

S11 E15

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Sister Miriam James Heidland: 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 welcome to part three of our series on identity, which is the identity of bride.

Heather Khym: I like this one. I like it a lot.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's going to be a good one. Well it always is.

Heather Khym: It always is, I mean, I like this bride series we're doing. It's good.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's open like a lot of different facets to it. You never know. So we've talked about free love, we've talk about freedom total and

Michelle Benzinger: Free love.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, not that kinda free love. Ain't nothing like that girl. That is not what we're talking about listeners. Just FYI, okay.

Heather Khym: Abiding Together took a turn, season 11.

Michelle Benzinger: Sorry, it's after lunch people, we get a little crazy.

Heather Khym: This is the slap happy hour.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: We've been at it long, long here. So for the title for our episode today is faithful and honoring love. And so we've been using the statements of intention for the marriage ceremony for the Catholic Church. And this statement of intention says, "Will you love and honor your intended spouse for the rest of your life?" Okay. So I'm just gonna let you guys think about that, the two of you, and I will read our gospel, our scripture passage for our time together. So once again, we're spending time with the same scripture passage for all four episodes of this series. And so we've been reading from Genesis, so I'll again read from Genesis 2:18-25.

Then the Lord God said, "It is not good that the man should be alone, "I will make him a helper as his partner." So outta the ground, the Lord God formed every animal of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to the man to see what he would call them. And whatever the man called every living creature, that was its name. The man gave names to all cattle and to 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 a 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 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."

Michelle, would you like to start us off today on wherever you feel the Holy Spirit leading you to go.

Michelle Benzinger: I think this is just such an important topic to talk about. To keep in the perspective that we were talking about like okay, the wounds of love also, that love is something that can pierce us and it is beautiful and it is what

heals us, but also we are hurt in relationships. We're healed in relationships, but we're also hurt in relationships. So what are some of the wounds that we experience in this union? Keeping in mind though, by Christ wounds we are healed and the wounds that we are afflicted for in relationship and communion, there's always can be a repair, a redemption, a restoration, and the Lord is always calling us back into deeper communion with him. And that we continue, like I said, in the last podcast to lean in and love, even when it's hard. So just to go through that lens of when we talk about that. But for someone to hurt us deeply, we have to be intimately and vulnerably in communion and connection with them, and allow them to hurt us. And so for me, I think one of the biggest areas of woundedness that I've experienced, actually, I don't know if they specifically have been by the other person, but it had been my perceived notion of the other person. Like I was always bracing myself, armoring up. I was always waiting for something to happen, before they even did happen, or I made assumptions of the other person and was just expecting. Or I was suspicious of intentions or motives more so than the actual actions. And for me, like it's been more hurt feelings or something like that than just these huge woundedness in marriage. Yeah. So just looking through in that lens, and realizing like my own part in the woundedness, and more so I think I've been more aware probably in the last year of my marriage, not where the focus has flipped. I have not looked upon where have I been wounded, but where I have wounded which has been a big part for me to take responsibility in that part. Because I think I was always bracing myself not to get hurt that I wasn't actually looking, hey, you're part of this too and you are actually hurting others also, and taking that responsibility. So yeah, Heather what about you?

Heather Khym: That's big and that takes some security in the relationship to even acknowledge that and to be able to come to grips with that and then go through the repentance process. Yeah, marriage has been hard. I mean, it's been really good too. Like we have three beautiful children and so many beautiful memories and fun experiences together and building life together from when we got married, when we were at university. So there's just like so much in there over the course of 20 years. But yeah, I can honestly say it's been a very hard road for us. And I mentioned in the last episode, we kind of have the perfect storm of our wounds and how they fit together in a really painful way. Like we can trigger each other so hard and so deep that, yeah, it's been a constant struggle in that way of feeling like we're at odds with each other, or we are sort of enemies to each other, like antagonists, like you're one that I need to defend myself against. And some of those things are real, there's real wounds that we've given one another, but some of them are from before. I know for Jake, he's looked at me through the lens of other people and as other women in his life that have hurt him. I can say I'm not that person, but that doesn't do the trick. Like it has to take time and for love to come into those places and heal in a way. I

