



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 70 - Awkward Joy

Elisa Morgan and Eryn Eddy with Mary Jo

Mary Jo: As someone with depression and anxiety, I'm not an innately happy person. It's not something that comes naturally to me, and that's because my parents were able to not normalize sadness for us, but make us comfortable with sadness, okay, because I think that's a huge thing in our world is, you know, we're supposed to be happy all the time.

Eryn: Right.

Mary Jo: And so my normal is usually...it's not about happiness. It's not about sadness either, but I don't really know where it lies.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: So I'm here today to talk to you guys about joy. [Laughing]

[Music]

Voice: You're listening to *God Hears Her*, a podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His. Find out how these realities free you today on *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Elisa Morgan.

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Eddy. The topic of joy is often talked about with an emphasis that we choose joy or find joy, but what does that actually mean? Are those phrases true or do phrases like *Choose joy* put pressure on people to somehow become happy in the midst of rather unjoyful circumstances.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Today, we're talking to our very own podcast producer Mary Jo Clark. Mary Jo is loved by everyone she meets. She's such an amazing person to be around. Honest. She's always the best at being intentional in conversation with people and making them feel heard. Outside her passion for creating excellent podcasts to encourage women, she is a super talented baker. Her cookies and



cupcakes are described by many as legendary. She's married to her husband Russ and they're currently expecting their first child.

Eryn: Let's dive into our truthful conversation with Mary Jo about what life looks like when choosing joy feels impossible. This is *God Hears Her*. Elisa, one of the things I like about our podcast, I mean other than that we're on it.

Elisa: Okay. (makes noises) I like you the best.

Eryn: I know, we're so humble. No, um [Laughing]...one of the things that I love is having real, honest conversations about the ups and the downs and messy things in life with how we navigate the messiness with relationships of people.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: The hardships of being happy all the time, right?

Elisa: Who's happy all the time?

Eryn: I know. I know. That pressure...

Elisa: Eww.

Eryn: ...that we put on ourselves.

Elisa: Yep.

Eryn: But who we have on here...she's behind the scenes...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...most times ah working with us.

Elisa: But she's there every time.



Eryn: Yeah, she's there...yeah. And she is so authentic. Whenever you and I discuss a topic that we're going to have, she always shares a story in how she connects with it.

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: And she's very honest and real about it, and I'm excited because that's always happened off air, but today it's on air. [Laughing]

Elisa: And the woman we're talking about is Mary Jo.

Eryn: Yes!

Elisa: Mary Jo...

Mary Jo: That's me.

Eryn: That's me.

Elisa: ...is one of our producers at *God Hears Her*, and we first met really through a computer screen, right?

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Eryn: Through email.

Elisa: Well through email, yes.

Mary Jo: Yes, yes.

Elisa: And then through a computer screen.

Mary Jo: Yep.

Elisa: Zooming into record from three different locations, but...and we didn't meet each other for many months...



Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: ...in person, but we worked well, and you're right, Eryn, it's because Mary Jo brings the real deal to us.

Mary Jo: But the fun thing for me is that's when you guys got to know me. I worked at Our Daily Bread for two years prior, and I spent two years transcribing Elisa's voice on *Discover the Word*.

Elisa: Oh my gosh! All my sound effects. [Laughing]

Mary Jo: Yes!

Elisa: (Makes noises)

Eryn: Oh so she's very familiar with your voice.

Mary Jo: We, you know, us in the Transcription and Correspondence Department would like pause our work and be like *Elisa made this noise. I don't know how to write it out, you know.* [Laughing]

Elisa: Oh my gosh! I'm so sorry.

Mary Jo: Now it's fine. It...it made it interesting.

Elisa: I apologize deeply.

Mary Jo: It was so fun. Obviously, the content made it interesting, but the fun noises made it, you know, extra special. And even after that, Daniel, one of the producers of *God Hears Her*, I was one of the people that they asked to be in a focus group as it was starting.

Elisa: Oh.

Eryn: Oh.

Elisa: Yes.



Mary Jo: And there were different names.

Eryn: Uh huh.

Mary Jo: There were shows. I remember the first one that we listened to was with Margaret Feinberg...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...and it made me want to buy *Taste and See* and I did it with small group and so I got to know Eryn that way too, 'cause then suddenly I'm transcribing *God Hears Her* and in this focus group.

