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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 episode. Today we're talking about super busy seasons of life and how we can bring some order to the chaos. Our guest for this episode is Emily Ley. Emily has been on the show before but she's someone I'm endlessly inspired by, and so I'm so thrilled to have her back.

Emily is the founder of Simplified, a brand of planners and organizational tools for busy women. Her newest book *Sure as the Sunrise* is 100 daily meditations on God's mercy and the light to greet each morning with hope and joy. So along with being an author and an entrepreneur, she's also a wife, a mom of three kids, a friend, a woman of faith, and so much more.

She truly does it all. In this episode, I pick her brain on how she makes it all happen. The short answer to that question I should be the first to tell you is she doesn't do it alone.

So here's just a few of the things that we're talking about in this episode. Emily is going to teach us how to structure our days to make everything run more smoothly. She's going to share with us the tools and resources that have been the most helpful for her in keeping her schedule organized. She'll tell us how she figures out what to say yes to and what to say no to. She's going to teach us how to prioritize what's most important in your life, in your family's life, and in your business's life or your work life. And we're going to talk about how to stay consistent in your faith when life feels really busy.

Friends, if you're feeling stressed out with a busy schedule right now, or if you just want to make your everyday life a little easier and more efficient, Emily's tried and true systems are going to be a game changer for you.

But before we dive in, I can't believe I'm saying this but Christmas shopping is right around the corner. And so I wanted to remind you that we have some amazing gifts and books available in our SMW shop. Now, I don't know about you but I'm the type of person who likes to get Christmas shopping done as early as possible.

That way I can be present with my friends and my family and enjoy as much quality time with them as possible.

So with that said, here are a few of my favorite things that we have in the shop that also work is amazing gifts. First step is our pink Girls Night travel tumblers that come in two different designs. I created them as a celebration of the true magic that happens when we gather together as girlfriends. I love these tumblers so much. They truly keep your beverages hot or cold for hours.

Another thing I love is all of our Girls Night sweatshirts. They are so soft. We have them in several different colors. I wear mine like an embarrassing amount. It's like every single day. We have a newer one that comes in this really pretty mav color and it's just perfect for the holiday months.

The last thing I want to tell you about is our Together Mug. It's a ceramic mug with our ampersand symbol, the & symbol on the front in this beautiful floral print. And it's there to remind you that you're not alone in what you're going through and you don't have to go through life alone. I can't think of a better gift to share with your best friends or your family.

Friends, if you're interested in any of these things or you want to see all the other good stuff we have available in the shop, just go to [stephaniemaywilsonshop.com](http://stephaniemaywilsonshop.com). Again, the link is [stephaniemaywilsonshop.com](http://stephaniemaywilsonshop.com).

With that said, let's jump into the episode. Here's my conversation with Emily.

[00:03:32] <music>

**Stephanie:** Friends, I am just truly thrilled about who we get to talk to today. I'm sitting here with my friend Emily Ley. Emily, thanks so much for coming back on Girls Night.

**Emily:** Hi. Thanks for having me.

**Stephanie:** This is so fun. We were just talking before this and I feel like there are a thousand different things that Emily and I could talk about. One of the things is you're one of the only people that I know that has twins.

**Emily:** Yeah, there are two of them.

**Stephanie:** Yeah. I mean, we haven't even talked about that. But that's so crazy. There's so many things that we have in common. Anyway, I'm really excited about this conversation. Before we dive in, can you tell our listeners who you are, what you do, and a fun fact?

**Emily:** Of course. Okay, well, my name is Emily Ley, and I am a wife to Brian. We've been married almost 15 years. I have three kids. So I have Brady who is 11, and have Tyler and Caroline who are seven years old, which is wild. I always thought that everyone was just going to be in diapers forever, but we're not there anymore.

I'm also the founder of a company called Simplified and we make planners and organizational products for busy women. I'm a podcast host, the host of the Simplified Podcast and I'm an author. I do a lot of things but it's all kind of centered around helping women simplify their lives, simplify their businesses, and really just make space in their lives for the stuff that really matters.

**Stephanie:** I feel like I've been listening-

**Emily:** Oh, fun fact. You needed a fun fact about me.

**Stephanie:** I do. I do.

**Emily:** I had to really think about this. So fun fact about me, when I was in high school, I was in Color Guard. At some schools it's not really cool but at my school it was the coolest thing. It was like what everyone wanted to do. We competed internationally and we were fifth in the world my junior year.

**Stephanie:** Oh, my gosh.

**Emily:** And by color guard I mean not just the flags and all that stuff but we did that for a little bit, but like rifles and swords, sabers. So I can throw a sword in the air, it can spin around five times and catch it. I still do it. I get it out every now and then just to show my family and they're like, "Here we go."

**Stephanie:** They're like, "Mom, we thought it was cool the first time." Okay, that is very cool.

**Emily:** It's random.

**Stephanie:** That gets major cool points with me and the Girls Night crew. We're just gonna say it. If your family won't give them to you anymore, we're giving you all the cool points.

**Emily:** I love it.

**Stephanie:** That is amazing. Are there like accidents as you're practicing flipping sabers in the air?

**Emily:** I mean, I've been hit in the face so many times. I actually have a scar right above my lip where my brace is. There was a hook on my braces and I got hit in the face with the rifle and the hook came out my lip. Yes, many black eyes, many... Yeah, it was fun. But I was a dancer before that so it was like so fun. I loved it. We practiced 40 hours a week when I was in high school as well.