mean, it's very complicated what we bring to the table when we come into communion with another person. When we're trying to come into communion, we can trigger each other, but there's also a whole history that we come with. Like there's some wounds that happened, from Jake, towards me, early on in our marriage in regards to he really struggled with pornography and, we've talked about this on this podcast before at various times, and that wound was very, very difficult for me it completely shattered me and broke my heart and the infidelity of that sin that just gets exposed it's so painful on so many levels. And I know this is unfortunately a common experience for a lot of women. But as I continued to do my own work in the following years, like I had to deal with that hurt. But then also realize that was also exposing hurt from a lot of other men in my life previous to that. So I couldn't put that all on Jake. I had to be able to dissect and take apart some of those things and really he have an honest look at what I was already bringing to the table, wounds that maybe I put on him as his fault, that it was a greater weight that a lot of those things held. And he was like, what the heck, why are you reacting like this to other things? And I'm, yep, we gotta take responsibility for all of that. So it's intricate. These parts we have to be very sensitive with ourselves, tender with ourselves, but also not stay in those places too. There has to be some movement, and even little movement is good, I've realized. So yeah. How about you sister?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, it's true, the closer somebody is to you, the deeper ability they have to love you and the deeper ability they have to wound you. Which is why I think for a lot of us, our second nature is just to be very guarded and to be very distant, 'cause it just seems safer. But then you don't have also the deep intimacy either because you, like we talked about before you can't selectively numb things. And I just remember many years ago, Dr. Bob Schutz was doing a follow up to a marriage conference and I wasn't at the original marriage conference, but I was at the day of follow up. And part of what he did is he does something called, family reconstruction. And so he had a married couple, and they were very willing to do this, and it was front of many people, it was very vulnerable. But he had them kind of take people from the audience to kind of reshape what it looks, what it feels like when the spouses have an argument. And then also to reshape what it was like when their parents had an argument. So for the bride, she got to kind of reenact what it feels like for her when they have an argument. It was very touching for her. She had like a woman kind of her standing kind of getting a little ball on the floor, and then the husband was like towering over her with his hands on his hips. And then Bob asked her, "Could you find some people and kind of re-sculpt "what it was like for you as a little girl "when your parents would fight?" And it was her reliving out her parents unresolved conflict in just her own ways. And she found a woman to kinda be her as a little girl. And she put herself as a little girl way in the corner with like her hands over her ears and just... So you could see how

you... You talk about the wounds are a perfect storm I think that's for most people the science of attraction and why we're attracted to people, it's never arbitrary of the subconscious things that happen in both beauty and sorrow. And so it was the realization for like this married couple for the first time to kinda see the fights they were having wasn't just about whatever was happening. It wasn't about because he was always late coming home from work. It had so more. And then he got a chance to sculpt what it was like for him where he felt emasculated. And then for him to reconstruct, like what happened when he was a little boy. It was like such a... And I just thought of I mean, obviously my spouse is Jesus Christ, but like in the conflicts I have with other people, or just in my misunderstanding with other people, there is so much more happening than what appears to be at the surface. And many times we're fighting or we're having continue disagreements about surface issues when there's something much underneath of the deeper longings of the heart that we often miss. And that's why it's affirming my own understanding and kind of just my own experience also but just with peoples, it's the repetitive patterns that are the longest stories of our life that keep being replayed in different facets, but it's usually very similar to always the same things.

Heather Khym: Yeah. And I think too, like you would experience this with the Lord, is your misinterpretation. Of his action or perceived inaction on certain things that your story, your history, which we all do. So I'm not saying this specifically to you, but in a particular way, I think that's how you experience some of the wounding that isn't really what the Lord is doing, but it can be perceived that way. The Lord has forgotten or is hurting me or he is definitely putting me through something that is painful and he's not listening, or whatever it might be. And so, what do you do with that when you feel like that feels true and how do you hold that up to who you know here that he is? What do you do in those moments?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, I honestly really do I go to the Lord and say, Lord, this is what I'm feeling. I feel like you've forgotten me or I feel like you don't care. Like you're just unmoved by me. Like you don't care that I'm coming to you as your wife saying, I'm really unhappy about this and I've been asking you for a long time to do... I've had many conversations with the Lord about that. So understanding of going back to who God says he is, and also, what am I believing about myself? And those stories of I'm a burden, that you hear those stories, I'm a burden, nobody cares about me, I have to try hard to be loved, like nobody's gonna take care of me. Those are stories from the womb for me. And so they're continually played out. And so coming into those places of Jesus, I feel like, I know this is not objectively true, 'cause I know who you say you are. So whatever's happening, it must be for my good. And Lord, if I need to do anything about it, lemme know. But until then, and just sitting with the

Lord saying, okay, I'm just renouncing those lies I believe about myself. And tell me that... And very deep and . That's been years of counseling, that has been years of... And that is often my daily prayer of, what's on my heart, and Lord, what are you saying? What's true? What are you saying? What am I believing about myself? And yeah, to me that's a daily journey of holiness.

