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Week 39: CS&S Last Week

Tammy Trent

Toni Collier #2

Studio discussion:

TAMMY: Hello, everybody. Welcome to *Life Today*. I'm Tammy Trent, and I'm so glad you're here with us. You know those moments when you'd rather do anything but face what's really going on inside? It feels easier to push it down, hide it or distract yourself with something -- anything that would make the ache fade for even a little while. But when the quiet comes, the hurt is still there. And maybe it's starting to cost you more than you realized.

Let me tell you, God never intended for you to carry your pain alone, or to bury it under the very things that keep you from healing. He offers us something better -- his presence, his freedom, and the gift of people who will walk with us, love us, and help us face the truth so we can finally find wholeness in our lives.

That's the kind of hope we're talking about today. My guest, Toni Collier, is the author of *Don't Try This Alone*. She shares her journey of healing, including the moment she realized she was numbing her pain instead of dealing with it, and how the Holy Spirit allowed trusted friends to walk into her life and begin to help her step into a new way of living.

This is the conversation we're about to have, and it's honest. It's going to be talking about accountability and the kind of community that will help us trade coping for true freedom. So welcome my friend, Toni Collier.

TONI: Hi!

TAMMY: I'm so glad you're here.

TONI: I'm so excited to be here.

TAMMY: It's so good. You shine so bright! You've got so much joy in your life for being through so much hardship in your life. And so let's start at the top. Because look, if you missed the last show that I did with Toni, you can go online anytime you want at LifeToday.org and catch that show and many others. So make sure to do that.

But Toni, let's recap just a little bit before we jump into the second show.

TONI: So for the past couple of years, I've been walking through healing from a really public divorce. In September of 2023, I got a call from my now ex-husband that he was being extorted. There was just years of infidelity in our marriage that I hid for a long time for him. And I just got to the point where I had people around me, and I was just ready to say, I'm not hiding this anymore. I am going to put it out there. I'm going to have some trusted community and some accountability around me.

And it's been tough. I mean, divorce is hard. It's a ripping. It's an unwanted divorce. You don't get married to get divorced. And yet our marriage was no longer God-honoring because of his actions and lack of repentance. And so here I am now, telling people that the way that I got through these last two years is with people.

TAMMY: Incredible, yes. Yes. Incredible. And here's the thing. You went through one marriage that ended in divorce. It was abusive and ended in divorce. A lot of times -- here's my question. A lot of us don't fix things in brokenness. We do not release -- God can't redeem things if we don't release it to him. So I wonder if in your first marriage there were patterns, there were things that you did, maybe even from childhood that carried into that marriage, then it broke, and then you quickly got into a second marriage. Do you think that you carried brokenness, patterns past into that marriage as well? Did you feel whole, or did you feel like I am in a bad place? I want to isolate. I want to do it alone because I don't want even somebody to see where I am in life. And I want to pretend or come across like I'm okay.

TONI: Oh, yeah. Absolutely. I mean, I think one of the things that I've learned over time was that I didn't know Jesus until I was 21. And so I didn't have a God in my life to ask, like, is this the right person for me? And am I making the right decisions? And that's from my first marriage. Like quickly got married, I was 19, got engaged, thought I was grown. My parents are still like, we told you. Okay? And so that's my first marriage.

Well, in my second marriage, I didn't have holiness in my first, and then I didn't have healing and wholeness in my second. It's interesting because we want to sometimes isolate those things. We'll just be holy and know Jesus and know the Bible, and the healing stuff can happen later. But we actually need complete integration. We make really good decisions when we are pursuing holiness, healing, and wholeness in our lives.

And I didn't have that. I grew up with a father who was an alcoholic, very verbally abusive. The Lord has since redeemed our story in such a beautiful way. That'll be another show, fatherhood wounds, you know. I mean, God has redeemed that. But I was, you know, called names when I was young and yelled at and, you know, whipped too harshly and all these different things. So I assumed, well, that's how men love you. They boss you around, they yell, they scream, they keep you from doing things. And I brought that into these marriages. And truthfully, honestly made some wrong decisions by picking who I picked. I joke with my friends now as a single person, I'm like, my picker's broken. I told you this, my friend Belinda said this to me. She goes, "You know what? I do think your picker *was* broken. And I think now that you are wholeheartedly pursuing the Lord, you are in counseling, you are understanding who you are and how those generational seeds of trauma manifested, and how you can take and reclaim victory over them, like that's all coming to you." And she was like, "Friend, when you do start dating again, I think it'll be different." And I was like, I don't think I'll ever date again, but thank you for your hope. Okay?

