

Today on the show we're going to talk about what to do when you don't like the person in the mirror. The one who's looking back at you. Self-loathing is not a new phenomenon, it's part of the human condition. Plus, we live in a world that binges on comparison and the result is destructive. The good news is, we can dig into our root system, deal with the lies we're telling ourselves, and self-managed to a healthier version of ourselves. All of this and more, on today's Chris LoCurto show. Welcome to the Chris LoCurto show, where we discuss leadership and life and discover that business is what you do, not who you are.

Welcome to the show folks. Joining me today, back in the studio, is Joel Fortner. Welcome back.

Hey, glad to be back on.

It's good to have you back in here.

Thank you.

I always say that as if I don't see you, you know, like every day. So we got you back on the show because today we are talking about what do you do when you don't like the person in the mirror.

Why did you bring me on for this particular episode?

Well, Joel, I know that that's something that you struggle with specifically. The reason is, is because we both lead people through Next Level Life. We both facilitate folks in this. We've both experienced times in our lives when we have not liked the person in the mirror.

And it's not like it's something that ever really goes away. It's just something that if you learn the tools, you can deal with it. But we see this a lot. We see this just about every week. We see people that are struggling with negative self-image, negative self-worth issues, all that kind of stuff. And one of the things I don't think we've ever hit on the show is that angle of, I just don't like myself or I don't like the person I see in the mirror. Or all those pieces. So that is what we're talking about today, that I just don't like myself very much anymore. So we are going to hit that, when we come back right after this.

Next Level Life is our two day personal discovery experience, it's a one on one personalized event where we guide you through a process to help you discover your root system. To get unstuck in life, and to discover what's holding you back from freedom and peace. Imagine this. What if you could wake up every morning with a clear purpose? What would it look like to have healthier relationships with less conflict? Where would you be in a few months, a year, five years, if you had clarity, purpose and peace? Probably a big difference from where you stand today. Now I know it's possible, because I've been where you are asking myself, is there more? There is, and there is a better way. And it starts with Next Level Life. You can go to chrislocurto.com/discover to take the next step. Now, if you're struggling with discontentment, regret, or not feeling good enough, which most of you are, if you're filled with anxiety or your relationships are lacking, don't keep going through the same motions every single day. Learn how to move past the things robbing you of peace. Go to chrislocurto.com/discover and take the next step.

All right, we are back. And we're talking about how much you don't like to see yourself in the mirror.

Which is totally untrue nowadays. I'm pretty hot.

Well, let's just jump in there.

Sure, we'll just dive right in. It's actually a really interesting thing, and I actually didn't even think about this until we literally started talking about this, was especially how much even as a young boy, of growing up and getting to where I had weight struggles, and while that's really not the thing we're talking about today, is just looking physically at the problem. "Oh I don't like my nose. I don't like my ears." That's really not what we're talking about here. But I will look at myself back then and I would hate-

And self-image, that negative self-image is a part of not liking myself.

We're going deeper here. More like self-worth level type issues here. But there are things physically just on this topic that I did not like about myself. But you could really look back with what I now know, and really see even underneath the physical stuff that I didn't like, it all stemmed from such a self-worth struggles and people pleasing, and other people then going on to make fun of your physical attributes that you don't like, which really just lowers and lowers and lowers your worth and feelings of worthiness.

Yeah, I think for me, it's so funny because it wasn't until a youth ministry in the mid nineties, up until that point, that's when God really got ahold of me and brought a lot out of me, shifted things, shifted a lot of my worth issues. I still struggled with a lot of those for a long time. But up into that point, I was just the shyest kid. I was the kid who always had struggles of, you know, am I hurting people? You know, I have all this stuff in my past about, guilt from, well, if somebody's not happy, it's my fault. If somebody's life isn't going the way that they want it to, it's my fault. You know, it's just this, this guilt that lived with me the longest time. And, and it took God a long time to get that worked out of me.

I heard somebody say decades ago, you know, you're struggling if you walk by mirrors and you don't want to look. And we're not talking about the insecure person who has to keep looking in the mirror to look at themselves and make sure that everything is right and all that, that is not what we're talking about, which that, again, is still an insecurity, but that I don't even want to look in the mirror. And I look through times over my life where, even if I had absolutely nothing to do with it, if I was feeling like somebody else's pain was my fault. If I was feeling like, and I'm the guy who wants to remove everybody's pain from the world. I want to heal everybody. I want to take care of everybody. I want you to experience pain that helps you to grow.

That God uses suffering to grow us, no ifs, ands, or buts about it. But then our goal here at the business is to help people to see that, utilize it, do something with it, fix it, move on. So not talking about that stuff, talking about when it was just, "Oh my gosh, it's my fault." And so if it is my fault, and I may have quite a few people in my past, that highly suggested that their problems were my fault. That's definitely a possibility, not naming anybody, out there listening to the show anyways. But I can remember those times of how I didn't want to look in the mirror. And it's just that feeling of, I'm not good enough.

I'm not worthy enough. Possibly shame in those moments. Even if I knew that it wasn't my fault, that struggle of, I just don't like that person. So I can go back to those times. You can go back to some of those times, and know what that is like. And so that's kind of what we're hitting today. And we're just going to hit a handful of thought processes that people have and want to kind of

do a deep dive on this. So the first one we're going to talk about is that that thought process, I feel like I'm a constant failure. I feel like I'm constantly messing up. What do you see? What do you experience when you see that?