**Stephanie:** Oh, my gosh. That's like such a perfect high school story. You're like, you know, riflery practice, and my braces got hit. Like, yeah.

**Emily:** Absolutely.

**Stephanie:** Everyone can relate to that. Okay, well, that's amazing. That is really amazing. I think probably the thing that you said that blew my mind the most though was saying that your twins are seven and not in diapers anymore. Because mine are almost two and still in diapers and I just cannot... I am aware of the fact on some level that they won't be this small forever, but I cannot wrap my mind around it.

**Emily:** No.

**Stephanie:** I cannot believe that they will get bigger.

**Emily:** I think it was Gretchen Rubin who said the days are long and the years are short. It's so true. There are parts of my life as a mom that I literally don't remember because we were just trying to keep the wheels on the bus and keep moving forward and keep everyone, you know, with everything needed. It's a lot. It really is a lot. Take a lot of pictures because you'll look back one day and be like, "Wow, how did we get through that?"

**Stephanie:** I really do, I guess. I'm writing this down on my soul right now. That's so good. Well, okay, so that's like the perfect lead into what I want to talk to you about today. You are a business owner, an author, a wife, a mom to three kids, you're a friend, you're a woman of faith, you're someone who has to brush their teeth occasionally, you know, shower maybe sometimes.

My guess is that one of the top questions that women ask you is like, how do you do it all? And that's one of the questions that I think we ask, basically, anyone who we can ask because I think so many of us with whatever is on our plate are feeling overwhelmed. Like there just are so many roles and so many to-dos that we are tasked with every day.

And I think that more and more—and I'm grateful for this—more and more women are starting to say, "I don't do it all," and also, "I have a lot of help." But I don't think that we like get much of a glimpse past that. And so it's this question that I

can't stop thinking about. And you're one of the people that I immediately thought of because I just admire the things that you do so much. I'm like, "I want to ask every woman actually how are you doing this?"

**Emily:** I love that.

**Stephanie:** "What does this look like for you?" So, Emily, you're like my first guinea pig. Thanks for being here.

**Emily:** You're so sweet. I love this conversation because I'm all for an inspirational story. But at the end of the day, can you just tell me what you put in your kids' lunchboxes? Like, what do you actually put in them? That's what I need to know.

**Stephanie:** Yes! Yes!

**Emily:** I went on a girls' trip pre-COVID—It was a while ago—with three of my really close friends here. We have a lot of kids between us. And we had this conversation one afternoon about like, "What do you make for dinner on those nights when you have four after school activities, and you don't get home until seven? Like what do you actually make?"

And from that conversation, I realized how important it is for us to have these tactical conversations because it's so important and it's the stuff that fills our brains all the time when we have so many things that we love, and we care about and we want to do really well.

I am what I like to call a recovering perfectionist. I do not do it all. So whenever someone asks me that I'm like, No, what you didn't see is the argument my husband and I got into about me always being the one emptying the dishwasher and him always being the one to put the laundry away or whatever. What else you didn't see is me banging my head against the wall trying to figure out what to go to the grocery store for meals this week. We all go through the same struggles, right?

**Stephanie:** Yes.

**Emily:** And God loves it when we have helper in the house. But I wish it was more.

**Stephanie:** But we don't talk about that.

**Emily:** No.

**Stephanie:** It's like, well, you know, I think we fill in the gaps because there are gaps from what we can see from people's lives. So it's like you've written so many amazing

books, and you're so consistent and present on social media and things like that. But that's only such a small piece of the story. But we can easily fill in the gaps and go, "Well, I bet Emily and her husband never get in arguments about the dishes."

So when we get to hear the back end... You know, for me I'm not packing lunch boxes yet but I want to know how important or how thorough other people are with brushing their toddler's teeth. That was the question last night. And I also want to hear from every family who takes care of their kids throughout the day, how they've put that math together.

**Emily:** Totally. Okay, my life has looked different as everyone's over the years. I've been in business for 15 years. Before that, I worked in corporate America. I have a master's degree in nonprofit management. I was like, climbing that ladder. When I left, I left that job after I'd started my company and I was working in the middle of the night when I was 28... How old am I? I don't even know how old I was. 25 years old.

And I was staying up in the middle of the night working on the side hustle and then going to work during the day. Once I was able to leave financially and take this on full time, my whole reason was so I could be a stay-at-home mom. And it's funny. I look back and I was like, "What did I think I was going to do? Stay at home and work during the day only while the kids nap?" That's not realistic for anybody. Right?

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Emily:** But I think that's what was in my head. Like, well, other people are doing this and so I think I can do that too. But no, no one's actually doing that. They're either working in the middle of the night or they're just working a tiny bit because their business is requiring that little of them. I don't know.

So when Brady was born, Brian was traveling all the time, and I was getting a business. You know, I had just birthed this baby and I just birthed this company at the same exact time. And I was trying to do it all. And we were also kind of trying to become debt free as a family. We were trying to pay off a bunch of credit cards and my student loans from graduate school and all kinds of things. And so we didn't have a lot of extra money to afford some of the things we can afford now, if that makes sense. So I've been in a lot of different situations with this.