TAMMY: Your pickers back on.

TONI: My pickers back on.

TAMMY: You think it's back on?

TONI: Yeah, because it's not mine. It is now being fueled by God's power and his presence.

TAMMY: I love that so much. I'm going to use that. People ask me all the time, you know, I'm widowed. I've been widowed for 24 years now, and God's brought great healing. But they always ask me, Are you dating? Have you fallen in love again? As if that's the resolve of the end of my story. Like I have a lot of love. God has healed me.

But Toni, the same thing we're talking about, I also knew in my brokenness through the death of my husband that I had to find healing and wholeness. Or I would bring brokenness into my next relationship.

TONI: Which would perpetuate all cycles.

TAMMY: Yes, yes! And so I didn't want also this new relationship to heal me. I wanted God to heal me. I needed him to heal me because this is going to disappoint at times. Unmet expectations. But Jesus never did. So I knew that I needed to establish first, a strong relationship, a mature relationship with Jesus and Holy Spirit in my life that would begin to walk me through. And when I'm whole enough, my picker will be on.

TONI: That's right. It's going to be blink.

TAMMY: I'll be ready. But I'm open. I'm open to the things of God. I'll always be open to the things of God. But I think, you know, love will find us. I don't have to force love in my life, it'll find us if that's what God has for us. But, when we can't cope properly, when we don't know how to run to Father God properly, when we don't know even what healing looks like, we begin to find things in our lives that will help us cope with the pain, with the brokenness, with the unmet expectations, with divorce, with the betrayal, mistrust -- all the things.

What is the danger when we run to those things rather than running to God? And did you ever find yourself in that place?

TONI: Oh, my goodness. Absolutely. Here's what I want to say first, if you're watching. This is not a place for us to convict you. It's a place for us to invite you into a holy relationship with the Lord that can actually change you so that you can be closer to him. Therefore, know exactly where he wants you to go, who he wants you to be with, and how he wants you to live. And the truth is, I only speak about this from a place of authority because I've done it wrong. Okay, so no conviction, no condemnation here. Convicting is for the Lord, and he'll do that.

But during this divorce, the first year, what's interesting is I felt pretty good. I was like, okay, I mean, I was crying, it was bad, I was grieving, but as far as, like the healing journey and not numbing, I was like, okay, like, I can do this. I've got my counselor, I'm feeling good. And then somewhere along the way, I think the dust settled, and, it wasn't wild, but there was a pattern that was developing. It was like a glass of wine a night, and like, that's just, you know, simple, Nothing -- I'm not partying in the club, but I really was spending a lot of time with Jesus during that season really intimately hearing from him. And I just felt the Holy Spirit say, hey, watch it with the wine. I'm like for what?

TAMMY: So your wine turned from one cup to two cups to a whole bottle to how did I get two bottles on the table? It's like all the things, and Holy Spirit said, Hang on!

TONI: And then the Holy Spirit said –

TAMMY: Was it Holy Spirit or was it –

TONI: So the Holy Spirit is convicting me and I'm like, are you sure? I'm not like going crazy here. Like, are we sure? And, my friend Deborah Falletta texted me just to check in. She actually, ordered some side dressers for my new house with my kids. We couldn't afford new furniture, all the things, and so I had my friends, my community rallied around me and literally furnish our home, which is so sweet. But she was checking on me to make sure I got those

dressers. And she said, “Hey, before you go, I hope this doesn't sound weird. I know we're not super close.” And I was like, what are you what? What? She said, “I just feel the Lord telling me to warn you about alcohol in this season.” And I mean, just sucker punched me, right? Just in the soul. And I sent her a voice note, and I was like, “Hey, thank you. I've actually been wrestling with this, and it's not wild and out of control, but I just don't think the Lord wants me to numb.”

TAMMY: Yeah! That's it right there.

TONI: He actually wanted to reveal to me that the reason why I was numbing is because I didn't trust him. Alcohol had become my idol. I wasn't wild and an addict but I had traded God's power for numbing. And that's still not what the Lord wants for us. It doesn't have to be I'm partying wild drunk. I don't remember the night. But if you were in a healing season, especially a painful season, and you were using anything to numb, God's jealous.

