

Episode 21, Got Your Six, Part 2

Amy: This is episode 21 of Untangled Faith. On this episode, I share part two of the “Got Your Six” meeting at Ramsey Solutions and the impressions Melissa Hogan and I have, as we listened and lived through this.

Melissa: Why is he talking about my marriage?

Amy: Yeah, why does he feel like he needs to tell everyone there?

Melissa: He says it at the end of this audio—because you're going to hear stuff.

Dave: But you're going to hear stuff is why I'm telling you this. Aren't you? If you haven't already.

Melissa: God was moving in ways that when you came to me, I wasn't under a gag order.

Amy: But you still chose to not say anything.

Melissa: Yeah.

Again, God is the hero. I'm sitting in the stands watching God move things in the arena, and I'm just blown away.

Dave: “I'm going to expose you, Dave Ramsey, because you have covered up for Chris Hogan.” Have at it. Better people than you have tried, gungadin. Expose me.

Amy: This is Amy Fritz and you're listening to Untangled Faith, a podcast for anyone who has found themselves confused or disillusioned in their faith journey. If you want to hold onto your faith while untangling it from all the things that are not good and true, this is the place for you.

This is part two of a two-part bonus arc of our Ramsey story. If you're new to this podcast, the first part of our Ramsey story starts in episode 17. But if you've been with me for a while, I want to make sure that you noticed that there were two episodes that dropped today. Make sure you don't listen to this one first. Start with episode 20.

Okay, now that you're sure you're in the right place, you've likely already invested hours of your life listening. And I'm very grateful. The previous episode, and this one you're listening to right now, are two of the most important episodes I've shared yet. They are also two of the heaviest.

This episode includes content that may be triggering for some people, especially if you've experienced any kind of abuse and subsequent secondary trauma from what happened when you reported it.

If it would be easier for you to read a transcript than it would be for you to listen, I have provided transcripts in the show notes and on my website, UntangledFaithpodcast.com. There are transcripts for this episode and the last episode available for everyone. Today, we get to the part of the employee meeting that I believe that Dave has been leading to during the previous 20 minutes.

Dave: So we have to balance all of that stuff out. So I'm telling you that for a couple of reasons, one is, it was just time for that talk around here again. And I saw that bumper sticker and it reminded me. And one of the reasons it reminded me was, um, I got really, really sad news. Um, Chris Hogan is going through a really, really nasty divorce.

He's not leaving. He is here. That's not sad news, that is sad news, well it's not sad news that he's staying. It's not that kind of sad news, but it's really a tough time. We started learning about this from Chris last summer. Um, and, uh, five days before the book tour, um, started, um, Melissa, who I've known, Chris's wife for many years, came in unannounced right after I got off the radio show without an appointment and demanded very angrily to see me and began to accuse Chris of doing all kinds of things. Um, to which, what did I do?

What have I been telling you for the last 25 minutes? Okay, Chris, where are you? Get your butt in here. You need to be sitting here and have a chance to tell me if this is true or not, these things she's saying.

Amy: Dave tells the team, "I've got some really, really sad news." So if people have spaced out, they're paying attention now and he starts to share personal information about his number one personality, speaker, author, Chris Hogan, Melissa's now ex-husband. He is saying there that he's going through a "really, really nasty divorce."

Melissa: And I want to be clear here. My goal has never been to air my personal situation or to say terrible things about my ex-husband.

I do believe in telling the truth and I do believe in calling out lies where they are.

Amy: Yeah. And Dave made this very public by telling this personal information to these hundreds of people.

Melissa: For me, the first thing, when I discovered this audio, when I heard about this and found out about it, this is my personal life. This is my marriage and things that affect my children.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: The idea that Dave thought it was okay to air things about someone's personal life. And he falsely characterized my actions to almost a thousand people in this company, some of whom I was friends with. That's extremely problematic.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: That is an invasion of privacy that is possibly legally actionable.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: If I had known about it within an appropriate amount of time. That's not what I care about. To share that kind of private information. And so I would ask, does he regularly share about people's divorces to the whole company? No, he doesn't. There are prominent people in the leadership or on the board of that company who have divorced over periods of time, including situations that might've had some similar themes as mine, and Dave not only did not share about it, did not talk about it at all within the company to anyone that I knew and certainly didn't share about it from stage. So, then you have to ask, "Why is he talking about my marriage?"

Amy: Why does he feel like he needs to tell everyone there? And he gets to that. He gets to that later.

Melissa: He's, he's pre-loading. He says it at the end of this audio: "Because you're going to hear stuff." He's going to characterize the narration. So this is what's actually happening.

Amy: If you're sitting in this room, You're all of a sudden, "What is happening?" And you also know that Chris Hogan is sitting in the room.

Melissa: Right. And you know that prior to this audio, he had gone on a one month sabbatical after the book tour that they had characterized to the employees as he just needed a break because he was a thoroughbred.