As soon as we could afford it, we hired someone to come in a couple of hours a week. I think her name was Kara. And I remember she came in like two or three hours a day, two or three days a week. And that was our first help we had with Brady. And she would hang out with him in the living room when he was a baby and I would go in my office and work.

So I had those hours plus naptime and I was still able to have extra time with him than I would if I was in a corporate position. I tried to take Fridays off so that I always had my whole day on Friday with him.

And then as the business grew, that kind of grew. And as he grew and his needs grew, that kind of grew. We didn't have anyone that came in like deep cleaned our house back then. Just as soon as we could afford that, we added that on. We had someone come every other week. So that's kind of evolved over the years.

Then he went to school and then we had to have more help with the twins. And it was always at our house. Like someone came to our house. We were lucky to have a couple of different women who came, you know, not at the same time, but like one would go back to college or one would whenever and we get someone new. So we had that kind of help.

I also have to say that like there's a time and you and I talked about this briefly before we started this, but there's a time in your life when it's your season to grind. Like it is your season to work and to stay up late and to sacrifice and to put in the work to set yourself up so that you can have the life that you want. And you make those sacrifices and you make those choices early.

How many tears have I cried over who is going to watch my children while I get work done? Not just out of stress, but out of mom guilt because at a certain point, my husband's career had really taken off. Back then he was in sales. His career had really taken off and I did have the option to be a stay-at-home mom, but I loved my work and I wanted to do it. So I chose that life.

So if you're a young mom listening to this and you are struggling with that, or just the stress of trying to figure out childcare, or maybe you can't afford anyone else to come in, and you're trying to just make it work, I get it. I've been there. And it is the hardest thing, because you love all of it, you know, and you want to give the best result to all of it.

I will say now, I'm almost 40 and the company is 15 years old, my kids are older, they're in school all day. Now we have this amazing woman who comes to our house a couple days a week and just helps me do life. Like helps me with laundry and helps me keep the house clean. And it's a totally different world obviously.

I'm out of that season of grinding all the time by choice. It was time to settle down. But yeah, I have a ton of help. I have a ton. We moved home to Pensacola because my family was here and they can help when I have to travel for work, or things like that. We have a babysitter on call for like date nights and to help if randomly Brian

is out of town and I have a work meeting and we need somebody to watch kiddos. Brady's also old enough to stay by himself sometimes. So I don't do it all.

Also, I'm a big believer in raising your kids to be adults. As soon as humanly possible, making them independent so that they can pack their lunches and they can help empty the dishwasher and stuff like that. So yeah, that's a lot.

**Stephanie:** I'm just soaking it all in. This is a total departure, and then I'll actually get to the questions I have for you. This summer you did something like grown-up camp?

**Emily:** Oh, yeah.

**Stephanie:** Tell me about it. Because I'm giggling with how much I love this. Tell me what it is, how it went.

**Emily:** My dad has always said to me, "Emily, you are raising adults. You're not raising them to be children; you are raising adults. So when it's possible, make sure they know adult skills. When they're age appropriate enough to learn a certain thing, make sure they know it, and they're able to master it."

It was pre-COVID, one summer, the twins were four... So it was three years ago, the twins were four and Brady was eight and I was trying to work. So summers are hairy. We don't have any childcare during the summers. They go to different day camps and things like that. And then sometimes they're just here while I'm trying to work. And it's wild.

And it was one of those days and I was like, "Okay, I just need you guys to know how to do some things so that they can leave my plate—those responsibilities can not be on me. And we were having issues with like, "Why can you not just brush your teeth thoroughly?" or "Your hair is dirty and you say you washed it. There's no way."

So we started this "How to be a person cab." And it was started as a joke. It was like, you know, we'll pick one activity a day or even a week and we'll like dive in. So one of them was how to brush your teeth. And yes, I had taught them how to brush their teeth, but they weren't doing a very good job, so says my dentist. So we watched a video on YouTube that was made by Sonicare. And then we got their toothbrushes and we did it together. And then I checked it and I said, "Hey, "do it like this." And I showed them. And then we practice flossing.

And we just spent like a good amount of time really learning how to do those things and it was awesome. And they were so into it. They were so into it. And so this last summer I made a big chart of all the things I wanted them to learn. Maybe not all in



one summer, but over time. And it was things like how to order your own food at a restaurant, how to fold a t-shirt, how to make a sandwich. And we would pick a couple a day or a couple of weeks and just dive into it. And once they kind of had it down pat, we would cross it off.

I mean, we were traveling a little bit after I did that and when we came back my daughter was like, "We were going to do "how to be a person" camp. We gotta get back to "how to be a person" camp." She's all about it. If you go look on my Instagram there's a real and it's a chart and you'll see it and it has all the stuff we did.

**Stephanie:** I mean we're so far away from that but then we're also not the girls are really interested in knowing how to do like day-to-day things. Like if you hand one of them... Like they'll find trash and take it over the trash can and they want to throw it away. Sometimes they get distracted by what else is in the trash can and want to start pulling things out. But I mean, if something spills they'll go, "Spill, spill, spill." And they'll like want a towel, and they'll clean it up. At first, they would just like miss it entirely but now they actually are getting it. It's amazing. But I also really do wish that I had done that growing up, because there are some things that I'm like, "I missed that."

