Unfavorable Odds
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Episode 20: Some Kind of Crazy

Guest: Terry Wardle
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Terry: I ended up admitting myself to a lockdown psychiatric facility where once you go through, you don’t get out until they say you get out. That in itself was just so, so frightening – but I had nowhere else to go. I believed my ministry was over – I was just going to beg for a sliver of sanity.

Kim: From the FamilyLife Podcast Network, this is Unfavorable Odds. I’m Kim Anthony. Unfavorable Odds is about finding hope and help in those seasons of life when things are pretty tough. Jesus has promised us that whenever we walk through those dark valleys, He is always with us. We will never have to go it alone. On each episode of this podcast, we’ll be talking with people who have learned how – during those dark times – to draw their strength from Jesus.

All of us have a story – but not all of us are willing to tell it – especially when it exposes our shame or our weaknesses. The person we’re going to hear from today decided to not only share his story, but to also use his own brokenness to help others to enter into this place of healing. His name is Terry Wardle. He’s an author, speaker and founder of Healing Care and HCM International. He has written a book called Some Kind of Crazy: an Unforgettable Story of Profound Brokenness and Breathtaking Grace.

I spoke with Terry about the childhood trauma he experienced that left him emotionally wounded, and eventually led him to check himself into a psychiatric hospital. As you listen to his life and the lessons he’s learned, you might find yourself relating to his story – and you may even find yourself revisiting some of your own unresolved pain or damaged emotions. Actually, that’s what happened to me as we were talking.

He gave this illustration, and it was as if he pulled a page from my life – so we processed that. Who knows? What Terry has to say may even start you on the path to healing and hope.

Terry, you grew up in the Appalachian coal fields of southwestern Pennsylvania. Paint for me a picture of what it was like for you growing up in that area.

Terry: It’s interesting because I have such mixed memories about that area. Part of me longs to go back and part of me – my whole life – has wanted to run away from it. To set the scene a little bit, my great-grandfather left England after being in prison. He illegally came into the United States with the idea of bringing his wife and his two children over,
but while he was here he got his cousin pregnant and he left his wife and two children in England, never to go back to them.

He then ended up taking her to this little southwest corner of western Pennsylvania – which if you can picture rolling hills and hollows and mountain streams – and there he raised eight children.

**Kim:** Wow.

**Terry:** Those eight children would have been barely educated – maybe grades school – then they raised families. So now you can imagine how big this little family's become. Out of that came my grandfather and then of course, my father. I grew up in an area where I had cousins everywhere. Aunts and uncles – you couldn’t go down into our next little town without me running into somebody that was related to us. They were all of the same brand – a very hard scrabble, coal mining, steel working or farming people.

It was an education. I look back on it and say I probably learned things I shouldn’t have and learned many things I’m glad I have, by growing up in that area.

**Kim:** Having such a large family, were you all very close to one another?

**Terry:** That’s interesting because we were close in that we spent a lot of time with cousins and aunts and uncles, but not close in the sense that any of us ever shared our stories. As a matter of fact, if something happens in our family, we would rally around, but there was never conversation about it. You just endured it.

So, yes, I could count of them. I’ve often said, Kim, that the men of my family would have thought their family crest would have been rednecks and blue collars. I used to laugh and said, “If men wore cologne, it was the scent of diesel fuel and dirt.”

[Laughter]

Yet I loved it! To this day, if I smell diesel fuel and dirt, it brings me back to a place that I go, “Yes, I want to go back to that.”

**Kim:** Aw! That’s great. What type of role models did you have growing up?

**Terry:** My grandfather was a notorious womanizer – notorious in our community. He had married my true grandmother when they were very young because he got her pregnant. She was a wild living woman. They divorced after about six years. Their fights often engaged fists and frying pans – and I’m not kidding.

**Kim:** Wow.

**Terry:** They went their separate, wild ways. My grandmother was a very wild woman and she ran around with men. My grandfather ran around with women. The men were
hard working, but they had a disdain for education – a distrust of religion. These were my role models. They loved to hunt, they loved to fish, they believe that laws are to be obeyed if it’s to your advantage – and if it’s not, they are not to be obeyed.

As a matter of fact, their hunting – when I was a kid I learned things like this – you don’t ask if it’s shooting hours, you don’t ask if it’s in season, you don’t ask how many – you just go out with the men and you take what you want. So that was what it was like – my role models were men that loved fast cars, hard work, running around and stories of how much they ran around. Many of them were addicted. There were often quarts of beer whenever the men would gather. I grew up in that area.

My mom was actually orphaned at a young age. My father – when his mother and dad separated, they were actually given to a neighbor to raise – so they had no family in which they felt nurtured or cared for. Then when they became adults, it was very difficult for them to understand nurture and care, so that was part of where I grew up. I grew up right across the street from my grandmother and her step-husband – my step-grandfather. He was an alcoholic, from his memories of World War II. They were the role models of my life when I grew up.

Kim: You mentioned something about their take on education and religion. There were some unspoken rules regarding these things. What were they?

Terry: They believed – to be honest with you – that religion made a man soft. If they got around a pastor, they would actually ask him questions to display, if you will, his own inability to handle manhood. They would want to know if he knew how to fix a car engine and what was his favorite gun and did he ever get a buck – and when he didn’t know any of that, they would all kind of snarl and act like, “Well, you go on back to the more effeminate men because we hard-working men know what life is really all about.”

That was similar with the issue of education. They thought that education made people arrogant and that education had little use because education didn’t teach you how to run a trot line, it didn’t teach you how to take care of game animals, it didn’t teach you how to plant crops properly – and it definitely didn’t teach you the difference between mouse coal and hard coal, so they thought, “What is the use of education?”

Kim: Wow. And you would live to defy those odds. We’ll talk about that later on because you did move into the area of religion and a higher education.

I want to take you back to your mother. In your book, Some Kind of Crazy, you talk about how she used fear as a means of control.

Terry: Absolutely. If I could just set it up – my mother was a very, very fearful person, but she used anger as the bodyguard for fear. My mother’s mother died when she was 18 months old, her dad died when she was eight years old, she went to live with a grandmother who died when she was 14 years old – and all of that loss was stuffed
inside. She ended up developing what some people could call it diagnosable, borderline personality disorder, so she did a lot of come close–get away, come close–get away.

So you never knew when you came close if you were getting hugged or you were getting hit. My mother would use fear to control my sister and would control me that way. A couple stories…

Every night when we would go to bed, she made us go around with her to make sure all the windows were locked and she would put chairs under all the doorknobs that access doors because she would say, “People out there want to knock you on the head.” And I remember that phrase – “knock you on the head” – and they want to rob you. Now curiously, my family were the family that were out doing things that were criminal and they had all the guns, but my mother would instill that kind of fear.

Also, she instilled a tremendous fear of God. She used to say to me, as I would leave for school in the morning, “Now behave, or God will knock that face right off of you.”

**Kim:** Whoa.

**Terry:** She believed that God was a great behavior modifier. She would rise up strong, if we did something that was wrong, she would not paddle us – often we were beat – and some of those were rather significant. She did all that as a way of controlling behavior – and why did she control our behavior – because of her fear. If she feared us, for example, getting hurt – what she would do is she would seek to protect us by being angry and mean-spirited and not allow us to do things. It was hard.

