

## Tray and Melody: Grace Awakening

Craig: Welcome back to another episode of the Robertson and Easterling podcast. We are as usual sponsored by Lifeworks Counseling and excited to be with both Roane and Eva today. Guys, thanks for joining us.

Eva: Thank you for having us again

Roane: Got the other, the good co-host, Ava's here.

Craig: Exactly. Roane, if you could try to be as quiet as possible during this, during this broadcast, that would be very helpful if we hear more of Eva, less of you. But anyway,

Roane: People say that

Craig: We've got some great guests today. Roane, I will ask you to introduce them and then, then you can be quiet after that.

Roane: I'll jump in, man. We certainly are glad we got Tray and Melody Lovvorn. Man, so much of what you guys have been through in your own story and your own journey, mirrors a lot of Eva and I and our own stories. And then the ministry that you guys have and fantastic work that you guys do. And so much of that is, through your own podcast, Undone Redone, and then the resources that you guys make available from working with couples and working with individuals, men and women, in this process of recovery from sexual brokenness. Y'all were featured in the movie - y'all are movie stars, I guess, right?

Craig: You're actually the most famous people that have ever been on our show. So, thanks for spending time with us today, guys.

Tray: You've got to get a broader circulation

Roane: Dozens and dozens of listeners. I mean, we were ranked way up there. The movie, kind of a movie documentary, *The Heart of Man*, which is just a powerful movie about the false self and the recovery of that. And then certainly how sexual brokenness plays out, I would encourage anybody that hasn't seen that to go rent that - buy it. It's a really powerful movie documentary, for sure.

Tray: Well, we're glad to be here. Thanks for having us and letting us share a little bit. We do have a similar story, and I know that you guys have already shared yours on podcasts, but we can definitely be in that same theme. I know of some of the ins and outs of that journey, no doubt.

Craig: Melody, why don't you just dive in and tell our listeners a little bit about you guys.

Melody: Whew. Well, we will try to jump through a lot of the details and keep this higher level. But tray and I actually met at Samford University in Birmingham, Alabama. I was from Jacksonville, Florida and was pursuing music and wanted to go to FSU, but my dad was a minister and wanted his girls to go to smaller schools. And so, my twin sister and I came to Samford University. So, I was studying music and met Tray, actually Tray's freshman year, my

junior year - I'm two years older than him. And here's this good-looking basketball player. I'd heard that he had preached in all these churches. And so, we really, we met in a cave actually and about six months later, we started dating. We were in an art appreciation class and started dating - I always wanted to marry a minister. I thought it would probably be a youth minister and Tray and I, kind of right out of the gate, started doing ministry together. I love to sing and he preached, and I don't know - when I saw him, I was like, man, God hit it out of the park here. So, we dated for two years and got married and actually he was pastoring a church at the time. And I don't know, I think both of us kind of lived in this first, somewhat clean and neat world growing up. It was pretty much ministry. And my mom and dad had three girls and I really pretty much thought I was going to marry Tray and just repeat, you know, we would have a family do ministry and eventually live in Africa. And so that was kind of where we were. So, Tray, I'll let you pick up with the details.

Tray: Yeah. So, Melody did not know, nobody knew about my secret struggle. I was eight when I was first exposed to a pornography stash. And you know, at eight years old, didn't have a box to put that in. And it became my go-to way of dealing with emotions that I didn't know how to deal with. Melody mentioned the clean and neat. It was like, we've got Jesus, so it's yay God, let's be the best witness to the lost and dying world we could be. And what that looked like practically for us is we learned to wear a mask. And we actually even spiritualized that because we thought we were doing God a favor to put our best foot forward, to make sure we were the most attractive representation of what Christians are supposed to be like. And that was what was modeled. And, you know, I say often that I was a present tense sinner and a past tense sin culture, meaning that if sin was ever mentioned, it was way in the past, usually before a conversion experience. And here I was struggling in the present. So, the way that internalized for me, especially with a big sin like pornography and sexual brokenness that I knew is wrong. But it drove a lot of what I now know to call shame, because my takeaway was, I'm just not like everybody else. I am fundamentally flawed and all I need to do is to keep stuffing it down and keep working on it in secret until finally I would find the magic formula, push the right button, pull the right lever and finally it would all go away. But struggling alone and isolated, that was also what I would continue to run to, medicate the pain in my life, the uncertainty, the not knowing what to do with negative emotion. And if anything, the fact that I was feeling negative emotion was part of my shame because I had a theology that says, if you're doing the Christian life right there should be no anger, sorrow, grief or any of the "negative emotions". It should be all happy, happy, joy, joy - let's go with God. So that was kind of what I was dealing with, you know. I came to Samford and as Melanie mentioned, I preached in a lot of churches - I started preaching when I was 15. So now knowing the family reputation, because my middle name (Traylor), last name (Lovvorn) - lots of Traylor and Lovvorn in the small town. And so, I grew up kind of like I've got to live up to the reputation, the family reputation, to God's reputation. Then I started preaching and now it's my reputation. So a lot of performance and again (yes, I was wanting to protect my reputation), but really I was sincerely wanting to be the best witness I could be for God out here in youth group because you may be the only Jesus some people may ever see. And then I took that to heart. And again, practically, that just meant I needed to hide everything that's negative and broken and lead with my strengths. And when I tell my story, the best illustration is - we just came through the summer season and you know,

kids at the pool in the summertime, they see how long they can hold a beach ball under water. You know, and everybody knows it's a funny game cause at some point that beach ball is going to come shooting to the surface with a lot of force and a lot of energy. And so, from that first exposure at eight years old and all the negative emotion, all the bad behavior that I was trying to hide, that was all this beach ball. The older I got, the bigger the beach ball got, the more secrets I had to hide. And it was just all of my waking energy eventually was keeping this beach ball managed and underwater. Yeah, I met Melody and frankly leaving the small town, coming to Birmingham, it was an opportunity. Finally, I can be known for who I am, but I quickly got labeled as the incoming freshman who preached in all these churches. I was like, well, great; I can't let these guys down. So, it was just double down more mess. I've got to repeat the process. I met Melody and we were going to save the world. You know, she's saying, I preached, it was obvious what God was doing. We're going to have our own ministry team.