**Emily:** Me too. Me too. I didn't know how to scramble an egg until I was like 25.

**Stephanie:** Same.

**Emily:** My kids now, whenever we make ground beef, Caroline comes in, and she's like, "This is my job." She knows how to make ground beef in the pan. And Brady can make eggs for everybody on a Saturday morning. He doesn't unless you ask him to. But they know those basic human skills, you know.

**Stephanie:** I love that. I love that. That is so fun. As we're talking about just all the things that have to get done in a life, I would love to know more about your schedule, and things that you have learned over the years about putting... You've 24 hours in a day, seven days in a week, how you allocate those to be able to... maybe what you choose to include, what you've chosen not to include. Just anything that's helpful in keeping the wheels on the bus, as you said, with calendars.

**Emily:** This is so important to talk about. I think it's also important to kind of underscore what I said earlier about there's a season to grind. This is just something I keep repeating in my head. There's a season to grind, and I am not in it anymore. I was.

All that to say there are seasons of the year where I have to really put in the work. I can't go work out during the day, I can't... whatever. I have to just say no to other

things so I can say yes to the thing that needs my attention at the moment. Like launches or book releases, those are busy times.

But on the regular, on the day-to-day, I try to push against this natural inclination that I have to always have a very full plate. There is a book that is by a pastor named Jacob Armstrong. He's a friend of our priest. So we are New Episcopalians-

**Stephanie:** Cool.

**Emily:** ...and our priests just... he's really dear friend of ours and he sent me this book and was like, "You have to read this. This is about a lot of what you talk about but I think it's also about a lot of what you're living right now." It's called *Breaking Open*. And it's about the difference between breaking open and breaking down.

One of the things he talks about is pace versus space, and how when you go at a pace that is too quick too fast, too hard, too full for too long you leave no space for God, you leave no space for noticing magic moments, for living life. It is a... especially the first half of the book... I listened to it on Audible, and he's a phenomenal reader. It is incredible.

And I kind of am taking what I learned from that book and trying to organize my schedule literally this week, as we talked about this, in a different way. I have a tendency to always have a very full plate, thrive on being busy, love adrenaline, love feeling needed. Brian says that I'll clear my plate and get a bunch of whitespace in my days, and then I'll just very slowly start adding things back on, or inventing new projects because I'm a builder, I'm a maker.

So my days now I'm trying to get back to what I was doing. And what that looks like is my kids are in school from 8:00 to 2:30 or 8:00 to 2:30 or 3:00 depending on the day. And they all go to the same school. My husband takes the kids to school. He's also an entrepreneur now. He works in private equity. But he takes the kids to school and I pick up and then I kind of do the afternoon shuffle with all the sports and stuff.

So when he takes the kids to school, I will go and work out. And I try to work out four days a week. I'm currently at two days a week because work's a little wild. But I work out with a personal trainer twice a week and do strength training, which has done light years of amazingly wonderful things for my mental health. I've not lost a pound doing that but really good. Strength training is really good for your mental health. I'm an anxious person if you haven't guessed.

So I do that. Try to do that four days a week. And then one or two of my days I keep for meetings. I try not to have meetings or podcast interviews for my podcasts

or for others... I try not to have them scattered throughout the week. I try to keep them all on Mondays or Tuesdays.

And then Fridays, I try to keep open for a hair appointment or volunteering at my kids' school or some work I need to catch up on quietly like not with a lot of stuff going on. Wednesdays and Thursdays are more like computer work, writing, creating content, or editing a book or helping Simplified with some sort of thing.

And then around two o'clock, I will try to start packing it up in the office and letting my brain transition from work to family. And then I will go and pick up my kids at school. And then most days of the week, we have a lot of sports. When you have three kids and you let them each choose a sport, it turns out to be a lot of sports. And like my oldest is playing tackle football, which I swore I'd never let him do but he's so into it. It's four days a week.

So afternoons are wild. We're all over the place. And then we will 99.9% of the time have dinner as a family. I don't like to cook but I do because these people have to eat. We probably go out to eat twice a week. We'll do leftovers once a week, and then we'll do easy stuff. I just do easy things. I don't have time to do anything fancy.

**Stephanie:** But truly we are the same person. Yeah to that.

**Emily:** I mean, I love my mom and dad and my brother. They got all the chef DNA. They are all three amazing cooks. And I am like, "Can you just eat a hot dog?"

**Stephanie:** My husband is a great cook. Like intuitive, can put all kinds of things together. And yeah, I'm like, "What is the fastest way?"

**Emily:** Oh, Brian is also terrible. It's like slow cooker, instant pot. I love my airfryer. I use it all the time. We just do easy things. And I love Green Chef. I love Home Chef. I love those kinds of things, too. We'll do that probably two nights a week. But that's it.

And then the kids, they go, you know, we'll hang out and the kids go to bed around 8:30, 9:00 o'clock. I'm an early riser and a late... I don't like to stay up late. My husband does. So I will go and read a book or watch a show. I'm usually in bed by 9 o'clock and I wake up around 6:00 in the morning or earlier because my dog go outside. And that's it. It's so different than what it was when my kids were little or they were in different stages. Like now they're all three at the same school all day long and life is just completely different.

I also used to have this terrible talent of wanting to see how much I could fit into my day. Like it earned me some kind of merit badge if I could record eight podcast

episodes or something in a day. And it's just terrible for your blood pressure. So I'm just trying to like incorporate more space in a slower pace these days. Because when you're someone who creates, you have to leave space to be filled up. Otherwise, you'll hit a wall. And I've done it multiple times so I can attest that that is true.