Well, the issue is not that you're actually failing, it's that you feel like you're constantly a failure. It's no matter what you do, you're making the wrong decision. People are telling you, you're making the wrong decision. There can be just such a deep level of submissiveness, people pleasing, passivity, lack of perspective of knowing like, wait a second, what's happening here? What am I allowing into my head? What kind of influence am I allowing? Is this even truth? That's not even really part of the process. The thing that will break your heart, is that person who it's like they're on a leash. It's like, they're on an emotional leash because they have zero perspective on what is truth, and any quality perspective. They can be led by anyone any direction, because there is just no worth.

They've been so trained to believe that they are worth nothing, or some level of that. And that's some of the most more extreme, heartbreaking situations. That's where you often see where, you know, there has been abuse or there is abuse going on in someone's life with that. That's on the extreme level, but even if that's not, you guys, it's really looking at, where is that me? And am I allowing in a type of influence that is just straight up control? That someone is trying to set my reality, to get me to believe things about myself, such as you are a failure, you are worthless. You're never going to make quality decisions, because then that becomes a belief system. And then look at how compound interest works that compounds and compounds and compounds and compounds. And then you're 30, 40, 50 years old. And you've literally been believing that way for decades. Look at where you can be in your life.

And again, I feel like I don't need to contrast this, but I'm going to do it anyways. We're not talking about the person who's failing and then going off crud, I screwed that up. Well, let's fix it and move on. That's not what we're talking about. We're talking about the person that you do feel like there's nothing you can do that is right. And again, I'm not talking about the victim mentality of just, Oh, well, I'm going to control somebody or manipulate somebody by going "Well, aren't I always a failure?" I'm talking about the person who, this is the lie they tell themselves all the time, right? This is what we see is that is that I can't do anything right. I'm afraid to take risks. I'm afraid to do things because you know, I'm going to self-protect myself like crazy, because I don't want to do something that causes me to be a failure yet again.

And what we see all the time is a lot of this comes from root system, right? We're going to see stuff in the root system. And what we will tend to see as we're working through somebody's root system, is we will see that usually it's a parent. It could be a grandparent. There's somebody in their life that is always responding with "That wasn't enough." And it doesn't even have to be the words. It can be, "Hey dad, Hey mom, take a look at what I did." "Yeah. Well, I did that when I was your age." And it's communicating to the person it's just not enough. It's not good enough. Or, you know, I'm better than you are. I think it is hard for people to understand how much the insecurity of, I don't think I know this for a fact that we do this for a living, the insecurity of parents, of being able to recognize that they're insecure to their own kids, that they're looking at their seven year old child, who's trying to impress them.

The seven year old child wants to get mom's approval, get dad's approval. Hey, look at me, look at what I'm doing. Do you love me? Do you think I'm amazing? Do you think something

incredible about me, and that sparks this insecurity in that adult. And that adult looks down at that child and is like, yeah, so what? Or yeah, I've done that. Well, you should have seen it when I was your age. Well, it was different. And those responses come flying back at that child as, you're just not good enough. You're not enough. So the crazy thing is, is what we translate that into is I'm a failure. I'm not good enough. I'm not worthy enough, because I didn't do something that caused mom or dad to go, "Oh my gosh. Wow. That's great."

Why would the kid ever expect that? I say this probably in so many Next Level Life events, somewhere along the line, I say, your kid doesn't look at you and think, "Oh, well you have a root system. And that's why you're saying that. And that's why that was a trigger for you. And you lost worth and went out of control. And now you're tearing me apart. Oh, well, I'll let you off the hook, mom or dad, and won't let it phase me."

It'd be so good if the child's going, "Dad, are you struggling?"

Exactly.

"Mom, what are you dealing with?"

Is something causing you to feel out of control today?

That would be the boom.

But there's no perspective there because you have to look, what is the child going for? Their goal is love. It's affirmation. It's look at this awesome thing I'm proud of. And then within one second, the brain is triggered loss of worth, out of control. And here comes some very poor response. And I mean that right there may be a gut punch to even hear that, that may be the person you see in the mirror, sometimes. It's solvable. That's the thing, we can get past this stuff.

And you know, we talk all the time about whether it's on the life side or whether it's in the leadership side, the business owner side, it does not matter. Where we get our worth from matters immensely. And one of the things that parents don't understand is that they are trying to get worth from a child. So it's one thing to recognize you're trying to get worth from a team member, a parent, a mentor, a leader, any of that, but it's so many parents don't recognize how much time they spend trying to gain worth from a kid. And so if the child is doing something better than you are, well, that's not good enough. No, you can't do that. You can't allow that child to be recognized for something that they don't even know that you did, or didn't do, or how well you did it doesn't even matter to them. They just want your approval. And the struggle and said that feeling out of control, like you were just saying, causes that response to come back in a way of, "So what?" And we're just hitting one aspect of what it looks like to parent and send messages to a child that you're a constant failure. What does that look like when that person grows up?

That's a fantastic question because we look at, you're now the adult who feels unworthy. Well just for communication's sake, leave it right there.