Elisa: That's awesome.

Mary Jo: So when I emailed you guys because I got a job then as a podcast producer here, I already felt like I knew you, but I was also a little bit star struck. So is that...

Eryn: I didn't know that part!

Mary Jo: Yeah, yeah, it was special for me, but it was like *These girls are so cool*. And, you know, so yeah, it's special to...to be here and to have worked. I've almost been a producer and engineer for podcasting at Our Daily Bread for a year now. I guess when this airs, it will have been over a year.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: Which is really exciting to be here with you.

Elisa: Well, I'm having a moment like pretending like I'm one of those TV shows, you know, where...where you sit with the producers and...

Eryn: Uh huh.

Elisa: ...and now you're like Jennifer Anniston or somebody...

Eryn: Yeah. Yeah.



Mary Jo: Right.

Elisa: ...you know, yeah, cause I'm having that kind of a moment, cause I'm looking at you going *Shazam!* [Laughing] You know. So. [Laughing]

Eryn: I know. I know it's true. I think that was the thing like when...when I started to get to know you, and...and you would share your story and your journey and just in like just moments of us talking about this topic—whatever topic it was that we were going to be discussing that day. I just thought *I'm so glad that she's on this team and leads this.*

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: With others and you're one of the voices that speaks in because of your authenticity.

Elisa: Yeah. So let's dive into your authenticity...

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: ...in terms of...I like to dive in. I always say dive in.

Eryn: Let's go in.

Elisa: Anyway, I want to go in, yeah.

Eryn: Let's go deep.

Elisa: You know, just...just how have you been shaped? You know, where'd you come from?

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Eryn: Where you from? Where did you go?

Elisa: And what...what was it like um laugh um [Laughing] in Mary Jo's skin?



Mary Jo: Yes, well growing up, I was actually known as Jo Jo, so...

Elisa: Aww.

Mary Jo: ...even that, my parents named me Mary Jo, but my sister was only 19 months older than me and couldn't say it, so my...

Elisa: That's darling.

Mary Jo: ...my family name became Jo Jo, and it still is, but it's so funny thinking back on that, because if anybody called me Mary Jo back then,...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...I'd be like *Who's that person you're talking about?*

Elisa: It's odd. Yes.

Mary Jo: Yes. Yes.

Elisa: Kind of professional or something.

Mary Jo: Right.

Elisa: Grown-up, yeah.

Mary Jo: I'm three, you know. [Laughing] Um but I...I loved my childhood, and a way I love describing my parents and I actually talked to them on the phone last night to ask their permission to be able to describe them this way, but...

Elisa: Oh wow.

Mary Jo: ...my dad is the logical man. He chose a job as a mechanical engineer and that's the way I would describe him. He is logically-minded, and I think of him, and I know he is also emotional...I know that, but I can't externally see it.



Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I relate him to any ah my nerds out there, I relate him to Spock on *Star Trek* who's half human half Vulcan.

Elisa: And so you're dad's half human half Vulcan.

Mary Jo: Yes, and you know what that me?

Elisa: So you're a quarter Vulcan.

Mary Jo: That's right. I'm a quarter Vulcan. Um math, yeah, exactly. Live long and prosper. So on my dad's side, and actually I've got to share this too because he likes...there's this little joke, and he'll be like *Do you know why I chose to become an engineer?* And I'll be like *Why dad?* And he'll be like *Because they told me I didn't have the personality to be an accountant.* [Laughing] And I love that!

Elisa: That's a good one. That's good.

Mary Jo: It makes me laugh. I think it's so funny um...

Elisa: Okay, so he's super logical.

Mary Jo: ...so he's logical.

Elisa: And stoic.

Mary Jo: He's funny. Stoic.

Elisa: Dry.

Mary Jo: And I know on the inside he really is a joyful man. I know that, 'cause I know my dad.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Mary Jo: And my mother...she's one of my best friends. Both of my parents are, but my mother and I have a special bond, and she is ah one of the loveliest people I know, and the difference between my mom and my dad is that he is all logical and she is emotional.

Elisa: Wow opposites.

Mary Jo: And yes, and she even more special into her story is that she's bipolar.

Elisa: Okay.

Mary Jo: So I grew up in this world of emotion—ups and downs—but also Vulcan, right?

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: So it's...it's confusing.

