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**Intro:** Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

So, friends, I'm so excited about today's conversation. Today we're re-sharing a conversation I had a few years ago with my dear friend Caroline Schandel.

If this is your first time meeting her, Caroline is a brilliant writer, speaker, and Bible teacher. She's a woman I've looked up to for years. She's taught me so much about who God is and about who I am because of who God is. And I'm so happy we get to revisit this episode.

In this episode, we're talking about waiting: how to trust God in the midst of long waiting seasons, how to tune into what He's up to along the way, how God uses those seasons to transform us and so much more.

Friends, if you are waiting on something today, a job, a spouse, an answer, a home, a move, a positive pregnancy test, or anything else, this episode is for you. God has us. He's taking care of us. And I'm praying that you walk away from this episode believing that more than ever.

But before we dive in, guys, I'm so happy to tell you that registration for my online course, Love Your Single Life, is opening up again on October 17th. Friends, I'm so excited to teach this course again, and I would love to have you join us.

If this is your first time hearing about the course, let me tell you just a little bit about it. So Love Your Single Life is a four-week course that teaches a step-by-step plan to savor, enjoy, and truly make the most of your single life, all while setting yourself up for amazing relationships and marriage in the future.

Here are just a few of the things we talked about in it. We talked about how to start really enjoying your single life and making the most of every moment. I'll teach you a powerful tool for building confidence, which also happens to be your dating secret sauce. We'll talk about how to find good, quality men to date, even when it feels like you've run out of options.

We'll talk about how to invest in your friendships, your relationship with God, your calling and passions, and yourself. We'll talk about what to do with your sex drive while you're single because it doesn't wait to show up till we're married, right? We'll talk about how to stay close to your girlfriends even when you're in different stages of life and so much more.

Registration for the course only opens up twice a year and the next time is on October 17th. You can find out all about the course and get your name on the waiting list at [loveyoursinglelife.com](http://loveyoursinglelife.com). Again, that's [loveyoursinglelife.com](http://loveyoursinglelife.com). That link we'll also be in our show notes.

One other thing I wanted to say is I know some of you guys may be listening to this after registration has closed again. And that is totally fine. Head to the website anyway, put your name on the waiting list and you will be the very first to know next time the course opens back up. I can't wait to share this with y'all.

Okay, with that said, let's jump into that episode.

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**Stephanie:** Okay, friends, I'm so excited for who I have sitting here with me today. I'm sitting here across from my dear friend Caroline Schandel. Caroline, thank you so much for being on the show.

**Caroline:** Absolutely. I'm so excited to be here, and yeah, grateful for the opportunity.

**Stephanie:** This is the second time you've been on the show. And you know, picking a favorite episode is really hard for me because I love all of them, but your first episode is so meaningful to me and was so powerful. You guys, we're going to link to it in the show notes. Because if you haven't heard that episode, let me just say you're welcome in advance. Caroline's amazing. I'm so glad to get to hear from her a second time but I want to make sure you hear that first one too.

So, for anyone who hasn't gotten to meet you yet, Caroline, can you tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself?

**Caroline:** Yes. So I am a mom of two little ones. I have a four-year-old and an almost two-year-old. And I'm literally about 10 days away from being due with our third, which is a little-

**Stephanie:** Guys, isn't that crazy?

**Caroline:** So life is pretty wild. Other than that I am a writer. I am just coming out with my first book called *Good Things Come: Encountering God in Seasons Between Promises Given and Promises Fulfilled*. I love speaking, teaching, anyway, to communicate about God moving in our lives and in our days. So those are my passions and what I love spending my time doing.

As far as a fun fact, I would say probably one of the things that popped up in my mind this time was the way that my husband and I first date that we had, which was such a debacle of a first date... And you know Mark.

So Mark and I had been friends for a long time and I'd caught wind that he wanted to go out to dinner one night and I thought it was because he's really interested in my roommate who happened to be out of town at the time. So I thought that he wanted to get to know me and kind of learn more information through getting together with me.

So I decided I was going to squeeze in a workout class before showing up to dinner that night. And I literally showed up to our first date sweaty head to toe in workout clothes from our boot camp class. And we laugh about it all the time now because I completely missed what in the world he was trying to do when we got together for dinner. So it was clearly wrong information.

**Stephanie:** That is... He's like, "Did she not like me?" Why? What does she... is this not a date?" You're like, "Aren't you trying to say my roommate?" That is so funny.

**Caroline:** Yeah. It's just funny because I feel like I'm a pretty perceptive person in most arenas of life. And my friends often teased me. But when I miss it, I just really miss it. And that was definitely one of those times that I completely missed what the dinner was about. So it took a little bit longer for us to get on the same page.

**Stephanie:** I love that. And it's funny. The anniversary, I guess, for lack... I don't know what to call it necessarily. But this week, I don't know how many years ago, several years ago is when Carl and I started dating. So we were telling our friend the story of the first time we hung out outside of work because we met because we were working together... And the first time we hung out outside of work it was the vice presidential debate that night, which is very exciting.

And it was on TV, and our friend Daniel, I don't know if we want to say his last name on here. But our friend Daniel wanted to watch it and he didn't have a TV. So he said, "Carl, I want to go watch this debate. Let's go to Stephanie and Casey's apartment. They have a TV." So they were coming over to watch the debate.

And I never hung out with Carl outside of work ever. I did not know personal friend Carl at all. And so they come over to our house and I just wasn't thinking about it. I definitely wasn't thinking like, This is going to turn into something or whatever.

So the way that Carl tells it is he's showed up and I'm in my pajamas. I mean, Casey and I just were not... I was not in date mode at all. That was the very first time that we hung out and I was eating like a plate of pumpkin pancakes for dinner. Anyway. Just I was not thinking that this was the first time I was hanging out with the guy I was gonna marry.