There wasn't a break in your mind where you all of a sudden, "Oh, you know what, I get all of this."

There's no grand coronation ceremony. No one has a Sceptre when you become an adult, unless you're British, no one turns you into a Knight. You just grow up. And you're now an older

version with that same root system. That same force of habit thinking is still there. Your belief system has now been fashioned. So you grow up, and now you're the struggling adult, who's getting triggered all the time by a spouse or people you're jealous of at work, because they're better at things than you are, or you're struggling in your job. And you're having tough conversations with your boss or whatever, and you're in comparison traps. So whatever it may be, and now you're parenting from that place. And then now how are you parenting your child with your own struggles? And this is how we perpetuate our root system. This is how we can't stop it because we keep creating generation after generation of people who are hurting and broken. Yeah.

One of the things we do here, cause I hate to see it, right? I hate to see a team member who's holding themselves back or self-protecting. And as Brian calls it, this is a concentrated environment. So we hit things here. Right on the nose, we jump on it, we solve it. We push people. You know, because we want people to get this solved. We want them to be working on understanding the lie that they're telling themselves, what is the truth, solving the problems. I'll never forget, Catherine, who gosh, just love her to death. Hired her to run our events and all that kind of fun stuff, and was struggling with some worth issues as she came in, and everybody has to go through Next Level Life on the team. But sometimes it takes a little while before they get in there.

And so she would struggle sometimes with a, "Oh, crud screwed that up. Or, Oh, crud, I screwed that up." And just wanting to make sure she didn't fail. And I would always go in and go: "And? So what? So you did, what are you doing about it?" And I love it because at one of the events, I was walking toward her and she responded, and she messed up something with the food or something like that. It couldn't have been anything big. I just said, "Catherine." And she just looks at me and she goes, "You're going to eat it and you're going to love it."

You could just see her go; "I'm not going to allow this to be a failure." And so it was great because she's responding to me. "I think I said, what are you going to do?" And she goes, "You're going to eat it. And you're going to love it." And it was her way of getting over that failure in her mind that, "Oh, I screwed something up." And it was a, that's a lie. We fix things around here. We solve stuff. We move out on stuff. So for me, that's one of those things where I'm always looking for that self-protection. Because the self protection means, and folks you've really got to get this, you've got to understand this. If you're afraid of failing, then you will put everything in place to not fail. Which means that you're holding yourself back immensely.

I call it putting another brick in the wall. You build that wall as fast as you possibly can, so that nobody sees you fail. So that you don't get put in a situation. Your neck never lands on the chopping block. What's the problem with that? It's like a self fulfilling prophecy. You end up putting yourself in a situation where you screw up. Because you've been trying to protect yourself all day long, from making a mistake. And next thing you know, something bust through and you have this mistake, and then you really beat yourself up. How do people respond in situations like that?

Well, when you think about that picture, you've protected yourself. You've protected yourself from failure, protect from failure. Well, what's going to happen? Are the failures just all the sudden going to stop? Just because you're being self-protective? No. Eventually it's just gonna all topple, and then it can be catastrophic. Then you can self sabotage massively in that place.

And as a leader, how do you see that team member? Like when you're a leader, I mean, you do this for a living. So if you were to see a team member in that self-protection mode, so that they're hiding from failure, how do you as a leader-let me ask that a different way. If you didn't do what you did for a living, and you didn't know what was really going on, but you're seeing this self-protection. How do you respond as a leader?

I'm going to possibly pull back? I mean, I'm going to get frustrated. I may start hammering on stuff and become very controlling, after a while I may fire you and let you go. Because it's like, you're awful. You're terrible. You keep failing and you're failing more and more and more.

You're not talking to me. You're not coming for help. You're just a frustrating team member. And so you're going to find the door eventually, but as the leader, I'll have zero insight about what's really going on.

Absolutely. Let's take another one. I feel like I never live up to other people's expectations or their opinions of me. Thoughts on that?

Oh, that's just huge. I mean, that's just like life almost every single day. I mean as being a person I think, especially my own story coming into like all this, what we do nowadays, but I was just so deeply trained to be that way. From parenting, to college, and academics. You're constantly trying to live up to people's expectations. But for me as a high I, it's their opinion. I mean, your opinion of me is the biggest thing that I would just kill myself over. Because I could never be good enough. And I would encounter people who would let me know that. And certain people, certain personality styles. But it's because I'm constantly seeking to do that. So you can see if you're that person that struggles with this, how little peace and contentment you live with in the world, because we don't live in the world isolated and we live with other people.

So whether you're going to church, or you're going to school, or the people right in your own home or your workplace, if your force of habit, decision making and thinking is constantly trying to get people to think favorably of you, or have some positive opinion of you, or fight to the death to keep any negative opinion, which was me as well. You get to five o'clock in the day and what are you? You're absolutely drained. You've spent so much emotional energy throughout the day, because of what you created, let alone you look back on yourself and think, "Gosh, because of how I operate, how many false expectations that I set throughout the day?" And it just sucks your life.

