

S11 E13

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Our sponsor this week is Chews Life. The mission of Chews Life is to equip all Catholics with rosaries for life. How do they do that? By creating rosaries for every age group and every person. For little ones, they have soft silicone rosaries. These rosaries are strung on durable, organic cotton cord and have food grade silicone for the beads. These rosaries are a beautiful way to bring your little ones to Marry and also offer something to soothe and delight them. For slightly older kids, Chews Life offers their Shepherd Kids Rosaries. These rosaries are also made with silicone beads, but are slightly smaller and have more between the beads so that kids learning their rosary can slide each bead as they pray. Finally for adults, Chews Life has beautiful rosary bracelets with many different styles and colors. The rosary bracelets are a great tool for someone trying to form the daily habit of praying the rosary. Not only is it very accessible on your wrist, but it also features a bookmark crucifix medal that can be used to keep your spot in your rosary. So if you only have a minute here and there to pray throughout your day, no worries. Hold your place with the crucifix medal and continue when you have your next chance. Chews Life aims to provide beautiful and durable tools to help you pray the rosary every single day. You can find their rose and a number of other wonderful products on their website, chewslife.com. Use The Abide Code 10 to get 10% off your next order. That's Chews Life, C H E W S life.com.

Hi friends, and welcome to Season 11 of the Abiding Together Podcast. Abiding Together is a place where you can find connection, rest, and encouragement in your journey with Jesus Christ. Hi, my name is Sister Miriam James Heidland, and every week I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger.

And we talk about all things Christ, about life, about beauty, about sorrow. We laugh, we cry, you'll fit right in. So grab a cup of coffee, settle in, and welcome home.

Hello and welcome to this week's episode of the Abiding Together podcast. And we are launching our last installment of identities. So we are going to start our four part series on bride, which will have wonderful nuances and many facets that will unfold. And so we're going to start with the title of, "Freely in Love."

We're gonna talk about free, total, faithful, and fruitful. And we're gonna talk about a lot of the, obviously the icon of the bride that we're all the bride that we're the bride of Christ. And so Christ is divine bridegroom and what the icon

of marriage is. And so there's just gonna be a lot of beautiful things that I think that are going to unfold.

And so we're recording this way ahead of time.

Heather Khym: I know. I can't believe it's May right now.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: This actually, when this actually does air. So what we're going to do is something we've been doing if you've listened into our series on daughter, sister, and mother, we have one gospel or one scripture quote that guides all of the episodes. So we take that and then it allows you to kind of sink down deeply with it. And so what we're going to choose for our identity is bride. We're going to choose Genesis chapter two, verses 18 to 25. And just to invite you, even if you you've heard this before, it's very well known, but just to see kind of as it washes over you today, and also as the weeks unfold, just what you notice in your heart. So here we go. "Then the Lord, God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone. I will make a helper as his partner." So out of the ground, the Lord formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what the man would call them and whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle and to all the birds of the air and to every animal of the field. But for the man, there was not found a helper as his partner. So the Lord God caused deep sleep to fall upon the man. And he slept. Then he took one of his ribs and closed up its place with flesh and the rib that the Lord God had taken from the man he made into a woman and brought her to the man. Then the man said, "This one at last is bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh. This one shall be called a woman, for out of her man this one was taken. Therefore, a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife and they become one flesh." And the man and his wife were both naked and were not ashamed." So there's so much in there, Heather, what are some of your thoughts as we dive into this identity and the Genesis passage, and we have like a lot of beautiful bullet points here, but what's on your heart right now?