Elisa: Gosh, that is confusing.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: But it was normal, right?

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah.

Mary Jo: I never knew it...

Elisa: You didn't know anything different.

Mary Jo: Exactly. But, the thing that...and I remember them actually sitting down with Blair and I and taking to us and saying *If there was something different about mom, would you want to know?* And we're like Yes. And that's when they explained bipolar to us...

Elisa: Oh gosh.

Mary Jo: ...and...I don't remember that. I would say 8 to 10.



Elisa: Okay.

Eryn: Okay.

Mary Jo: And I don't think I really understood what that meant at the time either, and I talked to her a couple of years ago the experiences as a kid, because I remember the sadness. I remember the depression.

Elisa: Hers?

Mary Jo: Hers.

Elisa: Okay, because what did that look like?

Mary Jo: Um.

Elisa: To you.

Mary Jo: I remember...Blair and I, we played together a lot just like sisters would.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: But like some days, we would check on my mom and she would just be in bed, you know. It would just be one of those hard days where she couldn't get out of bed and...but didn't think anything of it, you know. And I told her a couple of years ago, I remember the...those moments, but I don't remember the manic side.

Elisa: Hmm.

Eryn: Hmm.



Mary Jo: And she said that *That's because we were having fun*. Like that was just us having fun. The thing...this is how I know my mom's also logical, 'cause she...she did such a good job living out this disorder. She...when she was manic, a lot of people will like overspend and that sort of thing. She would just go buy a bunch of groceries and get us clothes, you know, like for her kids. Take care of her family. In the depression times, she would still...she took us to school. She took care of us.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Hmm.

Mary Jo: She didn't let anything get in the way of that, but I know that she'd get home and it would still be heavy. It'd be hard on her, and I just love her example in that, because whether it's genetic or environmental for me, I am someone that's also prone to depression and anxiety. My sister and I both have gone on journeys where we struggle with that. So that's why for me today, I'm really excited to talk with you ladies, because as someone that struggles with depression and anxiety, I'm not an innately happy person. It's not something that comes naturally to me, and that's because my parents were able to not normalize sadness for us, but make us comfortable with sadness, okay, because I think that's a huge thing that's lacking in our world is, you know, we're supposed to be happy all the time.

Eryn: Right.

Mary Jo: And so my normal is usually...it's not about happiness. It's not about sadness either, but I don't really know where it lies.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: So I'm here today to talk to you guys about joy. [Laughing]

Elisa: You know, you...you know yourself really well.

Mary Jo: And that's been a journey too.

Elisa: I'm sure it has.

Eryn: Well what...I'm curious, what is...what do you think the difference is between joy and happiness?



Mary Jo: Well Eryn, I took a page out of your book. [Laughing] Not your literal book *So Worth Loving*, but something you love to do and that is to Google things.

Eryn: Yes!

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: Because honestly...

Eryn: Glad I rubbed off on you.

Mary Jo: ...do you like happiness,...

Eryn: Right.

Mary Jo: ...joy...

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...contentment. Do any of us know the difference really, you know,...

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: ...and I think there is also a difference in the secular world and in the Christian realm of what those words mean too.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yes.

Mary Jo: So I looked it up...Google...and they said happiness is the state of being happy, and I didn't find that helpful. [Laughing] But that makes sense. And the...the sentence they gave for happiness, you know, as a description sentence was *She struggled to find happiness in her life*. And I was just like *Whoa!*
[Laughing]



Elisa: Yeah. Instead of *She's happy*. Yeah.

Mary Jo: Right. Right. They gave the example of *She struggled to find happiness in life*, which I felt like was more relevant for most people. Even if we don't talk about it.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: So then I look up happy because they said *Happiness is a state of being happy*. So happy is *Feeling pleasure and enjoyment because of your life or situation*.

Eryn: Huh.

Mary Jo: So,...

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: ...happiness is really dictated by circumstance.

Elisa: Right.

Eryn: Exactly.

Elisa: That's right.

Mary Jo: And if our goal is to find happiness in life, how do you maintain that?

Elisa: It's impossible, isn't it?

Mary Jo: You can't.

Eryn: It's impossible.



Elisa: And yet we're fed...

Eryn: And unsustainable to even us.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: And yet we're fed the myth that we believe is truth is that we're supposed to be happy and in fact, you know, America's the land of prosperity and happiness.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And the reality is you throw on top of that, if you know Jesus, you're supposed to be super happy.