And it is so incredibly exhausting. It's amazing, the things that we talk about Next Level Life, how much time do you spend protecting yourself to the person who's protecting, to this side, how much time do you spend trying to get people's approval? And whenever we ask those questions to whoever the person is dealing with one of these situations, they always go, "Oh my gosh." That's always their response. "Oh my gosh, 16 hours a day." Is like, exactly, right? You spend your whole day trying to get worth from somebody. And it's so-I want to say, funny. I want to say, sad. It's a combination of both. We see the people that can spend all day long trying to get approval and you do literally see them physically exhausted at the end of the day. You know, that person that's just like, "Oh, I just can't do anymore."

It's like, what is it that you've been doing all day long? Where's your focus been? It's trying to convince people to have really good opinions of you. To have really good expectations of you. You mentioned that you're high I, obviously, as we talk a lot on here on the personality styles, D

I S and C, and one of the things we will see I's specifically do, I've got a pretty darn good amount of I in me as well, is take on things to impress somebody. So a high I will try and impress a leader by being that savior. "I can make that happen. I can do that. I can do this thing." And what happens is you get to a point where you're out of capacity. There is no possible way you can keep doing all the things that are now on your plate with excellence.

Something's got to fall apart. And I remember in my early days of leadership, doing that to impress a leader, and getting to a point of going well, now this is stupid because now I can't do anything great. But a lot of folks don't ever see that. They want to blame it on the leader. They get to the point where they can't impress that leader anymore. Things start falling apart. The leaders come around going, "Why you're screwing things up?" And next thing you know, it's the "Well, you put too much stuff on me." Again, it becomes another self fulfilling prophecy; that whole time it was the, I hope I get you to think I'm amazing. Here's the problem with all of that. Let's say that they did have a good opinion. It only lasts for five minutes.

It only lasts for 30 seconds. You don't impress somebody and now their opinion of you is phenomenal and you're full of worth, because it just doesn't work that way. It's something that you have to come back after again and again and again. So even if you were trained early on to garner somebody's opinion, maybe you had that parent that always held back love because they were insecure. And so you kept trying to get it out of them, you know? And that brought on a lot of that. What happens is, as you roll forward, it becomes the, you never can get enough. And next thing you know, you're failing miserably.

This reminds me of a this story, I was in college and I won some award or something. And I remember I was sitting at lunch at the end of a semester. And I worked in, in this very Joel way of sharing that, hey, look at this accolade. But I was trying to do it in this very humble, like type of a way. And one of my peers who was a very high D, she turns and looks at me and she was controlling, but she absolutely called me out right there in front of everybody. And I was so embarrassed because she saw exactly what I was trying to do. And I never forgot it. And actually, I learned something from it. I learned a, hey man, don't do crap like that. You know what you're doing. Don't do that. It's completely unnecessary. But, but guys, I used to do stuff like this all the time, because of this right here. I need you to approve of me. I need you to know that I'm awesome. And I'm special. And I'm capable. Because you don't feel it on the inside. And so to Chris, to your point, it's all the time you've got to come back and have people affirm it over and over.

And people think that of you all the time anyways. Right? So people to always say, "Oh my gosh, Joel is so amazing. Oh, Joel is just incredible. Oh, Joel did a great job." And yet you can still walk into your day, and if somebody is not saying it today, all of a sudden that negative self-talk comes up, I've got to go prove myself to somebody. I had that moment probably I don't know, a week or so ago. And I think I shared that with the team where I just caught myself. I was gonna say something out to somebody. And I went, "Oh my gosh, you know exactly why you're doing that. Knock it off. And it was funny because some of our younger folks on the team were like, "Wow, what'd you do?" "I'm like, I didn't, I didn't say it."

And it's just like a shock to them they were like, you didn't say it. I was like, well, of course I didn't. I saw what I was doing. I called myself out. I worked through the truths. That's it. But we spend our lives without the tools, continuing to do that very same thing. So I love what you just

said, "Yes. This is a controlling person." Yes, they were dominant to you, but you could've gone the other direction. "What a horrible person, what a monster. Look at them attacking me. Look at who they are. They're terrible. I need to go find somebody else. I need to stay away from that high D, because they'll catch me. I need to go find somebody else to prove myself to." Another one I want to hit is the trouble forgiving yourself. How have you experienced that Joel Fortner? No, I don't know what that's like. I'll you speak into that.

Yeah. I have the first half of my life and decently into years later still, I struggled with guilt, guilt of things that I've done. People that I've hurt, stupid things that I've done. And I'm somebody who does not have a problem calling my own self out. I've done stupid. I'm a firm believer in the sooner you understand the stupid that you've done, the sooner you can get past it, the longer it takes, the more you try and protect yourself from anybody, knowing that you did stupid. Oh my gosh. No, I've done stupid. I've hurt people. I've been saying that forever. You know, man, I've hurt people. I've screwed stuff up. I've done stupid. And it's funny to watch people's responses. It's just shock.

Like, I can't believe you just said that. I went, no, no, no. I said out loud for years. Why? Because it keeps me in a place of going, yep. I've done stupid. I am doing stupid now. I'm will do stupid until I transitioned from this life into the next one. Right? It's something I'm very aware of. And it keeps me in that place of not trying to hide it. It keeps me in that place of not trying to protect myself, but until God got me to a place of just smacking me upside the head and saying, you know, how's that helping you? You know, what are you doing with that? There was a lot of time in my early days of traumatic stuff that I experienced were all I could do was seek God and go help.