Amy: Yeah, he's a thoroughbred. They don't know when to stop or when to take a break.

Melissa: Right. So this is what they've already told and preloaded to employees. Dave can't look like he lied, um, that, that sabbatical was about Chris just being tired and he was a thoroughbred after the book tour. So he's got to characterize it in some way make it look like he did not lie.

Amy: There is a lot here. Dave is representing you, that you came in unannounced, that you did not have an appointment. That you were demanding and angry and accusing Chris of all kinds of things.

Melissa: I've had a long time to process this audio and I've had a lot of therapy to process this audio and I've gone back and looked at my own documentation surrounding all of these events, which includes documentation, recordings. And I have a couple thoughts, many thoughts, actually.

So first of all, let's talk for a second about gossip. And Dave characterizes gossip as telling negative information to anybody who can't help solve the problem.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: So I think under that definition, even if you agree with that definition, which I think that's a, a pretty unique definition, he is gossiping about me.

Amy: Yes.

Melissa: Throughout this whole anecdote.

Amy: Yes, he is.

Melissa: Those people couldn't do anything to help me in my divorce. I didn't give them permission to talk about this situation. And he is telling this to almost a thousand people.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: My personal private information, which is completely gossip under his own definition. He also lied multiple times. I'm an attorney, I'm an officer of the court. I also do my best to tell the truth and not exaggerate.

Amy: So you're not worried about asserting, like emphatically, definitively that Dave lied in this?

Melissa: No. He lied, multiple times. And let's talk about those. He said, let's start with this, "Five days before the book tour, Melissa came in without an appointment and demanded very angrily to see me."

First of all, it was actually 16 days before the book tour. And I think Dave makes it five days here so it looks like the time is so compressed, that they couldn't have possibly done anything different. He could have looked at a calendar, even if he's saying, "Well, I misremembered." Yeah. I looked at a calendar. I calculated the time between December, I think 20th, it was of 2018. And the book tour started on January 5th, I want to say. That was a complete lie, but he says, I came in without an appointment, demanded very angrily to see him. At no time did I demand, much less, very angrily, to see him.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: In fact, I was still focused on protecting the name of my husband at the time and of Ramsey. And I actually thought I had an appointment. It had been communicated to me by my husband at the time that there was an appointment at Ramsey Solutions and I told that to Dave when I went in there. So even if that was completely not the truth, I had thought that we had a time that we were supposed to go in there. And then my understanding was my ex-husband had canceled that, but I went ahead and went and I spoke to the receptionist. I acted like that I had a Christmas present for Dave, because I did not want the people in the company who were going by to see this as something terrible.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: My hope all along had been that this could be, um, a reckoning that would be positive.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: It is absolutely false to say that I demanded very angrily to see him. I have text exchanges. I was seen by many people in the lobby and that's completely not true. And so, you know, "began to accuse Chris of doing all kinds of things." So this actually wasn't the first time that they had heard about some problems. I guess, do you want to call it misbehavior? This was not the first time, by any means.

Amy: The first time that they heard about it, or the first time you mentioned it?

Melissa: Uh, it was either one.

Amy: Okay.

Melissa: Either one. They knew about some inappropriate behavior many, many years before that. And how I know that is Dave actually said it to me. There were three days of meetings: December 20th, December 21st and December 22nd in 2018. In one of those meetings when I, I brought up an earlier situation, from Dave's own mouth, he said, "Well, we did an investigation around that time and we concluded that it was only an emotional affair."

Amy: That's fascinating to me now. I wonder if he just asked him if he had an affair and he said, "Well, it was emotional and that was it."

Melissa: That seems to be consistent with how Dave concludes what is true.

Amy: Did they ever talk to you?

Melissa: No. And if they'd done the minimum level of validation or investigation or inquiry, they would've known that not to be true, but they didn't. And to have Dave from his own mouth, say they did an investigation, and this would have been in 2007, -08, -09, somewhere in that range, because there was a pretty long situation.

Dave: Um, then they're arguing about it. And I can't tell who's telling the truth. And so they said, and one of them said, “Well, the elders of the church had been through all this with us for 10 years.”

And I'm like, “Elders of the church? Get in here.” Five hours later, me and several operating board members are sitting there with Chris and Melissa and then trying to figure out what the truth is in all these accusations and horrible things. Uh, suffice it to say, there are no angels in this story, as there usually aren't, including Chris. And um, looking at it, it was messy, but there weren't weren't clear lines. And we said, okay, um, not because we're taking up for Chris because he's getting ready to go on book tour, uh, but because there's not a clear line, if there was a clear line, we would have taken the hit and canceled the book tour, but there wasn't and Chris wouldn't be here anymore.

Amy: Dave says he's so confused. There's so, there's conflicting things happening.