Melody: Well, you also thought marriage was going to fix it.

Tray: Yeah, I did. I thought marriage... I didn't tell Mary Melody about my secret for two reasons. One, I was too much of a coward. I knew she'd find out who she thought I was. I was unwilling to find out if she liked me. I realized I didn't love who I realized I was. I was like, how in the world could she love who I really was? And the second thing is I thought, like Melody said, well marriage has got to fix it is a common lie that a lot of the guys that I have the privilege of walking with believe. But when marriage didn't fix the problem, it took my shame to a deeper level. You know, it's like now I know I'm fundamentally flawed because now I can have sex in the covenant relationship of marriage as God designed it, and I'm still going to this stuff that I know is wrong. There is really something wrong with me. And so that took my shame to a deeper level. Soon after our marriage, Melody was teaching school. By this time, I'm still in school, finishing a religion major and writing a lot of papers because I was an English minor. So, I'd be up late. I found internet chat rooms and for me chat rooms, a lot of people go to chat rooms to be somebody they're not, if I'm honest, looking back at my story, I was probably more authentic in the chat room than I was in real life. Because for the first time in my life, nobody had an expectation of me, nobody. Oh, you're so-and-so's grandson. Oh, your so-and-so, you're, the guy that's preaching...you know, my whole life, I kind of lived in that bubble thinking, "okay, what do I need to be to fit in to be most accepted?" And so, part of the draw was, wow, they don't care about any of that. They're just getting to know me for me. And so eventually over the next decade, unfortunately, that led to sexual rooms, which led to one-night stands, which led to Melody finding out. And about 10 years in a marriage or eight years in the marriage, everything came out and the beach ball finally came shooting to the surface.

Eva: How did discovery happen?

Melody: Discovery happened - it was like two weeks, about a week, week and half before Christmas time and Trey was in the shower. We had put the kids to bed and he was in the shower and we were talking, kind of getting ready for bed. I'd already tucked the kids in and I got into his wallet really quick to grab some money because I was going to the grocery the next day. And all of a sudden, I saw this receipt for the grocery and I was like, you didn't ever

do the grocery shopping - that's what I do. And I saw chocolates and flowers and I was thinking, well, we've already had dinner and put the kids to bed. Normally he would walk into the house with flowers and chocolates, if that were for me. And immediately I got this just like, kick in the gut. And you know, there were things over the time that we were married, that you know, you can't put your finger on it until after everything happens. Like one time walking into the room and seeing this naked girl on the computer. And in my naivety I was like, why would he be looking at that? I can take my clothes off if you want, you know, it just never connecting any dots. Or I'd walk into the room, he quickly clicks out of something and I'd think to myself, "well, that was strange", but never knowing, okay that equals hiding or he'd say, "Oh, I'm just jumping into this". You know, when you're married to somebody, you just believe them, right. And so, anyway, I began to ask him a number of questions that night and it just was like, crazy-making. And the next day I basically overheard a conversation. We were supposed to meet and talk about it because I just, I finally got fatigued enough the night before, we weren't getting anywhere. And so, I was going to meet him and just confront him and talk about it. But I knew that he more than likely wouldn't tell me the truth. So I jumped into the closet and was not there when we were supposed to meet. And I heard him make a phone call. And so that night I met at my girlfriend's house and confronted him and basically said, "I know the truth". And that came out. But what I thought at that point was, okay, this is a one-night stand and I can't get my head around it. I don't understand what's going on. And the next week I sit in an office where he proceeds to tell me everything, the pornography, the online chat rooms, the seven one-night stands. And, you know, it's the worst day of your life. Gosh I remember going like breathe, breathe, breathe. And then thinking, how am I going to take care of my four kids? They were all under the age of six and I was still breastfeeding our last one, but just how in the world can somebody live through this? So, yeah.

Eva: Oh, yeah.

Roane: You know, Tray, it's just, as I hear your story and heard some of it before, but you know, exposed to pornography at eight years old. Yeah, welcome to the club. And then, getting married, you know, marriage is going to fix it. I mean, there's so many things similar. The big difference is that I grew up in the Eastern Christian denomination so there was nobody comparing me to any pastors or Christians for that matter. But then when I did come to Christ at 20 years old, I was all in. And I always say, you know, to be a 20-year-old frat boy and to give up drinking, cussing and smoking - that's a big deal. And I did, and we started going to church and as you said, sin's always in the past. Nobody ever talks about present. Those sins are usually alcohol or may be drugs. But boy, nobody ever talked about sexual sin, lust, even present, past or future. And I just sat out there for years, sincerely wanting, I mean, I was dying on the inside and I wanted to be free. But boy, this thing was just eating my lunch and I had no idea what to do whatsoever.

Craig: So, guys, after discovery, what was the next step for you guys in your journey?

