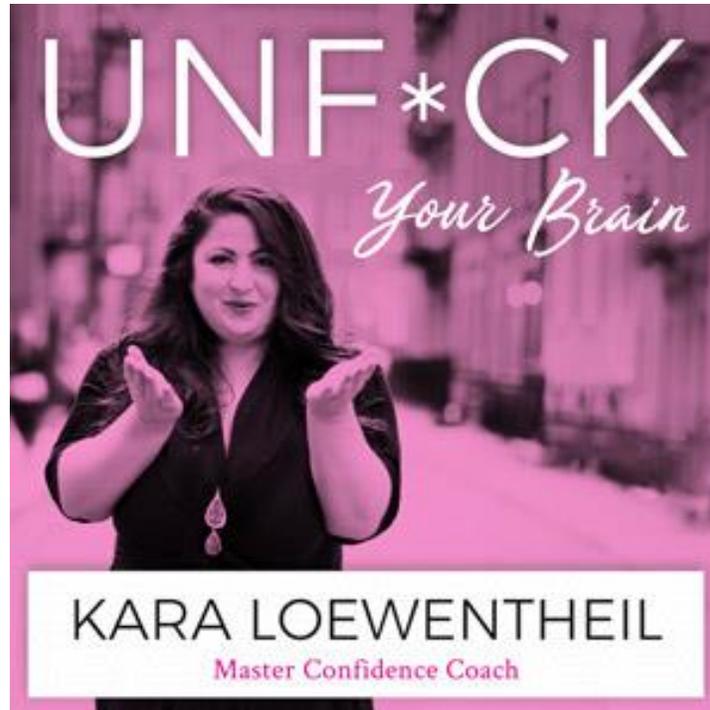


**UFYB 209: Reconciling Political & Religious Values
with a Feminist Self-Concept: A Conversation with
Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching
Graduates Judith Gatton and Simone Seol**



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Kara Loewentheil

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

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Welcome to *Unf*ck Your Brain*, the only podcast that teaches you how to use psychology, feminism, and coaching, to rewire your brain and get what you want in life. And now here's your host, Harvard Law School grad, feminist rockstar, and master coach, Kara Loewentheil.

Hello my chickens. I have two of our - I was going to say repeat offenders but they're not offenders. Repeat favorites on the podcast today. So it's no secret that I have what people would generally probably call progressive or leftist, which are not the same thing, but you could categorize my politics in a lot of different ways, anywhere from mainstream progressive to radical leftist, somewhere in between depending on your definitions.

But that kind of political belief set is not a prerequisite obviously for thought work because the whole point of thought work is we don't have objective claims to truth. And it's not a prerequisite for using this work, even the way that I teach it.

And so today I really wanted to have this conversation with two of my students who grew up with or currently identify as more politically conservative than I am who nevertheless went through the Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching and to talk about their experiences both with sort of the evolution of their thoughts and beliefs and feminism in general, and also their experience kind of bringing those belief systems or histories of being raised to think a certain way into conversation with the advanced feminist work that I teach, this kind of social justice lens on thought work, all of these things.

So I think it's a fascinating conversation, whether you are someone who is more politically conservative yourself or has a loved one who's more

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politically conservative that you try to talk to about these things, or just want to hear more and think about the different ways that this work kind of echoes or resonates across different points on the political spectrum.

So we are going to get into that with Judith and Simone, two of my faves. Before that, I want to let you know that we are launching. We are opening the doors to the applications for the Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching finally.

I am offering this one time next year in 2022. This is the time to apply if you want to be in the only class in 2022. So you can go to unfuckyourbrain.com/acfc or text your email to +1-347-997-1784 and use the codeword ACFC.

So again, it's unfuckyourbrain.com/acfc or text your email to +1-347-997-1784 and the codeword is ACFC. Here's the deal, applications close November 12th. We do offer scholarships. Applications are accepted on a rolling basis, so if you want to apply, you should apply as soon as possible. But in any event, before November 12th, that's when we close the applications.

For scholarships, that's not a rolling basis. We hold a certain percentage of spots for scholarship applications. So not as big of a rush if you want to apply for a scholarship in the sense that we're not going to sell those seats out to people who can pay full price. We are holding them but we still are considering those applications on a rolling basis.

So if you want to apply and you need a scholarship, also the sooner you apply the better. You must be a certified coach through The Life Coach

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School by February 28th, 2022. So that means you have to have gotten your approval that you are certified by February 28th, 2022.

Right now, it's only open to coaches who have been certified through The Life Coach School for intellectual property reasons because the teaching that I do builds on some of what is taught in that program. But obviously takes it deeper in one particular direction, into the social justice work, the intersectional feminist lens on coaching, and takes it deeper into really knowing how to coach and speak to and hold space for and understand people from different backgrounds than you may be from, or from your own background if you feel like you need even more theoretical and coaching tools to be able to effectively communicate.

So I always say if you're trying to coach a woman without this stuff, it's like bringing a butterknife to a sword fight. We don't want to be doing that. We want to really be able to show up for the complex identities and challenges that people face in a real world that doesn't exist in a white box, as you have been hearing if you've been listening to Outside the White Box, my podcast with Simone.