Melissa: If we go back to some of the themes of some of these earlier anecdotes—accusations are bad, they're most likely, they're most likely false. And basically in one of these stories, I'm going to tell you that they're false. And why would you believe them to be true?

So that is what I experienced. When I went to Dave, I was met with Dave and two other male members of the board and they were very hostile, Dave especially. And it was basically, “What other false accusations do you have?”

Amy: Did Dave say that to you?

Melissa: Yeah. So if you remember, I said this wasn't the first time they had learned of things approximately a month prior to this.

Amy: Some recent things?

Melissa: Yes. So they'd learned of more recent things that no one in any kind of right mind could characterize as appropriate in any way. It's been confirmed that everything that I have told them and laid out to them was true. Being in a meeting with three male board members that your husband works for, who are incredibly hostile to you and telling you, you have false accusations and that you're lying. It was so traumatizing to me. I can't even, I can't even describe how horrible that, it was about 30 minutes, at least from my memory. It was like being emotionally raped. And I don't use that description lightly. These are men

that have the power over your income, your health insurance for your child who needs this medication to live, and have power and influence in your community and in, in your churches.

Some would say then, why would you go to them? The reality is I expected that this would become public. There are enough things involved in this situation that I fully expected that it would become public. I actually was trying to help them. I thought, they need to get in front of this. They need to realize what's happening here and that this is not good. This is gathering steam. And this is really bad.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And I thought of, well, what if I didn't go to them and then this became public? Then it would be like, why didn't you come to us?

Amy: Yeah, you can't win in this situation.

Melissa: I can't win. I can't win. I thought that was the right thing to do out of respect for them.

Amy: At a certain point, Dave says that he finds out that the elders of the church have been going through all of this for 10 years. Did he then invite the elders in to hear their side of what was happening? And I'm really interested in that because he says, he's trying to figure out the truth, all these accusations and horrible things. He's got the elders there now, and he's still confused.

Melissa: My experience was, he did not really want to know the truth. He did not want to know the truth. It...

Amy: Who didn't want to know the truth?

Melissa: Dave did not want to know the truth. Again, it had been a month prior to that where nobody reached out to me or contacted me. In fact, it was the experience of being completely shut down and disbelieved.

Amy: When you reached out and said you had some concerns about an issue.

Melissa: Yeah, that it was false accusations. And at the time, I had a massive amount of evidence that everything I was saying was true.

Amy: Did the elders corroborate that?

Melissa: Yes, they did. Only one time did Dave specifically ask me if I had a recording of one thing. And at the time, I didn't know if I did, but that was the only time he asked for any kind of corroboration of anything, oh, of one specific aspect of the allegations, but nothing else. There were numerous things that I mentioned in all of this that they never questioned, never followed up on. I was clearly in deep, deep distress. They did not want to know. And in fact, I was shamed and gas lit, and told I was engaging in false accusations.

And again, it was so traumatizing. I can't even, it's still hard to talk about and I've had lots of therapy about it.

Amy: So when he says there weren't clear lines...

Melissa: That's completely untrue.

Amy: And so whatever line they're talking about, they decided that it wasn't crossed.

Melissa: Whether he thinks there wasn't clear lines as to who was telling the truth, which I think is what he's...

Amy: okay.

Melissa: What he's implying here. That's completely not true, because again, there were corroborating people there.

Amy: Why would he be so confused if all these people are saying the same thing? Like...

Melissa: If we go back to these earlier anecdotes in here, what he says is basically until that person...

Amy: The accused person.

Melissa: Admits that all things are true, basically anything else is rumor and innuendo. So that would include anything I was saying, anything other people were saying, and again, he did not ask for, or seem to want any actual

corroborating documentation or recordings or anything else. Yeah. I was incredibly vulnerable in that situation. My children were vulnerable.

It shouldn't have been up to me to prove what was happening, which has now turned out to all be true.

Amy: What would they think that it would gain you to go to them and make that up? If that wasn't true, you could possibly lose everything.

Melissa: That answer is displayed later on when Ramsey sent board members to a hearing in my divorce, on temporary parenting time of all things, where they characterize me as crazy and vindictive and trying to use this in a situation, which I would never do.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: My goal has always been to, for the truth to, for us to do as Jesus calls us to, to embrace the truth and to embrace ownership of our behavior, to protect my children and myself. The idea that somehow I wanted to harm people or be vindictive, um, is completely undercut by an exchange that Dave and I had at this meeting where he asked me, and I now see how incredibly unhealthy and inappropriate this question is.

He said, "Well, we could, we could fire Chris. And we could cancel the book tour. We could take that \$10 million dollar hit. We could do that."

Amy: Wow

Melissa: "Do you want us to do that?"

Amy: Putting that on your shoulders.