Heather Khym: Yeah, there's so much in that passage, but the part that struck out to me just as you, struck me as you were reading it was, we're not meant to be alone. You know, just that that's, we were talking about this in the last series and we've talked about it many times, but this is the image in which we were made and God's image that is a family of life and love. It's a communion of persons. And I think sometimes we often feel alone in many places. And to just remember that this is the original design of us that we were made to be in communion, like primarily with God, but also with others. And I think this topic of bride is gonna, you know, for some people they're like, "Well, I'm not a bride or I'm not married yet." And again, we just wanna remind everybody that this is

more than that. This is at any stage of, or any state of life that you find yourself in. We are all called to be bride. And so I'm really excited about this conversation. Yeah. I also love how Michelle says the word naked.

Michelle Benzinger: Naked, naked. I say it correctly. I'm sorry. So that's the word, according to Michelle. Anyway, yeah, I'm excited. I think it was interesting when we were praying about this topic. Sister had the idea to do the free total faithful, all those parts of it. And just even going through that part of the marriage ceremony. And it's the statement of intention, which I love that, like, this is the intent. And so the priest will say, "Have you come here freely intent upon giving yourself to your intended spouse in marriage?" But that whole idea, have you come here freely? You know, just really stood out to me. And like Heather was saying, but we are all the bride of Christ. Whatever our vocation is, we are all the bride of Christ. And the whole Christian journey is, you know, to be reunited in a union with a bridegroom, no matter who you are. And so just like asking myself, have I come here freely? You know, what is entangling me? What is hindering me? What areas am I not free? And what areas am I not giving myself freely to the Lord? To my spouse? Like my husband, but to others, like you said, we're all called to communion. And so we're called to communion with, and not only the Lord, but with others. And so what's blocking my freedom.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. Which is interesting when you think of the marriage ceremony in the Catholic church, just the rich glory of it and all the beautiful parts of it. And that it's a right in and of itself, but it's also, you know, many times placed within the heart of the holy sacrifice of the mess. Where the husband and the wife literally receive holy communion. Like they come together feeling holy communion. And I was at a wedding not too long ago. And the priest give such an outstanding homily but he talked about how, you know, love requires an altar. Like all of our loves require an altar of sacrifice. All of our loves require an altar of revelation. And he said, the husband and the wife today, they've just, you know, declare they're declaring their intent verbally and they're going to give themselves to each other verbally. And then they're going to receive together the holy Eucharist of communion within themselves is then tonight through their bodies they will come together. And the fullness of the communion. And you just think of just the deep reverence of gosh, of freedom of love can't be coerced. It can't be like, you know, we say, "Money can't buy love," it really can't. And even just people sometimes, well meaning say, "You know you should do this or you should do this." You know, "You ought to say Mary this person, or you ought to be a priest or you ought to be a religious sister." And sometimes not really understanding just the freedom of the gift of the person. Of how God always respects our freedom. And I've always found that really beautiful about God that as a divine person and Christ as a

human, human and divine, the only person to give us the gift of free will and never seek to manipulate it, which is we can't even imagine what that's like 'cause we do it all the time, like trying to get people to do what we want. And it's funny. We're crazy like that. But the freedom of the Lord of the Lord is not out to manipulate us or to strong arm us or to solicit us to do something we don't wanna do. And when somebody gives us the freedom to be, it just lets our heart breathe. We're like, "Oh, I don't have to please you? I don't have to, I can just be myself." And they're like, "Oh no, you can, you don't have to say about me." You're like, "Oh, okay." And then after we like, "No, I wanna say it now." Cause it's like freeing, you know?

