**DENIAL (done)**

**Clark:**  Previously on Living and Effective

**Langberg:**  Denial functions like a drum for a broken heart. Part of that is just numbness. It's feeling like it can't be real, this can't be true, we can't absorb the reality, particularly if it were sudden and unexpected. But even if it were not, we disbelieve the loss for a while, it postpones the pain.

**Clark:**  This is Diane Langberg, practicing psychologist and the author of Suffering and the Heart of God.

**Langberg:**  And actually it's not always bad. In some ways it helps us accept that tsunami of loss bit by bit, so we're not overwhelmed, so we can take in the truth and then we have to back away, and then we take in a little more truth, and then we have to back away.

**Clark:**  I'm Richard Clark.

**Smith:**  And I'm Joy Beth Smith.

**Clark:**  The Christian Standard Bible and Christianity Today present Living and Effective season two, a podcast about what happens when the Bible and humanity collide.

**Langberg:**  The place where you get some of these things so well expressed are in the lament psalms. The whole idea of lament is something that Christendom, at least in the US, I think, has lost.

**Clark:**  Diane will be helping us use the stages of grief as a window into how the Bible meets us in our suffering. We'll begin with denial, and how it works its way into a biblical community. But first.

**Langberg:**  We don't actively lament. We worship and follow the man of sorrows, who had no place to lay his head.

**Clark:**  We'll begin with denial, and how it works its way into a biblical community. But first.

**Popoff:**  There's a man who has just been diagnosed with prostate cancer. The doctor wants to do surgery. You're afraid. Got this going, this supernaturally touch you and heal you. Next time you go to the doctor, you're going to get a good report. Don't miss this miracle moment. You've got to act now. You've got to move now. God wants to move on your behalf. But you've got to use your faith now to see his miracle power released in your life.

**Clark:**  So, right now we're hearing tape of Peter Popoff. He's a prosperity Gospel teacher who was really popular back in the '80s.

**Popoff:**  And Jesus, touch your people, Lord, with your mighty power? Oh God, I ask you to let that heavy burden roll away. Let the sickness flee away as your people move in faith, even now, in Jesus, mighty, matchless name I pray. Amen, and Amen.

**Clark:**  So, I'll be honest and say one of the reasons that we wanted to talk about Peter Popoff this season is because he's fascinating.

**Smith:**  Yeah, I'm enchanted by him. We could not have found a person who actually was a better character.

**Clark:**  Yeah, a better personification of the Prosperity Gospel. All of the aspects of grief are highly individual, but in some cases they can be fed into by others. That's what Popoff's doing here.

**Oppenheimer:**  Popoff, I think, had the virtue, if you want to call it that, of being the most audacious. He really was a Donald Trump figure in that he just realized that if you were shameless enough you could get people onboard.

**Clark:**  That's Mark Oppenheimer. He's written this wild article for GQ about Popoff called Peter Popoff, The Born Against Scoundrel.

**Oppenheimer:**  The image we have from Hollywood of the faith healing preacher, who's incredibly over the top, who puts his hands on you and starts screaming in tongues, the glossolalia, and then shoves you backward violently, takes your cane or your crutches and breaks them over his knee and says, "The devil be out of you." Popoff gave us that image.

**Popoff:**  He's going to touch your body, you're not going to need to walk on a cane any longer. How many of you believe God can just take her off of this case, restore her health, restore her strength, restore your sense of balance? Can I just throw it up on the stage?

**Commercial 1:**  Yes, yes.

**Popoff:**  She said it's all right. There she goes. Come on, you can walk. You can walk, come on out here.

**Oppenheimer:**  That is not what Jim Baker's faith healing looked like. Popoff was the down rent tent revival, rural preacher par excellence, and his victims of his fraud were, not exclusively, but the most gullible and most helpless. But those, of course, are the people with the greatest need to believe sometimes.

**Liz Popoff:**  Guess how much money she got after you prayed with her and you sent her the miracle spring water.

**Clark:**  Crowd testimonials are a common feature on old Popoff broadcasts.

**Liz Popoff:**  How much did you get?

**Audience:**  23,000.

**Oppenheimer:**  He was always a complete dissembler and liar, and it's amazing how many people he took in. So his father, so he says, was a Pentecostal faith healer as well. I take everything Popoff told me, even the things I've been able to confirm sort of, I take with a big grain of salt. He was the MacGyver or the James Bond of televangelists, which is he would go anywhere, he would travel anywhere, he would do anything to get the Gospel to people who didn't have it.