Tray: Yeah, like I said, a week later, full discovery disclosure in the counselor's office. And then I went to an intensive. I went to Mark Laser's intensive (you know, we lost Mark last year). He was a pioneer, certainly in Christians who are doing this kind of work. And so, I

found myself in January of that year, right after Christmas, I was in St. Paul, Minnesota. I think it snowed 20 inches that week that I was there in St. Paul, a little different you know, but kind of picture. But it really, it was an option for me to get real and I did, but here's the problem...my theology was always (or my philosophy of life) was to know better is to do better. That was kind of what drove you to this incorrect understanding of the gospel. If I know better, then I'm going to wheel away the sin problem. And so, I go to this intensive and its great information, love what faithful and true does. I mean, it's fantastic, but there had not been a shift yet in me. So, my belief system was this the same. So here was my takeaway - took this great clinical information and I said, "Oh, I found the missing puzzle piece. Now I really know better". And so, I came back fully convinced now that I've got this missing puzzle piece, now that I've connected all these dots, I'm cured - I'm fixed.

Melody: And well, and then I went to an intensive, like two months later, we were separated for about six months. And so, I went to an intensive kind of kicking and screaming because at this point, I was still kind of like, "this is his fault, you know, he needs to go get fixed and I'm awesome and I'm great. I just need to help heal from what's happened to me."

Roane: That's so familiar to me that you are speaking my language - so familiar.

Melody: Yeah. So, I went to this intensive, but I didn't really want him to know about it because I didn't want to give him any hope that we would get back together, but that weekend actually changed my life. It was the first time that I felt seen, I felt heard. I was off the performance treadmill. And really, I remember leaving that weekend thinking these are my people, you know, like they know me and, and even over the course of the weekend, just being so tired and just thinking I'm so worn out. If one more person tells us we're this perfect family, I'm just going to die. Long, long story short, we, we did get back together. There were some things that transpired and, kind of some signs I was looking for, but we got back together and then it was a year later that Tray had another one nightstand.

Tray: Yeah. And that was basically, you know, as I tell guys now, because of that core belief of, "Oh, I found the missing puzzle piece so now I really know better" and I was definitely. I never wanted to replace Melody. My addiction was never about that. It was a deeper thing that definitely predated Melody - an intimacy disorder, as you guys know all about that. So I didn't get to the root issues though. I had put a band-aid on a much deeper problem, and I thought I had had fixed it, but a year later because I had not gotten to those deeper root issues, when the stress of life came and financial pressures and all the other things, I returned to my old coping mechanism. On a business trip to Tulsa, Oklahoma, I had another one-night stand and that's ultimately what led to our divorce and actually made Melody look like an absolute fool for ever reconciling and taking me back

Melody: I wasn't so worried that much about being the fool because I really felt like that whole year that we were together was really, it felt like looking back, that it was God just giving me strength to be able to say I'm loving you enough to let you go because I'd never would have been able to do that.

Eva: Right.

Craig: Talk around that piece just a little bit, because I'm the divorce lawyer in the room. I'm interested though, because you know, you guys are in ministry together. That was your plan – it was to work in ministry together. And then he discloses this sexual addiction to you and you stuck by him. You stuck with him until it came back out again. What puts you into a divorce lawyer's office at that season of your life, as opposed to the work that you guys had done around reconciliation before?

Melody: Yeah, I think before, we didn't know a whole lot. So here I am learning about sex addiction, false intimacy and just really beginning to peel back some of the layers of this world that I knew nothing of. And so, I'm learning about that, again, holding it very loosely because my goal was really to heal from this. Regardless of if we stay together and that's very much what we're passionate about together today is that both of you have to be on an individual path to heal. Cause if he does the work and she doesn't, it's going to be a hot mess. And then she does the work and he doesn't, it's going to be a hot mess.

Craig: Right. I heard somebody say recently on one of our, I think one of our shows, that two healthy people can be in relationship and two unhealthy people can be in relationship, but a healthy person can't be in relationship with an unhealthy person.

Melody: That's right You hit the nail on the head. Yes! And so we were separated the first time and there was a number of things that had transpired. We were kind of both on an individual track that allowed reconciliation to happen. But then that last year, you know, I was a part of a support group. I was a part of Beth Ward and Breaking Free and just a lot of things that I feel like we're peeling back some layers in my own life. And so when this, it was almost like I knew the weekend that Tray was going to have that one nightstand. I mean, I had gotten to a point where I was like, you're here but you are not here. Just being able to kind of speak to that - I feel disconnected from you, what's going on? And I just knew the things that I didn't know before. Right? And so the weekend that he went to Tulsa, I had a bad feeling about it. He had said like a month or two before, it's getting more and more difficult for me to travel. And I was like, quit your job. We'll figure it out, you know? And so that weekend, like I just said, I don't feel comfortable. You're flying in on a Saturday instead of a Sunday. You know, you're in a hotel room by yourself. And, his response was very predictable - it was something that was going to happen that weekend. And so, I found out a month later, and even after finding out a month later, I knew where we were headed toward divorce, but I had a number of people that just said, "wait, just wait, let it play out". And, and that type of thing. And so, it did play out. Tray was still not in a good place for a little while. And so really, honestly, after I had a lot of cool people in our lives at a large church and so a lot of people who were adults my age, but had been in, and had gone through divorce when they were young. Yes. They were like, "I was a child of divorce and you know, my mom used to fight with my dad. You know, I was a child of divorce, make sure you keep Tray alive in the house. I was a product of divorce, don't ever disparage Tray". And so it was really cool. Like nobody in my family had ever gone through divorce, but it was almost like God was like - pay attention, pay attention, pay attention. And so, I feel like I did a lot of things right. You know, keeping Tray alive in the house and all that. But let me just tell you, when you have four kids together and you're seeing them every other weekend, it was about four months and I remember my son saying, "mommy, why haven't you forgiven dad?" And I'm trying to keep him alive in the house and we're talking about memories and camping and praying for dad and all this and my seven-year-old said, "why haven't you forgiven dad?" And I was like, "well, buddy, I have forgiven dad". And he was like, "well, then why aren't you married?" And I just remember having this broken grieving moment

with my son and he's crying and I'm crying. I tucked the kids in and then I'd go to the piano, which is what I did a lot of times at night, I would just go to the piano and just play until I would cry. And I remember going to the piano and crying. And then I went into my bedroom and I hit my knees and I was like, "Lord, you have got to take him out. Like kill him, let him get hit by a car because I can't handle this". It is painful. I know that's not like I quit loving him, it was really more like, and this is what I told him to kind of, to answer your question.