Melissa: Yeah, I mean, again, I was in deep trauma in the middle of all of this and I wanted to save my marriage, but that's really inappropriate. I didn't say one way or another. My response was something to the effect of, "I just want God to be glorified." And that's what I want in this, to pull back the curtain on deception and manipulation and things that aren't true and aren't of Jesus and for God to be glorified, even in the exposure of really dark things.

Amy: Dave says, "Not because we're taking up for Chris because he's getting ready to go on book tour" here. I think we're going to call that leakage. You

think that's, how can you say you're not, because this whole speech is about how you take up for your friends. Own it Dave. Own it. We are going to take up for him. Maybe you don't want to say it's because of the book tour, but he has clearly asked you, we have invested \$10 million in this. What are we going to do now?

Melissa: That's a really loaded question.

Dave: And so we, we wrestled with facts and pushed rumor and innuendo to the side. And as best we could do in that situation, made a decision said, okay, Chris is going on book tour. When he comes home, he's going on sabbatical for a month, which will give him time to work on his marriage and try to save it. And we'll pay for the marriage counseling. We're going to put them in coun-, we're going to do all these things together. And we're, uh, and Melissa, if you want to go on book tour with him, that'll be okay, as long as it's not a toxic situation. And over the next five days, it was a lot of hyperbole and drama.

And we decided it was going to be a toxic situation and, uh, several of the board members came and said, "Look, she does not need to go on this tour. It's not a positive thing. It's not going to cause healing in their marriage and it's not going to be positive for the tour, either one. So she needs to not go." Which she was really angry about that, obviously. We came home, and when he came home from the tour to do his sabbatical, um, instead of them working things out, it got worse. And, uh, we played as best a role as we could play in all of that to help and be there for them. Um, pray for them. Uh, if there are facts, not purple egg rumors, not threats.

"I'm going to expose you, Dave Ramsey, because you have covered up for Chris Hogan."

Have at it. Better people than you have tried, gungadin. Expose me. I is what I is. I got your six, until I have facts, not rumors and not innuendo.

Amy: And then to say, "We wrestled with facts and pushed rumor and innuendo to the side." How did they decide what was facts and what was rumor and innuendo?

Melissa: Well, and I mean there wouldn't have been any rumor and innuendo.

Amy: People directly involved.

Melissa: Directly involved. That just doesn't even make sense.

Amy: And then he says over the next five days, a lot of hyperbole and drama happened.

Melissa: Well, let's go back to, it was 16 days. So again, this, that was not true. The reality is: I'll stand by my choices and my words and everything that happened in that period. And I have a lot of verification of all of that. God made me a lawyer for a reason.

And when you're in certain circumstances that are really unhealthy. And one of the things you do is you start recording, because you can't make sense of what is happening. I have lots of documentation and recordings and verification of, of my response and where I was. There were a small number of people that knew what was going on at the time, but I think their characterization of it would be inconsistent with mine—that I was not in any way, engaging in hyperbole or drama.

Amy: Yeah. I don't know who wrote Dave's speech, if he wrote it or if he chose these words carefully. But if he says, "It was a lot of hyperbole and drama." He doesn't say your name there, but he clearly implies the hyperbole and drama is coming from not Chris. It can't possibly be Chris.

Melissa: Right. And he goes on to say later, "She needs not to go. And she's really angry about that."

Amy: Was that true?

Melissa: No. The reality is, you know, we were in a situation where they had proposed what they called a restoration plan and they kept changing that, of what, what could and could not happen. But then at the same time they were doing that, they were saying, "We're following through exactly as we had said we would." So that's really confusing.

Amy: You know, they're changing it.

Melissa: Right. You're sitting in a situation where, what they're demanding or what they're saying can and can't happen is changing. But then they're saying, "But we're, we're following through." So that's hard to make sense of when you trusted people.

And again, this goes back to, as believers, I think our default is to give the benefit of the doubt. These people said, they're believers. They say they love us. They say they care about us, but when the actions are completely at odds with that, it's really confusing. That's cognitive dissonance. And so that's what I was in, going, wait, they're saying they're doing this, but it's completely the opposite.

And one of those things was, we'll pay for marriage counseling. And so they had said that. There are certain situations where marriage counseling is not appropriate at all. And the idea that an employer would say, as a condition of this moving forward, you're going to be in marriage counseling.

Amy: Together.

Melissa: Right.

Amy: That's, it's not just separately.

Melissa: And then also to later on add, and we are going to want reports from all the therapists, which would include individual therapists, marriage, and we're going to want reports from your elders. That is completely inappropriate. And that was one of those changes where you're like, wait a second, that, I knew enough to know that was really unhealthy and controlling and inappropriate.

And that was not anything that had ever been talked about.

Amy: He says, we played as best a role as we could play in all of that to help and be there for them. Pray for them. And if there are facts, not purple egg rumors, not threats. That's his, purple—purple egg is a reference to Twitter. It used to be, if people started an account and they didn't change picture, it would default to egg.