Heather Khym: Yeah. It's mysterious. Like and it even taps into some of those questions of why does God allow suffering in the world? You know? And it's because of this free will that He allows us to choose things and there's many people that choose not good things. You know, they choose to hurt people, to harm people, to destroy things. And yet God and his great love, like wants us to be free. And, and I think for many of us, we go, "Well, why doesn't God just make it this way, this way?" And often it would be an infringement on our freedom. So scary things can happen when we're free to choose. But at the same time, it's this beautiful, I agree, aspect of God's personality and his character that he's like, "If you're gonna love me, it has to be free." And that's why even in marriage, like marriage is the, sign right? Of Christ love. It's the most beautiful icon really of who God is and his union with us. And although it's lived out in imperfect ways, the intention and the actual, like if marriage was lived perfectly, this is the best sign that we have. It's the closest sign that we have to the love of God. And so that's why it's important that these quite are asked, have you come here freely? Because if you haven't actually, your marriage is invalid. It's not a real marriage that that's so essential to the loving bond that mirrors our love with Christ and are union with Christ that's free. So if you have been coerced or you have been forced or manipulated or whatever, it might be that yeah, that's grounds for an annulment really. I mean that you can't enter into a union that way. So there's a respect there that I think is so incredibly beautiful that we should mirror in our marriages, but also in our relationship with God and with one another, that this freedom is something that is beautiful and painful at times when it doesn't go our way. You know, that's the risk of love. Like love always requires risk where we could be hurt.

Michelle Benzinger: And it requires like this exposure and you are like, we even researching different classes, been taking like we are literally wired scientifically for connect or protection. Those are the are two elements that we do physiologically. Like either we're connecting or protecting, you know, that is what we are looking for signs. And so like, like we said, we are designed for communion. We're designed for connection, but to come here freely. And I think

about the Lord and two years ago, my word for the year was romance and just diving deeper in Lord who is the most faithful lover. Who is the most constant and pursuit lover. He is just so kind. And even sometimes to think of Him in that context makes people uncomfortable, but that is who He is. And if you look at the "Book of Hosea," you know, "I will lure her into the desert and woo her back and speak to her." But I always still am reminded like that was one of my scriptures from my silent retreat, personal retreat that I did. And I still come back to that scripture all the time and just the "Book of Hosea," because I realize I can also break the Lord's heart. You know, like we are free to hurt Him. You know, we think like, well He is, you know, powerful and sovereign and all this kind of stuff, but it's a love relationship and He doesn't want to a duty or a chore or someone thing on a task list or for, to check off like, I'm going to mass here, I'm doing this. He wants a relationship. He wants us to respond like the bride in "Song of Songs." He wants us to awaken. He wants us to be fully alive. And so what it says, when you have you come here freely, you know, He wants our freedom to choose Him to be in relationship with Him. And asking ourself the hard questions, "Why am I not free in my relationship with the Lord?" And asking those harder questions of myself, you know, or why do I choose idols like the wife in Hosea, like why do I choose all these idols and things that will not fulfill me, but yet I think they will.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. We all have like, we all serve at other altars. We all kneel down and just offer some instance, offer a pinch of incense to all of our idols. And we kind of mock you know, medieval societies, but we it's alive and well 'cause idolatry is in the human heart, out of original sin. So every generation passes it down just a little bit differently. And I think when you think about freedom also, I just think of, you know, the Genesis passages that we read, but also John Paul II concept of original solitude, which, I mean, you can look at the word, Adam meaning male and female. And then the differentiation is noted when Eve is created but that every man and every woman has a place in their heart and their soul of original solitude that belongs just to God. That is a sacred space that only the Lord and that person are allowed to enter. And that is a deep sovereignty of the human person. And when we try to infringe upon that of other people, it's very violating and this place where the Lord at any moment in our life, we can turn to the Lord in the garden of our soul and he's there. And that's our deepest longing. It's our deepest fulfillment. It's a place like we were talking about mother, of the place of unbroken love, unbroken connection, unbroken security, all the things that we want in our life and of total freedom where the Lord is always inviting, just always inviting us there of that deep place in our hearts. And it's from that ordering of our love there and the deepest places. We've talked about it before that all of our other loves can be ordered because I think you had said Heather in our series on mother, otherwise we're trying to stuff people or things like

idolatry. We're starting to stuff in the place of original solitude and it's not original loneliness. It's being with the Lord. It's being connected with the Lord and where He is our deepest fulfillment there. And that's the deepest sign of marriage is the icon of how God loves us into eternity. That all of us will be the bride of Christ, men and women alike, which is why the church is marrying before she's Petrine. But I think all of us is very important for us when we go into those places that there's a sacred garden within each one of us, that is a free place that the Lord is always us to, that's very sacred just to us and the Lord alone.