So you got to be a certified coach through The Life Coach School by February 28th, 2022. The course begins in March. It's the only class we're going to fill for 2022. So you got to apply now if you want to be able to do it next year.

Applications close November 12th, scholarships are available, people from marginalized communities are especially encouraged to apply and those applications are prioritized. And I cannot wait to see what kind of badassess are going to be in this amazing group. Alright, let's get to this conversation.

[UnF*ck Your Brain with Kara Loewentheil](#)

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—

Kara: Hello my chickens. So the first thing you all need to know is that we showed up to this recording and although you cannot see them, my guests today are perfectly color coordinated and looking stylish and I don't match them. So I have to coach myself about that and if I seem subdued during this conversation, that's why. I'm having outfit envy.

So my guests today are the wonderfully stylish and brilliant ladies, some of whom have been on the podcast probably. We've been having a lot of these conversations but I'm going to let them introduce themselves then we'll talk about what we're here to talk about. We'll just keep this very mysterious. Judith, you want to tell us who you are and what you're all about?

Judith: Yes. My name is Judith Gatton. I am a style coach for curvy women. I am also a master certified life coach but I'm figuring out how to do the whole new title thing.

Kara: That's how you do it. I'm a master certified life coach. Also a master certified coach with a certification in advanced feminist coaching. Yeah, that is too long. You got to figure out how to...

Judith: I got to figure out all the cool ass things.

Kara: I'm a master coach with advanced training with a certification in advanced feminist training? I don't know. We're going to have to do some...

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Judith: We'll play with it.

Kara: Alright, what about you Simone:

Simone: Hey, I'm Simone Seol, reporting live from Seoul, South Korea. I am a marketing coach for life coaches, host of the Joyful Marketing podcast, and you know what's so funny? Oftentimes people will refer to me or introduce me as a master coach. I'm not a master coach. I'm just a coach. I tried to bribe Kara to let me into master coach training and she was like, we'll see about that. So I'm trying to get on her good side.

Kara: I think it's more like I was like I'm not in charge of that. I don't even work at The Life Coach School.

Simone: You have connections to powers that be.

Kara: Someone texted me today that was like, can you pass a résumé along? And I was like, I don't - I'm just friends with Brooke, I don't know what's going on over there. I don't know who's hiring. I don't know anything.

Simone: You're in a secret cabal.

Kara: No, I always have to message Bev and be like, who do I talk to about this thing? Who's even over there anymore? What's happening? But I'm sure people feel like that about now that I've hired all these people, I'm like, I don't even know who works for me. I'm like, who's handling - I just put things in Slack like somebody attend to this.

Judith: So you've reached that level, you're like...

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Kara: A minion please. No, of course not. They're all wonderful and not minions. But it is weird. I have historically known everything that's happening and now there's multiple levels. There's directors and people under them and I'm like, I don't know who's doing what. So I'm just like, I don't know, whoever's business this is, can you please take care of it?

Alright, anyway, so we can do a whole other episode about that. So we're here today to talk about all the things. We're here because both Simone and Judith went through my Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching. And I have been doing a couple of conversations with people who had concerns before joining because I think they're interesting little microcosms of the different kinds of backgrounds that people have before they came to this work and then what their experience was.

So we had a conversation with several coaches who wouldn't have identified as feminists before the training, for a variety of different reasons, some having been raised in a very - in a religion where feminist was a bad word, some being women of color who always thought of feminism as just sort of white feminism that had nothing to offer them.

And so today, we're taking a slightly different tact, which is both of you had - I don't even know that it can be clearly defined. Both of you had different reasons that I would I guess categorize as being a mix of more conservative political or religious belief systems potentially than I have and that you were sort of concerned or had questions about bringing into a feminist coaching certification, or just the way I would be doing it.

So that may not even be the right description but that was the idea in this podcast was to talk about that. What space is there for different belief

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systems or different political belief systems, both in feminist coaching, and then in the program too, and for different religious convictions. So let's just talk. Do one of you want to start us off with what your thought process was about it? Neither of them want to talk.

Judith: I'll just go.

Kara: You're the master coach and Simone is not, as you may have heard, so you're kind of in charge here.

Judith: She's evolved in top secret things with you so I feel like I should point at her, but no, I won't.

Kara: It won't be top secret by the time this podcast comes out.

Judith: Okay, so I mean this has always been my trepidation with coaching in general has been sort of where does God fit in? Where does God fit into the model? Where do we put Him? I refer to Him as a Him, as also an entity.

So that has always been kind of interesting to reconcile. And then I'm always excited to do whatever it is that you have on offer, but it did give me pause like, okay, I'm going to be entering into this and in terms of my political views or my social views or coming into this as a woman of color, I was very excited to learn all the intersectional part of that and feminism, but I had trepidations about feminism and my religious beliefs, which are more on the conservative side.

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So it was kind of like, and then you sent us this book, I don't know, that history of feminism book with the illustrated one, which does not take a very great view of religion in it. So of course I read that first and I was like, oh man, okay, have I made a good choice here? So that was sort of the trepidations. It's always this idea of do I have to reconcile all these beliefs with each other. And I don't know that reconcile is the best word but it's the only word I have and the word I keep coming up against.