**Caroline:** I love it. But somehow it worked out.

**Stephanie:** Somehow it worked out. Yes. I feel like maybe we're at our most charming when we're sweaty and in pajamas.

**Caroline:** I think so.

**Stephanie:** Well, guys, like I said, I'm so excited that you get to meet Caroline. Caroline and I have known each other for a long time now. Caroline, you've always—I said this on the last episode—but you've always been like "When I grow up, I want to be like Caroline," just in so many ways.

And especially in my faith. I have always, always looked up to you. I've learned so much about God from you. There's so many things that I know about God in so many ways that I communicate with Him and I know that I can communicate with Him because I learned them from you. So anyway, having you on the show is just so special to me.

**Caroline:** Thank you.

**Stephanie:** I'm so excited about your book.

**Caroline:** Thanks.

**Stephanie:** Oh, man, *Good Things Come*. You guys, I am so excited about this book. So before we talk about anything else, tell us more about the book and how it came into being, like why you wrote on this topic.

**Caroline:** Yeah. This has obviously been a long time coming and working through the idea of how do we encounter God in seasons of our lives that don't look like the way we want or expected or imagined that they would.

I think the book really came about as I began to walk through all kinds of seasons of my life, realizing that that tension of what still wasn't, like the things that I still was longing for and hoping for, that I was waiting for it to happen that it didn't really matter what my circumstances were. It didn't matter if I was on wild adventures around the world, if I was in a dating relationship, or newly married, or having my first child, there was still that tension that was so present.

And I think as I kind of walked through all these different seasons, it became evident to me that this place of tension is actually such a powerful invitation. And that's the place when we're in the middle of what still is not yet, that's where God really meets us, where He works in our lives, and where we change and become.

So the book really is about: how do we reconsider the waiting of our lives not as what God's withholding from us but in fact, what is He offering to us? How is He moving in the middle of exactly where we are, growing and maturing us in this place? So, changing the way we see the waiting seasons of our life, not as this thing that has to be endured but really this is a powerful moment to experience God and encounter Him right where I am.

Honestly, the book, a lot of it came about as I was in South Africa about 10 years ago. I had this really powerful experience one night in South Africa where my group and I were held up at gunpoint. And in one of, I would say, the most intense waiting periods of my life, I encountered God right there in the middle of it with me.

I walked out of that hostel having really experienced, one, the presence of God in a way that I had never experienced before. That He was present and with me in that place, and He brought such peace and rest to me in the middle of not knowing what was going to happen next.

And then, two, realizing that that encounter I had with Him wasn't for that hostel. It was an encounter that was supposed to go with me and change the way that I saw life and showed up to my days from then on.

So the book really is me unfolding the process of the last 10 years of waiting and reconsidering it as just this really powerful opportunity with God to meet Him and be changed by Him exactly where I am.

**Stephanie:** Okay, I have so many questions right now. One of the things I want to say though is, Caroline, you know that I have a course called Love Your Single Life and, you know, it really is what to do in the midst of the waiting.

We're right in the midst of the course right now, and so one of the conversations I've had with so many women over and over again is hearing them say like, "I just wish that God would just tell me what was gonna happen here. I just would feel so much more peace if I could just know, you know, I'm not getting married. So great. Like, let me just kind of get on board with that." Or, you know, "You are getting married. It's happening in four years and it's gonna be great. So just chill out in the meantime."

I've heard from so many women saying, like, "I wish I just knew how this was going to turn out." But I'm glad that you pointed this out, that waiting is like just something that we find... It's a state that we find ourselves in for so many reasons in so many seasons. Because if it's not one thing, it's another. And it really does feel in the moment like if this thing right in front of me was just resolved, then I would feel peace and I'd be fine. Like I don't care what's after.

But that's actually not true. Because once you meet that person, then you're waiting to get engaged. And that season feels like it's going to last forever. And you have no idea when it's going to happen. You have no idea when this next chapter of your life is going to start. But then it does. And then you're waiting for your wedding. And then, you know, once you get married, next it's babies or next it's whatever.

The seasons of waiting are hard and they're one after another. There's always this tension. So I'm really glad that you said that because I really do think that... I know I've had this idea of okay, you know, I have to get through this one season of waiting, and then it's sort of smooth sailing from here. And it's just we're always kind of living in that... You know, in a million different ways we're living in that "not yet".

Can you tell us what happened in that hostel? I feel like I can't move on without us hearing that story.

**Caroline:** Yeah. Our whole hostel got held up at gunpoint and there was a moment where I was called out of the group and had a gun pointed at me and was told that if our teammates didn't start being able to give him more things that he was gonna take me out and use me as an example.

In that moment, I breathed in the presence of God with me. I just remember having found revelation in that moment of the words "you cannot touch me." That's just what I heard in my spirit. I just knew it, that no matter what this man did in this moment, he could never touch the Spirit of God in me.

Ultimately, they left the hostel. They had found what they were really looking for, which was a large sum of cash in a safe that was in the hostel. And probably not

wanting to get caught in the middle of that they left. The next day, we all left the hostel and began to unpack the whole situation that we had gone through.

And for me, I mean, it was one of those moments of life that the way I saw things really changed from that moment on. And I walked away so empowered in a way that I had an experience before of realizing who I am is completely connected to God's Spirit in me and what God says about me and what God is doing in my life. And because of that, even in the middle of really intense circumstances, they do not get the right or power to overwhelm or overcome exactly what God's doing or the plans that He has for me.

It was definitely the most intense waiting, like I said, with my life and the most powerful. I mean, I really walked out having met God in that place.