Heather Khym: And that is the school of love where, like you said, that we learn to love. Others in that deep way. I mean, it's hard to really live in the fulfillment of our vocations. If we don't know that love there in that hidden place. I mean the more that we push the Lord out or have these blocks up, walls, protections against Him and the ways that we might think He might hurt us because of our misconceptions of Him. Like when we allow those things to be healed and the intimacy that comes and the deeper union that comes, our capacity to love inevitably expands. It's like when the walls come down, expansion happens and we're able to love more freely and fruitfully in our other relationships. And I think just the whole analogy of marriage and love in regards to our relationship with God is so beautiful. Like all throughout scripture, even talking about the Harlot like you were saying, you know, the idols, the ways that we've turned away and recognizing this is all of us. All of us have been the Harlot, all of us have been the betrayer. All of us are the unfaithful ones. And yet God is always faithful and pursues, and pursues and is unrelenting in his love. And there's always a way to come back. You know, there's always a way to turn right around and to experience his love again. And I think to be able to bring that type of love, that faithful love, not just to experience it, but to give it in our other relationships and in our vocations. So back to the Lord, but also to our spouse, if that's what we're called too. I mean, it's incredibly powerful. It is the love that transforms. It's what transforms us.

Michelle Benzinger: It's incredibly powerful and it's incredibly vulnerable. I think for me, like to be in that secret garden, or that interior life for me has always come. There's always been an ease to that, like a natural that, and I think probably, but probably just picking it up osmosis almost from my mother, she was a very deep prayer. My great grandmother, very deep prayers. So I have these women and just experienced a lot of just heartache. You know? Our brokenness from just different relationships, probably like father relationships, stuff like that in my life and the Lords restored and redeemed. So then for when you bring it to marriage, you know, like you bring it, like for me to go to the Lord is the safest place in the world for me, you know, to bring Chris into that place with me, into my interior life, has probably been one of the most growing

parts of our marriage because he is like, "You just go to this Lord." And he goes, "You go to a secret garden and I'm not allowed." He said, "Are you allowing me sometimes into this place with you and the Lord?" And then you're like, oh nope, I'm gonna kick him out now. Like it's too. And I realize it's because it's this vulnerability. And I mean, this makes me tear up every time I say it, but because I told him like, because if you hurt me there. I was like, because the way, you know, like just my defense mechanisms, I'm like, I can get through anything if I can go back to the Lord. You know? But then like I'm still in that survival part like the shoes gonna drop, but I'm like, if you hurt me there, I don't know if I'll survive. You know, but the Lord's been asking me, but it's not a question. It's a question of trusting Chris, which I do, but it's more so it's a question trusting the Lord. Do you trust me that this is the person that you're one with person and you need to come to me fully. Both of you fully with the Lord together, you know, and that's the deep communion. And I think John Paul II communicates it so beautifully and I love reading more and more about his life. And he tells you the things that he learned the most about his priesthood are actually from the married couples. He said from the laity. You know, it's from the married couples watching love. And if you read, you know, "Love and Responsibility" or the "Jewelers Workshop" or any of those books, it's just a beautiful love and sacrifice of marriage, you know, and that deep communion with another person, you know, but that's hard. Because it's vulnerable. I mean, vulnerability and risk that each of us have to go in and it's freedom, but it's freedom with a cost.