When you add to that some very traumatic events that occurred to me as a small child, fear was almost bone marrow deep in me.

**Kim:** Do you mind going to some of those traumatic events that happened?

**Terry:** Sure, I’ll tell you a couple of them when I was very small. I mentioned that my grandfather was a notorious womanizer and it’s almost beyond description. In those little hollows in that area, many families would heat their homes with coal. My grandfather had a wild cat coal mine and so he would take loads of coal to families. If they couldn’t pay – if the woman was willing to give him an afternoon of pleasure – he would give them a load of coal.

Now, with that in mind, one night my grandfather came home – I was at my grandparents old clapboard house playing on the floor and he came in the house and he said, “Terry, let’s go for a ride.” I might have been five. I was shocked by this. My grandmother looked puzzled, then she nodded with a smile, “Go ahead. Grandpa wants to take you for a ride.” So the sun was setting, we get in his car and we drive down the road and he turns on a two-track – which means just two tracks going into the woods.
We drive way back, and now darkness falls. We drive back into those woods and he pulls a revolver out of the glove box and tells me to lay on the floor in the back seat.

**Kim:** Oh my.

**Terry:** I’m absolutely paralyzed with fear. I do it – because he yells at me – and he leaves the car – and it’s dark – and he’s gone for almost an hour.

When he comes back, he’s all perspiring – I’m half out of my mind with fear – I heard all the noises and scratches on the windshield – everything – the tree branches – just frightening me.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** Then as we’re driving out he says, “Now don’t tell anybody what happened. That’s our secret.” Well, I didn’t know what happened. Later on I tell my parents because I couldn’t sleep at night –

**Kim:** Aw.

**Terry:** – and they acted like, “Oh, don’t worry about it. Don’t think about it.” It was years later that my dad told me that he had slipped down through the woods to another house where there was a woman there – her husband was off on afternoon shift – and he was engaging in an adulterous relationship with her. I was simply the ruse – I was the way to trick my grandmother – my step-grandmother actually – so that was very traumatizing.

About six months later, I was again at their house and I hear *screaming* – blood curdling screaming – in the next room. He comes out falling – my grandmother’s trying to hold him – and he falls right in front of me at my feet in the kitchen – and he had a brain aneurism and he went into a coma –

**Kim:** Oh, my goodness.

**Terry:** – and essentially died at my feet with Gramma yelling, “Hal, get up! Get up, Hal! Get up!”

My parents then came and they called my step-grandfather – who was an alcoholic – and this is important – to come get me. So he picks me up in his grumpy way, takes me to his house – nothing is said – no one processes this with me, and now the fear builds. Now, one other story – and I could give you many.

About six months later I’m at my other grandmother’s house. I’m in one bed – my great-grandmother is in the other bed. In the middle of the night my grandmother comes in and says, “Mom’s dead.”

**Kim:** What?!
Terry: Now can you imagine? Now I’ve gone through these three childhood traumas –

Kim: Yes.

Terry: – back to back – add to that, “God’s Someone to be fearful of.” Add to that, corporal punishment – I had just this inability – I mean, I was afraid of the dark, I was afraid of so many things – and it was all because deep inside there was no processing –

Kim: Right.

Terry: – of the deep issues that had gone on inside of me. No one would talk about it. No one would help me – and then they simply labeled me as a nervous child. I had heard my dad say, “Oh, Terry’s just a weenie” because he’s afraid. So, by the time I come to my teenage years I want to find anger to become the bodyguard for my fear, and that sends me on a whole different kind of trajectory in life.

Kim: I’m thinking about that person who’s listening, who has struggled with fear all their lives – and maybe, unlike you – they’re not able to articulate where those fears come from. How would you counsel that person?

Terry: I would go even broader with fear. I think when you think of things like any negative emotion – anger, fear, depression, dysthymia – whatever it might be – I have come to believe that those emotions, when they’re expressing themselves – are actually a flag being waved by your true self, begging for your attention. What most of us do is we try to kill it or we ignore it. It’s like a smoke alarm goes off inside and what we end up doing is we turn the smoke alarm off.

We turn it off through addictive behaviors of whatever stripe that might be. If someone’s battling fear – we hate the fear, we want to kill the fear, we even often want to kill the part of us that is feeling fear –

Kim: Yes.

Terry: – but what we need to do – in the Lord – is ask the Lord, “What’s the voice inside of me begging for my attention?” because what it is – it’s the past crying out because every un repaired emotional rupture of life is still somewhere deep, present inside of us and begging for our attention – yet we silence it, we run beyond it, we try to pretend like it doesn’t matter. But I will tell you this – the unresolved past is the first thing we see when we look to the future. We just don’t know what we’re looking at.

Kim: Wow. When did your thoughts – your beliefs – change about religion?

Terry: Well, let’s say it this way – my thoughts began to change and it was a long season of changing – when the oddest thing happened in our family. My mother – now remember we weren’t church attenders, my dad would even make fun of people that
went to church, and if we had a relative that went to church he would actually get in their face and say, “So, are you saved? Are you better than all of us now?”

A revival came to our small town. Now, my mother decided to go to this revival but it was the strangest revival in the world because it was half revival, half Vaudeville as far as I was concerned. It went like this – so this evangelist came to town and he brought his song leader, and all these people came to the church. The song leader would be up front, singing these great gospel choruses. Now while he’s doing that, in the back, the evangelist has dressed up to look like Jesus.

Then what he would do is while the song service was happening, he would maybe peek in from the outside window and people would see them and they’d point – or he’d go to the balcony and he look over or he’d hide behind a pillar and he would come out from the pillar and look at everyone. People would swoon and they would yell and they would reach out like trying to touch the hem of his garment. Then he would disappear. The song singer keeps singing.

Then all of a sudden the preacher – now dressed in his street clothes – he would come out and he would preach the gospel, giving the impression, “Well it wasn’t me–”

Kim: Ah!

Terry: –it had to have been Jesus. Somewhere in the midst of that, my mother actually got touched by Christ. She comes to faith – it was a combination of kind of Pentacostalism, legalism and a bunch of other things mixed in. She actually even made me go one night. I’m just this young teenager – adolescent – and I’m sitting in the left hand side of the church, and the song singer, he’s going crazy and there’s all these people I’m seeing – some of them that had just stumbled out of Dick’s Bar.

They’re all there and they’re singing the gospel songs and all of a sudden, to my left, a doorknob starts to turn and I see it. Pretty soon the door opens slowly and he sticks his head out and there’s “Jesus”.

Kim: Goodness.

Terry: And Jesus is looking straight at me and he didn’t look all that happy to see me. [Laughter] The people again, yelling and hollering and he closes the door. That’s how it all got introduced. My mother then made us start going to church. My dad even started to go with great, great resistance.

Kim: Okay.

Terry: Now, at this little church, they had a youth group, and at the youth group were young girls. I’m 13-14 years old – I want to go to youth group and it was okay. I was meeting some nice girls there – some of them were college age and they paid attention to me. All of a sudden this youth group joins with other youth groups to go into
Pittsburgh to the Syria Mosque because David Wilkerson – sponsored by Kathryn Kuhlman – is bringing Nicky Cruz and other ones of these gang leaders and they’re going to preach the gospel.