Mary Jo: Oh yeah!

Eryn: Yes, that's right.

Mary Jo: Oh yeah!

Eryn: And if you aren't happy, then where is your faith?

Elisa: Yeah, what's wrong with you?

Mary Jo: Yep, aren't you praying hard enough?

Eryn: Yes, right.

Mary Jo: You should ah, you should feel that joy.

Eryn: Yeah, right.

Elisa: Yeah, choose joy. Here it comes.

Mary Jo: Choose...choose joy.



Elisa: There's the plaque.

Mary Jo: And then joy,...honestly did not find Google helpful for joy, and I think it's...it's because of this journey I've been on, but for the noun of joy *It's a source or cause of delight*, which to me sounds a lot like happy.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah.

Mary Jo: As a verb it means *To experience great pleasure or delight*.

Elisa: It's emotional.

Mary Jo: It's not,...yes, that is still circumstantial to me.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: And that's always been the struggle is when that's the definition we're given...

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...and we're told to choose joy. Okay, but what if I struggle with anxiety? What if I struggle with depression? Am I supposed to push those feelings down and pretend they don't exist?

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And pretend that I'm happy?

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.



Mary Jo: How...

Elisa: Or is that how you get happy?

Mary Jo: Is that, yeah, fake it until you make it?

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: There is value to that.

Elisa: Sure. The feelings follow faith, right?

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: So you just believed and then your feelings will get in line.

Eryn: So then you said there was a third word, you said, which was *contentment*.

Mary Jo: Mmm. Yes.

Eryn: So what is the definition of contentment?

Mary Jo: Honestly, I didn't look up contentment, so Eryn get on that.

Elisa: Yeah, Eryn's going to get on it.

Elisa: While she's doing that, I remember doing a study on joy...

Mary Jo: Okay.

Elisa: ...too and it was like from Philippians where Paul writes a lot about joy and also, I remember Peter wrote about joy, and what I discovered, and joy's a fruit of the Spirit...

Mary Jo: Yes, exactly.



Elisa: ...which means it's something that God grows in us.

Mary Jo: Exactly.

Elisa: We can't huff and puff and produce it by ourselves.

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: But what I learned is that joy is actually confidence in God.

Mary Jo: Mmm.

Elisa: And I, you know, I think we can probably define it a lot of ways,...

Mary Jo: Right.

Elisa: ...but in the word study that I did on it...

Mary Jo: Yep.

Elisa:then as the fruit of the Spirit that it's confidence that He is who He says He is. He'll do what He says He'll do, and we can trust Him and be in relationship with Him not matter what the circumstances...

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: ...which I love that you brought that up.

Mary Jo: Right. Yes.

Elisa: Does that ring true for you?

Mary Jo: I...yes, and I think that that is something that today, like, I really want to make sure this is a conversation between all of us, because I'm not an expert. It's just...

Elisa: Nobody is.



Mary Jo: ...a journey that I've been on for the past so many years to discover what it is.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: I think that one of my favorite episodes on *God Hears Her* so far has been with Sarah J. Robinson.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And she talked about her depression...

Elisa: She's so honest, yeah.

Mary Jo: ...her suicidal thoughts, and the idea of choosing joy.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And she said for her it's not that easy. It's more of a daily discovery.

Elisa: Ooo, I like that.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Eryn: Discovery.

Mary Jo: And that really spoke to me when thinking about how we can talk about joy now.

Elisa: It feels reachable.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: What did you find out about contentment, Eryn love?

Eryn: It says *Contentment is a state of happiness and satisfaction.*



Elisa: Hmm.

Eryn: Well they're all connected.

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: Well said.

Mary Jo: I also...that one...

Eryn: That one's a twist.

Mary Jo: ...so here's something that specifically I was able to learn through my twenties.

Elisa: Okay.

Mary Jo: 'Cause I really want your listeners to know as someone that was struggling with this idea of happiness, I also knew what I was quote on quote supposed to be, and I think that unknowingly, I felt like *Okay, I'll grow up and I'll be a wife and a mom. That's what I'll be when I grow up.* It's so funny, 'cause when I was little, I was like *I'm going to marry my high school sweetheart.* I didn't have a high school sweetheart. [Laughing].