How do I get to this place of forgiveness and forgiving myself on stuff? And being God, he has shown me many ways, especially through King David. A lot of stuff in the early days was, you know, showing me stuff that King David did and how he got through forgiveness. And just a whole lot of stuff. You know, obviously with the whole gospel message, it's a very large message and a large kingdom of forgiveness, but I had to still get to the place of going, okay. Here's a whole lot of stuff that I have felt guilty for my whole life that I had absolutely nothing to do with. This doesn't belong to me. It's not mine, but people have pushed this field guilty and separate that out by, Oh my gosh, here's the crap that I have done. Here's my stupid. A lot of times victim mentality would say, well, it's all everybody else's fault and not look at the responsibility side.

And that's pointless. That's a colossal waste of time. For me, I had to take on all the responsibility of the things that I had done and walk through this process with God of saying, I've screwed up. I've hurt people. What do I do now? You know, I've, I've messed things up. What do I do now? So for me, yeah, I have had those times, do I still have those times? Geez, let me think through that. Do I have trouble forgiving myself? I have to think about that, but I can tell you the first half of my life and even beyond that, some, yup.

Yeah. Yeah. I mean, it was such a lifelong long struggle to work through this. And we see tons of people who come through Next Level Life, who struggle with this as well. And because you go back to where we started this conversation, that if you believe a lie, that you have to be perfect. You can never be a failure. You self-protect over all that stuff. It will hold you back from ever taking personal responsibility. And there's freedom in personal responsibility. When you

rush toward personal responsibility you're not allowing a lie to hold you back from rushing there when you can just run right to where did I mess that up? Where did I screw up? How did I contribute to conflict with my spouse or with whoever, you're seeking failure. You're not allowing a lie to hold you back. That says I have to be perfect. And you struggle with perfectionism, which leads to all kinds of control problems and worth problems that you're looking for. You're not taking yourself so seriously to have to be, Oh my gosh, I have to be perfect.

Because you're an insecure person who takes themselves extremely seriously in a way of looking at it to where you see the cycles, guys, you see the cycles of how you can never get out of it. That's what I love about one of the things about Next Level Life is how as we learn to see and identify those cycles and we learned to break them down.

So we are going to talk about that on what we can do. How do we solve some of these things? And what does it look like if we don't, when we come back right after this. Hey folks, here's the deal. Every business has a culture, but are you leading yours intentionally, or settling for whatever comes in the door? If you're finally ready to create the company culture you've always wanted, then you're going to want to sign up for my free digital video series, Creating a Culture of Champions. I will personally guide you for 10 days to get clarity on the culture you desire and lead your team to embrace it. You can sign up at chrislocurto.com/culture lesson. Again, if you're ready to make a change, sign up for my free digital video series, Creating a Culture of Champions at chrislocurto.com/culturelesson.

All right, we are back. And we are talking about not liking ourselves very much. What happens when you don't like the person you're are? And here's the reason why is because you know, this show, we don't hit 30,000 foot view stuff. We dig in. We help people to solve things. We want people to get past this kind of stuff. We have tools to help them. But one of the things I want to hit really quickly before we get into any solution on this is why is it so important that we figure this out? And one of the things, when it comes to, you know, we've been talking about is, you know, negative self talk we've been talking about is lying to yourself. All of that for us falls under the category of self hate. Self-loathing. I don't love myself.

I loathe myself. And really, let me just say, it's more important to take a look at what God's love is for you than your love for you. If you're so focused on you, then you're missing out on him and trust me, you will never love yourself like he loves you, but here's what happens when you live in that place. When you live in that space, we have a lot of folks that come in and, you know, most of the people coming in are believers in Jesus Christ and a kingdom of forgiveness, but we'll have people that will come in that are nonbelievers as well. And go through the process. One of the biggest things we see on both sides, believers and nonbelievers, is this almost disdain- is disdain too strong? For the nonbelievers to disdain is probably decently spot on, for the believers and anger towards God. That there is this I'm mad at him. Because he's allowed this stuff to happen forever.

And you know, he is a mean God or a hurtful God. And they have this view of God. And they don't realize that their belief system, this decision making process, these surface level responses, the training from their root system, the lies that they tell themselves, are shaping this image of who God is. Now. I will be very clear and very honest, God is a God of avenge. There, there is justice. There is, you know, there's tons of mercy. There's tons of love from the moment Adam and Eve sinned, God was already setting up salvation from the garden. If you don't

believe me, go read what he's talking about. From that very beginning, he's already setting up redemption, right? From that very beginning, he's protecting them. They just did something stupid. He actually kicks him out of the garden so that they don't eat from the tree of life, and live this way forever.

Right? So he's already protecting, he's already talking about her child, you know, which is pointing towards the Messiah. Thousands of years ahead, he has a God who is loving. He is long suffering. He is slow to anger, but when it gets wicked, he is a God who will solve problems. He will punish, he will correct you get five pages, any wiped off most of the people off of the earth, because it got so wicked, that he took that away. But the problem is, is that people just see that God, they just see the God in their mind. That looks a lot like the parent that was not very loving. That looks a lot like the parent who was controlling or even abusive manipulative. And so all of this negative self talk and for a lot of folks, you know, we've had a lot of salvations that've come through Next Level Life and, and plenty of folks that were nonbelievers that left nonbelievers as well. But what we see is, is that attitude towards God is usually based heavily on the experience with human beings and this negative self-talk about themselves. Speak to that.