TAMMY: And I love how Holy Spirit gently nudged you. And how a friend, your community like -- and that's why even the book, *Don't Try This Alone*, you talk so much about community and why that's a powerful gift. And it just -- it showed itself on full display when Deborah -- we love her.

TONI: We love Deborah Filleta.

TAMMY: Oh, we love Deborah Filleta here. We love her here.

TONI: And it's amazing. And you know what's even more cool? She didn't just send that one text, she followed up. And in the moments where I was like, okay, I feel like I could just have like one drink, right? Like it's New Year's Eve, or it's Valentine's. She's like, “Pray about it.” That's community! She didn't leave the room even when I slipped up, even when I said, okay, I'm not going to drink at all, and I have one drink on Valentine's. And I was like, Gosh, I feel bad about this. And I texted her. She said, Well, tell me what you thought. What was happening in the moment, etc., etc.

We're talking about these deep and intentional questions to get to the root. Well, I was with my friends and I wanted to -- Oh, you wanted to belong. Since when did you have to do something to belong instead of just being? Like, those are the truths I needed to hear that I didn't have in me at the time because I was in so much pain. But an outside person who loves the Lord came and stepped in, not just once, but she didn't leave the room. And that's truthfully, if we're really, really honest, that's what we all want. That's what we want.

TAMMY: Not always answers but sometimes just someone that'll listen to you and never leave the room. How did you transition out of that for people that might be even struggling with things that are, you know --

TONI: So for six months, I totally stopped drinking. And then I was like, okay, I feel good. Like I feel like I can drink with moderation. It won't be, I won't be numbing. And, a year passed by and my body kept the score. And on the anniversary month of my life falling apart, I started feeling like I was numbing again, and I was wrestling. And I was like, not again! And I texted Deborah and I'm like, I feel like the Holy Spirit is convicting me again. Like, what is happening?

And then I woke up one day and I remembered the words. I used to be on the communications team at Northpointe Ministries under Andy Stanley's leadership. I remember one time he said in a sermon, he said, "Sometimes the question isn't what's right or wrong. It's about what's wise." And I remember asking the Lord like, what's wise here? I want to be wise. And it's to stop completely.

TAMMY: I am so proud of you.

TONI: To not play around with it. To not dabble in it, in and out, not to take any risk, but to say, if my arm sins, my hand sins, shawhp. Got to go!

TAMMY: I'm just so proud of you in that sense that you saw it for you for what it was, and felt like at the end of the day, I'm better without this coping mechanism that is robbing joy. It's robbing freedom. It's robbing a lot of things from me. So you recognized it for that and just said, This is just something I need to eliminate from my life. I'm proud of you for doing that.

We all have something. Whether it's eating too much, whether it's going to the gym, shopping, like all the things. So we all have something. I'm proud of you for getting there.

But I also wonder, if you have ever gotten angry with God for the way that your story has gone.

TONI: Okay. Yes. And I'm going to be honest with you, I denied it for a long time. My counselor even asked me in the first couple of weeks, like, How do you feel about God? How are you? And I'm like, I'm not mad, okay? Like I'm not mad at him. I'm not mad. I'm just a little disappointed because I've already been through so much so I'm wondering why this is still happening in my story.

I remember my counselor saying, it's okay for you to be mad. I was like, Oh, I'm not, I'm not. And I think what was happening is that God saved me. I mean, I got saved at 21. I lived a crazy, wild life, party girl, college girl. So I felt like it was a slap in God's face to be mad at him. Like he redeemed me and saved me. I don't have a right to be mad. And that's what I felt. I don't think that God is upset with me or you if you've ever been upset with God, or Mary or Martha for the death of their brother Lazarus. I don't think that he has ever had an issue with it. As a matter of fact, when Mary was honest with him about her brother dying, he sat there and wept with her. So how much more can I say to the Lord, I'm a little mad at the way that my story is panning out. I wanted things that I don't get to have anymore. And I don't feel -- I don't feel like God left me, was upset with me. Instead, I feel like he said, That's okay. I'm mad, too. I'm mad that this is your story. I'm mad that this has happened to you.

And the one thing that I just felt the Lord has said to me consistently for the last two years is, Toni, I know that this was not the rescue you wanted, but it was the one you needed. I had to take you kicking and screaming to get to freedom.

TAMMY: Yeah. I mean, I think that there are so many people that feel unworthy of love. That feel like, you know, if they've walked through divorce, especially later in life, like I deserve the betrayal. I deserve this hurt. Either they sit in that place or – and it's also what did I do wrong? So then the shame comes on them, the guilt comes on them; I'm unworthy of all these things, then I must be unworthy of God's love. Like we can go through those seasons. And then sometimes, if we begin to step into the belief of the lie, then it begins to affect everything in our lives.