 In the '60s and '70s he was a tent revival preacher working his way up, doing the faith healing thing. He also claimed to do these stunts like dropping Bibles off the coast of Turkey so that they could find their way to heathens Muslims. He also said he had smuggled thousands of Bibles into China. And people believed this. For example, in 1982, the Associated Press said that Popoff had used helium balloons to deliver Bibles and pamphlets from Finland into the Soviet Union. So that's the AP believing him. He had a TV show and he was buying cable time and he was appearing on Christian networks. And so he also rode that wave that Jimmy Swaggart and Jim Baker and the others were also riding in the 1980s.

**Audience:**  Praise God. Thank you, Jesus.

**Popoff:**  I told you, God burned it out of there.

**Oppenheimer:**  I think Popoff fans were a specific kind of Christian, real Bible reading fundamentalists who were turning to Popoff to interpret verses because they had no other interpretive framework. That is to say they weren't interested in theology and they weren't influenced by a particular denominational reading of the scriptures. They didn't know what Calvin would've taught them about that, because they came out of a reform tradition. Right? Or they didn't have a kind of Catholic catechetical sense of how the Christian message should be read in their lives. Right? So Popoff was their exogy, was their interpreter.

 A lot of these people giving money they could ill afford to give. These were people who were living paycheck to paycheck. These are people who explicitly are in great debt. Popoff targets people who are in negative cashflow situations And one of the things he promises is that people's debt can be cleared. He never explicitly says, "If you give to me your debt will be cleared." He's very careful about staying on one side of the law, but the implication is clearly that people who are desperately poor can get back to zero, scratch their way back to zero by taking some of their social security check or disability check and giving it to him.

 People who have put their faith in these irrational quixotic measures, it's easy to dismiss them. And I too often dismiss them as stupid or gullible or simpletons, but often they're just very, very desperate. And it's not the case that wealthier societies don't succumb to the charlatans who play on the irrational, but I don't think they succumb to them as much or quite as badly. So long as we have a country where we have so many uninsured people for whom going to the doctor can mean financial ruin, that can only be good for Peter Popoff's bottom line. He's a doctor of last resort for people who don't have access to medical treatment.

**Popoff:**  All I heard in my spirit was an explosion, and the Lord said, "Big." And then I heard, "Big miracles. Big breakthroughs. Big blessings." And that's what God has for you, big miracles, big breakthroughs, big blessings.

**Oppenheimer:**  Pop off is what psychologists call well defended. A well defended person is someone on whom therapy is very difficult, because they simply won't do the work of introspection. Whom have I hurt? Who's hurt me? What are my struggles? What are my pains? How am I broken? What are the things I'm still failing at after all these years? That kind of vulnerability is terrifying, and there are people who succeed in this world by simply pushing it so far down by defending against it so strongly with so many fences, around fences, around fences, that they end up being functional in a way that is that they keep getting up in the morning and barreling through their day and making it somehow. But at the cost of having no authenticity or empathy. So one thing you know about these people is they never ever ask you about yourself, which is actually very interesting in a celebrity because a lot of celebrities, the way they seduce you is they actually are very fulsomely asking you, like, "Tell me about yourself. How are you?" Right. The Bill Clinton's of the world. His genius was he always made you feel like you were the center of the universe, however sincere or fake it may have been.

 And then you take someone like Popoff, and actually they're terrified of empathy because what would they find if they actually entered into an authentic I thou relationship with someone else? So instead, the only thing that can feed you, because you don't have authentic human relations, is more material possession.

 He lives in this gated community in California. It's very hard to get in. And I ended up just... And I scaled some fences and ended up in this, at one point, behind some razor wire, and I found another way around to that. And I scaled another fence and finally got inside the community. And then I walked around a bunch of cul-de-sacs and eventually found myself outside the gate to his house. So there were gates upon gates upon gates.

 I rang the doorbell and no one answered, but it was this extremely... It's a multimillion dollar house in this very, very exclusive gated community. And he's nearly impossible to find. And then his office, which is out by Claremont, which is in the California inland desert. Similarly, cameras everywhere, blackened windows, security guards, to the point where if you come and park in his parking lot and just idle your engine and start taking some notes, as I did before I went up to knock on the door, the security guard comes out and knocks on your window and says, "What are you doing here?"