**Stephanie:** It does happen. I found the wall. I've found the walls.

**Emily:** Yeah.

[00:28:24] <music>

**Sponsor:** Hey friends! If you've been considering going to therapy but wondering where to find a good counselor or how to afford it, there is a resource I wanted to share with you. It's one of our amazing Girls Night podcast sponsors, [Faithful Counseling](#).

Faithful Counseling is a website where you can get matched up with a Christian counselor for professional online therapy sessions. This is truly the easiest and most affordable way to find a faith-based counselor. Now, you may have heard me talk about Faithful Counseling before, but just in case you haven't, I wanted to tell you four quick reasons why I love them so much.

The first is that it's easy to get started. All you have to do is go to their website and fill out a form about yourself, what you're going through, what you're looking for in a counselor. And within 24 hours, Faithful Counseling will connect you with a licensed, vetted, faith-based professional counselor.

Second reason I love it is that it's easy to schedule. Once you're connected to a therapist, you can start communicating with them in less than 24 hours. You can also log into your account at any time and send a message to your therapist and you'll get timely and thoughtful responses back.

You can also schedule weekly video or phone sessions. And the best part is you can do it all virtually. No commute, no awkward waiting room time, less time away from work. You can even do your sessions in your PJs, which I love.

The third reason I love them is that it's easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you need to find a counselor you really connect with. And often we don't find the right person on our first try. So then we're stuck going through the whole process of breaking up with our counselor, which can be awkward and then starting from scratch to find a new one.

But with Faithful Counseling, if you don't love your counselor or if you find that you're looking for something different, you can switch by clicking a button. It's easy and it's free. They really make it easy to find the best fit possible.

And then the last reason I love them is that it's easier to fit in your budget. Well, I love traditional in-person counseling. It can cost more than \$100 per session, which just makes it a total no go for so many of us, especially in a time when the economy is all over the place. But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and they have financial aid available.

And if you sign it through the special link that they gave me, you can get 10% off your first month. If there'll be something you've been considering or something you think might be helpful for you right now, head on over to [stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling](http://stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling). That link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again, that's [stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling](http://stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling) for all the info, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too.

[00:30:47] <music>

**Stephanie:** You know, because there is such a finite amount of time in a day, what have you learned or what can you pass on to us about figuring out what goes in your day and then also what doesn't?

I find myself saying yes a lot, because I just love to work. I love my job a lot and so I say yes to all the things. I've found over the years that I have to be very selective, I have to constantly be checking with my kind of core principles about why we do this work, why I do this anyways, and making sure that I have my eyes on the long game and not just the short game so that I don't overload my plate too much.

It's like they say, when you say yes to one thing, you're saying no to something else, whatever that is. So I think that doing really tactical things like time blocking or even day blocking. I mean, there are seasons where I'll say, "Hey, team Simplified, I'm out for three weeks because I have to edit a book or I have to write a book or whatever." And I'll also block out certain days of the week, like, these are my meetings days.

I even texted you right before this and I was like, "Do I have to put makeup on? Is this a makeup day? Because I will literally organize my to-do list for my day based on whether or not have to have makeup on."

**Stephanie:** 100%. 100%.

**Emily:** So I find that to be really helpful. I also have found that I just have to get comfortable with the fact that every day, at the end of the day, my work may not be buttoned up and tied in a bow. There may be things left for tomorrow, I might just be constantly behind on a certain thing. And that's where the grace comes in. You just have to give yourself grace and not try to do 100 things all at one time. Because when you do that you're not giving yourself fully to anything, you know?

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Talk to me about your home, because I know that you're such an organizer, you're such a cleaned-it-out kind of person and I know that you've really intentionally thought about the way that you put your physical space together in order to facilitate the kind of life that you want to live. So what are some of the things that you guys have done spatially?

**Emily:** We built this house. It was a custom build. We built it four years ago. And there was a lot of thought that went into that. Like, what are the spaces we're going to use the most? One of the tactical things we did... My kids have always had shoe boxes. They're almost too big for them now. It kind of makes me sad their feet are getting bigger.

Each kid has a shoe box, and it's just a wicker basket in our little mud room—well, it's a hallway—mud rack area. And that is where they keep their day-to-day shoes, like the tennis shoes they wear to school and then their socks go in there.

**Stephanie:** So they're just all tossed in there?

**Emily:** They're all tossed in there. They're not organized. Now, my daughter Caroline is the apple did not fall far from the tree. And yesterday, actually, she pulled out her shoe basket and she organized it by color. And she was like, "Mom, it just makes me so happy to look at." And I was like, "Oh, man, what do you mean? He's awesome."

**Stephanie:** I totally get that.

**Emily:** Yes, totally. We have three hooks right there for their backpacks and jackets. We built in like a laundry chute so that they didn't have to bring laundry down the stairs. We have a shelf in our pantry that their lunchboxes go on. So once they get home from school, they know (a) this stuff that would otherwise turn into clutter goes right there. Gosh, I'm trying to think what else we've done.

I try to declutter often and I try to really care a whole lot about the areas we live in, which for us is the main floor, and I try to just shut the door on the stuff that is there. Like their bedrooms and the playroom are upstairs. They're not like the other sizes of our house, which is fine. I mean, their kids, right?