Heather Khym: And to allow him to reveal who he really is.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Exactly.

Michelle Benzinger: And I think it's very important. I know for me, when I was getting married, I had a huge, huge fear of marriage, like unbelievably, like crippling fear. And I remember my husband and I, when we were going through marriage prep, I mean, we were extremely blessed to have Father Michael Scanlan, he was still living at this time and he did our marriage prep weekend and... Heather, we've told some of these stories before on the podcast, but I remember he met with us individually and then together. And, I was so thankful for just his intentional way how he really re-fathered me in a lot of ways. But I remember just being in the room meeting with him and just bawling saying, "I don't think I can do this." I really don't think it... And it wasn't my doubt of Chris, it was the doubt of myself. Because as we were getting married, my parents' marriage was getting, my parents were divorcing. So here I am preparing for sacraments and preparing for one marriage while I'm watching another marriage fall apart, and see the train wreck. I remember telling Father Mike, I don't really see that many happily married people, honestly, I don't. And I was telling Father Mike, what if he leaves? And my fear was not all the thing, it was just this deep seated fear of abandonment. Like deep seated fear of abandonment. I just realized... And Father Mike said to me, "What if he does, then God is still there." There's three people in this marriage and just really realizing it... And like I said earlier in this series, like it took me seven or eight years to really trust and it wasn't anything Chris had done, it was all me, like okay, I just had to build that foundation up of time. It took time for me to learn how to really trust and trust deeply. And I remember when my parents' marriage was falling apart, I got the, resurrection of Lazarus was the scripture I got. I was on a retreat and it was a resurrection of Lazarus. And I was kind of like, Lord, where are you? Where are you when this is falling apart? How could you let this happen? And he said, "If you would trust and believe, you will see the glory of God." And the Lord just constantly brought me back to that. I think one of the things that has been very growing for me is marriage. I think one of the things that I delight in more is my marriage. It has become this safe place and shelter, It has become... Chris and I can both say, we are extremely happily married, but it takes work. It takes a lot of work and we keep on going deeper. Like we keep on going deeper in intimacy in growth and revealing yourself, and it's messy

sometimes, but it's a school of love. But I remember I was looking at him the other night when he was sleeping, this made me teared up. I'm like, how much longer do I get with him? Just thinking. Because we've had, his mother passed away and I watched how his dad loved his mother, my mother-in-law had Alzheimer's and she just passed away. And I mean, my father-in-law loved her so well. I mean, so well, and it was just... When you behold that kind of love, you're like and it does heal and it does transform. And even asking, Chris is one of six, you ask any of his sisters or his brother, what the most powerful thing was, it was watching their marriage as they faced in sickness and health. The sacrificial love that he had, the delight he took in her even when she was not herself, like could not remember anything. He would still just get so enamored. And every time that he saw glimpses of her and she would recognize him, like the look on his face was like pure joy. And I'm just thinking that is a vision of marriage. So with the deep wounds, there's deep delight. And the Lord's stressing me like okay, one marriage may have fallen apart, but I'm doing a new work and a new thing in yours, and it's a beautiful work.

Heather Khym: Yeah, witnessing faithfulness in love is something so beautiful. It is healing to see it, no matter who you are, no matter what state of life you're in, like to witness that is to witness the love of God, which heals us, and it gives us hope if we allow it to. Like sometimes we can look at that and feel jealous or whatever, but to allow our hearts to be moved by that in a way of like, Lord, let this really heal these places that have maybe lost hope that things can be restored because... Although I'm saying, yes, my marriage has been difficult and we've had to do a lot of work and we've been in counseling and all of that, I mean, we are still together 21 years, and we're not planning on bailing and I can tell you how many times I wanted to bail, but you just—

Michelle Benzinger: That's real.