And I especially watch women that are even older that go through the stuff that now they just feel like I'm lost. I'm completely lost. I don't even know how to be found. How could we speak into anybody's life today that's faced deep betrayal, that is being gaslit right now, that is being told that they're crazy, they're too sensitive, they're too insecure, and they're unworthy. What could we say to them right now? Or what prayer can we pray over them together, Toni, that would just cover them in realizing that they're not alone. You don't have to try this alone. You need community. You also need Jesus covering it as your Father.

TONI: You know, I think, to go back to that scripture, and I just want to encourage anyone that's in a season where you have all those questions and all those doubts and all those concerns, to truly go and read the story of Lazarus. It has saved me in this season because it really -- I mean, the miracle there is that Jesus raised a whole person from the dead. Like, sure, okay, four days he was dead. Amazing! But I think the real miracle there is that all the things that we feel, the betrayal, the mistrust, the what am I going to do with all these shattered pieces? How can I still create beauty in the world? That Jesus heals that, too.

And honestly, I think his presence is more than enough, I really do. For Jesus to say, I'm going to fix it. I'll bring goodness, I'll raise your brother from the dead. But first, let me sit with you in grief that this even happened. For me, and hopefully for you watching, that tells you that you already aren't alone; that there is a God who is for you and not against you, and who is with you in the valleys. He's bottling up every tear. That is not a mean dictator God. That is a God who cares and knows. And he's with you today.

TAMMY: Praise God! And if you need someone to come alongside you today in that truth, there's a number on your screen right there. Please, please give us a call right now. We would love to pray with you. We would love to cover you in prayer. I don't know what you're facing right now, but God knows and he knows all the details. I believe he will connect you with the right person right now to pray with you.

And listen, I really want to get you this book, *Don't Try This Alone*. I think it's a must read for so many of us. And if you're struggling with that today, the things that we've talked about, I believe this book will be a totally deep encouragement in your life. I want to give you this book. I want to let you know how I can get it to you.

But first, I want you to take a look at this. It will bring you joy like it has me in my life. And then we'll come out on the other side and I'll wrap it up with Toni. But take a minute. Watch this.

Transition roll-in: [Shoes for One]

ANNOUNCER: *When friends of Life Outreach International respond to help the overlooked in various parts of the world, wonderful things happen. Take shoes, for instance.*

TODD: In this shipment that we received today are 25,000 pairs of shoes that are going to help us reach so many kids here in this region. Not only are the kids getting new shoes, not only are they getting something that will protect their feet and protect them from disease, but this gives us an opportunity to go into their communities and preach the gospel of Jesus Christ to those who have never heard before.

ANNOUNCER: *From Southeast Asia to remote parts of Africa, and to countries in between, children have been blessed because of the generosity of people who have a big heart and the desire to help others.*

JOHN: Today is such a great day. They have been walking with me up and down the street here, just singing and dancing and celebrating. We're just so thrilled to get to be a part of this Christmas Shoes and Smiles opportunity to bless children. So I say thank you to you for giving to Christmas Shoes and Smiles.

ANNOUNCER: *As we celebrate with literally thousands of children whose lives are impacted by receiving the gift of shoes, it is easy to lose sight of what a simple gift of a pair of shoes can mean for just one child.*

TODD: This little girl had no shoes. And because she had no shoes, and she had to make her way through this refugee camp in this village area, she had injuries to her feet, she had infection on her feet, she was having a very difficult time until we were able to bring these shoes to help her. Now she's had these shoes for about seven months and her feet are so much better.

So I just wanted to say a big thank you to *Life Outreach International* Partners for making it possible for us to give shoes to little children like this that desperately need shoes all over the world. So thank you and God bless you.

Studio appeal:

TAMMY: Did you catch that? One shipment, 25,000 pairs of shoes! That number alone is incredible. And like Todd said, it's so much more than shoes. Yes, it's the gift of something new for these precious children, but it's also an open door for our missionary partners on the ground to share the gospel, the love of Jesus with entire families who need to know he is their sole provider. He is their answer to prayer. Their comforter in times of trouble. He is their hope and he is their Savior.