Tray: I'm very careful crossing the street to this day. LOL

Melody: You're not messing with me, but what I told him when we are leaving the divorce lawyer's office, I said, "you know, I could have been married to a sex addict. It wasn't that you had a struggle, it was that I can't be married to a liar. I can't believe anything you said". And I said, "I will wither on the vine being married to a liar". So that was really what it was. And I love you enough to let you go. And I hope whoever is next in your life, that you will do the work to get hold of that for your kids and everything. And so that what that was, that was behind the prayer to take him out. It was just the pain does not go away and I just knew if he was dead, I would have closure.

Craig: That's really good. But now Melody, you actually, after a season of time after the divorce, you actually remarried someone else. I did talk about that a little bit, because that, to me, I've heard your story. That's actually one of the most interesting pieces of it. That's actually one of the most interesting pieces of it because you know, you got remarried pretty quickly, after you guys got a divorce. So, talk about that season of your life.

Melody: Yeah, it was really interesting. I try to do so many things right. In my desire to do right because again, my motto is kind of like good choices, plus the pursuit of godliness equals a perfect life. Obviously, that didn't happen with Tray. I kind of jumped back on the treadmill a little bit at this point. And I remember some people saying, you know, wait a year, don't date for a year. Looking back, I kind of wish they had said don't date for two or three because you're still kind of coming up for air after a year. You've got kids every other weekend, you still see him. And so, I waited for a year to start dating and one of the things that I wished that I had not done that I did. I was singing in a large church where, when you're singing or you're in ministry or whatever, everybody thinks they know you and I remember saying, "I'm not going to date anybody from this church". Because you know, everybody thinks that they know everything about you, but I did end up going to a singles retreat. And I also said, "I'm going to stay in my Sunday school class with all these families, because I don't fit in, in the singles class". I've got four kids, you know, and yet I also didn't completely fit over here, but I was like, I'm not going to quit my Sunday school class just because I'm divorced. So I end up going to the singles retreat to teach the ladies group or whatever, and I ended up meeting this guy and he could not have been polar opposite of Tray. Sorry, he could not have been more polar opposite than Tray. And I think because I saw Tray and of course, God hit it out of the park, all that mattered to me was as long as he loves God, I'm good. Well, you know that you need a lot more than that to really work. I think I just justified so many things in my mind - like athleticism is really important to me, family friendly is really important to me. Just a lot of the things that matter to me, I was just like, okay, it doesn't really matter.

Tray: And I think something that I've heard you say Melody too, is that I think your listeners probably can address is sometimes in the church, we are even taught sometimes, maybe directly or indirectly, to kill desire. That it's really our desire (this is the bad piece), and I think part of what you've bought into there was - well, I married the first time for desire so this time I just need to be satisfied maybe with much less.

Melody: Yeah. And I don't even know that I knew that I was settling. I just thought, I almost thought, well, I just had this ginormous list the first time and look what happened. So, I'll just keep it really short and simple this time

Craig: Love the first time and money the second time.

Melody: And I was friends with this guy - what was really crazy. I was always desiring Tray to pursue me, but I felt like he was always in a hunt for something else. This guy was...I mean I'd kind of gotten a little sassy and strong in my voice at this point, so I was like, "Dude, I'm not really interested in you. I'm not attracted to you. I've got plenty of friends. I don't need new friends". You know, I was kind of like, no, no, no. And I guess in his head it was like, yes, yes, yes. And so, he ramped it up even more. Oh, I just want to be friends. I just want to... and finally my codependency kicked in and I was like, "Okay, fine. I'll have a cup of coffee with you". You know?

Tray: Well, at this time he was bringing coffee at 6:00 AM to her front door

Melody: He would drop it off on my doorstep. And I was like, "Holy cow, I've never experienced this in my life". And again, still just friends, we're just friends. I'm not interested at all. Well, anyway, long story short, I was teaching aerobics at some resorts in other countries because I could go for free as long as I taught like three or four classes a day. And so, I took my twin sister with me and we ended up going (I think we were in Jamaica) and then came back and he kind of pulled this whole God card, which I will say, it's my responsibility. I got sucked into it. But that was kind of what my dad did a lot growing up. Like God told me this, and God told me that. So, I come back from this great week with my twin sister, you and I was thinking in my head, "Well, God can talk to me too". You know, like he could have told me that. But it was kind of this whole, you know, God told me to date you and marry you, and I can take care of your four kids and my four kids. And there was a really cool subdivision that had a Lake in it that I used to go journal at all the time, and he was like, and I'll buy a house in this property and y'all can just play all the time. It's almost like he knew everything about me. And so how could I say no? So, we started dating right after that. And what was it like eight weeks later? I think we started dating in July, we were engaged in October and married in December. So, it was crazy craziness.

Craig: How did that work out?