Elisa: Well woops.

Mary Jo: Darn it! [Laughing] I can't do that now. So um I remember the first time that I felt this loss of I guess the ability to feel contentment even was graduating college, because something I'm very good at is doing what I'm told.

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: I was an amazing student.

Elisa: Oh.



Mary Jo: Because they lay it all out for you. They're like *Here's your life*, for I don't know preschool through college.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And it never clicked in my brain until after graduation that that meant I would have no...no one telling me what to do after college. I'd have no direction...

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: ...because I didn't learn how to necessarily critically think through that. I learned how to do what I was told, and now no one's telling me what to do.

Elisa: Interesting.

Mary Jo: And even though I was a Christian, I don't think I necessarily was building my personal relationship with God to know what even His direction was.

Elisa: So you graduate and you're just kerthunk.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: You know, you're just plopped into the world.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: Plopped into the world. I was done with college. Done with school. Schools out forever. Thanks to that song. [Laughing] Um but all my friends moved home. I lost my sense of community. I moved back home with my parents because I couldn't find a job right away. I have no issue with people moving back home with their parents. I think that's beautiful. However, the world didn't tell me that.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Eryn: Hmm.

Mary Jo: Our si...our culture, American culture, it's very much, you know, *You graduated, you should be on your own now and figure it out.* So I felt like a failure in that. My mom was diagnosed with cancer...

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: ...and my boyfriend broke up with me.

Eryn: Mmm.

Mary Jo: And I couldn't be content. I couldn't figure it out.

Elisa: Well because it's not supposed to be this way.

Eryn: Your circumstances,...

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: ...pointed to sadness.

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: Totally, you're grieving. Yeah.

Mary Jo: Yes, you are not successful. You, like, all of these negative...again I think cultural ideas of what I'm supposed to be, and I'm not, so I shouldn't be happy, because that's what the focus became. It's the American dream. *Oh, you're doing this with your life? Well are you happy?*

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: Wait, does that matter? You know, but all of these things were kind of my circumstances...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.



Mary Jo: ...and people are telling me to choose joy. You know, and so that's when I took about a year in this pity party and it wasn't just a pity party, it was a full on like quarter-life crisis, breakdown, panic attacks, depression, anxiety,...

Elisa: Can we just pause there and thank you for correcting yourself.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: It doesn't sound like it was a pity party. It sounded like you were truly grieving...

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: ...some very real losses and I think we do judge ourselves with labels like that.

Mary Jo: Mmm. Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Elisa: And I...it's just so touching that you're so authentic that you can say *Wait, no, it wasn't a pity party. This was a real deal. It was blown out depression, anxiety, panic attack. I was miserable.*

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: Thank you, Mary Jo.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: That's...yeah, thank you.

Eryn: Yeah.

[Music]

Elisa: When we come back, Mary Jo will share more about her personal journey of finding contentment and learning the importance of being grateful as a path to being joyful. That's coming soon on this episode of *God Hears Her*.



[Music]

Elisa: Christmas is coming, and we have a great way to help you celebrate it joyfully. The *God Hears Her: A Joyful Christmas* kit includes our 31-day devotional with special readings for both morning and evening, so you can start and end your day focused on Jesus. There's a joyful Christmas ornament to hang on your tree, as well a notepad and pen to write notes. You'll also get access to coloring sheets, a frameable print, prayer prompts, and the *God With Us* booklet that you can download. So go to godhearsher.org/joyfulchristmas to order your Christmas kit and get ready for a joy-filled Christmas. Now back to the show.

Mary Jo: I think it's so easy for us to label things that way—pity party—and just get very (sighs) down on ourselves. And I...I am prone to that, so it's...I've learned how to help my friends see it differently, so sometimes I have to be like *You're your friend too. You can see this better for your....* Right? Where's my mirror, yeah. Talk to yourself. And that's also years of counseling. I think counseling helped me with this idea too, but in that time, I couldn't find a way out of it until I was broken enough to reach the point of being done and like it's time to be okay. And I mean at that point too, my mom's treatment was going well. I was still like I'm somebody that I'll mourn a break up for a solid year at least, right? Like I don't do well with loss. No one does, but like I just don't let go of that stuff, so I was still kind of mourning that, but I had a part-time job, and it's funny because I was a film degree, and I got a part-time job at Family Video. I was like *Hey, I'm working in my field!*

Elisa: I love that. I love that.