Kara: I'm curious how you do think about - this doesn't have to do with the certification but just for yourself, I'd be curious what Simone thinks too. Where do you put God in the model?

Judith: For me personally, God is a C. But I also think that circumstances are thoughts that we have attributed to be facts. And I think they're a little more fungible sometimes.

Kara: That's all human language we're using to describe them.

Judith: Exactly. So for me in my comfort level and when I coach myself personally on religious matters or something with regard to faith or spirituality that I might be struggling with, I put God, I put Holy Spirit, I put that in the C line. To me that is a circumstance.

Kara: Can I ask you another question about that? I don't mean a challenging question like I'm trying to challenge you. I'm just curious how you think about this. So where do you put - if you have a client who believes in God but a different God than you believe in, does that go in the C line or the T line for you?

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Judith: I would check in with them to see how they viewed it because it's their model. I'm showing them their brain. I'm not showing them my brain. So in my own personal coaching, to me, it's a C and I feel good about that and that's neutral to me.

But if I was coaching a client and depending on where they were coming from, what they presented as a problem or the issue or the thing they wanted coaching on, I would be showing them their brain. So to them is their God a C or is their God a T or the spirit or however they view that. Where would it go for them? And that's where we would place it.

Kara: And how do you think about the distinction between - there are some things that a client will tell us is a circumstance that we'll be like, that's not a circumstance, and there are some things that a client will say that is a circumstance and we'll be like yeah, that is a circumstance, and I think we all have those different lines.

I'll put racism or patriarchy in the circumstance line and a lot of other coaches won't. But I think that's always an interesting question is how are we - I feel like one thing that came up in the advanced certification all the time was like, okay, the first time you learned coaching it was very black and white, clear "rules," and now here at the big girl party you are going to acknowledge that we're making it all up and that we're going to take responsibility for that and not pretend that it's always a clear rule.

Yeah, some stuff we put in the circumstance line other people wouldn't, and that's all made up too. What's a circumstance and what's not? So interesting. I'm curious, what about you Simone?

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Simone: I was actually taken aback when Judith said that because I understand what she's saying but to me, the way I would have answered that question is that I experience God on the T line and the F lines and I guess in that way, God can show up on my R line as well. So to me, it's a lot more experiential and my way of experiencing the world rather than God exists and I take that as a C line because to me that's a given because I'm a believer. So that's how I would explain it.

Kara: It's almost like it wouldn't occur to you that it would even need to be a question whether it's in the C line kind of?

Simone: For me personally. I would never obviously impose it on a client unless they believed the same thing I did.

Kara: Yeah, sure.

Judith: I'm with you Simone. To me it's fungible. I could see Him as a C while also experiencing Him in my T, F line.

Simone: It's definitely both.

Judith: It's fluid but I also don't find it problematic to put Him in the C line in the context of my own self-coaching.

Simone: Sure, yeah, same.

Kara: So interesting. Well I guess let me ask you Simone first because I have more follow up questions for what Judith said. But what were your hesitations about - I know there were political ones, but then let's maybe try

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to separate them if we can. Did you have concerns from this perspective too or were yours really more on the political end?

Simone: So this is the behind the doors conversation that I had with Kara. I didn't sign up for this until very late because I had kind of written it off in my mind even though I loved Kara and everything that she did. I'd written the certification off in my mind as oh, it's going to be leftist indoctrination.

Kara: She thought I was running a Marxist labor camp.

Judith: Oh my gosh, how fun. It would be fabulous, right? A very fabulous Marxist labor camp.

Kara: Marxists often make seven figures and run businesses.

Simone: There's a lot to be said about that actually. But yeah, I'm really trying to think beyond the political progressive-conservative binaries because what does that even mean? I think all those labels are thoughts and there would be many conservative rooms where if I could walk in, they would consider me a rabid progressive. And there are many progressive rooms where they would consider me crazy conservative. So I don't think those labels do us justice.

But I do know that I have beliefs and ways of looking at the world where a lot of the things that a lot of my progressive friends take for granted I question. And so I tend to have a lot of respect for tradition and the cultural paradigms that we inherit, and I tend to think that religion is a good thing and it's really hard to capture one's political philosophy in 10 seconds.

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But Marxism generally makes me itchy and identity politics makes me itchy. That said, I always did and do still strongly identify as feminist. And so to me, this is a very nuanced space in my mind. And so in the end, I signed up for the advanced certification because I trusted Kara to create an experience where I wouldn't have to show up with some part of my intellect hidden. And I could just be engaged in all of my intelligence.

And I was right and I've gone on the record several times saying it's been one of the best investments of my life. What struck me in the very beginning was one of my very favorite things that you did Kara was you said...

Kara: It was when I sent everyone a portrait of Marx, right? In their gift box? And also a stuffy, like a stuffed animal so that everyone could snuggle Marx in bed at night.

Simone: Workers of the world unite.

Kara: I had to promise Simone literally that there would only be a tolerable level of Marxism.