And I do. I think it's an important thing to think through, like, what are the pain points in your day? You know, I remember years ago, it was a pain point in our day that the kids would come downstairs and not have their shoes on. And they would run it back upstairs to get their shoes, and then they were late for preschool or whatever. So we just made a shoe basket. And back in that house, they shared one because they were little and the house was smaller. But yeah, it's just a small thing that helps.

**Stephanie:** I think this is something I've learned from you. But just like having a spot for everything. And that if you notice like lunch boxes are getting dumped on the kitchen counter or your bag or whatever when you get home, then where does that live and making a space for it. Because when there's not a space for it, then it is going to clutter up... like it's gonna take up room that's not designated for it.

**Emily:** Totally.

**Stephanie:** And it just bring some peace to be like, "This is where this lives."

**Emily:** Another trick I learned, I will, at the end of the day—I find myself doing this most days—I'll take a laundry basket and walk around that main floor of our house and pick up anything that's out of place. And then I will just take the basket. And sometimes I will put the basket in a corner until another day when I feel like I'm doing it. Or most times I'll dump it on the floor, sorted by room, call the kids in to get their stuff, and then take the rest and put it away.

It's such a time saver versus walking space by space, picking up one thing, taking it to the other room coming back. That way everything just gets pushed back where it's supposed to be. And it happens a lot quicker. I try to do that every day so that in the morning I wake up and everything's kind of fresh start.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, yeah, that makes sense. I like that a lot. This is sort of in the same vein. And you can totally plug Simplified here. In fact, please do. What are some of the tools you use to keep organized? If I lose this or if I don't have this, then the wheels fall off.

**Emily:** The wheels fall off. So a couple years ago I started using two planners, which I always said was like not simplified, and I would never do it and I really couldn't wrap my brain around it. But I was mocking up planners for a photo shoot and I let myself just have free rein with a weekly one day and it was like, just see what you can make it.

And I marked it up into a meal planner. I told you meal planning is not my favorite thing to do. But now I keep a weekly planner in my kitchen open with the weekly

meals on it. And on one side of the... so the weekly shows like the whole week. And each day has two little columns. And on one side of the column, it's what's for dinner, on the other side is the grocery list.

So when I fill that out on Sundays, I have the meal plan and the grocery list already ready right there. And that has been a total game changer. Then when my daily planner, I will just keep my schedule and whatnot for the week.

Another thing that's been really helpful is keeping a trash bag in the car. I bought this trash bag... I think it's from Target. But it's a trash bag that has a Kleenex box holder underneath it and it attaches to your headrest. And so I keep that behind the driver's seat in my car, and it keeps my car so much more clean. Just that my kids have like a place for all the little papers. I think that's really helpful. Gosh, what's another thing?

I'm not a big fan of micro organizing. So like you see a lot of those pantries that have beautiful clear containers. They're in rainbow order and there's 900 of them. That doesn't work for us like at all. We tried it. Nobody in my house puts things back where they're supposed to.

So we do a lot of baskets in our pantry and then in our house just like Legos, for instance. Tyler is really into Legos. We don't organize them. It's just a basket and they all go in at the end. So we do a lot of macro organizing, if you will. And then with drawers and things like that, we'll do the little clear, you know, the little clear bins. So those are helpful, but yeah, not a ton of micro organizing.

**Stephanie:** That makes sense. That's something that's been working for us too. The girls are pretty good at putting stuff... They're really small and they can put stuff in baskets. I mean, sometimes we'll go through and be like, "These are all stuffed animals. These are all whatever." But I don't really care what's in each thing as long as there's just enough space to hold it all.

**Emily:** Yeah, totally.

**Stephanie:** And it makes it easier for them to participate. And it really does make cleanup just so much easier because you're like, "Just dump it all in the bin."

**Emily:** Totally. I just thought of something else. We use an app at work called Asana. It's a project management app. Asana is amazing. It is so great. I actually have a whole list of tools that I use to organize life and business over on my website. We just created a new website that's just Emily's stuff. And it's like books and all that. It's [emilyleybooks.com](http://emilyleybooks.com). But there's a bunch of tools that we use over there. And Asana is my number one, like ride or die. I don't know what I would do without it.



**Stephanie:** Okay, that is really great because we don't have something like that for my team. I think we have a couple of things that we've sort of tried, but not really and that-

**Emily:** You have to look at it. My whole team uses it. We keep a content calendar there. It's like a big master calendar. And then every little project, every book, every launch, every whatever has its own project. There's like color coding and messaging. It's great. It's really good. It's brilliant.

**Stephanie:** Just writing it. Asana... giant circle around it. Perfect. This is sort of, I mean, really, time and space, I guess related. But because work is such a big part of your life and because you're mom and because you're wife, because you have these really big I guess like rocks in the river sort of, I feel like you have more like big boulders less a bunch of little stones. What have you had to say no to in order to make space for these things?

**Emily:** Oh, that's a good question. A lot of things. I mean, there have been some big opportunities that I've had to say no to. Had someone locally asked me if I wanted to open a retail store. And he is the kind of person that would like really support something like that and help get off the ground. There's no bandwidth for that.