Heather Khym: You don't because we made these vows and they matter, and there's also grace in the sacrament that we have to pull on. And I think there's also saints that God has given to us in our marriage. I think he does for all marriages like that's an interesting question to ask, like who's the patron of your marriage. And that there's guardian angels for your marriage specifically. And so to lean on those other resources that are around. And I've also seen... We were just talking about before we start this podcast, what was the last time you cried like loud, like just like wailed. And I'm not really that loud of a crier usually, but I can recall moments and all of them were connected to my marriage where I just wailed. And I've also seen significant restoration happen, in the things that I thought, this will never be restored, I'll never be able to trust again, we'll never have what we had or whatever you think at those times. But yeah, to just see this miraculous restoration that continues to happen, and there's

a lot more areas to go and it's not perfect, and I don't think it ever will be perfect, but the Lord is working and that's the key. Like he's continuing to work, he's continuing to heal. And I do believe that nothing is beyond him.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Amen, friend.

Heather Khym: The more open we become... I mean, it's not that God is gonna do everything that we desire. But I do believe that if we're open, really open and we keep going there and laying it down that he will come and he will heal and restore. I think it just comes down to like, will we continue to surrender it, and will we stay? That is so hard. Like I had to tell myself so many days like, Heather stay, do not bail. Even emotionally, don't bail right now, don't run away in your heart or in your mind, don't go elsewhere to be comforted, like stay here and like go to Jesus with the pain. Like all of those things take severe discipline within your own self, to just be I will... Fidelity and faithfulness in a marriage isn't just, I'm not gonna have an adulterous sexual relationship with someone else. It's also in your mind and in your heart, in this things that you watch on TV or on the internet and put into your soul, the desires that come and where you bring those desires. Like there's a lot of emotional chastity that needs to still be held within the context of marriage to be faithful, to truly live out that vow.

Michelle Benzinger: And I love this quote we have in the notes, "Nothing cools love quite "like resigning oneself to mediocrity"

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Go Father Jacques Philippe.

Michelle Benzinger: Father Jacques Philippe. And I think that is a huge one in any relationship with your bridegroom, our bridegroom, our relationship with the church. All of it is to mediocrity. Like you can go start going through the motions. You can start getting complacent or comfortable, or I don't wanna grow in this area because that will disturb this. I don't wanna have this hard conversation. I don't want to look at myself in this area where I know I'm not loving well and whatever, like what areas are we complacent? Because one of the other things we have is, "Love is enthusiasm rather than pensiveness," that's John Paul II, "Jeweler's Workshop." And just this love is enthusiasm, and that it takes work, but it takes like, like we were saying before, it takes fully alive. It takes wholeness to do that. It takes all of the attributes that we were just talking about in marriage. And if you have these intents and you say these vows on your wedding day, we have to live these vows out daily and it is not easy. And it is so I think, especially, I do think find it even more challenging with the season we're coming out of hopefully. I mean, we keep on going in and out of the season with COVID, but it does feel like Groundhog Day. So it's really easy to give into complacency. It's really easy to give in. And I just know this season,

one of our sweet friends lives in our neighborhood, a season of when you have all these little, nobody's sleeping and the days run into each other, just like really to talk to my husband, I'm done. Like at the end of the day, when you're putting kids down and stuff that, it's just hard, but how do we like really stir the fires of love?

Heather Khym: And create and protect space for that to happen? Like you have to set aside time for one another.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And it has to be intentional.

Heather Khym: And you have to... I mean, mediocrity in any part of the relationship can be so destructive and it's so easy to let it happen. Like you just are trying to get through your day with so many other things that that often can be the thing that you leave, like your sexual relationship, your emotional relationship, your date nights, like all of those things can just be, I don't really have time for that because there's all these other things that are like right in front of my face so that later, later, later and then it can be months and months that you realize, I'm not actually connecting on a super deep level. Like I'm not giving my whole self here, I'm not receiving the whole self of the other. So, it's so important. Jake and I just had a chat about the date night thing again the other night, 'cause we were just why are we not doing this regularly? Like we don't have a lot it happening in the evenings, we're really busy and tired by the end of the day, workday. I was we need to do this again, like let's get back to it. And he was, "Yeah, why aren't we doing that?" Like sometimes it's just as easy as the decision.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Sure, yeah.