I get on the bus thinking, “Hey girls, sit in the back, hold hands, it’s going to be great.” I still remember to this day that I’m in the back, sitting with some of these teenage girls, and an older women walks all the way back through the bus aisle, comes right to me and she looks at me and says, “Terry, we’re especially glad you’ve made the trip with us.”

**Kim:** Aw!

**Terry:** Now I didn’t know what that meant.

**Kim:** Right?

**Terry:** It was kind of like, “Okay” and she left. We get to the Syria Mosque – all the people are rushing in and I get up on the second balcony – all these old wooden pews and wooden chairs – I’m sitting with a couple I knew and all of a sudden, David Wilkerson comes out to preach and he preaches a hell-fire, “You’re going to go to hell – sword is coming through the land.” It scared me so badly, I got up from my seat and I left and went outside.

Now that I’m outside in Pittsburgh – where I’d never been – I’m afraid because how am I going to get home? I’m a 13-14 year old kid – I don’t know how I’m going to get home – so I decide I’ll go in and stay in the restroom until I hear people coming, then I’ll get my way to the bus. I go into the men’s restroom and they piped Wilkerson’s sermon right into the restroom.

**Kim:** You could not get away.

**Terry:** I couldn’t get away. He’s still preaching hell-fire and all of a sudden I think, “I better go back to my seat because I’m not going to find my way out.” I get up front, go up to the second floor, I sit in my seat and he’s preaching and all of a sudden says, “If you don’t want to go to hell for all eternity, you come down front.” Well man, it hit me! I’m scared as could be and I went down front and I knelt.

Do you know, it might have been a hell-fire sermon but when I was kneeling there, crying, I suddenly felt an incredible touch of the love of God. He touched me – and it was real – and it was like He put a homing device in my heart. I wept.

Now, I left there, and I have to be honest, I lived the next six-seven years not sure whether I wanted to be a devil or a disciple, and I pretty much invested more in being a devil, but do you know that God put a homing device in my heart and eventually – after a very wild period of time – that homing device brought me back to faith.
**Kim:** In your book you write about how you had this experience at church, and someone talked to you about God’s call on your life. You went back and you told God that you were going to change – and I believe you made a promise to God.

**Terry:** I did.

**Kim:** But then something happened – an incident happened when you were hanging out with one of your friends – Danny. Tell me about that.

**Terry:** After I had this experience with the Lord, I would attend church for youth group and Sundays and then I’d run wild all week. When I was with youth group on Sundays or church, the youth group would go places and they would sing. I would go with them and there would be 15 or 20 youth up front, singing, and they’d sing their songs and then we’d sit.

We went to this little, wee church, on the Monongahela River – and I think it was called Souls Harbor Light House – right on the river. It had been a house, so it wasn’t big, but they put pews in it and after we sang we sat in the pews and this guy that was – he worked at Clairton Steel Mill – a short man, big, brawny guy with hands that were like meat cleavers – he got up and he started preaching.

All of a sudden he stops his sermon and he points straight back at me and he says, “Young man, what is your name?” Oh man, I was looking around, hoping he was pointing at someone else. But he pointed again and he said, “Young man, what is your name?” and I thought, “Okay” and I kind of squeaked out my name, “Terry” and the guy beside me yelled, “He said his name’s Terry!” [Laughter] The preacher said, “Terry, you get up here.”

I’m telling you right – I was sure he was going to heel-stomp me when I got up there because he was going to tell all my sins. I got up front, and when I got there he said, “Young man, you have an anointing on your life. The Holy Ghost told me that God wants you for His and I want you to kneel right here and we’re going to pray.”

I knelt – because I didn’t know what else to do – and he called the elders and all those men came up. They laid their heavy hands on my head and they’re praying and they’re really going for it and he’s just saying, “God has a plan for your life.” Well, I’ll tell you, I made a commitment that night, “I’m changing my ways, I’m going to live for Jesus the rest of my life!”

Well…the event was a powerful event, but one day a friend of mine – I was probably 16 or 17 maybe, about the time – he came by – Danny – and he said, “Hey, I have a treat for you” and he gave me some marijuana – some grass. So that night I took another friend and decided “Why not? Let’s go out and smoke some grass.”

The problem was, this grass had PCP on it, which is a tranquilizer – actually was called “Killer weed.” I had a terrible reaction to it. I ended up being high for two or three days. I
was a mess. I even was hitchhiking and got picked up by an old girlfriend and I couldn’t even sit in the car – I laid in the backseat while she told me off and told me how much of a jerk I was for doing this kind of thing.

I often thought, after an event like that, knowing what I did about God, I should have had a deep resolve – but the only resolve I had at that point was that I resolved to never smoke grass again, that was laced with PCP.

**Kim:** Now did you know that it was laced with PCP?

**Terry:** No, I didn’t know. It was afterwards that I talked to him and he said, “That’s when I told you it was a special treat – that’s what I meant.” I said, “Had I known that I wouldn’t have inhaled as much as I did!” But it was a very powerful moment for me because I saw how quickly life can pass right in front of you.

There was a negative side to that night, too, because I made my way to the church and I knocked on the door of the preacher. His wife came and she must have seen that I was in a haze, and I said, “I need to talk to the pastor.” He knew who I was and she left and came back and said, “He doesn’t want to see you” and she just closed and locked the door. I began to think about – just in all my craziness – that Jesus said you should forgive seventy times seventy and I figured out I guess I went past my max because they knew I was always in and out and in and out.

**Kim:** Oh.

**Terry:** It was after that I went off to college, and again, it was tough.

**Kim:** You were seeking his encouragement, his assurance, his comfort – the man of God – but he was rejecting you. That had to do something to your psyche.

**Terry:** Let me just say that I was in an absolute paranoia fog at that point. I knew enough that I wanted help and I was hoping that he would say, “You’re not going to die tonight, you’re not going to go to hell, I’ll be here for you.” And he said nothing except closed the door in my face.

My friend that was with me was so freaked out by how bad I was he just took off. It just happened that about a mile and a half away my sister lived, who is older than I am, who is a nurse – and I stumbled my way to her house and for the next maybe 36 hours, she worked hard to bring me down. But I pretty much felt this – it had been reinforced my whole life – you ready?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** If you perform well, God does good things for you. If you do not perform well, God will abandon you. It was the message I learned in life – I had learned in life that there are “A” people and “B” people. There are those that perform well – they get all
their needs met – they get applauded. Everybody else sits in the sidelines because they say it, they failed.

I grew up in an environment that said this – as you are you’re not enough, but if you measure up, you will get the goodies out of life. So what happened to me that night was my faith at that point, was based on this belief – If you act right, God blesses you. If you act poorly, God will judge you. I had acted poorly; the pastor became the evidence of God’s judgment on me.

**Kim:** Ooh!

**Terry:** The formula for Christian life when I grew up was this: If I – then He. If I – then He. If I had been good – if I had been better at sin management – if I had gone to church – if I had tithed – if I had witnessed – then God would have blessed me, He would have cared about me. But see, I wasn’t doing that, so as a result, doors were being closed, God was disappointed, He was angry at me and He didn’t want to have anything to do with me – and that was basically the message that came across from a very performance-based Christianity.