Mary Jo: *I did it!* Um but I still wasn't what, you know, people were telling I was supposed to be, so it was about...for me it was about learning contentment with *I am going to go to work. I'm going to do my job, and I'm going to be a light.*

Eryn: Mmm.

Mary Jo: You know we talk about purpose, we talk about *Well what are going to do with your life? What are you going to be when you grow up?*

Eryn: Mm-hmm.



Mary Jo: So how do we do that when we don't know what we want to be, or we can't get what we want to be?

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: Does that mean you don't have a purpose? Does that mean you're not in your calling? I don't think so. I think that God has more for us than that.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: Because we aren't our job. Our job is not our identity. Our...our status...

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: ...our relationships.

Elisa: How did you get to that?

Mary Jo: I don't think I got to that that year.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I think that my friends and I, we came up with this idea. A few of my friends and I were going through similar circumstances, and we couldn't find contentment or joy.

Eryn: Mmm.

Mary Jo: And for me growing up you sing the song, "I got that joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart."

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: And I think that we...like we said, that is a fruit of the Spirit. It is a gift from the Lord, and it is in there...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Mary Jo: ...and sometimes we can't feel it, 'cause it's down in my heart, and I've buried it because I'm not content and I'm not focusing on the gifts that God has given me.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: But I know it's there. I can't feel it right now...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...you know, and so it's this strange, for me, journey of discovering that every day.

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: And when I was post-grad, and I was...I remember when I turned 23 and I was like *All right here's what you do. You make 23 the best year of your life. So far, I will not peak at 23, but it will be the best year of my life so far.* Because in our pursuit of joy, we were deciding to not be afraid of anything.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I was afraid of everything, but that meant not letting that hold me back.

Eryn: Hmm.

Mary Jo: Accepting that I had anxiety.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: But not letting that define me and letting God define me, and so I...I don't say this in a way of making it easy. This...this is not an easy journey, especially for people that aren't just naturally bubbly and excited and like *Oh my gosh, life is so happy*, you know.

Eryn: Okay, so Elisa just hit me in the arm [Laughing].



Elisa: Sorry, it's just...[Laughing] There are a few of them in the world.

Eryn: And I'm glad.

Mary Jo: And that's beautiful. And that's lovely.

Eryn: And I will actually say to that...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: because that's naturally...that's where I naturally go...

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...having sadness around people scares them when I'm sad...

Mary Jo: Yep.

Elisa: Yes.

Mary Jo: Yep.

Eryn: ...because they're used to me being happy.

Mary Jo: Yep.

Elisa: Like what is wrong with you?

Mary Jo: I don't know what to do with you.

Eryn: Plan it...if I choose sadness and anger.



Elisa: The planet has stopped.

Eryn: It's like not received and that makes me feel ashamed to be sad.

Mary Jo: Yep.

Elisa: We do that to each other...

Eryn: I know.

Elisa: ...on every feeling.

Eryn: I know.

Mary Jo: And just so you know, I'm pretty comfortable with sadness, so you can be whatever you feel with me.

Elisa: That's good.

Mary Jo: Okay?

Elisa: That's good.

Eryn: All of my best friends are fours on the Enneagram because...

Mary Jo: Oh yeah.

Eryn: ...because they feel sadness and happiness.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Eryn: And they've helped me to feel okay with the sadness that I carry.

Elisa: Not everyone of your best friends is a four.



Eryn: No, I'm sorry. You're not. You're (Inaudible). [Laughing]

Elisa: But, Mary Jo, how are you in your skin now?

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: I...I'm really intrigued by how you said *I've got the joy, joy, joy, joy down in my heart...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: *...and maybe I can't feel it as a fluffy feeling...*

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: *...because it's down in my heart,* and then you started talking about embracing the sadness.

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: Is the joy still there down in your heart? Have you been able to experience it once you've recognized its presence?

Mary Jo: I would say that I'm going to throw out some Bible verses. Um one specifically that is not choose joy, 'cause that is not...

Elisa: I don't think it's in the Bible.

Mary Jo: ...in our Bible. It's not. [Laughing] So stop telling me to choose joy and smile! But James 1:2-4...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...is "Dear brothers and sisters, when troubles of any kind come your way, consider it an opportunity for great joy. For you know that when your faith is tested, your endurance has a chance to



grow. So let it grow for when your endurance is fully developed, you will be perfect and complete needing nothing.”