**Smith:**  So I think it's clear through Popoff's ministry that we can see that denial has a tendency to isolate, and it creates this whole crazy alternative narrative where we feel the need to protect ourselves. So how do you see your denial isolating you?

**Clark:**  Yeah, I think I will go weeks without talking in depth about my real concerns. I think I'm exhausted by them.

**Smith:**  You have a tendency to stuff it down and to pack it away, to go home, to act like your day was fine.

**Clark:**  Numb out. Numb out. That's what I do. Oftentimes I will like, "I need to rest. I need to relax. I need to unplug." But by unplug I just mean from work and stuff. And so, I'll watch a lot of TV or I'll read a book. I think it's those automatic things that tend to isolate me, because it's like I don't want to be burdened with the responsibility of articulating with those closest to me what is happening to me and why I feel the way I do.

**Smith:**  Yeah, your autopilot is what gets you in trouble.

**Clark:**  Right. And some people are on autopilot and they're watching TV late at night and they see someone like Popoff.

**Smith:**  I don't think so.

**Clark:**  No?

**Smith:**  I think that the autopilot is a luxury, and almost a result of privilege in a way. Like you can go home and video game, and that feeds the denial. You can go home and wife and kids and just turn it off. And that feeds the denial. And it's a way to self-sooth. But some people aren't afforded those privileges, and so they have to find other ways to enter into denial.

**Clark:**  They're like, "I do not have the money to pay my bills and I have to convince myself this will change."

**Smith:**  That's right. They don't have the same means of self-soothing as you do. They aren't afforded that same luxury. And so it's like if they can't distract themselves in the same way, what will they turn to?

**Clark:**  That's right.

**Smith:**  And I think that's how Popoff enters the scene where he is like, "Oh, if you don't have the video games, if you don't have even the alcohol, if you don't want the drugs, if you don't want to deny in those ways, let me show you something else that will take away the pain, that will take away the cancer, that will take away the poverty." And it does have a certain kind of allure, which is really scary.

**Commercial:**  Two weeks ago, I got $8,600 and paid mortgage off.

 And I send for the miracle spring water, and I use it. And by the time I go to the doctor to do the surgery, it was gone.

**Oppenheimer:**  The people who are looking for a profit, the profit is going to seem outlandish. Right? This is true of biblical profits, it's true of people who decide that an authoritarian strong man in politics is their profit, it's seldom someone who's really laid back and chill and subtle.

**Clark:**  Here's Mark Oppenheimer again.

**Oppenheimer:**  He was a showman, as so many of these preachers were, they came out of a tradition where if you wanted to grab people on the radio dial or if you wanted them to come out for your Wednesday night or Saturday night or Sunday morning entertainment, they were competing against the picture show, the movies, the saloon, the gambling hall, the river boats. They had to be every bit as captivating and flamboyant. And Popoff was utterly willing to be that captivating and flamboyant.

 And, of course, one of the ironies of the Prosperity Gospel is that when part of your flamboyance is that you yourself are dressed in super expensive clothes and drive super flashy cars and take super fancy vacations, people see it not as evidence of your perfidy, but as evidence that you're successful, that you've been touched by God. The bigger your mansion is, the more people believe that you earned it.

**Clark:**  Misplaced faith is incredibly powerful. It can cause us to see miracles when there's only miracle water. It can lead us to help build mansions for men like Peter Popoff. And that same faith can also lull us into catatonic states, dulling our pain to bearable levels. Leaning into longterm denial feels good. It's like jumping into the deep end of a pool and sinking to the bottom. It's peaceful down there. Sound is muffled. The feeling of weightlessness is almost like painlessness. But it only lasts so long before we run out of breath.

The Prosperity Gospel is just one version of something I struggle with myself. At it's core, it's placing too much faith in God's gifts rather than God himself. Todd Billings, feeling the painful effects of his cancer every day, is often faced with a harsh reality, but when life deflates his denial, he finds comfort in a very particular place.

**Billings:**  The Psalms have always had a special place for me, but it was much more pick and choose. The whole book of Psalms has become just a tremendous solace, just like a place where I just go and dwell and pray after the cancer diagnosis. There alone do I feel understood. It's in the presence of the lord and in the honest presence of the Psalmists crying out both praise and lament, all of it in hope, all of it in trust.