**Kim:** Right. Yes. What about the person who hears you and says, “Of course that’s how it is! If I do what I’m supposed to do, then I will be rewarded by God. If I don’t, He’ll punish me for it.”

**Terry:** First, I think there are many people that teach and preach that. I call it a “Harsh Gospel.” It’s not good news – there’s no good news in that. This is what that gospel says, “Jesus did almost everything necessary for you to be secure with God – now you make up the difference.”

**Kim:** Wow.

**Terry:** I just need to say to anybody – that’s not the Gospel of Christ. You want to know the formula for the Gospel of Christ? It’s not “If I – then He,” it’s “Because He – then I.”

**Kim:** Oh. “Because He – then I.”

**Terry:** Yes. That’s right – because He – because Christ went to the cross – because Christ lived the perfect life – because He walked this earth, we get the blessings! Even in the First letter to the Corinthians, when Paul has to chide them over misbehavior he starts by saying, “Let the Holy Spirit reveal to you everything that’s been freely given you in Christ” – “freely given you in Christ.” The Gospel of Christ is more scandalous – it’s better than we can imagine!

The Good News is this – because of Christ, you are secure as God’s child. Because of Christ, you have a new identity. Because of Christ, you have an inheritance. Because of Christ, all the promises of God are “Yes” – not because of your behavior. Paul spoke of this in Galatians, he said don’t let anybody add to the Good News that your behavior
gives you blessings. Paul went so far to say this – Do you think your behavior is why God gave you the Spirit? No! It’s because you believed. Believed what? Believed in what Christ has accomplished for you.

**Kim:** Yes! Yes! That’s powerful.

**Terry:** It’s the Good News.

**Kim:** It *is* the Good News.

**Terry:** If there’s someone listening who is caught in this performance driven, “I don’t measure up” matrix, it’s because of a world – and even a church – that doesn’t get it! Jesus did all that we need.

Galatians 4 says that because of Christ we have a new identity, we can have intimacy with God and we have an inheritance. The three great “I’s” – Identity, Intimacy and Inheritance – and they’re ours just by believing. But I was crippled, and even on that night as the door slams and the lock is turned, I believed, “Okay, I’m done” because I didn’t perform well, God is now angry with me. I lived with a number of years after that still trying to navigate that kind of Christianity.

**Kim:** Yes. Thank you for sharing that – because we can know that, intellectually, but sometimes it takes a while to really “get” that – to become part of who we are. It’s about surrender, it’s about allowing what Jesus has done to stand, even when we can’t.

**Terry:** It’s the key to life. I taught doctoral programs for years and I made all of my doctoral students read a book by the great African-American statesman, Howard Thurman. The book is called, *Jesus and the Disinherited*. He was a great writer. He wrote this line that I think is life-changing, he says, “Being aware of being a child of God is what gives you courage and strength.” Now here’s the key – it’s not *being* a child of God that gives you courage and strength, it’s being *aware*.

**Kim:** Being aware.

**Terry:** Many of us are not aware of how secure our identity is in Christ, but when you are aware of how secure you are in Christ – because of what Christ did, not what you did – then all of a sudden we have new courage – we have new life. That book was a life-changer for me. It’s small – 100 pages – but it’s a classic.

Howard Thurman was writing to disenfranchised, disinherited people and saying, “If you only knew.” What is true of you today – whether it’s a good day or a bad day – if you knew what was true of you in Christ, you would have courage, you would have strength. But many Christians are not aware – you know why we’re not aware – because we’re being taught a performance based gospel.
Kim: Yes. As you were talking about that it reminded me of a phrase that you use in the book, when you described part of your journey as “living in bondage on freedom side.”

Terry: Yes.

Kim: Where did you come up with that saying?

Terry: My daughter was looking for a venue for her wedding a few years back – maybe four or five years back. We went to a little town on the Ohio River called Newburgh in Indiana. They were up on the main street looking at different venues – and I have to confess, I got bored with the whole thing – so I went down to just stand at the river. As I was standing there was a little mist flowing and the river was melting from winter thaw and it was moving past – and all of a sudden my mind goes to several things.

I remembered living on the Monongahela River. I saw the great coal barges and I’m thinking about that. I’m imagining Lewis and Clark going down the Ohio and I’m having a little bit of a time and, Kim, all of a sudden I looked across the river – less than half a mile – and there was an unpopulated land, all gnarled up and I realized, “Okay, I’m in Ohio, that was Kentucky. If this were in the 1800’s, people on my side of the river would have been free and on that side – if you were not white, you would not be free. And I started to think about that.

Then I began to think of people that risked their lives to come across, to find freedom – or came across on the whole slave trail – trying to bring into freedom – moving to Canada. This thought crossed my mind – wouldn’t it have been sad if someone had risked their life and brought their family across and they got to freedom side, but they lived on freedom side by all the same bondage that they lived across the river.

I thinking about that and all of a sudden I went, “Why am I thinking this?” and He just spoke to me and it was about my own life and others, “Terry, you know what it’s like to be on freedom’s side, living in bondage.”

Kim: Yes.

Terry: “Many of My children are on freedom’s side, living in bondage.” It broke me at that river. I began to think of Paul’s statement in Galatians, “It is for freedom that you have been set free.” Many people think it means it is for freedom from sin – no! It’s from freedom of measuring up. Freedom from obeying the Law! Many Christians are still in bondage to – What are the rules? What are the rights? What are the rituals? – and yet He wants us to live with freedom.

I’m having this moment of, if you will, traveling back in time and all of a sudden it was about me, and it’s about many of my brothers and sisters who are Christians. They’re living on freedom’s side but we’re still in bondage – still in Prisoner of War camps, if you will.
Kim: Right. Right.

Terry: Because we don’t know how to live in freedom.

Kim: That performance-based culture you were talking about, leads us into that bondage.

After you graduated from high school, you went off to college. What was it like for you to be away from your family – away from your “clan” for the first time?

Terry: Let me back up to say, I hadn’t planned on going to college and I was a horrible, horrible high school student.

Kim: Okay.

Terry: As a matter of fact, in my senior year of high school, as humorous as this is, the principal who liked me, he said, “Terry, if you don’t get these grades up, I don’t know what you’re going to do in life.” He said, “But if you join the choir, you get an automatic “A”.” [Laughter] So I joined three choirs. I had three “A’s” and I was able to graduate from high school. I applied to a bunch of colleges because of the Vietnam war. I had friends that had already gone to Vietnam, some didn’t come home.

I applied to college – got turned down to every college except one – Geneva College. They let me in on probation. Well, I go to college – and I’ll be honest with you – they must have thought, “Who is this rube that has arrived here?” Here are these kids with long hair and they’re wearing their bell-bottoms and their tie-dyed shirts and they understood antidisestablishmentarianism and they knew who Joan Baez was. I didn’t know any of this. I felt so out of place.

I didn’t know whether to run or to hit them in the head – I was just conflicted but I wanted to give it a try. Some of them who were Christians, by the way, became very close, they cared for me, they began to bring me into their fold and soon I learned that I liked learning. As a matter of fact, my very first semester there I made the Dean’s list, which was shocking.

Kim: That is incredible!