Melissa: That was well before this.

Amy: That changed a long time ago, but then he turns on this really sarcastic, "I'm going to expose you Dave Ramsey, because you've covered up for Chris Hogan." Like he uses this really sarcastic voice and then it switches to threatening. He says, "Have at it. Better people than you have tried."

Melissa: Yeah. So again, it goes back to—any kind of accusation or calling out a potentially bad behavior. That's the problem. So anybody to say, we're going

to expose you, or, or even to say, we're going to hold you accountable for these. That is the problem.

Amy: He's threatening people that would dare speak the truth about this.

Melissa: Yeah.

Amy: This is a threat. "Better people than you have tried." "Come at me," basically is what he's saying.

Melissa: Yeah.

Dave: And so we're walking with Chris through this process and, um, you know, very detailed, unbelievably inserted into their personal lives to, to know what's going on because he owes that to us if we're gonna take his six. Does that make sense?

And we have, we've got his six. We've got friends in his corner. We've got spiritual people in his corner. We got prayer team in his corner. Paid counseling in his corner. He's got a good attorney. Every bit of that.

And so.

Amy: Well, if you're, is there any question in your mind sitting in that meeting? He's, you know, "We've got friends in his corner. We've got spiritual people in his corner." He must be right with God then, right? "We've got a prayer team in his corner." Well, then this must be the good guy, right? "Paid counseling in his corner." That's great. "We've got a good attorney." What does that mean? They have a good attorney. I don't know like what all that means, but the message that I would get here is that this guy is in a nasty divorce and it must not be his fault, even though we have heard Dave say there were no angels in this. But he must not have done anything too bad because we know where Dave stands on things. And he's still there.

Melissa: Let's go back to how he says, there's no angels in this story. By saying it's a really nasty divorce and there's no angels in this story, it's basically like, "It's really confusing. They both did bad things. We'll figure it out and we're playing the best role we can." When the reality is I don't claim to be a perfect person. We are all sinners. I don't claim that I was perfect in anything, but I acted with integrity in my marriage. We were married for 21 years and were in a relationship for five years before that. I did my best to be a good wife, support

my husband. So for Dave to characterize it as, “there's no angels in this story,” I think is completely disingenuous to the information that he had at the time he spoke. He completely mis-characterized the situation, because that suggested that there was things that happened that that did not happen.

When Dave is saying, “We’re walking with Chris through this process. We have friends in his corner, spiritual people, counseling, good attorney.” You know what you don't hear there? You don't hear that they, in any way, support me at all. Or my kids. What you hear is they have taken a side, they've chosen a side and that's Chris's side, even though at the time, every fact that they had, every documentation, every part of this underscored how vulnerable me and my kids were.

And there was nothing. That is what they knew at the time.

Amy: Yeah. I'm assuming. And that they were told things about you that were probably not true.

Melissa: Well, they knew that there was corroboration of a lot of what I said at the time. And since then, all of what I've told them has been corroborated.

Amy: Right.

Melissa: But they knew that we were incredibly vulnerable and they also knew, to the extent that they were told negative things about me, it had been corroborated that that person, my ex-husband, had lied to them for an extended period of time in a pattern of behavior. So the idea that you would trust that person really flies in the face of any kind of wisdom. But that's the pattern we've seen here is that, “I’m going to trust.” I'm going, to.... “Accusations are most likely false. The accuser is bad. I am going to have loyalty and you should have empathy for this poor accused person.”

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: That by the way, turns out to actually be the bad actor in the end. And, “I have no empathy for the people that they have harmed.” He's emphasizing that here because we have all these things in his corner.

No empathy whatsoever for me or my kids. And in fact, they worked actively against the betterment of myself and my kids, because they sent three board

members to this hearing. If you want to talk about false accusations, with the allegation that I was trying to get him fired, I was trying to make this go public.

And in fact, I could have gone public with all of this for a long time.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And did not. I sought support in trusted people around me and went to them when I was concerned it would go public.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: But they thought that the best thing would be to send board members and make these false accusations against me in order to get me under a gag order. And they were effective. They got me under a gag order that I was then under for the next seven months, uh, six, seven months. The gag order effectively actually prevented me from even speaking to my friends or family about what had happened or what was happening.

Amy: That's so isolating.

Melissa: It's like we were living parallel lives at the time because you've told some of your story. And so now people can overlay what was actually going on when you were trying to find me, when I had disappeared, because these things were coming out and it was so incredibly traumatizing.

But here's what I'll say, God is the hero. This is what I want people to always remember. God revealed so many of these things. I'm not smart enough or a good enough detective, or um, suspicious enough to have found out a lot of these things. God revealed them. There was an opportunity for repentance. And instead what happened was a doubling down of what was happening. Then God would reveal something else.