**Clark:**  While I don't have cancer leading me down those paths of despair, work can be toil and paranoid thoughts often leae me feeling useless and overlooked. Some times I feel as though my family would be better off without me. On Christmas and Father’s Day, I miss my dad who died of cancer a few years ago. Work, family, relationships. These are good things ravaged by sin. And I feel it so acutely at times that I often wonder if there's something wrong with me.

**Billings:**  Scripture is wider and deeper than a lot of people assume when it comes to questions of suffering and prosperity. And this nexus of questions, and even death and dying. Some of the reason death and dying is an important question for when we consider our kind of latent prosperity gospels is because it's kind of the Achilles heel of any prosperity gospel, whether it's a light form that is held by someone who would not at all want to be associated with a health and wealth preacher, or whether it's a hardcore form. Dying and death, it tends to be where these issues come up.

**Clark:**  That's especially true for Costi Hinn, who's been on a journey from one extreme to another when it comes to accepting the reality of our broken world.

**Hinn:**  I’ve often described our family dynamic in that ministry world as a hybrid between the royal family and the mafia. Add in the celebrity rock star, flying-by-the-seat-of-your-pants attitude, and that would be how we lived and we did it.

**Clark:**  I'm not sure if you recognize that last name, but it's kind of a big deal among a certain sect of Christians. Costi's family played a vital role in the rise of the prosperity gospel across the US and Canada, a belief that God always wants us to have good health and financial success, and that it's up to us to claim it. For years, he toured with Benny Hinn's miracle crusades. I'd see him on TBN all the time growing up when I was flipping through the TV channels.

Here's one of the many clips you can find of his healing bonanzas on youtube.

**Benny Hinn:**  How long have you had the hearing aids on?

**Audience:**  For three years.

**Clark:**  Hinn's brand of showmanship is more subdued than Popoff's, but he still puts on a show, whispering dramatically to demonstrate a claim of restored hearing.

**Audience:**  Yes. Yes.

**Benny Hinn:**  You can hear me now.

**Audience:**  Yes.

 You can hear me now.

 Yes.

**Benny Hinn:**  You can hear me now.

**Audience:**  Yes.

**Benny Hinn:**  You can hear me now.

**Audience:**  Yes.

**Benny Hinn:**  Can you hear me now?

**Audience:**  Yes. Yes.

**Clark:**  This is Costi Hinn

**Hinn:**  I became this heir apparent of their anointed mantle. Everybody was always prophesying over me as a young man, that I’m gonna be the next great faith healer.

You had this wealth of resources at your disposal. We would travel the world. Living in mansions, driving you know Beamers, Benzes, and Bentleys and everything else under the sun. Flying on private planes, packing out stadiums and preaching a gospel that is “Jesus die to save you ,yeah, but he didn’t just save you from sin or from hell. Or to give you this new life in him. What all that unlocks is everything that you really want, which is comfort, wealth, ease. You’re gonna get job promotions. You’re gonna have this wonderful time living life. And really, living on earth is kinda just a taste of heaven. So John 10:10: “The devil is a thief come to steal, kill, and destroy but I have come that you may have life and have it more abundantly.” That’s kind of heaven, but it’s the abundant life now. So you’re getting your heavenly banker and he’s gonna unleash and dispense like an ATM money, healing, and blessing and nothing in your life is ever gonna be the same. It will all be better, there will be no challenges.

Now, my uncle didn't participate with us, but all of us in the family, like next generation kids and others, even employees and whatnot, were living it up. We would go from a healing crusade, a gospel supposed “service” and then afterward, we would go out and security guards would exort us. We would go to night clubs: partying, drinking, and doing all sorts of things that were anything but faithful to Christianity, and even just general moralism.

And like most of the people who live in the fog of hypocrisy, I was totally lost in my sin, but I was pridefully and falsely convincing myself and others that I was a Christian. I'm just kind of a sinner and I struggle with some things, but God totally loves me and it's all good. We're all going to get there. I'm young. I would justify it.

 I'm at a church and the pastor assigns me, the passage was John 5:1-17, it's the healing of the Pool of Bethesda. In the passage, I begin to observe Jesus healed one man out of a multitude. Jesus healed the man immediately, and Jesus healed the man who didn't even know who he was. Well, as I'm reading through this, all three of those things really mess with my theology. And we had for years, we'd always promise God's going to heal everybody. It's always God's will to heal. If people are sick, it's their fault. They just don't have enough faith. They haven't given an offering or they're not going to the right anointed man. You had the music, you had the fanfare, you had the offering, you have the stories, you had the man in the white suit or the special songs you sang, this whole song and dance to get people healed.