Eryn: Mmm.

Mary Jo: I can't say that when I'm being tested, I feel that.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: But when I repeat that and focus on that, like where I am now is a result of where I've been.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I spent most of my twenties in retail jobs being told by some people, and not all my people, a lot of my community is very encouraging and helpful and didn't look down on me, but a lot of people were like *Well why don't...why aren't you more? Why don't you do more with your life? Why are you wasting it like this? Why don't you use your degree? Why don't you do this?* And so there was...that was a trial for me.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And that pushed my joy down deeper into my heart, because I felt like I wasn't enough.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I was basing it on community and not God.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: Another thing was that I got married when I was 30, and I didn't start dating my husband until I was 29. I had serious relationships here and there. I didn't really date around. I just had serious relationships, and I counted. I think I went through five break-ups. Ser...for me serious relationships. That is not a easy test to endure for me.



Elisa: Mm-mmm. It isn't for anybody, yeah.

Mary Jo: It isn't.

Eryn: No it's not.

Mary Jo: And that tested my joy, but something that I will never regret about dating each one of those people is that I learned a lot from them.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: I learned how to be a stronger person from each of them while dating them, and more importantly, from those break ups. I remember one specifically, this was probably the hardest one I went through, it just really...it made me so sad to lose this person as my friend too, and it just felt like I just broke my heart, and I remember talking to God the night that we broke up, and I said, *God, I don't know why this is happening, but I'm in with you and me now.*

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: *And I know that it is my time to be intentional with you. And I'm going to be sad, and this is going to be hard for me, but you accept me no matter how I am.*

Elisa: Yep. Yep.

Mary Jo: *And I think this is the time for you to fill me with your Spirit and teach me peace, teach me joy.*

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And I remember that year, I would call my mom most days and cry. But looking back on that year, it was one of the most strengthening years of my life to find this joy...this idea of joy was developing...

Elisa: While you were crying.



Mary Jo: ...I was discovering it...while I was crying.

Elisa: Wow!

Eryn: Yes. So good.

Mary Jo: And I...I didn't feel it in the tears, but I would constantly pray at the beginning and end of those cries and just give it to God. Uh this...this is so hard for me to say, 'cause you guys talk about the Enneagram. I'm a 9, which is a peacemaker and I kind of just do what people need me to do, but I stopped listening to people's voices so much, because they weren't always speaking the truth to me, even some of my dearest friends.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: They were still putting their expectations and their standards on me...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: ...and I wasn't hearing God then. So I grew from all of those things, and it brought me to the point of I'm still...I do not call myself an innately happy person. I still don't consider myself that. I still struggle with depression here and there. I struggle with anxiety. But through all of those trials, every single one of them. God grew me and He developed the joy that was growing already.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: And sometimes when I get in my stress or in my unhealth, I know I'm pushing that joy deeper down into my heart, and it's harder for me to find, but when I talk to Him, when I thank Him for different things each day...a huge thing that my pastor here at Ada Bible, Jeff Manion, has said for years is to make a gratitude list. Three things each day that you're thankful for, and some days that's really easy. Today, I got to talk with Eryn and Elisa about joy. Easy.

Elisa: That's on my list too.

Mary Jo: And other days, it's like *I don't know*.



Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: And I remember writing down things like *This morning I had a mug of English Breakfast Tea with a little bit of cream and sugar*. And it's like that was the biggest blessing of my day and that is not belittled. That was so beautiful to me, and it was a gift from God, and I was able to understand my gratitude towards Him and how that joy was brought from thankfulness. And so it's tough, 'cause sometimes I think there's ways I can help dig the joy out a little more, but I know it's still not me doing these things to make me happy.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: It's just accepting these tiny little blessings in the midst of anxiety, depression, or just an everyday, I feel fine.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: You know, I really respect that it's not just a choose joy...

Mary Jo: Oh no.

Elisa: ...you know, happy plaque or, you know, cross-stitch on a pillow, but I do hear, Mary Jo, great intentionality.

Mary Jo: Yes.

Elisa: And, you know, that's important.

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Elisa: You know, I'm going to choose to be thankful. Okay, then joy will grow.

Mary Jo: Yeah.