**Stephanie:** That is crazy to me. That is so crazy. One thing I feel like we should say, as people who have traveled extensively, I know both of us have, and you even more than me, is like that doesn't happen very often. Right?

**Caroline:** Right. It definitely does not. That was definitely a very unique experience.

**Stephanie:** Yes, yes. That has never happened to me traveling. And Caroline, I know you've been in a ton of places. And you spent a lot of time in South Africa without that happening, right?

**Caroline:** Right. Absolutely.

**Stephanie:** I don't know if anyone else immediately jumps to like worst-case scenarios in their head the way that I do. But I feel like, for all of us, that doesn't happen as frequently as some people are afraid it does.

**Caroline:** Not at all. That was very much just like a unique experience, for sure. One thing I was gonna say, Stephanie, when you were talking earlier about how the women in your course want to know, "Well, if I just know when, like if I just know when then I'll be okay."

What I think I realized in the whole idea of waiting is that there's such mystery to it. And ultimately, as much as we want the mystery to be solved or the mystery to be overcome somehow, the mystery of what God is doing and how He does it always remains. And it's because the mystery is what ultimately draws us into an active relationship with Him.

And if we know the answers, if we know exactly when things happen, then we immediately create space with God because we don't need Him if we know how

things are turning out. But the mystery of "I don't know when, I don't know if, and I don't know how" is again, if you can consider it from a different place, it becomes such a powerful invitation of "so because I don't, God, I'm just going to draw on deeper to you. I'm just going to sit here longer with you. I'm going to trust you all the more with the deepest desires that I have.

**Stephanie:** And I think it's in that trusting that we are prepared for what the next thing is. Because if we knew... I'm trying to think of a good example. Like there's a difference between climbing a mountain and getting just, you know, airlifted to the top. Like you get to the top faster and it's way less sweaty, and you have to work way less hard, but you don't have all the experiences along the way. You don't get stronger. You don't grow. So the top isn't as sweet if you aren't walking your way up.

And I think that's been one of the things I've been so passionate talking about for the last, you know, however many years and actually what my new book is about is just that it's actually living in the present and it's savoring the present. That it is what gets you ready for that future.

If you just had the answer and you just kind of hunkered down and hung out and knew that it was coming, it'd be lacking something because you wouldn't have walked the road. That road is important.

So I know that there have been several of these, Caroline. But other than in that hostel, oh, my gosh, can you just tell us what have been some important seasons of waiting in your life?

**Caroline:** Yeah. Definitely waiting for my husband. I got married when I was 28. I would say most of my 20s and probably even since high school I just was very much settled that I didn't want just anyone. I really wanted to wait for the perfect... I mean, not the perfect I guess, but the right fit for me in my life.

So that was such a long waiting season it felt like. And it was so uncertain for most of it. All the questions that you ask when you're really waiting for something that you deeply desire of "Is it ever going to happen? When will it ever happen?" That was a huge one for me.

And when we got married then and after a couple years, waiting to become a mom and getting in touch with that desire of I really want to be a mom. But I can't guarantee I'm going to be a mom. And so the waiting again of not knowing when, if, or how that would look.

The book was a huge one that has been such a journey for me. The book in and of itself has taught me so much about waiting. And the moments that I needed to push past and move forward in the middle of my waiting and the moments I needed to sit back and settle and rest into where it was has been a big part.

And then just what dreams and hopes of mine in life that I'm not seeing today, I'm not experiencing but I still carry so deeply within me. And so holding them as, "Okay, I'm not living in that place right now, which means that they're things that God is working out of me and doing in my life right now that I hope will change and grow and prepare me for when I could see that dream come to be.

So, in my own life, just constantly going back to that place of "God, you're here right now. You're working in my life in the middle of the tension of what still remains not yet." So I think it's really closing off the... like deciding that you're not giving into the lie anymore that there's ever a rival point on the journey with God. There is always an invitation to encounter Him in the middle of our days.

But there's no place where we get to that we feel like all tension is gone, that there's nothing I'm wrestling for, that all mystery has been solved. It's not faith and it's not a journey with Him without those things present along it.

**Stephanie:** I love that. You kind of alluded to this, but I want to hear you talk more about it. When we're in the midst of the waiting, what are some choices that we have? Because I know that there are so many choices we have that don't include doing nothing. When we think about waiting well, it's like just... I don't know. It's like when you're a kid and you're in timeout maybe and you have to wait for like two minutes on the stairs and it feels like a bazillion.

**Caroline:** Forever.

**Stephanie:** I think that that's what we picture waiting to look like is just sitting still and doing nothing. But I'm not totally sure that that's what waiting looks like most of the time. So I would love for you to just like... what are some of our options? What choices do we have?

**Caroline:** So the waiting that I'm talking so much about throughout the book and just, in general, is definitely waiting, that's active partnership with God. That, like you said, it's not the passive sitting on the sidelines of my life watching life pass me by as it will or won't happen, but really getting into the middle of my days and making choices that are partnering, that are joining God in what He is doing in the middle of where I am.

And I think the key and all that really is discernment. And it's a really big word to say figuring out what is the unique things that God is doing in the middle of my life and my season where I am. How is He leading? What is He saying?

That's what it means to discern is to kind of tap into that place of asking God, "Okay, what are you doing in the middle of what's happening or isn't happening right now?" Because I don't think that waiting suggests always doing nothing or just passively sitting by. I think, in fact, waiting is suggesting to us the idea of intentionally considering what is God doing, where is He moving, and how is He leading.

Some of the choices that I talked about in the book specifically is, one, the choice to do something. That there are moments that we have just got to get up and move in the middle of our waiting. Sometimes our waiting can even be this like shield of keeping us safe. Because if we really stepped out into some stuff, we'd have to face some fears or we'd have to face some things head on, some lies head-on.