I love what you're bringing up here because when you think about why is this so important, just to kind of bring that full circle and make sure that's super clear. I mean, you're talking about your relationship with God here. I mean, you're talking about your, your eternal life. I mean, so if that's your belief system, you know, as I love to say, I mean, behavior follows belief. Well, if your belief system has, God is only this way. What behavior is going to follow that belief? You're not going to seek God. You're not going to seek obedience because God says, seek obedience because you love me. Not because I have a gun to your head. And you just, you just freely do it when you love your father. It's just like in a great parent child relationship, but it compromises your entire relationship, possibly your eternity, let alone the day to day decisions of how you operate your life without faith and without God in it. And the more that I grow in that, the more I see there is to that comment that I just made of even peace and contentment and how I treat MaryBeth and how I treat our four kids and the team here and you and other people that it's all directly linked because of my relationship with God. And if I focused on him as only a, I'm unworthy, he's mean, he's just angry. Look at the cascade of decisions that can follow that and how detrimental that can be in your life.

I always tell people never apply anything you've experienced with men as the characteristics of God. Even from the good sides, which you know, which is great. That's fantastic. But here's what we do. God is way greater than any characteristics that we have as human beings, right? But don't apply the negative characteristics that you see in men to God, because what happens is you just pointed this out. You may be missing out on eternity with him because of something you experienced with a human being. With something that you experienced with somebody who was controlling and selfish and self centered. God lovingly corrects, praise God. There is a doctrine of suffering when it comes to God, he uses suffering to grow us. He uses suffering to bring us closer to him. He allows that to happen in our lives to draw us closer to him. When it comes to man, man, use this suffering to punish us for their own worth, their own insecurities, their own struggles.

So when we don't realize how much the negative self-talk, the lies, you know, the self-sabotage, the self-loathing, all of that affects us. We definitely don't understand how it affects things like our relationships. We don't see how it affects our relationship with the most important being, God. But we also don't recognize it. This is a super important thing. And believers need to hear this. Everybody needs to hear this, but understand if you don't love God, you don't love people very well either. You can convince yourself you do, but if you don't recognize all the things that God has done for you, and become incredibly thankful, that's the goal, right? The more I learn what he's done for me and that he has given me eternity with him and that he's taken away my sins and there's this kingdom of forgiveness. Then I love him more.

I recognize what he's done for me. And that causes me to love him more. Love myself, more love people more, right? I love, you know, the team, my wife, my family. It just changes the way my heart is towards people. When I don't love God. When I think he's just this horrible guy, this horrible being, then what happens is as I become incredibly selfish, incredibly self centered, self protective, self-sabotaging all of those pieces. And I lack massive authenticity. That's another big piece that we talk about in Next Level Life when I am operating and all of these, these surface level responses to self-protect, what happens is the authentic Chris Locurto goes away. And this guy shows up who has to protect himself and impress the crap out of people. So what do we do about this? Like if we're going to start, you know, we're mentioning some of these things, you know, the tools, root system perspective self-awareness and all this kind of stuff. What are some steps we can take to self-manage?

So I think one angle, the one place you can start guys, as first of all, is seek awareness of where you're struggling. If you can't see that he will never get anywhere. So when you come through Next Level Life, you're not only going to get that, but you're going to get deep into why. And where does this come from. But short of coming to Next Level Life is we've got to seek out, where are we struggling? What do I call those things? There's power and definition. And I can see what I'm struggling with. And if you recognize like, wow, I am struggling with self-loathing. I do struggle with self hate. I do. And then when you go from there, go to then what are you telling yourself? Where's your brain focusing? What negatives is it focusing on? What lies are you focusing on? And sometimes you have to slow down.

Those are two words I use in Next Level Life all the time. And when I'm coaching people is we operate just boom, boom, boom, boom, move on to the next thing. And we just get so fixated maybe on those negatives, but we're not in a problem solving mindset. We're just in kind of a protective, or I suck mindset, which is you're not problem solving. So mindset wise, I have to go to problem solving. What's up with me? This is where I'm struggling. This is what it's called. What am I telling myself? And then we have to get to truth and quality perspective, because this is about using rational brain, logical brain, over emotional, or sometimes irrational brain, right? There's power in that. When we slow down and practice steps like this.

One of the things we'll ask somebody when they're struggling is, "What's the lie you're telling yourself right now?" "And sometimes people go, I'm not telling myself a lie." "What are you telling yourself?" "I'm saying this." "Is that truth?" "No." "Then you're lying to yourself." You know, you can see that. We see it all the time and folks, we see them go into the struggle. Uh, we see family members do this. We see people that we know, people that we work with clients. We see it all the time. You can see the person going into the struggle. And one of the best

questions to ask if you're not using this to manipulate somebody is, "Hey, what's the line you're telling yourself right now?"

And if somebody can trust you because you're not being controlling or abusive, then they can actually stop and go, "Oh my gosh, I'm telling myself that, you know, I'm not good enough. Or I always fail. Or your opinion of me is that I'm stupid." Or, you know, and all of a sudden they can see that lie. They can see the lie that's right there. And so a big key to this is to recognize the lie that you tell yourself, because that's going to point to where you're struggling immensely. Everything's going to come back to self worth. We always talk about this all the time. But if I'm struggling with somebody's opinion, then I'm probably already creating that opinion in my mind, I'm already saying they don't like me. I'm already saying they've judged me by my clothing. They've judged me by my, the car that I drive.