Back in 2017, we completely closed our wholesale program. We lost 40% of our revenue. But the next year, like knowing that was intentional, we cut that because it was just so time-consuming. We decided to focus on our customers, like our actual real-life women we were serving, and we doubled our revenue the following year. So saying no to some things makes space to say a big YES to others. And in that instance, it was a lot more profitable. Gosh, what other things have I said no?

I don't ever go out to lunch with friends. Like I hate it during the work week. I actually told a friend this week... Like she asked me to go lunch and I was like, "I can't. I have 900 meetings." But we do do a lot of like nights out with friends, with a couple friends. Or we'll go to coffee or things like that.

But in this season I just can't. I have so much on my plate during the workday and I'm trying to literally work between the hours of like nine and two. It's a shortened workday. And so I have to have to get my work done during those hours because I don't want to work at night anymore, I don't want to work when my kids are home. That's not always the case. But you know, in this season, it's just had to be that way.

**Stephanie:** That makes sense. That makes sense. I know that your faith is a really big part of your life and I know that faith takes space, like you said. And really I'm thinking about your new devotional, which I'm holding for people who are watching on YouTube. I feel like they're gonna like-

**Emily:** Love it.

**Stephanie:** How do you make space for time with God? What does that look like for you?

**Emily:** That's a good question. I've always struggled with not really having a church home. When I was little, my family was faithful and they taught me my faith, but we didn't go to church every Sunday or anything like that. I don't have memories of youth group and camps and things like that. And then we moved to Tampa, we kind of had a church we went to and we liked it but we weren't really involved.

When we moved home, we were like, we are going to find a church and get involved. And we joined a church here and we tried to get involved, but it just didn't feel like the right fit for a number of different reasons. We had great friends there... a couple of great friends there. But for the most part, we didn't know a lot of people.

And we just kept filling this pole to this other church that's affiliated with my kids' school. It's Episcopal, which we were at a Methodist Church. And we finally made the decision to change churches. And we did that because theologically we aligned better there and also all of our like closest friends were there. And it was like immediate community. I mean, we had to community with them because they were friends. We're all in a book club together and whatnot. But it was a different kind of community too. And they introduced us to other people and their kids. Brady's an acolyte now. I just went on the women's retreat last weekend.

So making the decision that like, "We are gonna get involved, we're gonna say yes to these things because they matter, and we want our kids to grow up with it," it just changed the game, you know? And we just said yes. And was it uncomfortable to leave a church? Yeah. I mean, our kids were baptized there. That was a lot. But it's such a great fit. I'm so glad we did it. It really allowed us to make it a priority because it is so much fun. It's so important. Finding a church home is really hard, but it helps you make space for it.

**Stephanie:** I love that. I love that. That's such a good answer. That feels like a free pass to try something new, you know. So if you're really trying to jam something together, there's a chance that you may be trying to shove a square peg into a round hole.

**Emily:** For sure.

**Stephanie:** We're allowed to try a couple different things and see if there's a thing that fits a little bit better.

**Emily:** Yeah, you're allowed to change your mind. It's been a good transition.

**Stephanie:** I love that. Before we wrap up, tell us about your devotional. Tell us what it's about, how it came to be, what we can expect from it.

**Emily:** So when my publisher asked if I would like to make a devotional, I was like, "I'm gonna have to think about this." Because, first of all, a devotional falls right in line with the way I spend my mornings. I am a planner person, I sit down with my coffee, and my planner and I look it over, get ready for the day.

I love to have a few minutes in the morning before everybody else wakes up. But like I said, I was not raised in the church. So I don't speak the same church language that a lot of other authors in that genre speak.

And I always found it to be a weakness of mine that I could not write that way. The way that I wrote about my faith was just passionate, and not... not normal. It was passionate and it was every day. It was just everyday feelings about God and faith and the way that Jesus shows up in my life in little and big ways. The small moments he meets us in that are just very normal in average, right? Like every day.

And my publisher was like, "No, this is why we want you to write this devotional because people want to read that way and that just connects with people in such a beautiful way." And I was like, "Okay, I'll try."

And what I actually found when I wrote the devotional was I had so much fun with it. And I had so many stories to tell about the way that God shows up in our lives and the way He showed up in mine that I wrote too many devotions, which actually, we haven't shared this publicly yet, but there's actually gonna be a second one because there were so many.

**Stephanie:** Heard it here first.

**Emily:** Heard it here first.

**Stephanie:** Breaking news.

**Emily:** So the devotional that is coming out in November is called *Sure as the Sunrise*. And the title came to me during the pandemic when everything was terrifying and changing quickly, and I was trying to work and do virtual school, and keep, you know, everybody safe and healthy and not get my parents sick. And just so much. I'm sure everyone can relate to that. Just so much was changing so quickly.

And I was like, trying to find solid ground. Like what is happening? Every day I would walk out of my bedroom, and I would look out... We live on Pensacola Bay. And I would look out to the bay and I would see the sunrise. And I would think, "Okay, God brought the sun up again, just like He did on the very first day, with the same enthusiasm, and He's gonna keep doing it over and over. The sun is going to keep coming up. He did not forget about you, Emily."

It makes me want to tear up because I can just remember thinking like, "God, where are you? Did you forget about us? What is going on?" And seeing the sunrise over and over and over again I just kept thinking like, "He hasn't forgotten about us."