So sometimes it can be safer to just call it waiting and we're sitting back where we are. So there are moments that it's the choice to do, to get up and move. This book was such a big example to that in my own life of making the choice finally of "I'm just going to do the thing in the middle of where I am. I'm not going to wait until my season changes or wait for someone to validate me as a writer in order to write my first book."

I think a lot of creatives who are crafting things ultimately have that experience where they've all realized like, No, it's in the middle of where I am that I've got to decide who I am, and begin to move towards that.

I think there's the choice not to do that is a huge one in the waiting. And what I mean by that is the moments specifically where we have to make choices in the way we think about things to just shut off the lie. You know, most of us can go to that place of discrediting ourselves or disqualifying ourselves in about four thoughts.

So if the job interview didn't happen or panning out the way we wanted one more time, we can immediately just go down that rabbit trail of just ejecting us out of having any worth or hope for what God may be wanting to do. Or, you know, the date doesn't pan out into a relationship.

So, again, we can just go down that thought pattern one more time and get back to that place of "it'll never happen. No one will ever want me. I'll always be forgotten." And just that bad-thinking place. And so sometimes in the waiting I think the most powerful choice you can decide is just, "I'm not going there. I'm

disappointed that this didn't happen and I'm still hopeful God's doing things. I'm really sad that that person doesn't want to pursue a relationship with me but I'm really excited for who may come ahead."

Other choices are the choice to get back up. Sometimes we're going to fall, we're going to fail, we're going to mess up in the middle of it. So I talk about the idea of quick recovery. What does it mean to just get up quickly and keep moving?

And then there, I would say, too the choice to rest in the middle of our days. Just to decide that whatever is today is okay. I think that's a really powerful choice we can make. Even if today isn't everything, just finding gratitude for what is and just saying you're good as you are even if you aren't everything that I want.

One final choice I'll mention is just the choice that takes back promises into our current day. Because I think so often we can live in the middle of our waiting just deciding that when things change, then I'll experience this or kind of setting off promises that God actually has for our days. Like the rest He wants in our lives, or the faith He wants us to live into, or the confidence He wants us to walk in.

And we can begin to think, "Well, when this thing happens, then I'll be that person, then I'll do that thing. It's just such a false way of living life, just always waiting for tomorrow to bring the promise that actually today is meant to hold.

So taking back those promises and deciding, No, in the middle of exactly where I am today, that is where I get to experience God and live into the things that He has for us. And so really making the decision of "I'm not going to be defined by my circumstances or my season but I'm going to be defined by the voice of God over me and what He wants to do in me right here."

**Stephanie:** I think everyone is sitting here with their minds just totally blown. I feel like if everyone wants to just pause that and back it up and take a bunch of notes or well, just get Caroline's book.

Carolyn, there are so many things in there that I just, ooh, I just feel like I need to lay down and just... It's so good. It's so good. One thing that popped into my mind was, you know, a verse I just love is John 10:10. And it says, "The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy, but I have come that they may have life and have it to the full."

And I think that we really do think "I'll have full life when dot dot dot, when this happens." I think I posted something about this on Instagram the other day because I was thinking about it so much.

That verse is not specifically talking about life after we have walked down the aisle. Like it is not saying, "I have come that they may have life and have it to the full once they are married." It is today. That is a promise today. That is what Jesus says He has for us today in our current circumstances, no matter what they are and no matter what kind of waiting we are in the midst of right now.

**Caroline:** It's so true. And that's what I'm so passionate about is just I want to be someone who lives well my story today, that shows up in the middle of it, and is really purposeful and powerful about how I live it out. That's what I want for everyone around me as well is that waiting or not, tension or not, that we're being so faithful to be fully us in the middle of whatever our day may hold, even if it doesn't have all the things we really want or all the things we're waiting on. But the fullness of life is a promise like you said for today exactly where we are.

**Stephanie:** Oh man, I love that. Caroline, there's a story, and I don't know if you tell this in the book or if you're planning on telling it today, but I'm gonna put you on the spot. Last time we talked on the podcast, you told a story about waiting for a house, and like how you handled that waiting. That just meant so much to me. Can you tell us that story?

**Caroline:** Yeah. The story about the house is that when I was about seven months pregnant with my daughter—so this was about four years ago—I really wanted to nest and get more space. We were living in a tiny condo. And I had all the dreams of creating a nursery and getting to scour Pinterest for the cute pictures.

So I began looking around in Atlanta for more space so that she'd have her own room. And I found this house that popped up probably 10 minutes before as a rental house. The posting was like 10 minutes before I saw it. It was perfect. It was this cute little Atlanta bungalow. I was just sure that I was the first person [00:29:57] listing and it was meant to be ours.

So I wrote them immediately saying I wanted it, "What can we do? How can we get our application in quickly?" And they wrote back and said, "You'll have to wait until the open house we're going to do in a couple of days. And when you show up for it, after that, everyone can submit an application who's interested."

So when the open house came, I went with my friend and we walked through the doors. It was down the street from some good friends. I just loved it even more seeing it in person. It was that feeling of like this is home. It just felt like home for us.

I got really excited about it, came home, told Mark all about it. We went about trying to get all of our information together to send in our application. And so we

did. There was a lot of people who were interested in it. And a few days later, I got the phone call that said, "We had a ton of interest. We went with a family with the highest gross income, and it wasn't you."

And at this point, you know, I'm looking at weeks until I'm about to be a mom and just dealing with the disappointment of I really wanted this. And I really felt like it was meant to be ours and yet it wasn't and it wasn't going to be.

I just remembered, I think, in the moment too someone having told me the responsibility I had as I was carrying my daughter of... And I think this is true as a parent of just being so clear what is flowing off of our lives and the thoughts we're sitting in and it can just affect our children, or if you're a leader it can affect the people around you.