Terry: Absolutely! I went on that way and I began to realize I had a love for education but, I wasn’t living for the Lord. I would go to church occasionally. My Christian friends put up with my bad actions, my bad behavior, but I got a great education and I was surrounded by people that cared for me. I had to be careful when I went home because my family would – if I would say something that was oriented to my education, boy they could just push me back very, very quickly of “Who do you think you are?”
But I began to love that educational environment, I just wish I’d lived a better life because I still engaged in the same kind of abhorrent behaviors that I shouldn’t have, until one night my senior year where everything changed.

Kim: What happened that night?

Terry: I’m not going to tell you exactly everything I did but let’s say this – I was out doing things I shouldn’t have done – part of it involved drugs, part of it involved immorality, part of it involved running around with some people being disrespectful and doing things I shouldn’t have.

I came home about one o’clock in the morning to my empty apartment and all of a sudden a darkness and emptiness settled over me that was hard to comprehend. It was as if I was peering into the darkness of hell. I just was empty and I didn’t know what to do – and this is going to sound so strange but I’ll tell you the story – I decided to just read my Bible real quick, I found a Bible and the only verse it said was, “even the clothes stained by sin are corrupted.”

I took off all the clothes I’d been wearing that night, I put on other clothes. I grabbed those clothes, I went out behind my apartment and I lit them on fire. I thought, “I’m not going to do what I did tonight again unless I’m wearing those clothes that are now in ashes.” Well, that didn’t do anything. I began to go for a long walk. I walked through town in Beaver Falls, Pennsylvania and there was a Sparky’s Pizza shop. Above it – there was a stairway going up the side of the building – and above it was an apartment and in that apartment lived several young men that I knew were Christians.

I didn’t know what else to do and I went up and I – it must have been two in the morning – and I beat on their door. One of them came and said, “What do you want??” and I said, “I’ve got to give Christ my life.” A couple other guys standing there went, “Oh my!” Like, “Forget it!”

Kim: Yes.

Terry: The guy standing there said, “No! I think he means it!” I went in and knelt at a chair and I cried like a baby – that chair was an altar – and I bawled and I cried and it was as if all the darkness just began to come out of all that I had been doing. That night I just decided I can’t do this anymore – and that was the turning point. I had just a few more – maybe a month or two in college – and I stepped away from friends that were leading me down the wrong path, I made commitments regarding my morality, I began to go to church – and the next thing I know I felt the Lord calling me to spend the rest of my life serving Him.

I came home and worked for almost a year as a carpenter. During that time, I applied to a graduate program – Master of Divinity at Pittsburgh. I got accepted. I started to attend seminary with the idea I’m going to spend the rest of my life serving Jesus. Now, I have to tell you – there was a lot of unresolved baggage and a lot of mess that was behind
me – but that was the moment. That was the turning point in which everything began to change.

**Kim:** Wow. So, here you are, this senior in college. You graduate – and you’re coming from a family who has their own ideas about education and religion – and you’re about to go home and tell them your plans for the future.

**Terry:** That’s right.

**Kim:** You’ve already gone against their beliefs by getting a higher education. What was going to happen next?

**Terry:** It was a very interesting time. As I said, I was working as a carpenter and I decided to go to seminary, so I had to go home to tell Mom and Dad. When I went into their living room – I can still see my father – they had a big, flowered couch and my dad was sleeping on the couch. My mother was sitting in her favorite chair. I walked in and she said, “Oh, I thought you were working today.” “No, I here – I want to talk to you.” And I pulled up a chair.

My dad just turned his back to me – kind of wanted to sleep more so he turned his face into the couch – and I said to them – knowing he was hearing, that I had decided that I was going to seminary because I wanted to become a pastor. I remember my mother saying, “What do you – you didn’t go to school for preaching religion – how are you going to do this?” I told her that seminary wasn’t like that but I could go on the degree I had.

My mother had had this experience of Christ so she got quiet and she simply said, “Well, if that’s what you want to do, we’re going to be supportive.” Now, I mean, really – I was shocked and excited! And then reality hit. My mother smiled. My dad turned. He got up from the couch and he looked at me and he said, “What a waste. Why don’t you get a real job?” and he left.

It was a mixed bag. I didn’t expect my mother’s reaction and I guess I did expect my dad’s reaction. In between those two I began the journey.

**Kim:** So it didn’t deter you that your father was not pleased?

**Terry:** No. Now at this point I had been chasing down hell for a long time and I just couldn’t go backwards. I couldn’t – it was the first time I was feeling a freedom. I was feeling forgiven. While there were still unresolved issues of the past that were bothering me, I liked this new, strange quirky crowd that I was hanging with that didn’t smoke dope and like to talk about Jesus and opened their Bibles and they liked prayer meetings. I liked it. I wasn’t embarrassed by it and I decided I’m going that way.

Also, if I can back up – I had been engaged to someone that wasn’t at all happy about this change, so we went our separate ways. Then I find out one day from a friend that a
wonderful, beautiful young woman that I had dated all through high school, who was a Christian, had broken off her engagement. I remember sitting in a rocking chair and jumping right out of that rocking chair when he told me and I said, “I’m going to marry Sherry Clark!” She wasn’t all for the idea for a while, but I persisted.

Kim: Was Sherry the one you hitched a ride with when you–

Terry: Yes. [Laughter]

Kim: –had smoked that joint laced with PCP?

Terry: Yes, that’s who it was. She was the one that called me names and said I was an idiot and now I’m coming back to her saying I’ve changed. She was very slow on the uptake, I can tell you that.

Kim: Yes.

Terry: When finally she bought into it, when I went to ask her dad permission – which I would have never done prior to this change in my life. It’s hard to believe, but he had strapped a .38 revolver on his side and he came out wearing that when I asked him – and I knew that it was a message. He was saying, “You go ahead and ask and I’ll give you permission, but don’t you mess.” That was kind of our beginning.

You have to know that half way through seminary we got married, a year after that we had a child. I’m still going to seminary, working as a carpenter, preaching when I got a chance and I had a lot of unresolved baggage. It was tough for us, but we both were committed to each other.

Kim: After you graduated seminary, how did your ministry progress?

Terry: I pastored a church that grew – a small church that grew – people loved us. We then had another child, our daughter Kara – we had Erin already, our daughter Kara and I wanted more education, so I actually went to Fuller Seminary and earned a Doctorate. After I earned the Doctorate a seminary in Nyack, New York invited me to join their faculty – which I was shocked by.

Kim: Why did that shock you?

Terry: It’s me! I’m Terry Wardle from Coal Dust, USA. Who in the world would want me to be a seminary professor? I was glad I was even pastoring this church – it was only a small church – it grew from like, 80 people to a couple hundred, and they loved me there. When the seminary asked me to come, I went for the interview. They interviewed several and they actually offered me the job – and do you know I turned it down.

Kim: Did you?
**Terry:** I did at first because I thought, “I don’t think they know what I’m about here.”

**Kim:** Ooh.

**Terry:** Six months later they asked me to come and teach a short, two-week course, so I went to do that and while I was there it felt so good. I liked the environment. They were so good to me. They invited me – they had held the position open for another year and they said, “We really believe you’re the person.” So I said yes and packed my family of Sherry and two kids, at that point, and we went up to New York. We were about 15 miles north of the George Washington Bridge, so we were in a semi-urban area, which was now really crazy, from this Coal Mine, USA kind of kid, and I was thoroughly intimidated.