Heather Khym: Yeah. I was just thinking that's an interesting dynamic that occurs. I experienced something very similar. I had this deep intimacy with the Lord and then I met Jake and trying to love God with my whole heart. And then as our vocation was revealed. How do I love Jake with my whole heart? And God with my whole heart. And not let one, like, cause any disintegration between the others, you know? So like my relationship with God, can't be like, well, I'm gonna pull away from Jake when I get hurt. And just like, of course we need to go to the Lord, but it can't create distance. You know what I mean? It should always continue to bring communion and vice versa. Like I can't go to Jake with all I need or want or desire and expect him to fill that in me and cause any disruption in my union with God. You know, so it was hard. I was like, "Lord, I don't know how to do this. Like I don't know what this means." Like, because it was just me and God for so long. Like I had this early conversion experience and it quickly grew into something very personal and very intimate and deep for me. But I also remember being engaged and falling into sin with Jake and experiencing so much, it was pain in my relationship with God because of how it was hurting my relationship with Him. And I remember just feeling this, like, I mean, so many tears were shed over just like, "Lord, what are have I done?" Like, and I know that God is quick to forgive and he's

merciful and kind, but there was a rupture that was happening because I could, I didn't know how to love Jake well. And I didn't know how to let him love purely, you know, like there was all of our stuff was coming up of like the past that you think you don't have it maybe or whatever. And I'm like, "Oh my goodness, I'm treading on new ground. And here it comes." Like it was all coming up of all of these different things. And I'm like the lack of purity or self-control and all this new ground we're treading into. And I'm like it, I could just feel the disruption in my relationship with God that was so painful. And for many years I carried that. Like would go to confession about it. Lord, I know that you forgive me, but there's something that happened that I need you to restore. And that just took time. Not because of God holding out on me, but because of me. You know, my shame, my inability to still love in the purest ways, like all of that stuff. So it's a journey friends. It is a journey. And as you try to have your marriage really be an icon of the love of God, like holy smokes, your stuff's gonna come up. It's gonna expose more than it's beautiful. Expose the bad parts.

Michelle Benzinger: The good, the bad. The good, the bad, and the really messy.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And isn't that what love does? It's a mirror. It's it's a mirror into, I think we've all talked about places and I know for your husbands as well. And for me, just from people in my own life of had that person not come into my life, I wouldn't have known certain things about myself. I'm like, "Wow. I didn't know that was part of me," you know? And so the Lord brings those things in and we think of, you know, freedom and there's a beautiful quote from John Paul II, from "Love and Responsibility." And he says, "Limitation of one's freedom might seem to be something negative and unpleasant, but love makes it positive, joyful, and a creative thing. Freedom exists for the sake of love." And I think that reality of being free to be able to give the gift of ourselves to God. It's not compulsory, it's not manipulated and to give the gift of ourselves to another. And in our daily life, the people that are entrusted to us. But I have to think sometimes, and if I experienced this in religious life, I've been in my community over 23 years now. And I came to it freely. But there were times where I was like, "I did not sign up for this." And I think almost like more difficult because you're like, "No, I did this freely," but at the same time, you're like, "I did this is freely and I'm just like, it's killing me right now." As I'm sure it's been married women.

Heather Khym: Have have I been duped? That question will arise friends. I don't care what your vocation is. You just go, "Have I let myself been duped?" It's Jeremiah, right?

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I think it's really easy to put expectations on other people to be your fulfillment. I remember it was seven or eight years into marriage and I had this epiphany and it was nothing that Chris had done, but it was epiphany for me like, "Oh my goodness. I have put on this man, all the expectations for him to make better all the things that my dad did not do correctly." And it was almost like this unspoken expectation, like, and I was just waiting to catch him, like, see, look! And I was like, oh my gosh. And I remember going to him and repenting and I'm like, "I am so sorry. I have put these expectations on you that were not yours to fulfill. Like I am so sorry." And it was something significantly broke when I spoke that out and asked for his forgiveness. And you know, we went through that process because then he was absolutely able to love me freely in a way that he was not before. And was actually when I withdrew these expectations, that known and unknown to me, like that he was able to love me freely and starting to see the love that my heart so desired from him because he was coming, not under this weight or judgment of me, he was coming freely to love, you know? And I think each one of us have that, we're like, make it better fix we all that to people, you know? You know, like the line "You complete me." No, you really don't. Like, no Jerry McGuire, you know, like that's original solitude. Jesus completes you honey. And so, yeah, but you're like, okay, but that's what we want. You know, we want another person instead of ourselves, or the Holy Spirit or the Trinity dwelling within us to complete us. We want that person to make it better, you know?