 And we used to always talk about the atmosphere of healing, you need to get around the atmosphere of healing. And I'm thinking, Jesus just went around and said, "Be healed." It was real healing power. It wasn't some show. So I grabbed a commentary that my pastor had given me, and MacArthur writes in there, "The cruelest lie of faith healers today is that people who fail to get healed are guilty of unbelief or negative confession or they didn't give an offering or what have you." Jesus is a sovereign healer. He heals according to His will. He's a sovereign Lord. And here is a moment where He compassionately and lovingly heals this man out of His own sovereign choice. And I thought, "You've got to be kidding me." I begin to cry as I studied. It hit me like a ton of bricks. It was like all the questions I ever had were little cracks in the dam, so to speak, of my theology.

 This one blew the thing wide open. I told the Lord, "I'm sorry for all the things I ever said, taught, participated in." I repented of my sin. I said, "I vow to preach the true Gospel. I'm going to study. I'm going to learn the truth about scripture, and I want to tell people the truth no matter what that means." The Prosperity Gospel is, at its core, it's pride, it's greed, it's a lust for power, it's all the things that God, through the true Gospel, calls his people out from and says, "No more of that. Turn away from that. Turn to me."

**Clark:**  We didn't need to spend six episodes on why the Prosperity Gospel doesn't work the whole thing kind of falls apart when you start picking at it God promises us so much more than health and wealth. To turn those promises into currency for a promotion at work or sweet parking spot. Even an encouraging medical scan result is really just a warp that hope into something less satisfying. But just understanding why that appeal is rooted in something shallow doesn't mean we're immune to it.

Not too long after Costi stepped away from that ministry, he found his desire to trust God even in the broken moments of his life challenged in one of the most unthinkable ways possible.

**Hinn:**  We have a one year old. Our son Timothy will turn one in just a few days, and he's been diagnosed with a rare form of cancer. Do I really want, you think that's what I want? I'm going, "Yeah, God. Give my one year old guy a nice journey with cancer. So I can be more spiritual." Nobody wants these things.

**Clark:**  So, Peter Popoff wasn't unique in his ability to exploit the desperate and despairing. And let's be clear. We see these ideas everywhere. Whenever you attribute an illness to a lack of faith or someone's singleness to a lack of righteousness, have you ever grown accustomed to a feeling of safety and security? Are you convinced that God will make a way for you to work full time doing exactly what you feel called to do? That's the same kind of thinking seeping in. There's always been a reciprocal relationship between the prosperity gospel and denial.

**Hinn:**  Death is something that we did not every talk about growing up and if you ever did, you were rebuked. I can't speak for every prosperity preacher. I'll just talk to you about the hidden empire. There is no topic more scary than death. More than sickness, death. In our home, if we brought up death, we were told do not speak about death lest you invite the spirit of death into our home.

**Clark:**  So we've seen some of the really grim ways that denial can function through a prism of prosperity teaching, but I did want Diane Landberg to help me understand what she meant when she said that denial is not always bad.

Do you think that Jesus experienced denial in some way?

**Langberg:**  Well, no. Because he's truth. He never left the truth. However, he did say, "If it's possible, take this away." That's not denial, but it sure is resistance.

**Clark:**  So, resistance is part of denial, then.

**Langberg:**  Yes. Yes. Denial isn't ... And so is shock. Denial doesn't just mean, "I don't believe that this happened, I'm going to pretend it didn't happen." That's certainly one form of it. But shock is a huge part

of it. Resistance. Just "How can this be? How can I do this?" That basically is what Jesus was saying. "How can I do this?"

**Clark:**  When we were in the planning stages for this podcast, we were sort of exploring the question of whether there was healthy versions of each one of these stages, and then we got to denial and you and I, this is where we had a ... what you might call an argument.

**Smith:**  Creative differences.

**Clark:**  We had creative differences. This is such a weird position to take. I was like, "Every stage can be healthy. But not denial."

**Smith:**  You said that. You said-

**Clark:**  Just arbitrarily.

**Smith:**  "All of them except denial."

**Clark:**  Which is like if you're designing a game, a board game, just to have an arbitrary rule in there like, "But not this one," is bad game design.