Heather Khym: It's not actually that hard.

Michelle Benzinger: Because how you spend every morning with your bridegroom.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I do.

Heather Khym: You've coffee with your bride groom every morning?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: I do. And that for me is such, I mean we laugh about it, but it really is like my favorite time. It's just like my favorite time where I just need total silence and just darkness before the sun rises and coffee. And I was just thinking of, we're talking about faithful and honoring, and I was

thinking of, maybe I would love to hear you guys what you think about this, but I was just walking with a couple that was just recently getting married, and we're just talking about the importance of friendship, of like being best friends with your spouse. And the philosophical definition of friendship is shared goodwill and to honor somebody as a person and when you talk about justice as a fruit of, like religion is belongs to justice, is 'cause it's giving God what's due. And we owe a justice to people to give them what is due as people. And I would imagine, I don't know if you guys have conversations like this, but I would just imagine there's just certain things in a, like there's certain things in a friendship you just don't say to each other, 'cause it would be so destructive. 'Cause once you say something you can't unsay it. And I'm wondering as married couples, 'cause you're loving somebody who's a beloved child of God and just the honor and the reverence of, here's a person who God loves and that God's given to me, and it's like working on the area of friendship and also honoring them, and how do you.. 'Cause I'm guessing it's just like anything else in life, when we talk about relationships ebb and flow and passion probably does and attraction, just ebbs and flows, but the bedrock of friendship of we're together on a mission and we're running toward the Lord together and you're my best friend no matter what. And, I don't know.. And I would mention some things you guys decided, like we're just not gonna say this to each other because it would just be completely destructive to the human person. I don't know, I would love to hear. Like how do you guys build friendships with your spouses?

Michelle Benzinger: I think for us, Chris and I had to grow into it because I think we started as really good ministry partners together. But we had to learn how to become really good friends with one another. And I feel like in this season, like we are really good friends, and like someone... I mean he's my favorite person in the world to delight with. And I mean, he's the first I love doing nothing with to, like us walking around Home Depot is fun for us. We walk a lot, but we've also had it, like about the Father Jacques Philippe quote, we have three mornings a week, we call our communion time and it's first thing in the morning, and we spend 30 to 45 minutes together just praying and talking and holding and all of those things and it's been beautiful for our marriage. But I also think learning how to delight in one another and just laugh with one another and—

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Which is what friends do.

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah. And joke with one another. Just all those kind of things, which has been a beautiful process for us. One of the things that was off limits, we said, we have never thrown the word, I wanna get a divorce, this off the table. We decided that at the very beginning of our marriage, like that was just that conversation is, we don't go there. 'Cause I think a lot of people say it

as a threat or ingest or like, I'm done. It's like as an ultimatum or something. We're like, no, that's just not an option. Yeah.

Heather Khym: Yeah, I've had to think sometimes about what would I hate to hear? What would I never want said to me because I wouldn't be able to get it out of my head. And those are the things that I don't won't ever wanna say. It's like treat other people how you'd like to be treated. There's somethings I never wanna hear from Jake, and I just don't... Even if he thinks it, I don't want him to ever say it. And so some of that has been good for me. Like to just go, there's just... I don't wanna hurt him. Ultimately, I really don't wanna hurt him. And I don't believe he wants to hurt me. Like in everything that's happened in our marriage, I don't think either of us have been intentionally trying to hurt each other. It is just messy. There's just a lot of dynamics at play. And so, yeah, I think there's a lot we don't say on purpose and it's good. We don't name call like when we do argue and we argue.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Sure, of course you do like everybody does.

Heather Khym: We just don't fight like that. I think it's hurtful. It's immature, it's unhealthy, and it's also common for a lot of people. And so just be honest, like it might be a place that you need to grow, but I'm like there's just things that I don't wanna be treated that way either. I wanna fight in a way that's fair.

Michelle Benzinger: And you have to learn how to fight fair, that's one of the biggest lessons in marriage. I had to learn how to fight fair, 'cause I--

Sister Miriam James Heidland: What does that mean for you guys to fight fairly?

Michelle Benzinger: I will do, especially at the beginning of marriage, I will do those under the belt things. Like those little jabs that like sucker punch underneath the belt, You're gonna go do this after you did this. Like you're gonna go give a talk and you can't... I mean I will like...