Melody: Well, not so good. He struggled with clinical depression and I just kind of went into happy homemaker. Let me just try to make your life perfect. And I was dying, but honestly, I think the hardest thing for me was having to finally face a year and a half and finally face looking at the fact that I'm going to have a second failed marriage and how in the world can I do this to my kids? And that was really what God brought me to - the end of myself. Oh, so

the good choices, plus the pursuit of godliness, doesn't equal a perfect life and your dookey stinks just like everybody else's stuff, and let's do something here. So that was kind of a moment for me where I kind of came off my Holy mountain and I was like, "Oh, okay, Tray and I are kind of level here". Not that I ever even considered reconciliation with him, but it really did a number on me.

Craig: Well, that was a really brave thing for you to do though. I mean, you know you had this failed first marriage and then you find yourself in a bad, second act of the same play and you had enough courage though, to step away from that relationship.

Tray: When his clinical depression wasn't cured by her outgoing, bubbly personality - he left. And so that, that kind of made the decision pretty easily.

Craig: So, the decision was made for you then?

Melody: Yeah.

Craig: So how did you guys find your way back to one another?

Tray: It was - we call it our grace awakening. We talk a lot about that in the Undone Redone podcast. And just kind of really have this paradigm shift from growing up in the church. Hearing the word gospel, hearing the word grace, but really realizing our journey is that I didn't really practically understand that if we really said here's my practical theology, it was saved by faith, sanctified by sweat effort and just get 'er done. You know, kind of stuff that you have showing - showing God how much of a first-round draft choice we were and how glad He must be to have us on his team. To go from that to Him, as I defined recovery, now God lovingly introducing us to ourselves. That He knows all the brokenness about us and He just needs us to know it. And I covered up all that brokenness my whole life because I didn't have a theology that said God wants to join me in my struggle, especially not my struggle with pornography. I thought God was angry that I was struggling, but he was angry, disappointed that I couldn't get my stuff together. And so just trying to do the Christian life in my own strength, which is what many of us do. You know, we get all the imperative commands of scripture, but then we incorrectly think it's our job to carry it out so that we'll finally get the attaboys and attagirls from God. That's what happened with us. And I was probably about a year and a half, two years ahead of Melody in this process, because as we use the prodigal story protocol, elder brother alive, kind of as a backdrop for our story. We both were public elder brothers for many, many years until my secret product was revealed, right? And then I had a very public outing and I became a moral leper overnight, right? Written off by the church, all of that. So now I'm in the pig pen and I'm having to come back to my senses when there is no hiding. Now everybody knows, right? And so, I'm at a crossroads. And I began to understand that while God loves me (it was *Abba's Child* by Brennan Manning), that was the book that really was the eye-opening experience. It was a Saturday morning, somebody had loaned me the book and it was about two years after our divorce. And I'm alone on a Saturday morning, Melody's got the kids and I pull the book off the nightstand for whatever reason, just start reading. And two hours into that book, tears streaming down my face, that book began to break the log jam of my misunderstanding of grace and this was the thought I said, "God, you mean when I was 11 years old and you

shaped the new saved me at Shockoe Springs Baptist camp, you saved me knowing full well that I was going to spend these untold thousands of hours looking at pornography, and chat rooms and ultimately these one-night stands and then I was going to do it again. I was going to lose my family. You saved me at a sheer grace, knowing all of that". That thought is what I began to understand. It never was about me. It was, you did this in spite of me. And so that really began a radical shift of me understanding the gospel in a new way. And it gave me permission to go into my brokenness for the first time because after that point, it was all about looking the part, because I thought that's what God expected of me. And what shifted is like, God, you already know how dark my heart is. You already know what I'm capable of. You already know not only what I have done, but what I'm going to do today and what I'm going to do five years from now. And you mean what Jesus did at the cross covered all of that. That it's not what Jesus did, plus my best effort that gets me in – it's sheer grace. It's all of what He has done. So that began a radical change. Going back to that church, it was like the red sea parted because everybody had the view of me. And so that was my test of the gospel. And so, I'd go back, watch my kids perform in this church that I was the moral leper outcast, and I'd hear the snickering and the whispering and the disdain and you know, the looks and all that. And I'd watch my kids and this is what would be my refrain about every 10 minutes, sometimes every five minutes, "Lord, they know a little bit and they have written me off, you know it all and you love me". And I would just sit there fully present watching my kids. And then I'd see another person make eye contact and quickly turn away and I'd have to do it again. Just learning to preach the gospel to myself, because for me, the gospel was for lost people. That was my early understanding, the gospel was for lost people - well, I got that when I was 11. I realized I am a desperate sinner who's desperate for a savior every minute of every day and that was a huge. So, then that radically changed my recovery because I dabbled in recovery before but when I went to the intensive, I was looking for the quick fix. I was looking to do enough of recovery to finally put it behind me and to be done. And what now, what I have helped men understand is, I think sanctification and recovery, it's all kind of synonymous. It's not about us sitting less and less, but the more I walked with Jesus, the more I see my desperate need for Jesus that's now the closer I get to the light, the more my own junk gets illuminated. And the more it becomes clear, and it's a total 180 from what I used to experience - it changed me. Then Melody, again, her courage as an elder brother after this divorce, to see her elder brother sin in the same, like certainly consequences are different, but that to the heart of a Holy God, that elder brothers' sin and prodigal sin is all an affront to a Holy God. Yeah. And that her owning that, it leveled the playing field and we began to co-parent differently.