Elisa: You know, I'm going to spend some time noticing what God is doing, and God will grow joy.



Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: I'm going to allow sadness to sit with me, and God will grow joy even as I'm crying. You know. I just...I think that's really beautiful. It's simple, but it's not simplistic.

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: And I...I love how you've modeled that for us.

Eryn: Yeah. Yeah, you know, the thing that I heard you say earlier was that you surrendered...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...your circumstances...

Mary Jo: Hmm.

Eryn: ...to the Lord, because you were operating out of your own strength to produce happiness and joy, and you learned you can't.

Mary Jo: Can't.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: So *Lord, have it all...*

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...*and do what you want*, and when He had that invitation from you, He did, and He taught you where your strength comes from, and He taught you contentment, and that's where joy and happiness...

Mary Jo: Yes.

Eryn: ...is found...



Mary Jo: Yes.

Eryn: ...is in contentment.

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: And not in this manufactured, out of our own ability.

Mary Jo: Mm-hmm. The movie *Inside Out* was...

Eryn: Oh, I love that movie.

Mary Jo: ...kind of revolutionary.

Eryn: I love that movie.

Mary Jo: I think for our generation, 'cause there wasn't a conversation before of this idea that joy can coexist with other feelings.

Eryn: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Mary Jo: These feelings don't have to be just set in one way...

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: ...and I know we're talking about joy that it's...it's more than a feeling, but I think that means that it allows us to...to feel things, and we don't need to *But I can't be sad right now. I have to be joyful.* You can express that sadness.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: You can share that sadness, and I think that will help with your joy, because you are accepting your reality. Like you...you're expressing these feelings. You're acknowledging that you're there, which is something I learned from my counselor—talk about it. Let it out.



Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Mary Jo: Talk about it with God, and that is going to propel this contentment, this joy, this excitement for your relationship with God, because He's...

Eryn: And trust.

Mary Jo: ...and trust.

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: There's one more verse that I want to share, because it doesn't say joy in it, but it something that me and my team have talked about recently, and it was actually from a *Discover the Word*...

Elisa: Oh.

Mary Jo: ...um show...

Elisa: Cool.

Mary Jo: ...that Bill was leading about the Trinity. But the verse that he referenced was in Revelation, and this one is 1:6 and it says, "He has made us a kingdom of priests for God His Father. All glory and power to Him forever and ever. Amen."

Elisa: Mmm.

Mary Jo: And something that I love that is your focus is speaking to the woman that doesn't feel seen or heard, and I just know from my personal experience, from hearing friends talk, from hearing anyone else talk, from reading books by Christian women, we struggle with purpose, we struggle with calling, and I think that those struggles, instead of us finding joy in them, often it...it makes us push the joy down. And this verse spoke to me so much when we were going over this program, because it says "He has made us a kingdom of priests for God His Father. All glory and power to Him forever and ever. Amen." So if you are allowing this confusion about purpose and calling to push your joy deep down, I just encourage you to



know that you are a priest for God His Father, and that is your calling. It doesn't matter where you are. Oh my gosh! I'm emotional and I'm going to cry! I'm pregnant. [Laughing] You're a priest for God His Father, and it doesn't matter where you are. It doesn't matter what job you're doing. It doesn't matter if you're married, if your single, if your divorced, if you're going through something hard, if you're sick, you are a priest for God His Father, and you can find your joy in that because that's your calling. And it doesn't mean you feel it always, but it's okay, and like oh, Elisa said something earlier, and it made me think of something Pastor Mike Todd said in...in a sermon about joy before, but God's got it, and I trust Him. It's okay to be sad. It's okay to mourn. It's okay to not understand what's going on, but again, God's got it, and I trust Him.

[Music]

Eryn: We are so thankful for the opportunity to learn more about Mary Jo. She is such a light for those around her!

Elisa: We're especially grateful for her vulnerability. We don't really talk about what it means to choose joy, and I'm thankful for Mary Jo's insights and her encouragement of what it looks like to live a life of contentment.

Eryn: Well before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but there's also links to connect with Elisa and me on social, and a link for our *God Hears Her* Christmas package. You can visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for joining us, and don't forget God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. Today we want to also recognize Rob and Deb for their help in supporting the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thanks y'all.

[Music]



Elisa: *God Hears Her* is a production of Our Daily Bread Ministries.