Here’s another reason why – the person that held the job before me was Ravi Zacharias. [Laughter] Ravi Zacharias is internationally known for his writing and his apologetics and he’s a huge somebody – I wasn’t known past the second stoplight in our town. Ravi Zacharias was known all around the globe. They didn’t make me feel that way, but I felt thoroughly intimidated. I just did what I knew to do which was talk about Jesus, love on the students and it went great. Things really took off. I started some programs that grew.

Here’s the strangest part of it all – after two years of me doing this, I was standing at a soccer game on homecoming, on the campus of the University that had the seminary and the college. All of a sudden the Chairman of the Trustees finds me in the crowd and says, “We want you to come up to the main building. The trustees want to talk to you.” I went up thinking, “I’m fired. I don’t know what I’ve done but why would they want to talk to me?”

I’m in there – there’s all these – I mean the Chairman of the Board from JCPenney’s was there and all these big moguls are in there around this table – and they start asking me questions. Half way through this – about a half hour in – I realize they’re interviewing me to become the head of the seminary. I was shocked!

**Kim:** Wow!

**Terry:** The interview ended and I went. About an hour later here comes the Chairman again and he said, “We want to offer you the job as the head of the seminary.” I almost fell over! I couldn’t believe it. This was a large Seminary, it had a campus in Puerto Rico, beautiful office for the President and two secretaries and an expense account and more money.

What I’m about to say is very important: I was too wounded to say no.

**Kim:** What do you mean by that? Too wounded to say no – because, in my mind, I would think you’d turn it down like you did the first job.
Terry: No, I didn’t. It was too – too many kudos – too many strokes. I was still dealing with my insecurity and all of a sudden, here’s this group of very powerful people sitting around a table saying, “We choose you.” I’m going to have two secretaries and I’m going to have an expense account and I’m going to have the biggest office and I’m going to be known.

When you’ve grown up believing, “as you are you’re not enough, but if you measure up, you will then become a somebody”, all of a sudden I had become a somebody – but know this – I had carried all my wounds into that moment. I’m still dealing with things from my past that had never been healed. I was anointed by the Lord, I was gifted to do His work, I could make things happen – but I still had fear and insecurity – so I became the head of the seminary.

For two years two things happened – things went well at the seminary but I was new to this group of people and the old guard really rose up against me. “What are you doing offering this job to a 34 year old that’s only been part of us for two years? By the way, he doesn’t believe everything we believe.” And all of a sudden, nasty letters and opposition rise and within two years it went from me being a somebody to me being ridiculed and criticized around the country from these denominational leaders.

I just had to say no and I had been offered a job to go to California and I decided I’m going to go become the head of this new graduate program at Simpson University. While I’m there I’ll start a church – because I know how to do church.

Kim: Yes.

Terry: I want you to hear the way I say this – I packed my unresolved baggage from childhood into college. I packed that baggage into seminary. Now I took all that baggage 3,000 miles across the country. Things at the university went well, for the most part. Criticism followed but I planted a church with seven people on my back porch with another young man that was very gifted and 18 months later we had 800-900 people in this church.

Kim: By the time you were 40 years old, you had accomplished some significant things.

Terry: I had. I think in some people’s minds I was the epitome of success. But first, if you’re performance dominated, you’re never a success. [Laughter] You’re only as good as your last performance and now you have another performance. I think people thought I was at the pinnacle – or at least the penultimate – of what would be my career and, all of a sudden, I went into a very deep place. I’d be happy to tell you about that if you’re interested.

Kim: Yes! I’m absolutely interested. That was my next question. What happened – after all of this achievement – that caused your life to spiral downward?
Terry: Let’s remember a couple things – first, I have these unresolved issues from my childhood and also I was being criticized. I had been criticized by this denomination and as I start this new church, can you imagine, in town what everybody else thinks. The colleagues in town and the other members of this denomination were not particularly happy with all of this. I had been invited to go back to that seminary in New York and teach a one week class.

I had been told by the dean that while I was there they wanted to talk about me coming back – as a professor –

Kim: Okay.

Terry: – and I was thrilled, because that had been such a special time with me. I went back and I taught the class. On the night before my last class I met with some of the old administrative friends I had – and the new dean – and I thought we were going to seal the deal on me coming back and he said, “Terry, I’ve got bad news for you. The trustees think you’re too controversial now and they’re not going to allow me to give you a contract.” It just took the breath right out of me.

I got up the next day, I taught that class and when I turned out the light in that classroom as everyone left, I went into extreme depression and agoraphobia right there. That was the prelude to me going home. Limped my way home and ended up in bed. I couldn’t even get out of bed. I even kept the shades down in bed and I was in bed day after day after day. I had a local doctor try to treat me and it wasn’t touching a thing.

Finally I remembered that a friend of mine had gone through a tough time and went to a psychiatric hospital in Colorado Springs – which would have been about 1300 miles away. I just made up my mind, I’m going. Nobody supported it – my doctor didn’t support it, my family didn’t support it – but I was so – I was in panic attack after panic attack after panic attack – I was afraid to leave my room!

I ended up admitting myself to a lockdown psychiatric facility, where once you go through you don’t get out until they say you get out. That in itself just so, so frightening – but I had nowhere else to go. I believed my ministry was over. I was just going to beg for a sliver of sanity – I’ll go back to being a carpenter, I’ll sweep floors, I’ll do anything – but I’ve got to get over this depression and this agoraphobia.

I went into the psychiatric hospital – here’s an interesting story – the first night I’m in there – you have to realize I’m barely drawing a sane thought. I’m sitting on the edge of my bed and all of a sudden I remembered something I heard Corrie ten Boom say, “The object of your pain can become the source of your blessing, if you give it to God.”

Kim: Oh.

Terry: I’m sitting in a psychiatric hospital, not sure God exists. I know I wasn’t holding on to Him anymore but if He was holding on to me, I prayed a simple prayer: If You’re
there, I give you permission to use even this." For 30 days I was there getting treatment. Then I was in a long, long journey out of agoraphobia and depression. All along the way, the Lord was leaning on me and what He was doing was, He was bending me toward wholeness.

**Kim:** What were some of the most significant things you learned while you were in the hospital? About yourself and about God?

**Terry:** One of the good things they emphasize was how you can break your life through performance. Their ability to articulate my performance workaholism was very helpful. That was one of the most important things they taught. They taught that many people are living their life according to certain lies. Like, “I have to measure up to be loved.” “I have to measure up to have my needs met.” “I'm defective.” They really worked hard on that – that was very helpful.

I think the other thing that was very helpful was what happened when nothing else was happening. There were about 15 in this unit and when we were all done at the end of the day, there were a couple couches and we would go sit on these couches. All these people were in there for serious issues. We just sat there and loved on each other and listened to each other’s story and listened to each other’s cry – and I learned – matter fact I want to go further and say this – that was my first experience of true Christian community – in the psychiatric hospital.