And knowing that I felt such disappointment, I really knew I needed to do something to move past it. Because disappointment is real, and we have to be honest about it but it's never a destination we're meant to just pitch our tent in and just stay in forever. So it's something that if we can work through, it can actually be such a powerful tool to push us toward God and grow us and build greater faith in us.

So I really did the only thing that I could think of doing in the moment, which was to drive back to the house and move myself out of disappointment by way of blessing the house and the family that was about to move in there. It felt like the most active way to push out of the place that I felt myself singing into which was I was just so sad. I wanted it.

So I went back to the house and parked my car in front of it and prayed blessings over the house and the family. And I thanked God for what He was doing and thanked Him that He was giving the house to this family, that it wasn't our gift, it was a gift for this family.

So I just kind of spoke the blessings and words into them that I would want someone to speak into me. I remember saying in for all the families who live in this house afterwards and just trying to kind of send-off just this beautiful blessing into this place.

So we drove back to my condo and I really settled that this condo was the place that we were going to bring home our daughter, and that this was our gift. And it wasn't everything I wanted or imagined but it was good. It was really good as it was.

And that was such a big moment of growth for me of just deciding that kind of what I was saying before the choice in the waiting to just say, Whatever it is okay.

It wasn't everything I wanted, and I didn't have to pretend it was, but I could be so grateful for what actually was in front of me.

So we lived in that condo, we ultimately moved to Florida for a year and a half. So about two years later, we're coming back to Atlanta to settle. Now we live in Florida and are trying to figure out how we're going to find a rental property here in Atlanta when we live so far away and things go so quickly.

And sure enough, on a whim one day, Mark had been prepping me that we're probably just going to move into apartment short term at some complex here until we could get our feet on the ground. Obviously, it wasn't what I wanted, but I was okay with it.

And then I looked at my phone one day and I couldn't even believe it. Like literally posted an hour before was the exact same house. And I just remember looking at Mark and thinking like, "If God does this, not that He had to, but if He does this for us, I won't even know what to do, like just the kindness of this gift that He could maybe give back to us that I had completely released."

So Mark called up and found out from the property company two things. That they're having a really hard time scheduling an open house date with the current family, and two, that they only rent to families of people who've seen the property.

So given those two things, and then I had seen the property two years ago, we got to send in our application before anyone saw the property, and pulled up our moving van, moving truck a month later. And that was our home for about a year and a half when we first lived in Atlanta.

**Stephanie:** I love that so much. Ooh, like gosh. Again, I feel like I need to just like sit and process and think and pray and praise. I just... gosh, man. God just really does write more beautiful stories than we could. You know, just every time He does.

But I love that you were so faithful in that, that you really... And it's so hard. It's so hard to fully... It really is a decision to say I'm gonna thank you God for where you have me and release this thing that I was hoping was a gift for me but isn't and not release it, like have it pried out of our hands and sit in that disappointment. Like you said, it's not a destination. But to release it and bless it and to say, "Hey, you know..."

I'm picturing all the times that I really liked a guy and he, it turns out, liked my friend or liked someone else. And I think in that moment, it's so hard because we really do feel like we've gotten passed up. And it's really easy to have some

resentment there. It's hard to want them to be so happy when you were picturing you being the one that was happy.

I feel like that's how we partner with God in the waiting. We're being faithful, we're trusting Him. That's what it actively looks like to trust Him is to thank Him for the gifts that He has for other people, trusting that He also sees us. The way that He sees us and answers their prayers, He does the same for us too.

**Caroline:** Yeah. What I learned through that whole story as well was the unique opportunity given to us in the middle of our disappointment to lift up honest and heartfelt and raw praise to God. That you can't do in the middle of fulfillment, right?

When you get everything, you can thank God for everything He's done. But it's different than when you're in the middle of uncertainty, when you're in the middle of the disappointment. And there make that choice even still to say, "Even with how I feel, even with what I'm not receiving, I am so grateful, God, that you are doing something."

And I think that is such a holy decision that we are able to make in the middle of those "not yet" moments. That you don't get in the middle of fulfillment. You get right there in the middle of the tension to lift up that raw, costly praise. That really does... I mean, it's painful, right, to say in the middle of our disappointment that "I still trust you. I'm still leaning into you."

But every time that we do, what we're doing is we're saying that the experience of the moment or the feelings or emotions are not trumping who we believe God is. They're not informing us of who God is. That even with what we feel or what we see, we're pressing into a reality beyond it, right? Like lifting our eyes higher and leaning into that trust of saying, even in the middle of not getting the thing that I really want, I am so grateful that you're a God of provision, that you're moving on my behalf, that you're doing more than I could see.

I think about the prayer that I prayed in the middle of sitting in front of that house feeling so disappointed. I mean, tears were streaming down my face. I was really sad. And I didn't even realize that I was praying over my own family two years later.

And I would never get that on the flip side. You know, like I could never tap into that at a different moment. But because of what flowed out of me that day, I actually got a chance to pray this prayer over my own family that I look back and think, "There's such a unique gift given to us in the middle of the uncertainty and the waiting that we don't get anywhere else." Just like God so uniquely shows us

who He is in the middle of the uncertainty and the waiting that He doesn't show to us anywhere else.

So I think that's part of it, too, is just realizing this is such a powerful ground because you get to tap into things and pray things and believe for things that you don't get to pray or believe or tap into in another season when you're experiencing the fulfillment of that hope that you really want. You get to tap into it right here even when tears are streaming and it's so difficult to have those words flow through my mouth.

**Stephanie:** I love that so much. Something that you said just reminded me of this. We've been talking about what God is capable of doing in us in the waiting and partnering with Him and encountering Him.