And this went on for the entire fall of 2018 and then through 2019. And so God was with me in that. It was heartening to me that you cared enough to want to support and find out. And so, even just that care, was a huge thing. God was moving in ways that when you came to me, I wasn't under a gag order.

Amy: But you still chose to not say anything.

Melissa: Yeah. Again, God is the hero and God kept revealing things. And I think he's still using people and situations to keep revealing what's happening. I'm sitting in the stands, watching God move things in the arena and I am just blown away all the time. I think that's still going on.

Dave: But you're going to hear stuff is why I'm telling you this, aren't you? If you haven't already.

And, um, but that's the reason we put Chris on sabbatical. When he came home, that's what was going on. At that point, we didn't know what was going to happen. And at that point it was still none of your business, but now it's going public. I mean, he's filed, it's a public filing of the divorce and um. And so, you know, some of these people who have opinions out there. And truthfully, um, we had folks working here that heard things and believed that we were covering for Chris and quit.

So, which is kind of okay. And that's probably a good thing. I love you, but if you don't believe I've got integrity and do what I say I'm going to do. You should quit. And if you don't have the backbone to come ask what the flip's going on, you should quit. If you're just going to believe lies on their face, I'm okay with that. Okay. So that's how this works. It's messy, y'all. This is grown up talk, isn't it? Welcome to your first day.

So, having said all of that, if you have personal information of great concern, it may or may not be something that we don't know. It likely is something we have heard or know, because believe me, it's, uh, it's unbelievable. But, um, but if you're worried and you need a little bit of information to know that we have integrity, we will share a little bit of information with you, but it's none of your business really, um. That's what it comes down to.

But if you're worried about our integrity in leadership and are we covering up for him because he's a big brand? Um, the answer is no, no.

Amy: Yeah. This part feels particularly personal.

Melissa: Yeah.

Amy: For me.

Melissa: Yeah.

Amy: He doesn't say my husband's name. He doesn't say my husband's leader's name, but unless somebody else quit, unless they know of somebody else that resigned because they believed that they were covering for Chris, then he was talking about my husband and my husband's leader. And for him to say, “If you don't believe I've got integrity and do what I say I'm going to do, you should quit.” Yeah. I guess I'd agree with that.

Melissa: Because that's exactly what your husband did.

Amy: That is why he resigned.

Melissa: But the reality is—this whole audio has exhibited a intense lack of integrity.

Amy: And then he says, “If you don't have the backbone to come and ask what the flip’s going on, you should quit.” I would like to address that. To say, “If you don't have the backbone to come and ask what the flip’s going on, you should quit.” None of this would happen if he hadn't. He very specifically did go to his leader. He did exactly what he was told to do. So for Dave to stand up and insinuate, in front of hundreds of my husband's former team members, that he didn't have a backbone or that his leader hadn't had a backbone is completely wrong. It's disingenuous. He knew that was not true.

Melissa: Dave knew at the time that these people had gone to their leaders.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: In the case of your husband, confirmation of information came from those very leaders.

Amy: Yeah. The senior executive VP said this guy did have an affair. Well, and it was while he was working here. What? We didn't know about that one.

Melissa: Yeah, Nathan didn't even know.

Amy: So, the first time anyone gave us confirmation of that was one of Dave's leaders.

And then also to say, “If you're just going to believe lies on their face, I'm okay with that.” Dave, you never said Nathan's name, but I'm just going to assume you're talking about Nathan. Why are you saying that he's believing lies?

Melissa: There was nothing he believed that was a lie or has proven to be a lie. And since that time, additional information that the company has confirmed to be true, and that we knew was true all along.

Amy: They knew during this meeting the things that Nathan knew were true. They already knew enough to know that they were misrepresenting Nathan.

Melissa: And I think they were counting on nobody else there finding out. So they used this to try to shut people down internally. Because if you go through this audio, it's highly conflicting because on the one hand they say, “Come to us and people who didn't come to us have no backbone,” but then multiple other times they say, “If you have personal information, we probably already know that.”

Amy: Yeah. I mean, it's like...

Melissa: He says, it's none of your business really.

Amy: He goes right from saying that Nathan's believing lies or insinuating that the people that have left are believing lies to saying, “Having said all that, if you have personal information of great concern,” he says that with a sarcastic voice, we could talk to them.

But that's exactly what Nathan and his leader did. They had personal information of great concern and they disregarded them, they misled them.

Melissa: And then here they lied about them!

Amy: They wordsmithed all these things, and then misrepresented them to the entire team. I think the hardest thing, and I said this in the last, in one of my last episodes, that there were people in there that knew Dave was lying and that knew the character of my husband and his leader, and they just sat there.

Melissa: And are still sitting there.

Amy: And have never said anything. Like when did you cross the line that you are okay to do that? What are you telling yourself? What are you telling

yourself now that you know the absolute truth about all of these things about Melissa and that you were lied to? And that you were okay with letting the whole entire team think that she was a terrible person, that she was not trustworthy? What are you doing to make that right? Why was that okay? How are you justifying the fact that you sat there and were willing to damage somebody so much?