Melody: Actually, it was actually the healthier that we got, and like he said that he was a little bit ahead of me, it was more fights that we would have. Because you know, and y'all know this, as you're walking with couples in recovery and things like that, the healthier you get, it really actually creates tension and a lot of your relationships (because you're changing things), you're not letting people take from you like they used to take or whatever, and now you know how to set boundaries. So, some of the shaming that I did with him afterwards because I did have this thought for a long time...if he was the Disney World Dad who took the kids out for the weekend or whatever, came back and I was like, "yep, that's the con artist", blah, blah, blah, blah, blah. And if he wasn't doing things that I felt like he needed to

do or whatever, I was like, “yep there's a sex status”. So, he was kind of in a lose-lose for a little while in my head. But the healthier he got, it was actually arguments that would really flesh out....

Tray: I think we need to tell the story.

Melody: We may not have time.

Tray: So, I was driving in Mississippi. I was covering Mississippi and Alabama in my sales career and Melody had gone through her divorce and we were responding differently, and we don't get into all this stuff, but that door had closed. But after she got remarried and right before that, the door to reconciliation in my mind had closed. I remember I was driving around Jackson. So, I think as a tribute to us, we certainly need to tell the story. So, for whatever reason, I was talking to her about the sermon. I think it may have been a Monday or Tuesday. And so, the sermon just from a few days before,

Melody: And let me interject, I'm going to interject some. So, we didn't talk about anything other than kids and finances. That was it. So, like when he starts talking to me about a sermon, I'm sure I've either got an eye roll going on or I've got the phone out to the side, you know - I'm not listening to this.

Tray: Yeah. And so, I'm telling her about this for whatever reason because like I say, it was just a business decision - I mean a relationship at that point. And as I'm talking, she says this... and sometimes Melody, or not sometimes – often times, Melody has that ready, fire, aim

Craig: Is she an enneagram eight?

Tray: She's a seven

Melody: Unless I'm talking to a passive man then I move into my eight

Eva: I connect so much with your story and who you are, Melody.

Tray: So, I'm saying this and she just kind of interrupts me - stops and says basically out loud, kind of the ready-fire-aim; she says, “Do I have to do what the woman at the well did to understand grace the way she understood it?” And I knew exactly where she's coming from, you know? And so, I just said, well, I'm gonna have some fun with it. So, I said, “Melody, how long do you think you could go without sinning?” And I thought it was gonna be a rhetorical Haha question then we'd kind of move on. Well, it got quiet on the other end of the phone and I'm like, oh goodness, she's about to give me an answer. This is going to be good. And so finally, after a brief pause, she finally did answer and she said...

Melody: I said, “two weeks”.

Tray: I said, “Two weeks, that's amazing!”. I said, “How amazing, Melody.” I said, “After two weeks, why stop - add another two weeks and you've got a whole month. And then you can add another month and then you'd be, well down your road to this sin free, perfect existence.”

Roane: That sounds familiar. I get it

Tray: What she said, what did you say then?

Melody: I kind of started crying and I said, "I'd be too tired".

Tray: And then we say that story because Melody is the one that verbalized it, that sums up both of our belief systems and this performance treadmill that we grew up in. That it's all about being small sinners and showing God and everybody else what a small sinner we are. And when you're a small sinner, grace is not amazing, right? And small sinners need a small savior. The beauty of recovery and everything that blew up in our life, we use in our ministry, Undone Redone. We didn't have a name of a ministry with the word undone in it, that was less than perfect. I mean, so just that kind of connotes the shift. Now we realize that big sinners need a big savior, and it really kind of showcases her small view of sin, but certainly I had a small view of sin before everything blew up as well. And what the gospel does - it doesn't take away all the consequences, but it helps us realize that this was never our problem to fix because if willpower could fix our problem, Jesus didn't have to die. It doesn't require a savior. And frankly, our flesh doesn't want a savior. Our flesh wants a little help and then, well okay, God, I got it - I got it from here. But to really blow things up and to help us realize that we are desperate, not just for salvation, but I'm desperate today, that was a game changer.

Melody: Yeah. Yeah. That was a game changer. And we started really, after that, I had this kind of shift of like, "okay, I'm really beginning to grasp that". I remember reading *Prodigal God*, *Ragamuffin Gospel* and *Abba's Child*. Just a lot of that was really helping me shift. So, we had really gotten to a point where we were co-parenting well, and I was like, "Oh, I like this". There's not a lot of tension. He can come over and help the kids with homework again, not thinking at all. I mean, I'm kinda thinking, okay, I'm just gonna be a nun. It's just me and God - I'm done with marriage and all that kind of stuff. And so, we got along really well. We would show up at events together. I remember one time we went to the movies together and he sat on one end and all the kids in between us and I sat on the other end. And again, still didn't think of anything, but I remember I was texting during the movie and kind of cackling because there were some people in our old church there and I was like, "I wonder what they're thinking" and all this kind of stuff. And so, I do have a little bit of an inner rebel in me. At Christmas time, Tray mentioned reconciliation. He was helping put the kids to bed one night and he mentioned reconciliation. And I was like, no, we've got a great thing going. No two parents love their kids like we do, you know? And I just, I felt really comfortable. I could call him and say Tal is being disrespectful to me - it just worked. And so, this was like December, well in February Tray asked me to go to the beach with him and the kids. And of course, you know, my seven said oh my gosh, that'd be so fun. And then I was like, Ooh, what would the kids say? That would be awkward. How would I do that? And so of course I said, no. But he texted me over the course of the weekend. The kids would call and we were talking all that kind of stuff. Well, I guess it was like, after that weekend, Tray had a tree fall on his fence at his house and an insurance adjuster had come over. Well, he called me, I don't know, maybe it was a couple of days - I may be blowing this timeline baby, but but he called me a couple of days later and said that he was, he said, "I just wanted to let

you know, I'm going to be asking out this insurance adjuster." And he hadn't dated somebody for probably like over a year. And he said, "I just wanted to let you know I'm going to be taking her out." Well, of course my ready-fireaim got the best of me again. I was like, "Wow, you just mentioned reconciliation a couple of minutes ago, you know?" And I just kinda lost it. So of course, Tray didn't say anything and we hung up the phone, but the next weekend he had the kids. And I remember when he brought them home and put them to bed - I don't remember what kind of words were exchanged at that point, but I think I was a little snarky to you and you left and drove off. But then a few minutes later he came back and he knocked on the door, and when I opened the door, he stepped in and he hugged me and basically said, "I'll wait forever for you if you'll just give me a shot at reconciliation. I will wait forever. And we don't have to figure this out." I was counseling with somebody at the time and he said, "We can go see Dr. Langston, but I don't know what I'm doing. You don't know what you're doing, but I just want to see if this is a possibility," and so of course I lost it.