Heather Khym: Yeah. Yeah. I think, I mean, in turn it causes us to put people in bondage. Where we don't allow them to love us freely. That's scary. You know, because it's like, if you don't love me the way that I think I need to be loved. Then that probably means you're gonna hurt me. So if you could just do this, then I know I'm gonna feel safe. And I think often we don't even know the way that we need to be loved and we think we know, but we don't know. And until we experience someone who is truly bringing themselves to the, it's the gift of self. It's not all about us. Like they're trying to give themselves as a gift to us that we are to receive. It's not just, "Can you give me what I need?" Like love me in this way and meet all of my needs and all my fears and be this for me. It is a person coming before a person to give themselves completely to the other. And am I open to receive who they are in the way that they want to give it in a way that only they can? You know, which if you're called to marriage, this is mysteriously God's plan that this person, have you ever seen that on Instagram reels where it's like this voice that says, "Do you ever look at your person and just wonder, wow, how did I ever get?" And they're doing something so stupid. Like I just do so. But I'm like, sometimes that is the real thing. You're like, how is person like God's desire for my life? Like I have no idea. And I wonder, and I ask questions sometimes. But to have that trust that truly, as we are becoming one and as we are, hopefully making each other holy and loving

each other as Christ intends, that we are becoming who we are meant to be. And only with this person. This is the pathway that God has designed and the good, the bad, and the ugly that if we love the Lord and we continue to bring it all before Him that He will work it all out for our good, you know? It's a mystery. My goodness, is it a mystery? And I'm sure, even for you Sister, you're like really, this? All these sisters, this community, these priests, this is you intended for me, Lord, from all time, this is what?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah, this is my way of sanctification. Or this is my way of joy. Like this is the way that I was called. And I'm sure people have thought that about me as well. It's like, this is the way of the fulfillment, which God has for me. Like, this is the way of love. Like from all eternity, when God created me in my mother's womb, like at that moment, like the way He formed my heart, like this is the way to fulfillment of love. And so often it looks different. And we think it ought to look different. We're like, "Not this, Lord." And it's such a, it is a divine, cause we're just so little. And when we talk about, and I think, you know, when we talk about freedom, we're not talking about doing whatever I want however I want, that's license. So we're when we talk about freedom in this sense we're talking about the fullness of freedom is to be able to see what is good and to choose what is good. So that's how I know how free I am is to be able to behold what is good. And then my freedom to choose what is good. So that's why many times we'd see ourselves like in compulsion or bondage where we can see what's good, but we just don't have the capacity to choose it. Or we don't out of our own, you know, character defects or weakness. And even as we're talking about this, you can hear, since we've been talking about the identity of daughter, of sister, of mother, you can hear our wounds from childhood. I mean, you can hear the whole, which is why it is so imperative that we must always allow Jesus to come into our own personal heart. So He can bring us in a holistic communion so that we can grow more holy. Otherwise, what we'll do, like you both have said, we'll just put it on the other person, our whole life and say, "This is your fault. You're not making me happy. I want something else." And you know, and yeah, that sometimes when people change behavior, it does alleviate, obviously. But when we're putting our whole life on like, "This is your fault, do something to make it better." That's just destroys everybody.

Heather Khym: It will crush them. It'll crush 'em yeah. The weight of our expectation. And our anticipation of the disappointment that they're gonna lead us into will crush them. And it will foil all the plans, you know? Like it really does. It foils all of the things that we actually desire. It's like sabotaging ourselves.