Simone: So in one of the earliest lessons, it might have been the earliest lesson, you said like, I have biases, I have my own perspective, and I'm paraphrasing but I'm not forcing them on you. And it's more useful to be aware of what our biases are as opposed to pretend that we don't have them and that we're talking about these ideas in a vacuum.

And I'm still speaking in Kara's voice, you said, I don't want you to read all of the course material, you were basically giving us the context of your

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awareness that you were not coming from a vacuum and that you have biases too. So I can't remember exactly what you said, it was a lot more eloquent than what I just described.

And that was such a relief to me because it gave me permission to not have to pretend we all have the same assumptions, and secondly that it gave me permission to acknowledge that we all have existing beliefs and biases that influence the way we think about coaching and that's okay.

As long as you have awareness of it and as long as you have awareness of how it's operating in the back of your mind so that you can be cognizant of how you bring it to coaching, which I think is what's missing in so many conversations, that people don't think that their biases are biases. And second of all, I think it's because people think if I have a bias, that's wrong, it's bad, it's influencing my coaching negatively, which it doesn't, it just exists. You have a human brain, you have a set of beliefs.

So that statement that you made in the beginning made me feel like my thoughts will be welcomed and that I could engage with anybody else's thoughts from an honest place. And ever since then, were there things that you said, that you taught where I thought I would have said it differently, or I would have presented it differently because again, I think in a lot of progressive worlds, it's taken for granted that religion is this horrible thing and tradition is this horrible thing for women.

And obviously so much of that has so much validity and has to be brought to light and discussed, but somebody who actually is religious would talk about those things differently, right? And especially thinking we spend a lot of time talking about the woman's body, right? And I think if you come from

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a theological lens, we would have a very different discussion of how religion views a woman's body as opposed to a progressive who's not favorably disposed towards religion and in fact on women's bodies in general.

So a lot of choices that you made that if I were running the course, which I never would because it's not my expertise, I would have done it differently. But I was able to always critically engage because you weren't pushing it down our throats as you have to believe this. But this is how we think about these ideas and you were challenging us to critically question what we are believing and if we agree with what we're believing.

And if we are fully aware of and practicing bringing our highest coaching intelligence to how we use those ideas to help our clients in the way that best serves them. And so in a way, you left so much room for us to come to our own conclusions and to create our own feminist best practices for coaching no matter where you are on the political or religious spectrum. I felt like you really allowed for that space and I really took advantage of that. So I don't know if any of that made sense.

Kara: That all made sense. There's so much stuff in that. One, I'm just thinking - I was reading some of the final projects today for certification and Brenda who's been on the podcast a million times now is a weight loss coach obviously and her project is a module for her weight loss course about fatphobia.

And I was like, this is what I want. It's not that you have to be on board with me and what I teach and my project wasn't like, let me secretly try to

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convert Brenda to be an anti-diet coach. I know that she had her own experience and believes in the work she does. That's not it.

But it's like oh, now everybody going through that, if you're going to teach a weight loss course, then I for sure want you to teach a segment about fatphobia in your weight loss course. That is such a perfect example to me of how I'm not here to tell people what their feminism should look like really. It's critically engaging with these systems of oppression and how to bring them into your work.

I should also just say, the course when we're talking about the cultural context of religion is very focused on - I'm barely an expert, the way it's hard to be an expert on anything these days. My little version of it, it's really the impact of Puritan sexual culture on American culture. I'm definitely not making any claims to be speaking about the global set of religions.

Simone: There is a lot of beating up on Christianity, which for the most part I'm like, yeah, that's legitimate, it deserves to be critically thought about. And if you are a Christian, some of it will make you think and it will make you clarify what your own position is and why you think that.

But ultimately, I think what you were pushing is not the feminist agenda or the progressive agenda, at least with that awareness. I think what you were pushing is hey, think more deeply about why you coach the way you do, what thoughts and assumptions you bring into it, and be more in integrity with these questions.

And you create the space for everyone to find their own answers in that. And dare I say it's a safe space for people to bring in whatever ideological -

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you never coach us on how to believe. You coach us on how to think and how to bring more intelligent coaching questions into the conversation. So I felt like it really sharpened my thinking as opposed to push my beliefs in a certain direction.

Kara: I'm curious what you think about this Judith, especially because I actually - we can always cut it out if you don't want to talk about it. But I coached you about your belief in God in the program. So I'm curious, are you willing to share that experience?

Judith: I'm totally willing because that was life-changing. It's funny because I don't remember specifically what I presented as the coaching problem at the time.

Kara: It was something about leaving your job. It was like...

Judith: Oh yeah, something about leaving my job.

Kara: God didn't want you to take a certain job or you were supposed to have the job you had and you weren't supposed to leave it. It was something like that I think.

Judith: Yeah. That somehow I was predestined, which obviously that word is fraught with meaning, but it was predestined...

Kara: Not in this sense maybe.

Judith: Not in that particular sense. But to be an attorney who handled catastrophic claims because that was a mission, vocation, et cetera, which

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is often thrown around in Evangelical circles, like you're called, you're called to do x, y, or z, which gives it this extra special meaning that you can't ever escape whatever it is that you were initially called to do.

Kara: I would still be a lawyer too. That would be sad.