Tray: That was kind of the start to two biggest fears. My biggest fear was hurting her again. Her biggest fear was being hurt again. Well, if we're not in relationship, neither one of those two fears could be realized but as soon as we stepped into any type of relationship, immediately those two fears become possibilities and it was really scary.

Roane: We always talk about recovery is just simply recovering the life that God intended us to live. And it's not about some 12-step program or (I've loved the 12 steps), however you know you said it earlier, Tray, recovery really is sanctification. And we don't complete that process until we're face-to-face with Jesus and it's walking through those things and the behavior changes and everything that you guys have talked about, or all the things that are so important for a partner to open their hearts to the possibility of reconciliation.

Craig: Tray I wanted to ask you about that. So, what I've heard you guys talk about is you started co-parenting well, your communication around the children started to improve, but what would you say to our listeners about what it was in your story that made reconciliation possible between the two of you?

Tray: I think the big thing is what we shared about that shift and our belief. Because as long as we were on that performance paradigm, there was always something else to do. And we were constantly, we wouldn't have put it in these terms but now looking back, we were constantly trying to do enough to earn and keep the Father's smile because at our base core level, we didn't believe we already had a smile that we had to constantly do more to keep Him smiling, right? To keep Him happy. And so that's what drove this performance treadmill. So, when we could finally just learn to just rest in the truth that we already had His smile, that seal our obedience was there, but our obedience, unlike before, instead of trying to make Him smile, our obedience now was because He was smiling and that was the game changer. We could finally rest and that also gave us permission just to settle into our own identity. I didn't know who I was as a man. And that's what a lot of my addiction was, is I needed a female to validate me as a man and Melody, bless her heart, when we first got married, she tried to. She thought to just add that to the list of Proverbs 31 Woman and what she's supposed to be doing. And that was not what she was supposed to be doing, nor

designed to do. And so, we didn't want neither one of us. And we worked with couples and I'm sure even around you the same way. I come from one of the first things that I'm sure you'll want to be more of what you had, right? Yeah. That's, that's usually not one of they're coming, but really, it's like, "can we trust God for something new and different?" Can we trust him for a new normal? And for us, it was that journey through pain because pain-free was never an option. And as I look back, my theology was always looking for the pain-free option because my theology tells me incorrect theology if it's painful, that's proof you're not doing it right. But now I understand that that's hogwash. The pain has gotta be there - that's the growth, that's the healing – it's on the other side of the pain. It's like having an infected sore. If I'm just putting Novacane and a band aid on it, I may make it quit hurting for a while until I bump it on something; to get it truly healed it hurts like crazy to get all to the surface so that true healing can begin to take place. And so that would be what I'd tell your listeners is wherever you are, don't settle for the band-aid and the Novacane, you know? Get with folks like Eva and Roane, folks who are trained to help you individually understand your own narrative - the story, the lies that have come out of that, the message of the arrows is what John Eldridge would say. And then how does that show up in the relationship? What lies has he brought to you as a couple. As well, and that now that's become your truth. But we've got to have some professionals help us unpack all of that so that we can then undo it to use the name of our ministry so that then it can be redone. You know, we all want the resurrection, but it's hard to volunteer for the crucifixion and resurrection without the crucifix death before there's a resurrection.

Craig: That's right, guys, we're almost out of time for today, but I do want to end the today's show with the story of your re-marriage. If our listeners can go back and listen to one of the earlier episodes of our podcast and hear about when Roane and Eva got remarried, it's one of my favorite stories that they tell. So, I'd love to hear the story of your wedding, the second one.

Melody: Yeah. And I guess just you, you share that, but I just was going to share just a quick, quick story that I talked about when we were headed toward divorce of just what to do, what not to do that I felt like were real instruments of the Lord to say, "pay attention to this". One of the things that I didn't do that was very, very hard and it's not because I was so godly or whatever, I feel like the work of the Holy spirit was that the story, the details of the story that Tray needed to share - or parts of the story that Tray needed to share was his to share. And ofcourse on those days that I thought, "he's never going to share - he's going to be 80 on his death bed or they'll never ever know. And it's just going to be my burden with regard to my kids. This is going to be my burden to have to carry forever." So, we're dating at this time and this is a real pertinent part to even getting engaged and married - was he came over one Saturday and he had done some things because you know, a lot of people say, how did you rebuild trust? And some of these were just very earmark things that I could pay attention to. Tray drove to North Carolina to sit down with my parents. Tray didn't put up with some of my crap, but this particular Saturday, he comes over and he plops down in the living room and starts asking the kids all these questions. And we had just finished breakfast so of course they run over and get in his lap and he is sitting there talking (and they were in Christian school at this time), so he starts asking them about the 10 commandments and I thought, "okay, that's kind of strange". As I was cleaning up, I can see

