

Hey you. Welcome, welcome to Drawing Near, with Mary Ethel Eckard, author of *The Making of a Dragonfly*, available on Amazon. You can also visit me on Facebook or on my website, [maryetheleckard.com](http://maryetheleckard.com).

Thank you for inviting me into your world. This week's show is titled, Exposed and Embraced.

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As I've shared before, the desire of my heart is to be a dragonfly for God – to shine His light so others are drawn to Him. But I haven't always felt this way. For a long time, I ran from that same light. I have lived in selfishness and caused hurt and pain to others. I found ways to get what I wanted when I wanted it. I didn't like being told what to do. I wanted to be the master of my own life, not giving control to anyone, not even God. I spent a lot of energy fighting and rebelling against the greatest relationship this world has to offer. I didn't want to live for God for fear it would hinder me in some way or take away my freedom and happiness.

Yet, I knew when it was time to raise the white flag of surrender before the battle at hand completely destroyed me. Stay with me as I share a glimpse into the years I stumbled through life without the light of Christ to guide me.

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In my mid-twenties, I claimed to be a Christian, yet I lived like someone who wasn't a Christian; I lived a lie. My lifestyle and words were in contrast, as rebelliousness took hold. Scripture called me out. It says, "if we claim to have fellowship with God yet we walk in darkness, we are lying." My life was a lie.

What happened? I wasn't happy, so rather than looking within to find happiness and contentment, I ran away.

I ran away from God. At least, I tried to. I didn't want Him anywhere in my path, unless I needed Him. I still wanted Him as a safety net, but only as a genie in a bottle that I called on in case of emergency.

I was in search of happiness, and I searched for it in all the places I wasn't allowed to look in my earlier years. Wasn't allowed to look, you ask? Well, I had a Christian upbringing, so there were certain things my parents and God said were wrong. And I wanted to discover life apart from God.

I discovered it all right! It was chaotic, there was no peace or contentment. Man, to be master of my life, to do what I thought would be fun and bring me happiness turned out to be more like a prison sentence. I was held captive by guilt, emptiness, regret, and a spiritual void. I pushed God away and, because of His great love for me, He allowed me to have what I wanted – life without the sense of His presence.

I parked myself in the darkness of selfish decisions and desires and found the darkness to be restrictive.

It was like being in a dark room. It was restrictive because I didn't know where the obstacles were that might trip me up. I didn't know what was hiding in the darkness alongside me. Were there monsters in the corners? I groped and shuffled to find my way out, not knowing which way to take. The darkness fought to hold me hostage. After a while, panic set in and I begged for light, so I could see! The darkness had a grip on me. The more I fed it, the darker it became.

You know, what we feed grows. Whether it's an addiction, a desire, selfishness, discontent, spending – whatever – the more we give our lives over to it, the more it beckons for more. Darkness is the same. The more we hide it in our heart, the more space it requires.

Eventually, God willing, we come to the end of our selfishness and realize the dark dungeon we've descended into. We raise the white flag of surrender in search of a rescue that will bring light, take off our chains, set us free, restore our peace and purpose in life, and show us true contentment.

Our rescue is found in God alone, through Jesus! And once we surrender and ask Him to be our rescue, our lives take on new meaning and new direction! Once we have truly been delivered from the darkness, we never want to return – so we commit our lives to being God's light, so others can find their way out of darkness.

Scripture sums it up like this: "You were once darkness but now you are light in the Lord. Live as children of light and find out what pleases the Lord." Ephesians 5:8

That very same God I ran from, who I didn't want to live for, is the very same God who came to my rescue. He pulled me from the darkness of rebellious living and set me in the light.

Because in Him there is no darkness. And when He rescued me, I humbly crawled into His lap, confessed my sins and asked Him to forgive me, and He set His light within me – because in Him there is no darkness. And when He resides in me, He lights me up!

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Which reminds me of a story. Hey, I'm a storyteller – of course I'm going to have a story to make my point! I think some stories are just hanging out in my head waiting for an opportunity to be told.

Years ago, at a Dragonfly Ministries retreat weekend, I walked into the meeting room on a Friday evening and met a young woman named Ashley. As I talked with her, her body language screamed for me to back off and leave her alone, yet she continued to engage in our conversation. As the weekend progressed, she softened a bit, but I could still see the hesitancy in allowing me into her space. Ashley continued to attend retreat weekends, and over the course of time, she began to soften and no longer pushed me away. One evening, she shared, "When I first met you, I didn't like you. I didn't like the spirit in you. Now, it's that same spirit that draws me to you."