So I wrote *Sure as the Sunrise*—this is the title—I wrote it so that women who are going through big things, small things, whatever it is, however their days are filled that they can fill themselves with a little bit of truth to stand firm on in the morning. And it's a beautiful book. I'm so proud of it.

It's *100 Morning Meditations on God's Mercy and Delight*. Every week has five devotions. They have a verse affiliated with the story and then they have a call to action at the end. Like a little piece for you to think through. And then at the end of every week, there's a reflection, like a guided journaling section. It's beautiful.

**Stephanie:** I love that. I love that. I'm trying to tear over here. That's so beautiful. I just feel like what we need most of the time is like, "Hey, I didn't forget about you." And especially with all navigating so much, and the world felt so scary, like, "Did you forget about us?" And like, "No, I didn't."

**Emily:** And there's times I know in your life, and definitely mine, where I have thought the same thing. Like, "God, why can everyone else have a baby and I can't? Did you forget about me?" I remember thinking those same things going through infertility before my first and then before the second and third. And like, "God, why did you forget about me?"

And there's truths in the Bible, there's truths that God gives us to remind us that, like, "I'm working something here. And these are the truths that you can stand on because everything else might change but these things are not going to change."

**Stephanie:** I was in church really early in my faith and the pastor was just this really amazing guy who was just a really amazing speaker. And he was talking about how he became a pastor. And his whole family had been... You know, his dad was a pastor, his grandpa was a pastor. So he was like, "I'm not working in the church. I am not going to a pastor."

And he was talking about how he felt like God was like tapping on the shoulder and being like, "Hey, hey, hey." And he's like, "No, no, no." And then finally, he's like, "God, what?" And he knew that this is what God had for him. And he said, "But I made a deal with God." And he's like, "I don't know if you're allowed to do that but I decided I was going to." And he's like, "I..."

[crosstalk 00:52:13]

**Stephanie:** Totally. I'm like, "I hope you're allowed to because I've definitely attempted it." But he's like, "I'll do this as long as I can talk to real people about you in real ways. I don't want to speak churchy language. I just want to talk about you in real ways, to talk about you to real people in real ways." That's what he has done.

And I remember sitting there going, "Same. Same." I mean, I wasn't raised in the church either. I don't speak churchy language and I don't find that to be super inviting when you walk into a space and everyone's speaking a language you don't understand. That resonates so deeply with me. And I'm just really grateful that the fact that you speak the way that you do, that you talk about God the way that you do is really important. And I'm glad that they told you that and I'm glad that you listened. So thank you for this book.

**Emily:** It's been really fun. It's been an exercise in paying attention and just looking around at like, Man, if we make the space for it and if we pause long enough to see it, there's so much magic happening even when things are so hard. I've learned a lot from writing that book.

**Stephanie:** I love it. I love it. Emily, here's my last question. And this one is selfish but it's my show. So here we go. What is something that you wish you could tell yourself like five years ago age-wise and then also, you know, when you had twins who were about two? What is just something you wish you could go back and tell yourself?

**Emily:** Oh, man, would I think about that time in my life when the twins were two, Brady was six, that was a busy year. I mean, five years ago was what? 2017? Oh, man, there was so much going on. I mean, the business was at that point doubling year over year. I mean, it was wild. It was growing so fast. And I was trying so hard to keep up with it.

The kids were going in 900 directions. We were living in Tampa. I can sum up that time period by saying there was a lot going on. And if I could go back and tell myself anything, I would tell myself to loosen your grip a little bit. Like yes, this stuff is happening with the business but you having a super tight grip on it is not what's making it happen. And it's not all going to fall apart if you like take a nap. I truly believed it probably would back then.

And the kids like they can have a hot dog for dinner. Just cut it up really small. It's fine. And the living room can be messy. That's fine, too. It's not a reflection on you as a mother or a woman, if you're living it was messy. I was still so wrapped up in trying to do it all perfectly. Not that I'm not still trying to do. But I was really trying hard back then, because there was just so much going on. There's less going on now. There was so much going on.

So I would tell, you know, 34-year-old Emily, like, loosen up a little bit. Have some fun. These are the days. You're gonna be 39 and a half years old one day and you're gonna look back and be like, "I don't remember a lot of that. I was just moving at lightning speed all the time."

**Stephanie:** So just slow down a little bit, take a nap, and everything's not gonna fall apart.

**Emily:** Taking a nap fixes most ailments. Most day to day taking an apple fix it. Also water. Water is good. If your kids are ever out of sorts, just involve water. Put them in the bathtub, give them some water to play with. Give them a squirt gun, whatever. Water fixes a lot of things too.

**Stephanie:** That is so good. That is so good. Emily, thank you so much for just being you-

**Emily:** Of course.

**Stephanie:** ...and for leading the way in so many ways.

**Emily:** You're the best interviewer by the way. You are so good at this. You're so engaging and fun. I love what you do.

**Stephanie:** Thank you. That means so much. Well, okay, we're gonna have to have you back. I told you I have a secret surprise new project coming up that I haven't told anyone listening about, but I will soon. But we're going to need to pick your brain a little bit more.

**Emily:** I love that.

**Stephanie:** So we'll get it on the books. Thank you, Emily.

**Emily:** Of course.

[00:56:39] <music>

**Outro:** Guys, thank you so much for listening to this episode. I cannot tell you how much it means to me to have you here at Girls Night.

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