what's happening in the living room and I'm watching what's going on. And so, he's like, what is, shall not bear false witness, what is thou shall not covet thy neighbors, blah, blah, blah. You know? And then all of a sudden (and I'm thinking, where is he going with this) and then all of a sudden, he said, so what does thou shall not commit adultery mean? And I remember it like it was yesterday, my girls who were my bookends, they were like 11 and six at this time said, is that when a daddy or a mommy likes another daddy or mommy that they're not married to? Is that when a married mommy and daddy likes another married mommy and daddy that they're not married to is what basically what they said. And Trey said, "Yeah, that's exactly what that is and I just want y'all to know that daddy did that to mommy and he did that to mommy seven times and really hurt her heart." I just remember standing in the kitchen, just overwhelmed at the honesty, they wrap their arms around their dad's neck and said, "Daddy, I forgive you". And I remember that being a moment for me, I'm just going - God's saying to me, "Melody, it feels like you'll let whatever pain is still in here go, I'm the surgeon and I can do a work on you". And just to be able to witness that with my kids and for them to get to experience what reconciliation looks like was just an amazing. So I think, what like a week or two later, we got engaged.

Tray: That was kind of a moment for Melody.

Craig: It sounds like your girls taught you something in that moment.

Melody: Oh yeah. They keep doing that.

Roane: So y'all got engaged you did the whole deal.

Tray: Yeah. Got re-engaged. And we got married. Well, we did another ceremony and we just celebrated our 12<sup>th</sup> - October 3<sup>rd</sup> we celebrated our 12th anniversary of our remarriage.

Melody: Well, there were so many people that walked with us that we really wanted them to surround us.

Tray: It was beautiful, beautiful service and just a lot of celebrating - and obviously our kids. Back to that fear thing. You know, we knew that stepping into this now both of those fears are back on the table and we just knew that this is kind of use the recovery cliché. It's a one moment at a time, one day at a time kind of thing. Just because we're remarried doesn't mean everything is magically fixed, but we knew we felt confident we had a new way of living a new way of approaching life, a new way of seeing ourselves, a new way of seeing God. And so, just being off that performance treadmill, we didn't have to work so hard for everyone else's approval, and each other - that we were trying out for each other, and really the big guests change in our new marriage that we talk about in some of our marriage stuff in our ministry is - instead of being two people trying to outperform each other, we wanted to be the chief repeater in the relationship. How do we out repent one another and knowing the gospel and what had been awakened, that we realized we don't have to pretend we got it all together. It's pretty, obviously we don't and our brokenness may be different, but it's just owning it. And again, we're big sinners, we're married to big sinners. And so, you know, we don't have to pretend to play the whole tit for tat game. And that was a real game changer. So yeah, got remarried and we've been learning a lot since then - just how to do life

together and then doing work together. You know, that's a whole other level of being business partners in a lot of ways,

Roane: We know all about it. LOL

Eva: We need y'all to do some counseling with us around that. LOL. We counsel you and you counsel us - we love that! I'm always looking for another tool in my toolbox,

Craig: Guys in the minutes that we have, talk a little bit about you, your ministry and the work that you do and how our listeners could connect with you guys.

Tray: Yeah. So, we have Undone Redone. Undone Redone.com is the main page where you can go and find out what we do. So, basically because of what we talked about healthy marriage is made up of healthy individuals, we work with men and Melody works with betrayed spouses and has a program called Life Beyond Betrayal - where they can get into community and courses. And then we also do work with couples. We have couples come in for intensives. We have resources for couples, do marriage intensives ourselves at churches and retreats and those kinds of things. But then we also have a parenting piece; a few years ago, we realized that 80% of first-time exposure to pornography happens at home. And so we realized that we're doing all this work on this end with people who are in crisis, but we need to be doing something further upstream to the eight to 12 year old's that are today, first being exposed. And so, if parents have a little bit of information with the constantly changing technology - so that's our, My Secure Family piece. So really four different buckets, if you will, men and women, parenting and marriage are where we do most of our work, but that's not enough. We stay plenty busy with that, but we've got a lot of fun things going on. COVID is actually, really expanded what we're doing because it's amazing when you see all that stuff that's under the surface. When you get people quarantined and put them in lockdown for a while, it has a tendency to have beach balls come to the surface. And I say, well, that's a good thing. And we don't want to figure out a way to get it back down, but really just God wants to bring about healing. And that's really our thing is every heart living free - that's what we're about. And unfortunately, it's usually pain and crisis where they find us. And the hope that we offer is that that can be the doorway to a deeper understanding of themselves. And certainly, a deeper understanding of the gospel. You know, we want to be so generous with them into their pain and not just to help them quickly medicate the pain.

Melody: Well, and I guess just the last thing too, with you being a divorce attorney, part of my platform with ladies is whether you stay married or whether you divorce, I really tell them to table three things when they hit this process. I'm like, I want you to put divorce on the shelf, reconciliation on the shelf and forgiveness on the shelf. Because the bottom line is you've got to heal and you're going to be a better if you can go in and show it, cause she's thinking I gotta make a decision, I gotta make a decision, all my friends are telling me this. And I'm like, "No, you don't have to make a decision at all; let's just get on a path and let's heal". I've created three courses that helped a woman really walk through the trauma and grief from the trauma and then kind of reclaim herself after betrayal. After she's done those, I'm like now you're going to be in a much better place to make whatever decision that you need to make. And if he's doing the work and she's doing the work, then reconciliation is

definitely a possibility, but sometimes you can have restoration without reconciliation. And so that's kind of my philosophy.

Craig: You guys have been awesome. Thanks for spending this time with us today and really grateful for the work that you do. I'm really inspired by your story. So, thank you.