And I know that for I think all of us, no matter how long we've been Christians, no matter how long we've had a relationship with God, it's like on some level we know what that means. We're like, Okay, yeah, encounter, partner with Him. Let Him transform me."

But also, there's sort of a practical next step where it's like, "So how do I do that?" How do we actually meet Him? How do we open ourselves up in a way where we're like being malleable? How do we put ourselves in a position where we get to experience all of the goodness that He has for us in sort of a practical way? Does that make any sense?

**Caroline:** Yeah. Yeah, I think it's all day by day and it's making some intentional decisions to stop and pause and listen and hear what God's saying. Some of the things that pop into my mind right off the bat are things like just even taking the five minutes a moment morning and asking God, "What are you saying for my day? What are you doing in the middle of my season?"

Just giving space to listen. Opening your Bible and seeing if a scripture just pops off the page at you, or taking out your journal and just writing through it. Like creating space for God to speak to you so uniquely about exactly where you are and what He's doing.

I think, too, it's things like when I was waiting for Mark, I didn't know that I was waiting for him, obviously. I had about my year of my bathroom the scripture that says, "I'm still confident of this, I will see the goodness of the Lord in the land of the living."

And I would brush my teeth in the morning, and I'd brush my teeth at night and I would just look at that verse. And I would just continually try to get it into my mind of "I'm still confident, I'm still confident."

And that's another way of just in the middle of where I am, which at that moment was seeing all my friends get married and engaged and have all these big romances around and feeling so single and not connected at all, and seeing no prospect around, and looking at that verse and just saying, "I'm still confident I will see your goodness, God."

And then obviously the next line says, "Wait for the Lord, take heart and be strong, and wait." And so that was such a key verse to me in a season of waiting. So could be finding the verses that just speak to your season.

I think another thing is learning the practice of gratitude, especially in the moments of disappointment, or where you just feel so discouraged. And you could go to that place of beginning to just sit in it more and more and more. Or you can decide, "No, I'm going to purposely lean into gratitude. I'm going to lean back into what God's doing."

So, all the time, if I'm starting to feel really discouraged in life, I will just out loud begin to say, "God, I'm so thankful. I'm so thankful for my family. I'm so thankful for my friends. God, I'm so thankful for a church that is a safe place for me to go. I'm so thankful for the food that's before me today, the shoes on my feet." Like I just start rattling off every single thing that I can think of that is such a gift in my life to remind me that I don't live in lack, I don't live without. Like God is doing so much right in the middle of where I am.

Last thing I would say is just kind of what we did on the podcast last time, but declaring over yourself. Like taking hold of your own voice over your own life and your own season and just speaking forth the words of life and blessing over you.

You know, we're so quick, I think, to speak the negative thoughts or words over our life and over who we are. So being even more intentional about pressing into "God says." Like, "This is who you say I am. This is what I believe you're doing." And really out loud.

I think I mentioned it last time that our daughter does it. And even this morning on the way to school I was talking to Mark and he's like, "All right, we're gonna get off the phone and do our declarations now." It's something that we are trying to just teach our whole family that this is just what we do. We are pressing into being a voice of life over our day.

And I think those things, the gratitude, the declarations, listening to God and discerning what He's doing, the finding scriptures and making a visual, marking it somewhere in your daily life it's just all ways to keep you stirring in the goodness of God, especially on the days that it doesn't feel very good or it doesn't look very good and things aren't going the way that you would really want. It keeps your spirit, keeps yourself just too hopeful and expectant that "but God is still moving."

**Stephanie:** I am so glad that you mentioned these different things because really, every single thing you just listed is something that I have learned from you over the years. And I've done all of those things in my life and made them part of my day and part of my spiritual practice and it has just made such a difference. I really do.

The very first time I ever thought about the words that I'm saying about myself was with you. You were the very first person to show me that we need to... we are saying things about ourselves all the time, whether it's in our minds or out loud. When we look in a mirror, when we, you know, casually in a sentence, say... we dropped something we say, "Oh, I'm so dumb."

We are constantly talking about ourselves, and it is so important what we say. And so taking that time to really specifically say, "This is who I am. This is who God is, and this is who I am, and this is who I am because of who God is." And repeating it and repeating it and repeating it.

At first you feel like a fool and at first you feel almost like you're sort of lying because you don't believe the things you're saying. But the more you say them, the easier they are to believe. And really, that's what the process looked like for me of going from a place where I felt really defined by my insecurity and actually moving to a place where I'm defined by who God says I am. And it was really through repetition of speaking it out. And I learned that from you.

**Caroline:** Yeah, it's such a practice of just building it in so that you get used to doing it. I think God is always wanting to upgrade us. He's always wanting to call us higher, to see things higher, to join Him in a higher place. And so all these practices to me are... when we're talking about partnering with God, it's the idea of just we're joining in Him pulling us higher.

So when you can see everything that's going on in your life just a little bit higher, then you realize that "Okay, that isn't the most defining thing right now. This actually is what God's doing. This actually is what He's saying over me. I'm not dumb. I'm not insecure. I'm actually confident and settled." To me it's like joining God in the upgrading of where He really wants to take us, which is just so much higher to see things from a greater vantage point.

**Stephanie:** As you're talking, I was thinking about the idea of God transforming us and how we... You know, if you give someone a hug, there's that game that's like light as a feather, stiff as a board or something, you know?

**Caroline:** Yeah.

**Stephanie:** There are times when we are so rigid, when every muscle in our bodies is just tight and tense and where we become sort of immovable. I think that sometimes we can become that way when it comes to growing. And especially in the waiting... I feel like disappointment just hardens us after a certain amount of time if we let it.