Listen, this isn't about me – this is about God's light. It's not something we turn on and off – it's a natural light that is the result of spending time with Him, confessing our sins, understanding His truth and walking in His ways.

In verse 7 of I John 1, we are told "if we walk in the light as He is in the light, we have fellowship with one another, and the blood of Jesus, his Son, purifies us from all sin." When we are purified from all sin, the darkness in us is taken away and God's light replaces the sin and darkness.

Initially, Ashley saw the light of Christ in me and she was repelled by it. Why? I think you know.

From personal experience, when I was in my years of rebellious living, I didn't want God's light anywhere near me because I didn't want my sin exposed – not to myself or to anyone else.

I attended church, but I wasn't ready to be confronted with the light of truth. So, when a sweet elderly man from the church came to visit one Sunday afternoon, I turned him away. I wasn't finished searching every corner of darkness for the happiness I suspected was hidden within, and God's light in the elderly church man threatened to expose sin within me. I wasn't ready for that to happen.

So, Ashley's comment didn't surprise or offend me. I walked in her shoes for a season. I also knew that, in time, she would surrender to God and embrace His light rather than be repelled by it.

The reign of darkness has a way of, eventually, making us run toward the light faster than we ran away from it!

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Scripture confirms by telling us, "Have nothing to do with the fruitless deeds of darkness, but rather expose them. For it is shameful even to mention what the disobedient do in secret. But everything exposed by the light becomes visible, for it is light that makes everything visible." (Ephesians 5:8)

Friend, to be a true follower of God is to allow His light to expose the darkness. He already sees it. He knows all things. And the truth of darkness is it hinders our relationship with Him. Or, we can continue to hold onto dark areas in our life and keep them a secret from him. But I'll remind you of two things. Number one – that just won't work because he knows all things; and number two, that little bit of darkness we hold is a hindrance in our walk forward.

Remember, God is light and in him there is no darkness at all. So, when we have darkness in our life and we try to hide it, he works to expose it.

Guess what ... I have another story. Stay with me.

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Several weeks ago, the Lord impressed on my heart that we as individuals and as a nation are in a season of exposure. He is bringing all things hidden in the darkness, into the light. All things will be exposed; all wrongs will be made right.

My response to that revelation was to join forces with God in praying for the darkness to be exposed, both in our nation and in individuals, starting with me.

It is a brave and courageous prayer to ask God to expose the darkness in our life. When we pray in accordance with God's will, He answers! How do I know it's God's will to pray for exposure of sin?

John 3:16 answers that question ... repeat it with me. "For God so loved the world that He gave His only son, that whosoever believes in Him shall not perish but have everlasting life."

God provided a way for us to have forgiveness of sin and to walk in the light ... To be forgiven we must first be aware of the sin. Even those things that are hidden deeply beneath layers of false beliefs and justifications. To aid in our purification process, God faithfully exposes our wrongs, more so when we invite Him to do so. What proof do I have to back that up? Well, when we extend an invitation, we wait expectantly for a response; we are open to receiving the answer. So we invite God to expose sin in us and we wait for His answer. Once exposed, we then take ownership of the sin, confess the sin, and seek forgiveness for the sin.

Stay with me. I want to share how God answered my prayer to expose hidden sin.

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## Exposed and Embraced

At the end of a hard season, I awakened into a new season of life. I peeked through the door of my soul and found a safe and happy place to reside. I stepped my foot into the world and found it to be good and life began anew.

Soon, the realization came that my season of brokenness was intended by the enemy to shut me down, to keep me from teaching and speaking, to render me powerless. That realization gave me the push I needed to find my voice in a new way.

I wrote and published my first book so I could share my story with the world and bring hope and healing to those walking through the storms of life. But that was just a drop in the bucket of finding my voice.

God says we have authority in His kingdom when we overcome the darkness. He brought me through some dark days – dark days where He was my closest companion, my rescue, and my light that kept me moving through the fog. Heck, he was my foghorn when I couldn't see the way ahead.

I wanted to use my overcomer's authority to be a foghorn for others – to be a megaphone for Christ – to speak in a way that would broadcast His goodness and His light into the world. Not based on a secondhand knowledge of who He is but based on a firsthand understanding and relationship of who He is!

He is more than we know. He is more than we understand. He is the abundance we desire, we seek, we hunger for!