Judith: Right? And the funny thing is I was trying to use the Bible, evidence from the Bible to support my desire to leave. So I had gone...

Kara: This is all coming back to me.

Judith: Embarrassingly...

Kara: I had a really intense law school school supplies moment where she had cross indexed and color coded the Bible. I can't believe I forgot about this.

Judith: Every mention of art and beauty and fashion.

Kara: Oh, that's right. You were like, okay, I'm going to build my case - this is the record for this case. This is my document, this is the discovery that was given to me for this case and I'm going to build my argument with numbers about how many times art and beauty are mentioned in the Bible. That's right. This was so good.

Judith: And I had done a study on different - obviously because there's many different versions of the Bible.

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Kara: You got to cross index them all. Obviously, you can't know what your calling is until you've highlighted every version of the Bible. I do remember you did the original Aramaic and Greek versions also. The Dead Sea scrolls, like hold on, I just got to highlight this.

Judith: Right, so when they talk about Lydia and the New Testament being a maker of purple cloth, yes, I did do a study about what that would mean at the time. No shame, I will totally comp to that.

Kara: Some buffers look very productive sometimes.

Judith: Oh totally. This is completely buffering with art and style fashion references in the Bible. And I kept thinking if Esther spent a year beautifying, surely, I can work on style. Surely. Because this just makes so much sense. But back to the coaching...

Kara: What we did was we just looked at the spreadsheet you'd come up with and we just decided whether or not there was enough evidence. I just gave a ruling, right? That's what we did.

Judith: Right, we made a determination because that's how coaching works. The beauty of it was, again, perkening to what Simone said, you didn't tell me what to think on that particular occasion. You just showed me like, what my thinking was doing and why I was doing it.

And I obviously had the choice of whether I wanted to continue down that track of highlighting everything and its mother to produce evidence to support the idea that I'm permitted to leave something that I no longer want to do. And I think you had asked me and I don't want to take this out of

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context, but something to the effect of, aren't you Christian? Don't you have Jesus? Aren't you into that love stuff? Or something like that.

Kara: I mean, I'm obviously a very skilled practitioner of these arts. That is a really quality coaching question right there.

Judith: Something about that really struck a chord with me because yeah, I think sometimes in the Christian context and when we get to coaching and we add sometimes what can be dogmatic coaching and we take it on as a new subset of religion with our own religious beliefs, we drive ourselves mad.

And I can only speak for people who are similarly wired to myself. I drove myself mad and then pausing to reflect like, wait a minute, you're doing that because you're trying to build evidence to support your desire to leave, which is not necessarily a religious thing. That's a human thing.

You want to change something in your life and you're looking for external justification. You just happen to use the Bible on this particular occasion to justify your desire to leave. And I don't remember what you asked me but you asked me something and I literally burst into tears and I was like, I think you broke my heart.

Kara: I don't remember exactly what I asked you but what I remember from this, which is similar to almost all the coaching I ever do on God and religion always turns out the same way, which is that - this is just my coaching experience.

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People's relationship with God mirrors the relationship with themselves. Every time I coach somebody about their relationship with God - and this is so interesting because it's like, I think ACFC is playing with this too where on the one hand we all believe that people need to have our same beliefs and experiences to understand us, and there's some ways in which that is useful in coaching.

And then there's some ways in which having someone from the outside, outside your perspective is useful in coaching because they don't share whatever your preexisting biases are, or they don't share your beliefs. I coached somebody in the program about a minor medical thing but something that everyone else, all the master coaches had ever coached her about it believed her and agreed about, they took her C as a C when it wasn't really a C.

Sometimes someone from an in group does create that safety and support where we feel like, okay, you're not going to tell me I'm hallucinating everything, but somebody from an out group has a different perspective because I don't have a personal relationship with God because that's not what I believe. And so when I look at the way someone's talking about their relationship with God, I can see so clearly that it's always mirroring how they think about themselves.

So if they're really hard on themselves and they don't have unconditional love for themselves, they don't believe that God has unconditional love for them. They might say yes, God has unconditional love for all humans in this abstract way, but when I'm like, what about you? Does God have unconditional love for you when you're yelling at your kids and drinking two bottles of wine? They're like, no, definitely not that.

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So I feel like that's what came out in your coaching, which is so similar whenever I coach someone on this stuff, which is you're coming at it from this very I have to justify it, I have to have enough evidence, and I have to get permission from this punitive - as though your destiny wasn't a fun thing you got to discover. It was like an onerous assignment that you had to live up to, which is how you also were thinking about yourself in your life.

Judith: And it's funny because if I were to coach someone on that, who were let's say the same religious beliefs as I, that's when it comes back to the relationship with yourself. Yes, on a very abstract level, higher level, I believe God is love. Abso-freaking-lutely. But bring it home and suddenly my own ish with myself...

Kara: People are like, I can totally make 100 grand this year, and I'm like, great, can you make \$8000 this month? They're like, oh my god, no.

Judith: I think you actually coached me on that and I think it was I wanted to make 200 grand and you asked me if I can make 3K, also burst into tears. So yeah, abstractly...