**Smith:**  Yeah, that's terrible

**Clark:**  But you were like really passionate that denial has a healthy-

**Smith:**  Yes. At the end of the day, throughout the bible we see a desire for justice and I think that denial is the slow acceptance that justice has not been met in some way, that the unjust has happened, and it's just our eking understanding of this unjust thing has just occurred and what are we going, what is now a natural response to that.

**Clark:**  Right.

**Smith:**  And I think I'm okay with that. I'm okay with denial being our brains adapting to the unjust.

**Clark:**  Our brains as like computers that are not programmed for injustice.

**Smith:**  That's right. Especially because of the bible's kind of structure and love of justice, and my own personal love of justice where I can really get behind something where it's like yes, your brain short circuits almost.

**Clark:**  Yeah. And one path a lot of people take is to go from, "This didn't happen" to "This did happen but shouldn't have." And that's where we get into anger. Here’s Todd Billings

**Billings:**  If you look at even some of the popular literature on this, there's a book called Confessions of a Funeral Director where he grew up in kind of a fundamentalist type household where it was always, everything was death negative, he said. So, death was only conceived of as an enemy, the result of sin. Illness, all the result of sin in a very linear, very direct sort of way. And then he moves to a more progressive direction, which for him is a death positive narrative. Death is just a part of being human. It's completely natural. It's just part of God's created intent. Some of what I've found as I've engaged scripture with this is that we have what you might call death negative and death positive narratives within scripture.

 There is a sense in which, especially in the Augustinian tradition, which draws upon scripture for support that death is just irrational. It's not God's intention. It's a result of the fall. It's the last enemy to be destroyed. And yet even in the early centuries of Christianity and you see this in (inaudible) in the second century, there's this other narrative as well within scripture, which is you see it with the patriarchs who died full of years with a sense of completion.

There's, with the number of narratives, the sense in which death is connected to just being a creature.

**Clark:**  Where Todd has drawn deeper into grief and acceptance, Peter Popoff has burrowed into

denial, making a career of the idea that those who were most faithful would be exempt from life's troubles. But in the end, even he couldn't escape a pretty bad day.

**Oppenheimer:**  ... in 1986 a group of people, including the magician James Randi, a small but notable group of magicians who used their own understanding of how people can be deceived, because they'd learned it from their own magic.

To expose people who they think are using deception in cruel, rather than entertaining ways. Within the magical community there's a concept of ethics, which is that you shouldn't ever lead people to believe that you actually have metaphysical powers. They should know that they're being deceived by human sleight of hand. That's what makes it so amazing, is that it's a human being who's mastered card manipulation, or pulling rabbits from hats, or optical illusions, in a way to deceive them. That's ethical. They're paying to be tricked, pleasurably.

James Randi is kind of the king of this school of magical debunkers. So he likes debunking those who claim that their powers come from God. He took a radio scanner to a Peter Popoff revival, and the scanner pretty quickly picked up on Popoff's wife, Liz, feeding him names and illnesses of people in the audience. Popoff had an earpiece, and he would hear Liz say something.

**Liz Popoff:**  She wants to get rid of the walker.

**Popoff:**  You want to get rid of this walker, sister? Lord, how long

have you been walking on that walker?

**Audience:**  About three years.

**Liz Popoff:**  She lives at 1627 10th Street.

**Popoff:**  1627 10th Street? Is that right?

**Audience:**  That's right.

**Liz Popoff:**  She has arthritis all over.

**Popoff:**  Burning this arthritis right out of your body.

**Oppenheimer:**  Randi got a recording of this, and he took it to the tonight show. Johnny Carson also, by the way, a former magician, who really harbored a great disdain for charlatans.

**Popoff:**  In the name of Jesus.

**Liz Popoff:**  Jody Dean.

**Popoff:**  Is it Jody? Jody Dean, Jody Dean ...

**Oppenheimer:**  Johnny Carson played the tape, and it made national news, and all of a sudden Popoff's money dried up for awhile, and in 1987 Popoff had to file for bankruptcy.

**Clark:**  Popoff is an unethical magician. He'd show you a trick, but he was never willing to let you look behind the curtain. As a result, he gained a captive audience. But true relationships are built not by giving a great performance, but by letting others in on the secret.

**Liz Popoff:**  Hello, Petey. Can you hear me? If you can't, you're in trouble.

**Clark:**  Next time on Living and Effective

**Clips:**  billings - imagined life; diane - God betrayal; billings - psalm 88; JB - brain scran; hinn - yeah give us cancer; billings - take away my kids' dad