So I think that, you know, as we're in hard seasons, our part of the equation is to let ourselves be wiggly enough to be moved, to be changed. I feel like that looks like not numbing ourselves. That's something that I've been convicted of lately is, it's really hard to hear from God, it's really hard to have a good sense of what He's saying and what He's doing when there's not one moment of my day where there's silence.

There are always opportunities to do the harder thing, to do the thing where we're like, "I really don't feel like doing that but I know I should." It's actually doing that thing. Or "I'm really stuck in this area of my life and I know I need to do something about it." And instead of putting it off, we asked for help. That's partnering with God. That's taking the opportunity He's giving us to grow and to change and to be different and to be better.

Those are just a couple of the mental pictures that came to mind as we were talking about this is just being wiggly enough for Him to move us and taking the opportunities that are placed in front of us by doing the thing that deep down in our heart we know is like best for us. You know?

**Caroline:** And I think with that, that releasing, something has to look like while still holding expectancy for what God wants to do. And what I mean by that is, you know, I think so often we become so specific on the way that a prayer needs to get answered or that God's going to fulfill this dream or this hope in our lives, that it can become such this rigid expectation of the parameters, like what it's going to look like, feel like, when it's gonna happen. And then when it doesn't, we feel just all the more discouraged and disappointed because what we want isn't happening the way that we expected it to.

I see that in my marriage. Like if I begin to put expectations on the words that Mark has to use in order to affirm me, then all of a sudden, it just takes all the life out of the journey, right? It just is this very rigid box that he has to perfectly fit into.

But with God, it's the idea of releasing the expectations, and like you said, getting loose and willing to have God move and mold us the way He wants while still holding expectancy that "God you're doing something. I didn't get the job that I really wanted but you're doing something." And so I'm going to hold that expectancy even though my expectation may not have been met.

I think we can get so caught sometimes and just holding to exactly what something has to look like. And the place to get to is just release it enough to say, "I don't know how it's going to look but I really expect that you're going to do something amazing.

**Stephanie:** The example is Mark, I feel like we've all found ourselves in this position more than once, where it's like, I want to be taken on this kind of date. And we get so specific that if we're that specific, usually if it's going to happen, we have to like lay out those expectations. If it's that clear in your head, then at some point, you're gonna have to say, "This is what I want for my birthday exactly." Otherwise, you're not gonna be able to guess it.

And then when you get it, it's not as fun. It takes so much joy out of it. Whereas if you got something slightly different for your birthday or if the date went a little bit differently, or if Mark tells you in his own words how much he loves you and why, it's actually so much more special than it would be if it was so contrived.

But we have had all this time to kind of build these expectations. But yeah, when they come through, even if they come through exactly the way that we were hoping because we held so tightly to them, yeah, they don't have any life in them anymore.

**Caroline:** Yeah, yeah, exactly. We've like sucked out all the joy in the life of the gift because we were so rigid of what it had to look like.

**Stephanie:** Caroline, I have just two more questions for you. And this next one is a really hard one, so good luck. I know that all of us are asking this. What about when God doesn't do the thing that we were hoping you would do? What do we do then if it's just like no after no after no? Do we give up? Did we hear Him wrong? What conclusions do we come to? How do we move forward? Do we let go? Do we keep holding? What do we do when it's just consistently not happening?

**Caroline:** I think this is such a good question because this is real life. Real life is that no matter how long we wait, it does not demand God to move, it does not guarantee He will do the thing that we want Him to do. It doesn't mean that God ever owes us no matter how long maybe we've held out for something because ultimately it's all a gift. It's all a gift from Him.

So even when we have waited and waited and waited, there's still the possibility that we may not taste or see or behold the thing that we really want to see. And in my opinion, that is some of the most holy ground of faith is the moments when God doesn't. Because that is when we ultimately are wrestling with who is God in the middle of what hasn't happened or I haven't seen. Like, Who do I believe Him to be when this isn't happening?

One of the most powerful scriptures to me about this comes in Daniel 3 when Shadrach, Meshach and Abednego are about to be thrown into this fiery furnace because they're not willing to essentially denounce God and worship the other gods.

And so the king at the time, this guy named King Nebuchadnezzar is about to do this. And they look at the king and they say these words that are such powerful words, I think, about what we do, the choices we make when God still doesn't do the thing that we really want Him to do. And they say back to him the words that "we believe God is willing, and we believe God is able. But even if He doesn't, essentially we believe God's willing, and we believe God's able."

And I think what we ultimately do is we can't force God have things happen in our lives, right? We can force all kinds of things on our own. But if we want to be doing the things that God has for us, we can't force anything to happen at a certain time or a certain way.

But we always have the choice in the middle of what isn't or is to decide, "I believe that you are willing and you are able, even if I never see it in my own life. Like I still believe God that that is exactly who you are." So choice becomes one of the greatest gifts I think that we are given because that is what changes us, the choices that we're making in the middle of when we don't see it.

I think discernment is so key when you're saying, "Do I give up? Do I not give up?" Those are the moments that we have the choice to make of leaning in and listening and asking God, "Okay, it's not happening. What am I to do now? I didn't get the house, so what happens now?"

God didn't do it in that moment. I know ultimately my story is He did. But as far as I was concerned, when I drove away from the house, the end of the story was God didn't, and I believe you're good, and you're kind, and you didn't. And then having to lean in and say, "So what now God? Where are you redirecting me? What are you asking me to do now?"

We read about in Scripture the moments that Jesus tells people to forcefully advance the kingdom, right? But then Jesus also says, "Receive the kingdom like a child." So what is it? Do we forcefully advance? Do we receive it like a kid? And

the answer obviously is YES to both. It's just a matter of leaning in and discerning: what are you doing in this moment? What are you asking me to do in the middle of realizing that this isn't happening?