All other Christian community I’d been part of was people trying to measure up and connect at their projected self. Nobody can fake it there, I mean, you got there because you’re a mess. There were people with sex addictions and people with deep depressions and agoraphobia and other kinds of issues, and there we would sit on the couch. We would sit close and we would love one another and I learned how important community is.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** The third thing I learned, I learned there, and I learned it by what they didn’t teach. Wounds are created through experiences. Concepts will not rewire the brain. Many people think if you just get rid of stinkin' thinkin’ – you've probably heard that phrase –

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** – just put positive thoughts – it doesn’t work that way. When you’ve been through a deep, negative experience, that experience hardwires into your life. So, let’s just do it this way, let’s say that someone was abandoned when they were five years old by their father – that’s a hard-wired experience. That hard-wired experience wounds you – it causes you to believe all kinds of things about yourself – that you don’t measure up, maybe you weren’t loveable, maybe it was your fault – and that creates a lot of negative emotions inside. That’s hard-wired in.
Now, all of a sudden, someone tells you, “Just memorize the Scripture that says I will never leave you or forsake you.” You can memorize that all you want – when the night is dark and the wind is howling, that little part of you that experienced that goes right back to, “Why didn’t he love me?” Why didn’t he stay?” “Wasn’t I good enough?” “Was it my fault?”

Do you see these two conflicting teachings? One is, “Learn these concepts and you’ll be better.” But the other one is the negative experiences of your past can really hurt you. That’s what happened to me and it happens to many, many people. If I have a place of frustration with the church, it’s at this level because they get frustrated with those of us who’ve been wounded and say, “Why doesn’t the Scripture just change everything for you?” – Because you gave me the Scripture as a concept.

Do you know today, Kim, leading neurobiologists say this, “It takes an emotion-laden experience to rewire the brain.” So if a person was wounded as a child, in relationship – in an emotion-laden experience, they need a new emotion-laden experience – with Christ – to be able to see that happen, to really change what they believe.

**Kim:** Now Terry, I have to ask you this, because I just want some clarification. When you talk about healing and how memorizing Scripture doesn’t always fix the problem, you’re not downplaying the power of Scripture, are you?

**Terry:** Oh no. I believe in the power of Scripture, but let me give you an example of this. I dealt with anxiety for years and maybe years later I’m with a group of pastors and they ask me how I’m doing and I say, “I’m having a tough day, I’m anxious today.” Invariably someone would say this, “Well don’t you know the Scripture, perfect love cast out fear?” I would get angry – of course I know the Scripture – but the Scripture is pointing to an experience, it doesn’t say the Scripture casts out fear, it says the experience of perfect love casts out fear.

Scripture is not simply to be a concept. We’ve got to position people so they’re actually able to experience the power of Scripture. Take the Scripture where Christ says, “I have not come to condemn” – remember that?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** “I haven’t come to condemn the world.” We need people to sit with God and – naming their name – Terry, I haven’t come to condemn you, I’ve come to save you. I think we are the object of Scripture and instead we make Scripture our object – something we control. I think Scripture is supposed to be speaking and controlling us.

Even this example – someone will talk to me about, they have a wandering child and I say well then, become the prodigal father. Don’t just give them the story of the prodigal son, become the prodigal father. When I teach people Scripture – of course, I preach Scripture – I teach Scripture all the time – but let me give you this example.
In Ephesians, there’s 52 statements in the first three chapters of Ephesians of what’s true of you in Christ. One of them says you are chosen. I tell people this – I want you to get quiet now, take a couple of deep breaths, ask the Holy Spirit to take over your imagination, can you do that? They’ll say yes. Now ask God to give to give you a picture of Him choosing you. One woman said, “I’m in the ballroom, and I’m sitting over in the corner and Jesus walks right across the room and He reaches out His hand and He says, “I choose you.”

Another young man told me that he was on a playground where they were picking sides, and Jesus looked straight to Him and said, “I want you.” You see? That’s a use of scripture that’s more powerful. You know the Scripture says in Ephesians – You are God’s work of art – His poem. People need to hear Christ say that. That’s where freedom begins to come.

I’m in Scripture all the time, but I approach Scripture more episodically than I do conceptually.

Kim: Yes. That way Scripture – it comes alive. It is alive, but –

Terry: Yes!

Kim: – I think, to your point, that many times we are reading Scripture as if it’s dead – as if it is just words.

Terry: We want Scripture to be alive! It’s a living Word and the Holy Spirit wants to speak to us in that. Do you know that when you’re a child, you learn through your imagination? It’s only later that you’re learning through literal – using letters. When you say to your little child, “Go get the ball,” they don’t see ‘b-a-l-l’ in their head, they see the image of a ball and they go. We need to recapture the power of imagination as part of the healing component of our faith in Christ.

The Bible says things that are amazing! Did you know that Scripture says that God wants to carry you on His shoulders like a lamb? Why can’t we visualize that? Why can’t we imagine us when we’re hurting and broken, that He comes over to us and He picks us up and He carries us and says, “You belong to Me and I love you.” What about the Scripture – do you know that it says in Psalm 23 that He sets a table before you? Let’s picture the table!

Then let’s imagine Jesus sitting us at the table – and then there is a cup and there is a pitcher – and He takes and says, “Are you thirsty?” and you say, “Yes.” And you imagine you’re sitting there and He starts to pour into this cup, His living wine, but He doesn’t stop pouring – and it goes over the edge and down on the tablecloth and you say, “Wait! It’s spilling!” and He laughs and He laughs as He pours and pours. Then He says this to you, “This goodness will follow you now all the days of your life, for your cup will overflow.”
There’s a difference between seeing that and embracing it as a concept. We need to help people see the wonder of Scripture.

Little boys and little girls who have grown up into men with anxiety and fear need to see Jesus go back into their past and hold them and say, “I choose you. You are My work of art!” That’s where healing comes. That’s the kind of thing that has enabled me to release the people that have hurt me.

Kim: Terry, when you gave the example of a five year old being abandoned by a father, and the pain that takes place – the emotional hurt – you were talking about me. It’s still a struggle for me today, as an adult. I’ve committed Scripture to memory. I’ve done all that I know to do, but still those questions linger in my mind. Was there something I could have done?

Terry: Yes.

Kim: Was I not good enough? Did I not measure up? So, I want to ask you to take me through some healing. In your book you talk about mental time traveler. What does that mean to you and how has that helped you to heal?

Terry: I’m going to take a running start at this. If you remember, I said that to be abandoned is one example of a wound – there are many.

Kim: Yes.

Terry: Sexual abuse – many. Wounds create false beliefs. What that means is, when a five-year-old or a seven-year-old or a thirteen-year-old has been deeply wounded and nobody processes it with them, they try to figure out what it means. Like me, in the car in the dark or my grandfather dying in front of me – you try to figure it out – so wounds create false beliefs. Little kids don’t get it right.

What happens is somebody believes well there was something wrong with me, or everybody’s out to get me, or nobody’s going to ever come find me. Do you know that that belief creates feelings? Wounds create false beliefs – false beliefs create feelings. Those feelings can be anger, depression, sadness, insecurity, fear – and you know what we end up doing? We try to kill those – we compensate – we develop behaviors. “I’ll just perform.” “I’ll just please everybody.” Or “I’ll just eat a lot of cake.” – whatever it might be.