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah, a little more passive aggressive.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, yes, yes. And I was like, that is so wrong on so many levels on my part. I was like, I had to learn how to fight fair.

Heather Khym: But you didn't have those skills too, and I wanna say that in regards to Jake too. We grew up in very different households and there's different— Some people don't have the skills going into marriage. And so you

do have to be patient with one another and teach one another, but not in a condescending way, like how you'd like to be treated. That actually really hurt me and please don't do that. Like don't say that, don't treat me that way.

Michelle Benzinger: And to realize conflict isn't a bad thing. Where me I thought conflict is bad means someone's walking out the door, 'cause there's a fight or someone's storming out or whatever, where actually conflict can actually grow connection and a deeper connection if you can work through it and get through the other side... Yes, the repair was big deal. So that was huge for me to realize.

Heather Khym: I think something Jake and I have just tried to do also is to keep growing as individuals. Like we are in a relationship together, but we are responsible to grow ourselves. And so just continuing... I mean, sometimes it's through counseling, but just listening to other people who are experts at relationships, or how to communicate better. Like these are skills that I wanna be better at to be able to love him better but other people as well. So I think there's a lot there that we can grow in. There is really no reason to stay stagnant into where we are. There's a lot of places and a lot of opportunities where things can change and that's important to know. Like I think the lie of the enemy is, it's always gonna be this way. He makes these big sweeping statements. Like this is never gonna change, you always do this, it always ends up this way. Gosh, these are so loud in my mind sometimes. And I have to literally just say, no, I will not agree with that, like I will not. And I think before they would come in those thoughts and I would be not aware enough and I would just adopt them and agree with them almost like, it was almost like immediate that would happen. And now I'm, no, I will not agree with that, that's not true and, Lord, I need you to come with your truth right now.

Michelle Benzinger: I think it's the continuous renouncing of what you will not come into agreement with, and then the continuous affirming of what is true and who this person is and that you coming together. And I know for us, I think it is also having other couples to walk with you. We've had some since we've got married, like for us, like the Georges, since we've gotten married and then another couple that we really in this last season rock intentionally with, where it's pretty much a no holes bars. Like we say, the goods, the bad, and the messy and we are really good. And we know that each other is for the other's marriage. Like one of the lessons Gretchen George and I started at the very beginning is, if I come to her with something with Chris or she comes to me with something with Paul, we never belittle the other husband. We are always for the other husband because we're for them. It's not we get together and be, "Oh my gosh, I can't believe he did this." Kind of be whatever. And I think one of the beauty about being Catholic is the complementary of the vocations and gifts. I mean,

for you, we laugh, you are part of our marriage beyond this kind of our Trinity. And then Chris's best friend is father Joe Fitzgerald. We laugh two of our closest friends are religious and they're in and out of our marriages and they speak, and I'm very honest with you about things, and Chris is very honest about Father Joe, the good and the hard with all the different things with marriage and parenting. But to see how you all love, like how you love the bridegroom.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: We need each other.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes, it is complementary and just having a lot of religious in and out of our house, like how our vocations really heal one another.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's true, yeah. Priest and religious sisters need good, holy like marriages like to be... And not marriages that are on the surface perfect. But just to see... I've known you guys both for so long and just hearing the beautiful stories of your marriages and the difficult stories, it's given me such grace for growth and learning how to love like, that's what love looks like. I can't tell you how many times you guys probably don't know that, just listening to your hearts, I'm like, that's what love looks like. 'Cause for me it just looks different. And that you see our life of like the, or our ultimate fulfillment is Christ alone. Like that ultimately it's God alone who is our fulfillment. And when we're all faithful to our vocations, we make each other stronger, when we're all faithful. And you guys have spoken to me just the truth about women and about children and just like, we need each other. There's a real atrophy when one doesn't have the other. So both of the image of God how he loves.

Heather Khym: And I think that idea of friendship, just to go back to that part, that's so important is, that we can learn from other couples too. I mean, Jake and I are very opposite in what we like to do. Like I want to watch football with Jake, not because I like watching football, but because he likes it, and then there's some things he'll do with me because I like it, that's something that we had to learn. It's like, it's not about what I like or want to do, it's about will bring us together and unify us. But we've also learned from other couples with how they play and how they have friendship with each other. I think we're better in community, Jake and I have always said that. He and I are both better people in community and learning from one another, it is the most important thing. And I think for you too, like friendship with the Lord has to be at the center. Like it's not just obedience, although that's important. It's not just fidelity, so important, but the deep friendship.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It has to.