I love how Jesus builds a bridge for us to go in his name through something as simple as shoes. He'll use anything to get to people. Just as Romans 8:28 says: And we know that all things work together for good for those who love God and are called according to his purpose, even through a little pair of shoes. God is calling us all to be his light all around the world. And the beautiful

thing is, he gives us something so tangible to carry -- shoes! A pair of shoes. To us, it may seem small, but as you saw, it's completely changed the life of that precious little girl. And I've watched it do the same for thousands of children all over the world on all of these trips I've taken with Life Outreach through my 16 years in ministry with them.

So on behalf of all children all around the world right now who are running, laughing, and playing safely in a pair of Life Outreach shoes that so many of you have generously given, thank you! Thank you for responding. Thank you for giving. Many of you have been a part of this for years, and we see you, and we are so aware of your generosity. We're deeply grateful you continue to give because the work is just never done.

There's a child right now somewhere, longing for a new pair of shoes. And maybe you're seeing this for the very first time, and you feel that tug on your heart that just says, I want to be a part of that. Well, we would love for you to join us and make Christmas unforgettable for these children this year. Here's what that will look like: \$36 give shoes to ten children, \$72 provides for 20 children, \$180 blesses 50 children, and \$1,000 will put shoes on 275 children or provide two life-changing corrective surgeries. Maybe today you'd also consider a gift of \$500 to help a child born with a cleft lip or cleft palate receive corrective surgery to help restore a life and a smile.

Together, we can remind children across the world that they are deeply loved and seen. So go online or give us a call right now and let us know we can count on you today because this is it. This is the final week of our campaign, and our goal is to give away 150,000 pairs of shoes and provide as many life-changing corrective surgeries as possible. But we can't do it without you. Every gift matters because every child matters. So let's finish strong. Let's reach this goal together. Let's make this the best Christmas these children have ever had!

CS&S Last Week Cause 2025:

ANNOUNCER: *Poverty is a killer, and because of it, children needlessly suffer not only from lack of food and clean water, but also from a lack of things we take for granted, such as a healthy smile or a protective pair of shoes.*

Far too many children living in extreme poverty have never owned a pair of shoes. And while that may seem minor, walking with bare feet puts them at risk of painful infections, injury, and life-threatening diseases.

But this Christmas, you can bring hope and healing. Your gift today will help provide new shoes for 150,000 children in time for the holidays. And for some children, a beautiful new smile. Your gift of \$36 will help provide shoes for ten children, \$72 will help provide for 20, \$180 will help provide shoes for 50, and a gift of \$500 will help provide a cleft surgery, restoring a child's smile forever.

As a thank you for your gift of support, be sure to request the beautifully crafted yellow crystal shoe ornament, a treasure to display each Christmas. With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request this keepsake set featuring four of LIFE's colorful crystal shoe ornaments. Finally, please consider a gift of \$1,000 or more to help provide over 275 pairs of shoes or two children with corrective smile surgeries, and you may request the beautiful bronze sculpture, "Lion of Judah."

This is the last week! Please call, write, or make your gift online today.

Studio goodbye:

TAMMY: Hope you're going online and giving the best gift that you can give today. It makes such a difference. You must know that. And for any gift that you're able to give today, I'm going to send you Toni's book, and you're going to love it. And remember, this is the last week of our campaign. So pick up the phone, give us a call. We need your help right now.

And, Toni, I cannot tell you how much I've loved these last couple of shows with you. Thank you so much for being here. Do you have something more for -- In fact, let's do this. Can you pray?

TONI: Yeah, I would love to. I would love to. Lord Jesus, we are so thankful for so many things, God. I mean, the breath in our lungs today, Father, that we even got a chance to just be alive, God. What we are asking for, Father is your presence. Lord, if you didn't do another thing for us, if you didn't bless us with that promotion, if you did not make that relationship work out, if you did not do another thing, God, your presence would be enough.

And I just pray for any person that's out there right now feeling so completely alone, unseen, unsafe, God. I just pray, Lord, that you would do something amazing in their lives, that you would begin to shift relationships in their lives, that you would bring friends and people that love them and that see them deeply, Father. And I pray in the name of Jesus against the spirit of shame. I pray, God that we would not walk in shame, that we would walk in freedom knowing that we are so worthy, not because of what we can do, but because of who we are. We are sons and daughters of the Most High. What good news, Father. We love you; in Jesus' name, amen.

TAMMY: Hallelujah! We love you! And we love you. Thank you so much for watching. We'll see you next time on *Life Today*.