Melissa: I think people should wrestle with their actions before the Lord.

Amy: And I'm not talking about people that were sitting in there and didn't have any idea.

Melissa: I'm talking about leadership.

Amy: We're talking about leaders of Nathan and his leader that knew these guys, knew their character. People that knew the whole story and knew that Dave wasn't sharing an accurate representation with the team. People that knew Melissa and suddenly were going to have to decide, against everything they had already seen about her, they now we're going to think that she was a bad person.

Melissa: Some of these people, I had counted as friends and there was nothing, um, in the past or in anything in any of those discussions to lead them to believe that I was not telling the truth. And in fact, there was a lot of collaboration that I was telling the truth, and they're going to have to stand before the Lord and account for themselves in that. Not a single person involved in any of that has ever come to me, has ever owned anything related to that.

In fact, when I was in one of those meetings, I had really prayed about bringing up some of this information about how they had already acted and how they had treated me. I said, "I was very hurt when you had done these things," these two things, including referring my ex-husband to divorce lawyers and....

Amy: Before he had ever even, never mentioned it to you.

Melissa: Yes. And in basically advising him to get away from me and get a divorce and different things like that. And when I said that Dave reacted very strongly and intensely and said, "Well, if you don't trust us, what are we even doing here?"

And if you can imagine, after the interactions I'd had with him and the other board members and how vulnerable I was at the time, when I was bringing up

concerns of here's how one way in which you have hurt me and that was his response. I actually ran out of the room and was in the bathroom on the floor. It was again, so traumatizing to, there was no empathy for me at all. Basically for me to bring up any concern was, um, attacked in that kind of way. I have no problem saying that's what happened because there were witnesses and that's the truth.

And that's a really unhealthy and abusive way to respond to someone who has vulnerably come to you. And then who says here's a, is a way in which you've hurt me.

Amy: Yeah. They break trust. And then they accuse the victim of being the problem. They call that DARVO—the deny, attack, and reverse the victim and offender. To make it seem like you are the problem because you didn't trust them when they had been absolutely not trustworthy.

Melissa: And that's what continued over the next period of time, is again, it was very confusing. Cause I was getting, you know, mixed messages and manipulation. I was being called and emailed and told what I could and couldn't do. Who I could and couldn't talk to.

Amy: Who was telling you that?

Melissa: It was through emails and voicemails, multiple female board members.

And then there were emails from Dave himself, and, that were attacking and accusatory and it was incredibly distressing.

Dave: Truthfully, one of the things we discovered through this process is the longer that a hillbilly walks with you, the more they're obligated to stand in loyalty. And so if you've been here about 10 minutes, I would not have invested the number of human hours and tears that I have into this situation.

But if you'd been here 15 years or 14 years, like Chris has, and you, I got this situation, it doesn't matter if you, where you work in the organization, you're going to get exactly the same treatment he's gotten. I'm going to stand with you. We're going to give you more investment back into the situation to find out what's going on.

But frankly, the amount of productivity this has sucked out of the marrow of my bones is unbelievable. And I would not have invested that in someone who's

been here, you know, 94 days, I'm just like, you know, this ain't working, so that'd be done. And it's not cause I treat you different. It's just cause I treat you different.

Did you know that fair is not equal and equal is not fair? It would be wrong to treat someone that has been here 12 years exactly the same. Give them the, you know, the exact same thing. Now, again, you cross certain lines, it doesn't matter how long you've been here, then that's where we are. Right? And I don't hold things against you you did before you came here or you did 15 years ago. I have not got a long enough yellow pad to collect everyone's sins. Lord Jesus help me. If you go back to my high school days or my college days, none of you would be working here. So, um, because you know, you just, you know, before Christ, you know, Lord a'mercy.

Amy: And then he makes it seem like he is the victim again. He's, he's saying you can come talk to me, but frankly, the amount of energy I've expended on this is just unbelievable.

Melissa: I would venture to say that the damage and the amount of energy and emotion that Dave expended on this was a tiny fraction of what I was living in, in that period of time. I subsequently found out while I was in deep distress—we're talking like, in therapy multiple times a week—the board members were on vacation in Florida telling me what I could and couldn't do and who I could and couldn't associate with in my family.

Amy: And you were hardly functioning.

Melissa: Yeah. And here's the thing in, in hindsight, God took care of me. He took care of my kids, but not without incredible damage. And I really could deal with that much better if it was just me, than the incredible amounts of damage to my children. The Word says, if you harm these little ones, it's better for a millstone to be hung around your neck. And again, they're also going to have to stand before the Lord and account for the damage there that I hope can be redeemed.