Michelle Benzinger: And you learn when to leave your husband at home to go to the art museum because it's not fun for either one of you. And so...

Sister Miriam James Heidland: You gotta know when to hold him.

Michelle Benzinger: You gotta know when to hold him.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Yeah. So I think that's the ongoing journey of just love. It's the ongoing journey of friendship. It's the ongoing journey of Christian life, Christian living, and this is what it is. It's not always glamorous or easy, but it's worth it. I think we would all say it's worth it. It's all worth it, so worth it. Yeah. Yeah, so dear friends, as we kinda wrap up this episode, what Heather Khym, would you like to share you one thing?

Heather Khym: Well, this is sort of a resource one thing, based on the topic that we're talking about right now. So Jake and I actually shared our story, the whole pornography issue, how that impacted our marriage, but the restoration process, very practically how we walked through that and the healing that occurred in Jake and how that was restored. So on "Restore the Glory" podcast, I think it's Episode 35, we share about that in more detail and there's resources there that people on our website, but also I think attach to that episode specifically that people can check out. Yeah. How about you?

Michelle Benzinger: For me, I'm just gonna list a couple of just different books that have been really good for me just as resources for marriage. One is our friend, Dr. Bob's "Be Devoted". There's a great book by Dan Allender, which I really love is called "Intimate Allies", and it's his book on marriage. And a couple others just really good resources on marriage to pray with, and to dive deeper into.

Heather Khym: There's a good one, Dr. Edward Sri. That he did on love and responsibilities. I forget what that's called.

Michelle Benzinger: Men, women, and love or something.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: "The Mystery of Love".

Michelle Benzinger: Yeah.

Heather Khym: Yeah. That's really good.

Michelle Benzinger: That was a really great one.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, mine is a tweet that I came across several years ago when I was trying to put together a talk for a youth conference. And when I did this, there was this tweet coming up in my timeline. And it's a picture of, and it while posted in the show notes, but it's a picture of a mother and a father, a husband, and a wife, and the wife is curled up on her husband's heart. And the daughter posted the tweet and she said, "My parents have been married for 34 years. "My mom is in the final stages of young onset dementia diagnosed five years ago at the age of 53. My dad cares for her full time. She doesn't always remember his name, but she knows she is safe with him. And if that's not true love, I don't know what is." And I often give talks about this tweet about, it's like the epitome of the masculine feminine genius and you can tell she's sick, the mom is sick and she's curled up laying on the heart of her husband, and her husband's just so big and strong as he wraps his arms around her. And the daughter tweeted a month later, her mom passed away. And just the... Like I think we all want to love and to be loved like this, all of us wants to be weak and to have like nothing to give and still be cherished and cared for. And all of us want to be able to love and just to give the gift of our ourselves. And I mean, sometimes I'll say, when I talk about this tweet, like I can pretty much guarantee you that 34 years ago, neither of them knew they were signing up for this.

Michelle Benzinger: Yes. Oh, absolutely.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: And just the fidelity of the husband to the end, even when she forgot who he was, he never did. So it's just a great... And to this day, this tweet has over a hundred thousand retweets, got half a million likes on it and people commenting from all walks of life. But there's something about the picture, especially that people just—

Heather Khym: That's an icon, isn't it?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It resonates deeply with how we're called to love and to be loved, and that's the way Christ loves us.

Heather Khym: Amen. So people, if you wanna see that you can go to our show notes on our website, abidingtogetherpodcast.com. You can check out all the things and the YouTube link, because this is the video also.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: There's a video?

Heather Khym: This is a video podcast.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Oh, this is a video. Sorry it's been...

Heather Khym: Remember that right now we're sitting in a studio with video cameras pointed us.

Michelle Benzinger: Sorry to our amazing crew, that sister Miriam forgot that y'all are here.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: It's just heaven, you just loss track of time.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: Well, thank you so much for joining us today dear friends and please join us next week for our final installment of our identity series and also our final installment on our identity as bride. So, until next week we'll be abiding together. God bless you, have a great week.