Michelle Benzinger: It is our self-fulfilling prophecy. You would do that. But I love John Paul II, I love the book, "Love and Responsibility." So we see love, but we forget the and responsibility. That I'm responsible for my own actions. I'm responsible for my own holiness, my wholeness, my growth. And when I take responsibility for that, then I can love others freely. And I think for me, like even changing the way I view other people as a gift, and when I don't understand, like, "Oh, wow, look at the mystery of them." Like, so let me unwrap this gift in a different way. Like, let me see, Lord, you created everyone as a gift. So how do I receive the gift of who they are? Like how do I receive the gifts of, you know, whether my husband's...

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's hard to do sometimes. Pushing on all your wounds, you're like, "I wanna kill you."

Michelle Benzinger: Oh my gosh. And that's where you-

Heather Khym: That's the worst gift that I've ever seen!

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah, your self awareness. Or realize where you don't feel like you're a gift yourself. So you don't want to give yourself to other people. You're like, "I don't feel like I'm a gift in this area. So therefore I don't wanna give myself in this area," you know? And I think that's where the Lord is calling us to say, "Okay, come in the garden with me, it's scary." You know, it's vulnerable, but you are a gift, you know? And He continually reminds us, we are a gift to be given, not to hold, not to hoard, you know, but a gift to be given to others. And seeing it through that lens is I think it can be life changing and transforming, you know?

Heather Khym: And JP two talks a lot about that. Like this is where we find ourselves. When we make a sincere gift of ourselves to another, that this is truly where we will find ourselves. It's the losing your life. And then you find it. Like, this is where we find ourselves when we make a sincere gift of ourselves to another, that this is truly where we will find ourselves it's the losing your life. And then you find it like, it's all the, it's the flipping upside down that the gospel does. We think that we can't do that or we'll lose. Like it's the flipping upside down that the gospel does. We think that we can't do that or we'll lose everything, that we'll be lost. We'll have nothing, you know, there's orphan parts of us that activate when we're in a relationship with someone, whether it's the Lord or with another person, like it will activate. And we think, "I need to protect myself." "I need to do it all for myself." "I need to make sure that I'm getting what I want or that I'm first," or whatever it might be, you know? Yeah.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And there's, I mean, and part of a relationship is, you know, kind of a sitting at a table with another person and saying, "Putting everybody's needs on the table." And you're like, "What do you need? What are your desires?" And so it's, it's not dismissing our desires or saying that what we need doesn't matter. But it's like the honest assessment of that. And like, what is, I was pray about that all the time. Like, what is truth? Like, what is reality? What am I putting expectations on? I think of the things that the Lord really convicted me of many years ago that I, that really just helped my own growth. And I catch myself doing at times is what psychologists called magical thinking of like finally this one person or this one situation, or this one event will finally come along and I'll be perfect. And my life will be perfect. And I had no idea how long that was like an operating system in the back ground of my heart of, well, it is just one thing. It's just this, it's just the next thing. And just the Lord was so gentle about that of there is no perfect situation or person, or you, even like maybe one day I'll be good enough to be loved. Like I'll finally get it all together so you'll love me and I don't have to try so hard. And like, that was such, and it's still something the Lord works out in my heart every day. Like, okay, Lord, just to surrender. Here's my heart. Here's what I desire. Here's what I would like. Here's what I, and that's, that's life friends. It's just the humble daily things of life.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And I think for just that continuing there's a rootedness for each and every one of us to have in our faith and rootedness in our relationship with Christ, but also there's a commitment to growth, ongoing growth. When we mentor young couples for marriage and prep, one of my biggest things is like they said, "What it is essential?" And I said, essential, your faith that your identity is rooted in Christ. Your identity. And then that the Lord is writing a new story with the two becoming one. The Lord never seen anything like this before. This creation of the two becoming one. This is a new creation, a new love story that the Lord has written to the world. Like your marriage is, you know, an icon of the church and Christ. So like the Lord's doing something new here, but always say a commitment to ongoing growth. A commitment to ongoing holiness and wholeness. Like that you continue to grow, that you don't succumb to complacency. Or just, this is the way it's always going to be, or all of that, that you continue to grow and that you really continue to be a student of one another. I mean, it is a school of love and you do not graduate. You know, some of us may not get out of elementary school. Me. And so, but you know, it's a constant school of love.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, gosh, there's so much more to go as we unfold, the different parts of this.