Anything is possible with the Lord. And I pray for that. No one has come to me and offered any kind of support or reconciliation or owning of their behavior. They certainly have never showed any ownership of the damage to me, or especially to my kids.

Amy: I don't even know what to say.

Melissa: When you put yourself out there as a lover of Jesus and a follower of Jesus, people look at your actions and say, well, that must be what a follower of Jesus looks like. And if our kids are looking at that and my kids are looking at that, and there's no accountability for really damaging behavior? Instead, the actions are to attack the person who is vulnerable and who has made credible and supported allegations. What does that say to my kids? That says power and money and influence are going to win the day and that gives them an entirely warped message about who Jesus is.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: And that's what happened.

Amy: So there is a statement in here where Dave says, "If you've been here 10 minutes, I would not have invested the number of human hours and tears I have into this situation. But if you've been here like 15 or 14 years...." I want to point back to this quote from EntreLeadership, where he says it doesn't matter if you've been here 10 minutes or 10 years, that there are certain things that you get fired on the spot for. And that was in the context of cheating on your spouse.

Melissa: And now we know that's, that's really not true. That is completely opposite of what he's saying here, which is, "Hey, if you've been here a long time, I'm going to invest more in you." That's the more honest thing to say.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: But he's not admitting that he's being inconsistent here. He's saying, well, this is the logical natural thing, but that's not what he said in EntreLeadership.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: That's not what they did.

Dave: So, you know, grace, grace. Loyalty is a character trait. Toxic loyalty is not called for. That's a cult trait. But loyalty, I got your six, is a character trait. And what you can hear from this is I got, we got, your six, and we expect reciprocation. It's mandatory. [audience laughter]

You're either fer me or you're agin me. That's how this place works. So hope you're okay with that. If you're not, then this is your day. It's okay. I love you. Glad you were here for a while. All right. Hope that helps. Oh, by the way, if you have a serious question, just come to the operating board member. We are all in the loop on everything. So if you have an issue, you're welcome. We're not trying to shut things down, but we're just wanting to, you know, want you to know what's going on. And also don't want to open the flood gates and have pastoral counseling for everybody that's been through trauma. So I haven't got time, but, um, cause we've all freaking been through trauma, right?

So that's what's going on. I hope that's okay.

Amy: There are so many mixed messages coming in this meeting and in the context of what we've seen and read in *EntreLeadership*. And even there where he says, "Loyalty is a character trait, toxic loyalty is not called for. That's a cult trait." But didn't he say that they took loyalty to an extreme already? Didn't he say he basically has toxic loyalty already? He's expecting people to not remember what he said 20 minutes ago.

Melissa: He admitted that multiple times that, you know, "We take it into stupid. We go to a toxic extreme." And now he's saying, and, and here's the leakage. He's saying, toxic loyalty is not called for and it's a cult trait. Basically, he's calling himself a cult because he's admitted he's engaging in the behaviors that he finds are consistent with a cult.

Amy: Yeah. And then we have what it really feels like a sincere emotion coming out where he says, "And what you can hear from this is, I got, we got your six and we expect reciprocation. It's mandatory."

Melissa: It's threatening. So it closes out this speech of, "I stand by these people. Accusations are bad. They're most likely false. I expect that you're in the camp with me and these other people. I've got your six. You better have mine. If I find out you don't, um, hell and high water and wrath."

Amy: It's not wrong for me to ask this of you. It's not toxic. It's not a cult thing, because I said it wasn't. It's not wrong, because I said it's right.

Dave: God, we thank you for this day. We thank you for our team. We thank you for a place that is highly unusual, and Lord help us to have wisdom and mercy. You blessed us that we might be a blessing. You put smart people in this room, people of character in this room, people of great talent in this room. Unify

us. Teach us to cover each others' back as our first default in Jesus' name. Amen.

Amy: But then Dave closes out this meeting that has been jam packed with all kinds of things. People don't even remember maybe what he said 20 minutes ago, but they know the impressions that they have been left with. And then he closes with this prayer and it is just so manipulative.

Melissa: And he says, "Teach us to cover each other's back as our first default. In Jesus' name. Amen." So he is cloaking this toxic loyalty to accused abusers who then turn out to be that.

Amy: Yeah.

Melissa: Cloaking that in Jesus and calling it good. And that is my biggest problem.

Amy: I hate to speak after Melissa summarizes this so well. First, to those of you who have gone to someone for help only to be treated like the enemy and left with deep trauma. I am so sorry. It's particularly egregious when this happens in Christian settings. Second, to those of you who have heard the Ramsey narrative of the situation previously over the last several years, thank you for listening. Thank you for listening to Melissa share the truth of what was happening. I hope you can see and hear the integrity and bravery in her voice. If you remember anything from this, I hope you remember Melissa's words that say, God is the hero of her story.

Thanks so much for listening. I'm taking next week off, but I'll be back on November 17th.