Then in the church, you know what people do that’s sad? They focus on the behavior – so they want to talk about people that have a sexual addiction or people that are performers or people that manipulate and control – not knowing that that’s just a symptom of something much deeper.

Kim: Yes.
**Terry:** The work that I’ve been doing over the years now is how do we let Jesus touch us in what’s deeper? Let me say a couple other things that kind of lead to this healing moment. Neurobiology today is hand-down on this issue. When you’ve been wounded in your past – especially as a child – and that was never processed, you still have a child inside of you, sitting in that wound.

If there’s a five-year-old girl whose dad left her, that person’s become a great, beautiful professional, but the five-year-old girl is still inside, wondering. Remembering when he left, wondering why he wasn’t there, do you see? So we leave in this suspension, a part of ourselves – all emotional ruptures demand repair. When we fail to repair, we leave a part of ourselves suspended in the past.

When my mom had this incessant response to sickness – where whenever I got sick she gave me an enema. When I was four and five and eight and nine years old – nobody processed that pain with me. So, there’s still a four and five-year-old laying on that cold floor inside of me. Now, I grew up to be a man and I began to wonder, “Why am I afraid? Why am I anxious?” Remember what I said earlier – it’s a part of me waving a flag saying, “Please pay attention.”

It’s that five-year-old waving a flag, it’s that seven-year-old, that ten-year-old. People say, “Why can’t you just stop believing that it was your fault?” Because it’s been emotionally wired-in that it was your fault.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** You can’t – you can do all the positive thinking you want and all the memorization – but what you need is a new positive experience – you need to see Jesus.

Walk back into the memory of that moment in your time where Dad left and you were alone – and He’ll pick out a very specific memory – and there you’ll be. You’ve got to allow yourself to feel those feelings again. To remember what you believe – not as a 25-year-old or a 35-year-old as a 45-year-old but what did you believe when you were five? Then what you want to do in the midst of that is to invite Jesus into that picture.

I had a moment when I was a young man, I was probably a teenager, where my mother – in front of relatives – said that I had nothing but horse crap for brains – but she didn’t use that phrase. It was very humiliating for me. I went on and earned a Bachelors, a Masters, a Doctorate and do you know what? I still had a voice inside.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Terry:** You know you have just horse crap for brains. Do you know when I went on my inner healing journey, Jesus took me on a mental time travel. I could see myself in my imagination, back in that living room, remembering my mother saying that, remembering how humiliated, how angry I was – and Kim, all of a sudden I said, “Jesus come.” And I
saw Him enter that picture. And He pulled me to His chest and I began to weep and you know what He said? “It’s not true, Terry. It’s not true, Terry. You have My mind and I’m proud of you.”

That new, emotion-laden experience was so powerful that now I can think back on the other experience, but it doesn’t hook me. You’ve got to be in a safe place with a safe person and let Jesus take you back to that moment and see that little girl and touch her feelings. Let yourself cry on her behalf – hurt on her behalf – and then you want to turn with Jesus to that little girl who’s five years old and say what she needs to hear. “You’re going to turn out fine. It’s going to be okay, and you are loved.” And all of a sudden, you’re going to be able to remember Dad and there’s still loss there, but you have a new episodic memory to carry through. Does that make sense to you?

**Kim:** That makes sense, it really does. Thank you for sharing and thank you for walking me through that process and taking anyone who is listening through the process as well so that they can see an example of how Jesus can heal those emotions – those stubborn emotions that just won’t go away.

How has your faith in God helped you to forgive your family?

**Terry:** I’m going to just reword it and say my experience of Christ has enabled me to forgive my family where forgiveness was needed. I think it would be difficult for people to forgive if they didn’t go through healing because we forgive with words, but we still have these unresolved places in our past.

As Christ has met me on the steps of our house when my mother beat me down the steps with a broom handle, as He’s met me when I heard my dad say, “What a waste, get a real job.” As the Lord met me in those unresolved emotions of the past, and I’ve been able to grieve my loss, it’s easier then to turn and to offer forgiveness because you see your folks from a different perspective now – you’re not in the mud up to your neck with your own wounding – but the Lord’s able to lift you out and now you’re able to see from a broader perspective, and you can see some of their wounding.

I think there’s a principle that I want to share with you that I think is critical to healing. I think many people forgive too quickly because they’ve not touched, grieved the loss and been healed. The turning point of my own healing journey came a wintry night in the mountains of California, frustrated that Scripture wasn’t working but I decided to go to the Bible one more time.

I read the story of Jesus in Gethsemane. All of a sudden I see it – He went to a safe place. He was with people He felt safe with, that they could support Him. He *grieved* His loss before God – He cried out His loss – and then God sent help. Here’s what I learned: When Jesus was hurting, God gave Him an experience of His presence.

So what has helped me forgive is the experience of His presence. Many of us are out there saying, “I forgive” yet there’s a big wound inside. We’ve got to learn how to go
before the Lord. That’s one of the reason I do what I do today – to try to provide a safe place for people that are still limping from the wounds of the past, so that they can meet Jesus and all of a sudden hear His word of life. Then they’re going to rise up and it’s easier to say, “I forgive.”

Kim: I don’t usually do this while I’m interviewing someone but as I was talking to Terry Wardle, I found myself taking notes. It’s because what he was saying was so wise. There were so many things I wrote down, but here are a couple of things that really stood out to me. Follow me on this.

First, Terry said that our wounds create false beliefs. When we’re hurt, we tend to believe things that aren’t true. Then he said, false beliefs create feelings and those feelings mark us and help shape our identities and who we become. So it’s important for us to recognize those feelings instead of hiding them or ignoring them, because those emotions we feel are like a flag being waved, begging for our attention.

What’s inside of you that’s begging for attention? Are there any emotions you’re trying to hide? We can only move towards healing when we invite Jesus to meet us in those places of unresolved pain.

Another take-away that’s very important to me personally, is Terry’s encouragement to not lived performance-driven lives. Now, as a former elite athlete, I know what it’s like to live a life that is driven by performance. My identity was based on the scores the judges gave me, and if I performed well, everything was great, but when I didn’t I felt like I had very little value and worth at all. When I came to faith in Christ, I automatically thought that God’s love for me was based on my performance – but it wasn’t true.

Instead of believing that God’s love and acceptance is based on what we can do, we need to hold on to the fact that all that God gives us is freely given us in Christ. As Terry says, it’s about changing our mindset from “If I – then He” to “Because He – then I.” Terry quoted Galatians 5:1, so let me read that again. It says, “It is for freedom that Christ has set us free; stand firm then and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery.” I’m choosing to walk in freedom. How about you?

If you want to find out more about Terry Wardle or his book called, Some Kind of Crazy, check out our show notes on the Untfavorable Odds page at FamilyLife.com/podcasts.

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On the next episode of Unfavorable Odds,
Carlos: And I kept telling her, “You can’t love me ‘cause look at all my wounds.” And she told me, “I don’t see your wounds, I only see your scars – and when I see your scars I see who healed you, and that is Jesus.”

That’s Carlos and Rosemary Evans, next time.

I’m Kim Anthony. Thanks for listening to this episode of Unfavorable Odds. Unfavorable Odds is produced by FamilyLife® and is a part of the FamilyLife Podcast Network.