Heather Khym: I know as I'm like, thinking ahead of the series, I'm like, "Oh, let's not get into it." Like, we could just say one sentence and launch into a whole other topic.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. So maybe this week, as we talk about just our own area of freedom of our ability to, with the Lord to see what is gonna to choose the good and just to kind of notice in our hearts, maybe what we're putting on expectations on our spouses, our children, or people in our life that are often even subconscious to us, we don't even know we're doing it. And just to ask the Holy Spirit, "Okay, Holy Spirit, where am my life am I not free? Like where have I grown in freedom? And then where am my life am I not free? Where Lord, where in my life am I putting expectations on people that can't possibly fulfill?" And maybe spending some more time in the garden this week with the Lord. Maybe just helpful to kind of open our hearts a bit and just to kind of massage our heart so we can journey more deeply into this identity as bride, which is gonna be really beautiful. Yeah.

Yeah. So miss Heather, would you like to share the one thing for you, my dear?

Heather Khym: Yes. My one thing is a playlist that I made called, "The Hidden Life." And it's just yep. Songs of intimacy between us and the Lord. And so we were talking about that at the beginning of this podcast. The importance of growing in the hidden life and the hidden places that no one else can see, that no one else can go. And so I hope that playlist blesses people. There is a song in there that I was sharing with Sister Miriam this morning called "Preference" by Rachel Morley. And she is like, I don't wanna worship my preference anymore.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Tell the other, they were like, though it talked about, I won't like worship how you want love, how you wanna be loved or like how I want to you to love me or something. What was the other one you were talking about?

Heather Khym: Yeah. "I wanna love who you are not who I think you are." Yeah. It's so good. Yeah. So a little song of repentance thrown in there. Yeah. So anyway, that'll be in the show notes. If you wanna access that playlist, it's in the show notes on our website. Michelle?

Michelle Benzinger: Mine is, I can't remember if we mentioned this on the podcast before or not, but the book by Francine Rivers, "Redeeming Love" and it is, actually it'll be a movie, I think, coming out a couple months before this podcast airs in January, they're making it into a movie.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh! I saw Beth Moore make a funny comment about the poster. Like they're like the image for the she's like, looks like they're not leaving room for the holy a spirit, if you know what I mean.

Michelle Benzinger: But it is a beautiful story of the "Book of Hosea," you know, fiction story of the "Book of Hosea" by Francine Rivers.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Is that the quote y'all have in your bedroom?

Michelle Benzinger: Yes!

Sister Miriam James Heidland: What does it say?

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, It's restoring Eden, returning to Eden. "If you love and forgive, that is the way back into Eden." Returning to Eden.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: We should do that.

Well, since it's spring, I have a wonderful 'cause you know I love kale. It's one of my love languages. I know. I know. It's okay. So it's a kale salad with carrot ginger dressing, and it's got kale, it's got avocado. It's got, I believe chickpeas in it. So it's a wonderful spring salad that you can bring to your graduation parties or your spring outdoor events. And it's kale. I mean, need we say more?

Michelle Benzinger: No.

Heather Khym: No.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: The two of you are horrified right now. Anyways.

Well, dear friends, thank you so much for joining us. And we just invite you to settle in and just to open your heart to all the Lord wants to speak to you about being a bride. So until next week you'll be Abiding Together. God bless you.