Kara: Basically, come sign up for ACFC and I'll make you cry a lot.

Simone: You made me cry too at some point.

Kara: Yeah, I made Simone cry, I made Judith cry. Just running around making people cry.

Judith: You have to live up to your reputation though. I think that this happens, right?

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Kara: I have some scary reputation apparently. So I'm curious what you thought - you said that you have some, you feel like you are politically progressive in some ways but then your religious values are more conservative. How does that play into your concept of yourself as a feminist coach? How do you bring that all together?

Judith: It's interesting because I grew up in a matriarchal family where women rule the roof. So feminism wasn't really a thing growing up per se because we were all sort of feminists by default rather. It's kind of interesting. And then I learned about actual feminism from nuns who had...

Kara: As one does.

Judith: As one does when they go to an all-women's Catholic college. And honestly, the most beautiful experiences I had with feminism and also understanding relationship with God in that context came from the sisters. Religious Sacred Heart of Mary has a long tradition of standing up for women's rights. They're the first to send women to study abroad, they had colleges and high schools all over the world that were...

Simone: I'm so happy about this conversation.

Kara: When you said from nuns I was like, hasn't Simone said that to me? There's some kind of mind-blowing going on.

Simone: I feel so safe right now.

Judith: People have had some negative circumstances with sisters but I only had positive ones because I knew them in college. I didn't have the

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elementary experience. So the sisters I learned from were amazing and they had doctoral degrees in theology and philosophy and the world. Their perspective on the world was very beautiful. They held their religion, but they also were very progressive in their politics. So to me, it was...

Kara: If you think about history, a nunnery was one of the few places you could go to get an education and not have to get married, right? I mean, if you were interested in learning and not in having 100 babies, that was kind of your option.

Judith: Yeah, exactly. So to me, there's kind of like, that was reconciled. That was all good. All kind of made sense to be progressive in your politics and believe in women's rights and the right to determine what happens to your body, while also believing you're a child of God. So yeah, it all kind of made sense. It still makes sense to me. I don't know, Simone, what is your experience with that?

Simone: I think I have a similar experience. I don't really feel like - there's some places where I feel like coaching, not really coaching but the way I want the world to be is different from certain parts of the way the church wants the world to be.

I want a lot more women leadership in the world, including inside the church and stuff like that. At the time, there's not agreement in the highest echelons of the hierarchy about that. But other than that, I think I agree. My experience of the dignity of the human individual and of the human spirit and our power to create beautiful things in the world, all of this to me, it comes from God and it's very much related to how I think about my faith.

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Those are the same ideas that we talk about in coaching. How do we create? How do we know about our inherent self-worth and our inherent valuableness as human beings? And to me, those ideas are very closely connected to God.

So in so many ways there is no divide. And I think from the same paradigm, we get these feminist ideas that women are human too, women are worthy and just as valuable as men and we're not less than, we're not second class citizens. These ideas to me come from God. So I don't know what question I'm answering any more.

Kara: Just free riffing.

Judith: I love it. I love the idea that - also because I do this on - I go through these bouts where I'm like, I'm going to study this particular thing in the Bible. And I've done lots of surveys of women in the Bible and there are some really incredible women in there that are oft forgotten and often not spoken of.

But there's a weirdly little feminist thread underneath all of it if we go looking for it, which is kind of cool to see it through that lens if you will and if you want to, to review some of the stories you knew from yesteryear or things that you were told when you were younger and revisiting it now as an adult with perhaps a feminist lens and seeing something really cool and something beautiful that you might not have seen the first three or four or five times.

Simone: If you wanted to, for example, do a final project on the women of the Bible or how to bring in feminist spirituality, religiosity, I think Kara

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would totally welcome that and help you to think through that in the most intelligent way possible so that you can be proud of it. And so I was just trying to tie it back to the certification somehow.

Kara: Listen, one of my training classes at LCS I taught was 12 members of the Church of Latter-Day Saints and one ex-member and then one person who had worked at Planned Parenthood. And everybody survived. Everybody made it through. And some of them still like me.

I obviously - first of all, when we say I'm not religious, that's true in the sense I guess that I don't have a relationship with a divinity. I'm Jewish, which is an ethnic religion, so there's quite a lot of religious ritual structure and observance that goes along with being Jewish. It's just a kind of hybrid system where more than in most other religions, people will follow all of the rule - well, not all of them, I'm not Orthodox.

But like, will follow a lot of the kind of rules, be practicing religious customs. It's not weird or taboo unless you're Orthodox probably in Judaism to be like, oh, no, I don't believe in God but yes, I keep kosher and I keep the Sabbath and I do all of these things that are religious rituals, even though it has nothing to do with my...

When I was growing up, each of my brothers and I would get to this point where we'd be like, all defiant to our parents. Like well, I don't believe in God so I don't have to go to synagogue. And my mother would be like, I don't give a fuck, that's up to you. Who says I believe in God? But this is what we do, we're going to synagogue, these are the rules, this is the culture, that's what we're doing.