They judged me by the report that I turned in last week, whatever that is. And I don't even know the truth, necessarily. I'm probably creating this. So one of the things we'll say is, is that an emotional liar and an intellectual lie? Which is funny because it kind of stops people in their track and go, what's the difference? Well, an emotional lie is something that you're creating in the moment that you don't have great basis for. You don't know if it's truth. You don't know if it's going to happen. If it has happened. Any of that stuff, an intellectual lie will be a lie about something that's already a fact that you know the fact about. Well, of course it's not intellectual then, because you don't know any facts about it. And so it wouldn't make sense to lie to yourself about something you were to know the facts.

Well, yeah. So it's an emotional lie. Yup. So why are you emotionally lying to yourself? And then you can start to see, Oh my gosh, like you just said a few minutes ago, it's not a logical thing that I'm telling myself, it's an irrational thought. It's the irrational brain. I'm a rationally coming up with something, and I'm spending time on it. And I mean, you and I get through the irrational thoughts, the lies pretty quickly. I mean, we can get over those, you know, a lot of times it's five seconds. You recognize it. You get through it with the truth. Boom, you're over it. But for a lot of folks, and this was us back in the day as well. I can I'll speak for myself now. It's true. There are times I'd spend days on it.

You know, in the early half of my life, the younger half of my life, I could spend days convincing myself that somebody thought I was crap. That somebody thought I wasn't good enough. We were talking the other day, we had a client and the other day we were talking cars, and we talked about how in youth ministry, back in the mid nineties, I sold my favorite truck, old beat up truck. But I love that thing. Big old fast engine. Just love that truck because I had convinced myself that all the other youth leaders were judging me on my vehicle. And I have missed that truck for what does that now? 25 years, I have missed that vehicle. Because I convinced myself of what somebody thought. And here's the funny thing afterwards, when I went and showed them all my new used car, my newer car, everybody's like, Oh, that's great.

What did you use to drive? Nobody knew what I had driven before. And the funny thing is I have wanted that truck back forever. So, if we can catch ourselves, if we can define it and say, you know, this is the thing that I'm struggling with. We always tell people it's not difficult to see what you're struggling with. What we teach them is the why. Cause coming in, we have some folks that they don't even recognize the what, but we'll have a good number of folks that can see the what they're like. I know what it is. And then we help them to see that, why that, that, that

phenomenal tool that releases all of that. But so once we get to that place, what else can we do?

Well then when you operate with that perspective, because you're going to get triggered, you're going to be triggered.

Is that you then start practicing your information is that you have to practice using perspective to self-manage when you get triggered. So reactively, when you get triggered, recognize what's going on, battle lies with truth what's perspective here, at times, what is my responsibility here? Sometimes we get triggered off something and we want to hide from failure rather than being like, you know what, that's me. Don't hide from it, own it. Again, there's freedom in personal responsibility. And then when we get root system level information, we have to remember just like we teach, Hey, other people have a root system. That's important for you to know. Well, honor yourself as well. Realize, Hey, remember, where did this come from? This is an ingrained or trained behavior.

And when we operate with perspective, we're not operating in just pure, raw emotion anymore, and getting obliterated by it, and living in a shame cycle or living in a place where you hate the person in the mirror. You just don't like yourself anymore because you're not operating with any quality perspective when you're in that place. So you have to remember no, this information about yourself. That's why I tell people. And they come to through Next Level Life. I said, don't let this be a two day experience. Keep the information in front of you. Because one of the reasons why you get really good at this is because you memorize it, you know yourself so well that you're able to be like, boom, I'm past it. I just worked through that thing. Then it's rinse wash, repeat.

But proactively is that, I mean, as a believer, growing in your relationship with God is absolutely the number one most important thing we should do. And it's easy to hear that as believers, who've grown up in, you know, in church your whole life and be like, yeah, yeah, yeah. I know that.

I'm talking about your one-on-one deep, intimate relationship with God. I'm not talking about just a using the Bible or using faith as a coping mechanism.

I'm talking about making it reality. So that's where we've got to be as believers because we need to be growing in our worth as well. We need to be really knowing truth about what does God say? Not that we're perfect. We're we're, we're still broken. We still sin. We still fail. That's just, we're humans, but we don't have to live in guilt and shame over that. We can live in truth.

We learned this a couple years ago, uh, going to Israel, a Eastern mindset compared to a Western mindset. We live in this Western culture where a lot of, a lot of pastors, a lot of church leaders will say, read the Bible for what it says about you, which is a ridiculous statement. Uh, but I will say it's one that I used to believe as well. And then when we were in the middle East, what we learned is they have a different perspective. They're like, it's not about you. It's about God. Learn him. If you learn about him, you'll learn about you. And man, what a huge shift in perspective of going, well here we ask the question, well, how did God part the red? Over there they're like, you're kidding right? He made the water. He made the land.