I am finished with the darkness and declare to the world, there is light. And I prayed, Lord, I have come through a season of quiet and healing. In that season, I closed off many people, and I took on responsibilities that were not mine. I did this, so I would not have to inconvenience others with my issues.

Lord, if there is any darkness in me expose it, if there is anyone I have hurt, show me. If I have done anything that was against your plan, reveal it to me. Amen.

Then I winced because I knew he would answer that prayer, and I wasn't sure I was prepared for what may be revealed. Living in a fog for a few years had many days when I went through the motions of life, without paying attention to what I was doing. Now that the fog was lifted, it was time to see any debris shattered across the landscape.

It was just a short time after that God showed me something I had done that was unintentional yet unethical. It was hidden under a layer of reasoning, justification and wrong thinking. It had taken place in the fog.

With the exposure came a choice –confess and seek forgiveness or bury it under a layer of excuses and fear. Confessing it would break trust and I would risk losing friendships. To bury it would invite darkness to take up residence in my heart. We all know that darkness invites darkness and what we feed grows – we also know that darkness can snuff out the light.

This little light of mine, I'm gonna let it shine. Hide it under a bushel, no! I'm gonna let it shine. Won't let satan snuff it out, I'm gonna let it shine. Let it shine, let it shine, let it shine. And scripture says, "But whoever lives by the truth comes into the light, so that it may be seen plainly that what he has done has been done through God." (John 3:21)

## Exposed and Embraced

What did I do? I confessed. Without justification, excuse or reason. Sure, I could have justified why I did what I did, but I didn't want to water down my wrongdoing by seeking pity or even by giving explanation. I just wanted to expose it in full view and leave it to the people I had wronged to work through with the Lord.

Listen to this, "Woe to those who go to great depths to hide their plans from the Lord, who do their work in darkness and think, "Who sees us? Who will know?" (Isaiah 29:15)

I don't ever want to be the one that the "woe to" is addressed to. Do you? Let's get this confession thing done. Let's invite God to reveal our hidden areas of sin and darkness to us. Let's get the darkness exposed so we can carry God's light in fullness, let's embrace His light – let's glow for God.

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I want to tell you something. Listen, Scripture says God lifts the humble and brings down the proud. How does He bring down the proud? One way is in exposing sin in full view.

I know this because the Bible tells me so.

"There is nothing hidden that will not be disclosed, and nothing concealed that will not be known or brought out into the open." (Luke 8:17)

I would much rather expose my own sin to the world where I get to choose when and how and where, than to try to hide my sin from God and have him choose the when and the how and the where. Because as humbling as it is to confess our mistakes and our wrongdoing to others, it is so much harder when God must do that for us, so He can break down our pride.

Here's a challenge for you – something to noodle.

Let me present you with three IF statements: These are from I John 1.

- IF we claim to be without sin, we deceive ourselves and the truth is not in us.
- IF we confess our sins, he is faithful and just and will forgive us our sins and purify us from all unrighteousness.
- IF we claim we have not sinned, we make him out to be a liar and his word has no place in our lives.

Which of these IF statements resonate with your spirit the most?

Read them again in I John 1:8-10.

Sit with them, pray through them, and ask God to show you what to do with what has been revealed.

He will answer – how do I know?

Because the prayer is in accordance with His will.

And what happens when we pray in accordance with His will? Here's the answer.

"This is the confidence we have in approaching God: that if we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us – whatever we ask – we know that we have what we asked of him." I John 5:14-15

## Exposed and Embraced

I will close with this encouragement: May the light of Christ illuminate your pathway, so you always know which way to go; may His grace cover you each day, may you feel His love, sense His presence and may you know the truth of who you are in Him.

Remember, God's word brings hope, freedom, and peace to those who hear it. Send this podcast to someone who needs a word of encouragement today.

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Because there is so much scripture in this show, a transcript of the show is posted on my website, [www.maryetheleckard.com](http://www.maryetheleckard.com).

Read the scriptures and invite God to expose any hidden or known sin that has taken harbor in your heart.

Do the work of confession and seek God's forgiveness!

Raise that white flag of surrender so your life in the dark dungeon of selfish living can be transformed by His light that spreads good news.

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If you'd like to hear more of my story, you can purchase my book on Amazon – in either book or kindle format. The book is entitled, "The making of a dragonfly, following Christ through the winds of change." You can also purchase it at Walmart.com or barnes&noble.com.

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Thank you for tuning in to the show. This is Mary Ethel Eckard, signing off.