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So sometimes I think my perspective on it is partially shaped by I don't think of myself as anti-religion in a way, I mean, just in general. But also because my idea of what religion is is also different than what a Christian person's idea of religion is, or what somebody else's idea of religion is, but particularly religions that are based more on an internal personal spiritual relationship with God, that's what some parts of Judaism are based on, but it's not what the religion is necessarily based on the way that a lot of people practice it.

So it's almost like, as always, it's almost like it's our thoughts about what do we even mean when we're talking about religion, or what do we even mean when we're talking about God? All of these things mean different things. But I do think - you sort of mentioned dogmatic coaching Judith, and one of the - in that sense of the way we do one thing is the way we do everything, coaching isn't about not being religious or being a certain religion or believing in God in a certain way or whatever.

But it is going to almost always be true that if you have a certain relationship with your religion, I think sometimes you're going to bring that relationship into your relationship with coaching. If you have the belief that you have a lot of, let's say, guilt and shame around your religious dogma, I think you're going to end up with a lot of guilt and shame around your coaching dogma. You're going to sort of relate to coaching the same way you relate to your religion, and you're going to relate to God the same way you relate to yourself.

None of which means it isn't true or untrue or helpful or unhelpful. It's just starting to see those patterns and the ways that whether you put it in the C line or the T line, it's always okay, what are my thoughts about this and

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where do they come from, and do I like them, and how are they showing up in my life?

When you can start to be like, oh, weird, I don't think I'm good enough and God doesn't think I'm good enough, maybe there's something going on there, or oh, I see I'm responding to my coach the same way I used to respond to the nun who taught my Sunday school. When you start to see the ways in which you're playing that same thing out, I think a lot of the reasons people are attracted to coaching are the reasons some people are attracted to religion too.

It's a set of beliefs about how to understand the world, of how to operate, and there's a shared creed and a shared understanding and a shared inside language that other people - I think about this in social media where I read some coach's post. It's unintelligible to somebody else. It's like, here's a joke about how the C is not the T is not the F. I'm like, we're all like hahaha, and everybody else is like, what the fuck are you talking about?

I'm sure that somebody could write a thesis about parallels between the contemporary life coaching community and religious community and there would be a lot of parallels.

Simone: People everywhere are just looking for answers and I think those of us who used to find it in religion are now finding it in coaching. And I think there's a little bit of a dangerous edge there where a lot of us seek out coaching and want to get better at coaching as a way of almost looking for a strange version of Christian deliverance.

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Like I will be saved and I'm going to be perfect when I'm better at coaching, when I get to this level, which is transposing that kind of thinking onto coaching. But that was never - at least that's not what I think coaching is. Coaching isn't here's how you get perfect and saved.

Kara: And that shows up in perfectionism. This is something that I talk about in the course, which is it's not just obvious and true that you're supposed to become ever more perfect until you finally evaporate in perfectness, whatever's supposed to happen at the end.

That's one specific cultural and social ideology. I mean, I guess I also come to it a little salty from the perspective of the dominant culture being influenced so much by Christianity and seeing the ways in which for good or bad a lot of those belief systems are just taken as the standard and for granted.

And when you are a member of a minority religion, you're just like, hey, we don't all think that. That's not the only way there is to think about these things. There's a whole other system over here. What were you going to say Judith when you wanted to get in there too? Who knows anymore?

Judith: I'm just following wherever this thread goes.

Kara: I know. There's no good way to wrap this up.

Simone: I just want to say one more thing. You can correct me if I'm wrong Kara, but I really think that what Kara wants for everybody - I'm your spokesperson now. I think what Kara wants for everybody is to come into your own coaching thought leadership.

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And I think the world would be a better place if we had plenty of robust examples of a really intelligent coaching leader who is an Evangelical Christian, a really intelligent coaching leader who's an atheist, a really intelligent coaching leader who's secular Jewish, Catholic, Muslim, Hindu, all of these things.

So up until now, the picture has been more homogenous and I think that it's so great that we're having this conversation so people know that there is a place for them in coaching whatever they believe, or if they like nuns, there's a safe place for...

Kara: The point of Judith's coaching wasn't your relationship with God is a mirror of your relationship with yourself, so that means God isn't real, don't worry about it. That's not the coaching. The coaching is your relationship with God, the way you're thinking about God now from your limited human brain is showing you how you think about yourself.

You can correct me if I'm wrong, but the way that I felt as the coach was like, your relationship with God is so much bigger and more loving than you can see right now because your relationship with yourself has capacity to be so much bigger and more loving than you're seeing right now.

Judith: And they can't see me nodding emphatically but yes.

Kara: And I don't have to believe - what's so funny is I feel like at the end of this, what we're really saying is sometimes you can just coach no matter what your back - I don't have to believe in God myself to see that you do and that that relationship is important to you, and that probably the height of it is not well, God judges me a lot and thinks I should be a lawyer. I don't

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have to be a member of your religion to see that that's probably not the height of the human divine relationship.

Judith: I should hope not, dear God, that would be kind of sad and anticlimactic. Especially since I think there's a C. S. Lewis quote where sort of longing for a far off country, if the far off country is where we're all lawyers, God help all of us.

Kara: I always think about that Anne Lamott quote which is, "If you find that God hates all the same people you do, then you can be pretty sure you made him in your image."