He made the earth, he made the universe. He can definitely move it around. Yeah. Ask the question. why would he do it? It's just a completely different perspective. When you look at

yourself and your relationship and you start to recognize how God sees you, when you learn him and you learn his, you know, there is one theme from the front of that book to the back of that book. And it's redemption. It is his love. It is his redeeming power. It is him setting us up to have eternity with him if we go after it. And if we don't, well, then we choose eternity without him. That is his love for us. And when you start to see that he is that great of a loving father and he's somebody who's crazy about us. Then all of a sudden you start to change the way you look at yourself.

If I look at man's opinion, all I see is the things that I come up with in my mind. Or the things that I experienced. You know, maybe I've got a parent that doesn't think I'm good enough or, I can never get their attention or whatever it is. But then I can look at God who has pursued my heart my whole life. What does that say about my worth? Do I compare my worth to a created being or to the creator of the being right? The more I see that relationship with him. And I understand him, I seek him the more I see myself, the more I see my worth in his eyes. The last thing I want to just kind of hit here is that man's opinion. So much of what we're talking about is built on how do other people see me?

What do they think about me? How do they experience me? As long as you are stuck on the opinions of others, then you're always going to operate yourself in accordance of trying to control those opinions. If I can get you to think that I'm amazing. If I can get you to not think that I'm stupid. If I can get you to think that I'm brilliant. If I can get you to think that I'm attractive. If I can take a look at social media, it's ridiculous how much we try to control people's thoughts of us. If I convince myself that I can do that, then I succeed. But what we always say is it lasts for five minutes. Now I've got to go do it again. If I can get past those lies, that negative self-talk and tell myself, man, I'll be honest.

Your opinion just doesn't matter. Now, if it's a good opinion, not a self esteem, crap. I don't believe in self esteem, self worth, self respect, absolutely. Self-esteem could go out the window because it's saying you're a good person no matter what you do, screw that noise. Take responsibility, understand your worth. But if I see that your opinions or your judgment or your whatever is not healthy for me, great. Get it out of your life, remove it. I'll get it out of my life. If I can see that it's supportive. Even if it's calling my butt out, it's it's to help not to hurt. Hey Chris, here's something I see you screwing up on. Hey Chris, here's something that I experienced with you. Hey Chris, whatever. Hopefully it's got some positives in there as well, because I'm going to take it better when you hit me with the gut punches.

But if I can see that, then I can see that your opinions of me are for me, not against me. Not talking about victim mentality, not fluffing somebody up. Let's just say that. But being honest, truly caring about somebody. If I can understand who I need to remove as far as their opinion, and who I need more of, not to make me feel better, but to get me healthier, than it changes the way I look at people's opinions. Any thoughts on that?

Yeah, a lot. I mean, it's just checking who's your influence. Who are you listening to? I mean, just because you grew up, at times, with parents and this is not a dishonoring thing. What I'm talking about here, I'm talking about not everyone's parents are perfect. Right? And just because you grow up and you look back and you realize, wow. Actually the opinion of my father, there was really not a very good opinion. And you are shifting in life to actually seek healthier influence and opinion. It's really checking who is in your life today, and really take, getting a

really good perspective on what kind of influence am I really allowing in? Because again, that's affecting today's decisions. It's affecting today's emotional struggles or lack there of.

Yeah. We seek each other's opinions. There's been multiple times something's happened. I've turned to you. I'm like, Joel, what'd you see? What can you tell me about that? Give me a gut punch. Because I know that it's a healthy process. Here's the key. God's never going to give you bad opinion. God's opinion is always going to be truth. No matter what it is, whether it's, Hey, you're sucking or Hey, you're doing a great job, whatever it is, it's going to be honest. So things to wrap this up, you've got to focus on getting to that place of understanding that a lot of stuff has come from your root system. It's affecting the way that you think it's affecting the way that you judge people. It's affecting the way that you judge yourself, you know, having that negative self talk, lying to yourself is only going to keep you perpetuating the problem.

It's going to keep yourself self-protecting and keep you from going after healthier stuff. The sooner you recognize that if you will face these things, take responsibility for your actions. Take responsibility for the stupid that you've done, because everybody has done stupid, and not care about other people's opinions. I'm not saying if you've heard somebody then go back and, you know, ask for forgiveness to make it right. Do whatever you can. You know, it's not walking away going well, I don't care about you. I only care about myself. It's the sooner you recognize that you do stupid. The sooner you can focus on fixing the stupid. And again, no ifs, ands or buts about it. The King of the universe has got the best way to do this. So while we have a ton of tools that we teach and we have so much more, this in Next Level Life, understand the more that you focus on him and his obedience and being obedient to him, it will change the rest of your life.

Well, Joel, thanks again for joining me on the show.

Always great to be on.

Hopefully this was helpful to you guys out there. We would love to hear from you, any questions, thoughts, comments, whatever podcast chrislocurto.com. Also, you know, people who need to hear this, share this with them, help them to get this, I would bet money there's somebody on your mind right now. Maybe it's just you you're like, no, but I'm only thinking about me. I would bet money. There's somebody else on your mind right now, share this with them and help them to get some help. If you need to go through Next Level Life and trust me, you do, make the decision. All you gotta do is just get information on it. Go to chrislocurto.com and click on Next Level Life and just get information. That's all you need to do. But folks as always take this information, change your leadership, change your business, change your life and join us on the next step.