And I think that's where we are able to make the choice of I believe who God is in the midst of something that He isn't doing. And I really think that is some of the most powerful, holy decisions we can make in our lives is when we are in the moment of truly having to decide that this may not be.

Like I may just have to let go of this hope. I may have to release this and just lay it down as the precious dream that it is before Him, and I really trust that God is still who He says He is, and He will do the things that He says He will do in the ways that He will do them, even if I don't see it, or partake in it the way that I really expected to."

**Stephanie:** This phrase came to mind. That it may not be time for this, for this thing that we were praying for or hoping for but it is time for something. For some reason, the example that came into my mind was, you know, I know that there have been long seasons of my life where I was really hoping that a relationship would work out with this specific person and it's not happening, and it's not going well, it's not going the way that I was hoping it would. But for some reason, there's something in me telling me, or I think I'm supposed to stick it out for this. What do we do in that moment?

And I think that, even when we don't know what to do about this area of our lives, there are other areas of our lives where we do know what to do, and where God does have something for us to do right in this moment. I don't know if that makes any sense. It's not time for this relationship or a relationship or this thing to come to fruition, but it is time for something. So what is this time for? What are you supposed to be doing right now? And it's hard.

It's like we want an answer in this area, you know, to the right, but we may need to leave that for a minute and leave that unanswered. But that doesn't mean that there's nothing to do right now. There's something to be done. There's something that God is saying or leading us to or some way that we can be learning or growing or focusing on.

So I think that sometimes instead of it being a yes or no about this one area of our lives, it's a... It's not even a not yet. We have no idea what's going to happen over here. But even with not knowing what's going to happen over here, there's something else for us to be doing and pouring our time and our heart into.

**Caroline:** Yeah, yeah. I think that's so true. And I think with that as well, that it's okay to allow areas of our waiting or dreams still hold the mystery and let them just be, like you said, and kind of turn somewhere else. We don't always understand. In fact, a lot of times we won't. We don't.

And I know that there are listeners that are dealing with such real loss even in life that does not make sense, it does not have a pretty bow to it. Or a dream that didn't happen and are dealing with the aftermath of feeling so discouraged or defeated by that. And there may not be some great answer to put to it other than God didn't and I trust Him, and I don't understand.

You know, it's like allowing the mystery to just be part of the story as we turn to other areas. But realizing that it is such a holy ground with God in the middle of what we don't understand, and we don't know why He didn't do things, and we may not get those answers.

And I love what you're saying about focusing in on the things He's doing and being okay that certain things just hold mystery longer than we ever anticipated them to.

**Stephanie:** That reminded me of a verse in Philippians 4. Philippians 4 is one of my favorite parts of the whole Bible really. I just want to read this because I think it just speaks exactly what we're talking about.

So it says, "Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice! Let your gentleness be evident to all. The Lord is near. Do not be anxious about anything, but in every situation, by prayer and petition, with thanksgiving, present your requests to God. And the peace of God, which transcends all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus."

It transcends understanding. There's always going to be some waiting, there's always going to be something that feels unresolved, but we get to bring it to God by prayer and petition. With thanksgiving, we get to present these requests to God. And then the peace of God, which completely goes far beyond what we could ever understand or make sense of will guard our hearts and our minds. I love that. I love that.

**Caroline:** I love that.

**Stephanie:** Carolina, as we are sitting here in the waiting, in whatever that may look like in our lives, and it just takes a million different forms, I would just love it if you could give us a last piece of encouragement.

**Caroline:** Yeah, definitely. I would love to. I think the last piece of encouragement would be to really press into where God has you as He has you right where you are. Because where He is placed to you, the waiting is not for nothing, and it isn't void of His power or His plans in your life.

One of the verses that has often spoken to me is in Isaiah 60, where it says, "Arise and shine for your light has come." And that word "arise" means to get up, stand up, and stay up. And "shine" means that we're reflecting something back. So we can reflect back the lack around us, the fear around us, the discouragement around us or we can reflect back a reality greater than that.

So the verse has always spoken to me so much in the waiting: the idea of arise, get up, and stand up and stay up exactly where you are, and then "shine" reflects back a reality of who God is so much bigger than you may even see in this moment. Because it doesn't require faith to reflect back what you see but it requires so much faith to reflect back a trust and a hope and a belief in God beyond the present moment.

I remember so clearly when Mark and I were in Mozambique about seven years ago. We were listening to this woman speak one day and she was sharing words that her pastor had shared in their church. So they weren't hers, they were her pastor's. And it was out of this intense moment he had had with God that He came out understanding these words.

And the words were that history will determine if you believe in God. The idea he was getting at was that ultimately, it's not our words that determine if we really believe. It's the way that we choose to live the everyday moments of life, the unfolding of God's story in us, that really reflects a trust and a hope and a belief to the people around us that God is real to us no matter when, if, or how He chooses to move.

I think my encouragement would be just that: to arise and to shine in the middle of where you are and realize that the choices that you make, and the way that you show up and live today, and the tension that's before you and then certainty of what's ahead of you, that those are powerful decisions that ultimately tell a story of your life of how you choose to trust God in the middle of the mystery when God hasn't and may not, and yet you're still saying, "But I trust you. I believe you. You are good and I will see that goodness in some form or another in the land right around me in my life."

**Stephanie:** Caroline, thank you so much for being here.

**Caroline:** Yeah, thank you. This was so much fun.

[01:04:50] <music>

**Outro:** Friends, thank you so much for listening to this episode. I can't tell you how much it means to me to have you here at our Girls Night.

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All right, friends, that's all we have for today but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night. And this next one is such a good one. I'll see you then.