Simone: So good.

Judith: But I think there was something that was said on the Clubhouse with Corinne a week or two ago that I think is important to note here just about the community you created in ACFC and the beauty of it. And I think this is just the beauty of your coaching in general is we don't have to believe the same things or agree on the same things.

You're always offering us these new ways of looking at something, a question to ask ourselves, to take what you say and run with it and make it our own. And I think all the beautiful work product that's coming out of ACFC, you can see that. Everyone took something, gravitated towards something and ran with it, made it their own, and all the beautiful projects that are coming out of this, new modules for people's coaching, Simone has this beautiful model heresy and all these other things that we can see that she's doing.

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It's very cool to see the spark that was lit and then everyone took a little bit of that flame and went off and ran with it. And I think that is really, really cool, and we didn't all have to agree on what we were going to do or choose the same thing.

Kara: Nobody can. We talk about this on the other podcast, I talk about this all the time but the idea that even in a progressive movement or any moment people are all going to agree is like, you could go to one meeting of a feminist organization, I have been on the board of several, it's like, two goals, four people, 17,000 opinions.

There's no - no social movement even agrees, even on a small scale. So it's so insane that what we've decided that what social justice means is everybody having the same set of acceptable opinions when like, within any movement, this goes back to our podcast that we've talked about, but there's always accommodationists and there's always people who want to attack from the outside.

And then there's always institutionalists and there's always people who want to be revolutionary. There's always people with different ideas about what's the goal and what's the agenda and what's the best process.

Simone: There's no unified feminist agenda.

Kara: Exactly. There's no unified any agenda. Seriously, anybody who thinks there is has never been to even one meeting of a social justice organization. Three hours on what kind of beverages to order before you even get to anything else. That's not just social justice, that's any human.

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Judith: Get the church ladies together about having a baby shower for people and people lose their minds.

Kara: Right. It's like people have only existed somehow in online spaces. They've never been to a meet up in their neighborhood or something. Anyway, to try to pull it together, this podcast is just turning into Kara rambles with her friends. That's what we do here. Interesting things come out.

I do think that is so important to understand because I would say because of the patriarchy, feminism in particular has this reputation of being kind of strident and a purity politics and whatever else. And I guess there are some - if somebody was like, I'm going to take your certification so that I can coach women on how they shouldn't teach their daughters to read, there are probably things that I would be like, that's too far.

Feminism does have some meaning, does have a meaning, that's not it. Reasonable people can disagree on what empowerment is but making your female children consciously illiterate is not one of them. There are things that would be too far. But within the range that yeah, I just get to choose because we're all about taking ownership of whatever our own biases are, there's so many different ways to empower women differently.

We're not all supposed to look the same and what's going to be empowering to somebody who has a strong religious faith is going to look different than what's going to be empowering possibly to a secular Jew. And I want all my students to be out there unlocking their own genius.

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The point is to think more critically, think more deeply, and see the ways in which even if you are a feminist, even if you are a master coach, you're still holding yourself back. I still hold myself back. There's still internalized who are you to be this big, you don't really know, you should be better, all of that, unlocking all of that is really the point of all of this.

Simone: I think if you are like, I hate feminism then you might have a problem with this course. But I think if you're anywhere on the spectrum of feminism curious or wanting to...

Kara: Have you been considering potentially swiping right no feminism on Tinder for a dalliance?

Simone: No, but I think that's legitimate. If you're like, I want to be able to reconcile this in my mind, then I think it's the advanced certification is a great place to be.

Kara: Yes, and there's only a touch of Marxism.

Simone: That's debatable but I was able to survive.

Kara: It's a survivable - that's the tagline. The Advanced Certification in Feminist Coaching: a survival amount of Marxism.

Simone: Don't give power away to Kara or any system of thought to be your own person and therefore your own growth. And take everything that Kara and all the other wonderful colleagues offer to better your thinking. If that's your agenda then that's what you're going to get. That's what I got.

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Kara: That's true of the podcast too. A lot of people listening to this are not coaches, are never going to be. But I do think there's something about - I was having a conversation with a student the other day where she was talking about how hard it was for her and how upsetting it was for her when I said something she disagreed with.

Simone: Who made Kara your God?

Kara: Right. I'm like, you should be disagreeing with a lot of what I say. Some people don't think thoughts cause feelings. There's a lot to disagree with. We could start at the very beginning. I understand that we all want that authority figure, we want - to me, that's internalized socialization right there.

Women do not trust themselves to discern what is true or what is helpful, they don't trust their own authority, so they think their authority figure needs to know everything. And so then there's this very heightened stress and emotion if their authority figure says something they don't agree with or doesn't seem to validate a certain part of their experience or doesn't have the right exact politics or whatever it is.

I don't think it's because - it's not because there's something wrong with women's personality obviously, but it's that we don't feel equipped to just take what works for us or leave what doesn't, or challenge ourselves because we don't believe in our own authority and our own capacity to discern. That is the root of so much of the people pleasing and self-doubt that we have to rewire.

Simone: Amen.

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Kara: Amen. Alright, thank you guys for coming on. It's always fun to hang out with you and just discuss all the things under the sun.

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