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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.

I am so excited about today's episode. Today, you're going to be hearing part two of my conversation with my amazing counselor, Christen Reed from Ready Nest Counseling here in Nashville. Now if you haven't listened to part one of the episode, make sure you go back and listen to that one first.

In this two-part episode, we're talking about becoming a mom, why it's such a big transition, what you can do to prepare for it, and some really practical pieces of advice and wisdom to help you through, especially in those first few months.

Like I said, if you didn't listen to part one, go back and listen to that part first. But today in part two, we're focusing on how to ask for help as a new mom and why needing help is not a sign of failure, weakness, or somehow a sign that we're a bad mom.

We're talking about why it's so important for us to take care of ourselves and how to actually do that, and how to drop the guilt so many of us feel when we do. We're talking about how to filter through all of the advice that's out there for first time moms so that we can figure out what's best for us, for our family, and for our new baby, and so much more.

And then at the end of the episode, since Christen is my therapist, we talk about therapy: why it's so important, how it can help, and how to find the right therapist for you, even if you've struggled to find someone who's a good fit in the past.

I said this last week, but this is a pretty vulnerable topic for me. Becoming a mom is something really recent for me and it's honestly the hardest transition I've ever been through. But I want to share the whole story of how this has been for me because if you're struggling in any of the same ways that I was, it is so important to me that you know you're not alone.

Okay, one more thing before we dive in. Speaking of therapy, as you're hearing from my amazing counselor, you might find yourself thinking about counseling in

your own life. With that in mind, if you live in Tennessee or in South Carolina and are navigating anything related to motherhood, go check out Ready Nest. They are so great. That link will be in our show notes too.

But if you're in a different season of life or you live in a different state, that recommendation doesn't help quite as much. So here's one that does, is 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. 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, 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.

The second reason 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 could 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 do literally every time.

The third reason is that it's easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you have 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 is awkward, and then starting from scratch to find a new one.

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 make it really easy to find the best fit possible.

And then the fourth reason is that it's easier to fit into your budget. While I love traditional in-person counseling, it can cost more than \$100 per session, which makes it the total no-go for so many of us. But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and they have financial aid available.

And if you sign up through this special link they gave me, you can get 10% of your first month. Friends, if therapy is 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 give you all the information as well as 10% off your first month. Again, that's [stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling](http://stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling). You can get all the info about Faithful Counseling, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too.

All right, you guys ready? Let's jump into part two of my conversation with Christen.

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**Stephanie:** So one of the things that I know was really hard for me and I think is really hard for a lot of women is asking for help. So there was never any expectation that I would be the sole caretaker for these two babies, partially because I think that that's impossible.

But even so, I felt a pretty intense amount of failure for not being able to take care of them by myself. That was never anyone's expectation for me, it was never my expectation of myself, but still, the fact that I couldn't do this on my own, I felt bad about that.

And I remember having a hard time asking for help or a hard time receiving help. And whether that looked like looking at Carl and telling him I'm tapped out... you know, it was really hard for me to not have more to give. I felt weak for that. Or whether that was like, you know, having my mother-in-law help me with the girls, which she has helped so much, and still does. I felt like I shouldn't need that.

I remember a specific conversation when we were trying to find and hire a nanny for the girls to help us, that I felt like I should have only the bare minimum amount of help. So like if I had enough nanny hours that I could take a shower and take a nap, that I was being lazy and indulgent, and also that I was harming my kids by spending time away from them.

So talk to us about how to ask for help and how not to feel guilty about it. I don't think you're gonna say we should feel guilty about it. So if we shouldn't, why?

**Christen:** We definitely shouldn't feel guilty about asking for help because we're human. We're not perfect. We don't have the capacity to handle everything at all times of the day. Right? And you know, how often have I reminded you of "Steph, you have to, you have multiples"? And reminded you to have grace for yourself, right? And

reminded you that this is double for you what it is for a mom that's just having one kiddo, who equally is hard. But it looks a little bit different because there's two, right? We've talked about that a lot. And for any of our listeners that are moms of multiples, they'll totally understand and be able to resonate with that.

**Stephanie:** I'm sending you all a hug.

**Christen:** Exactly. Yes. But you know, as far as asking for help goes, the first thing I think that we have to do is extend that grace to ourself of "it is okay that I cannot do all of this. It is okay that I have to have my basic needs met, like taking a shower and eating and sleeping. It is okay."

And if we ask for help in order to meet those needs, guess what? You're setting yourself up for success. It's not setting yourself up for failure, it's setting yourself up for success because you're gonna be a much more present mom, a much more present partner, a much more present friend, daughter, granddaughter, the list goes on and on and on and on because you've met those basic needs, right?

It's not selfish to take a shower. It's not selfish. It's not selfish at all. It is not selfish to hydrate your body. It is not selfish to feed yourself a nourishing meal. Those are things that we actually have to be doing in order to be performing at capacity. If we're not, then we're not going to be able to do any of the things that our baby wants, needs for us to do, or our partner, or ourself. So let's remember that. Basic needs are not a luxury. Basic needs or basic needs. Okay?

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Put that on a t-shirt. Honestly, I would wear it.

**Christen:** Right?

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Basic needs are not a luxury. They are basic needs.

**Christen:** Exactly, yes. And it's never, never, never, never, never selfish of you to ask for help so that you can go take a shower, especially if you haven't taken one in three days. That's never selfish. It's just not. Asking for help, extending grace for yourself first, that's the key I think. And just reminding yourself it's okay, we all need help sometimes. You know, your partner is going to need to ask you for help on another day. And guess what? It's totally normal. It's totally okay.

**Stephanie:** We've talked about this a lot, that there's sort of this idea that having your kids with anyone but you is like second best or it's plan B. But I think that the way that I felt about it... And this is totally subconscious. I don't actually feel this way at all. I haven't been raised this way. I haven't been given any explicit messages like this. And if I had, I'd be like, That's not true.

But I think I still have this weird gut feeling that Plan A is that my girls are with me, that I'm the one taking care of them at all times. And then to have them with anybody else is like Plan F. Like, it's not just second best, it's like way less good, if that makes sense. Is that true?

**Christen:** 1,000% no. It's not true at all. It's actually really helpful for our kids to be able to be with another adult, appropriate adult when that is safe. A safe, appropriate adult. It's really, really helpful.

Why is that helpful? We want to raise really well-attached, securely attached humans. That's what we want. And that are well rounded and that have a really beautiful view of all different things of life. But a way that we can set our kids up to grow up to be securely attached individuals is by allowing them the opportunity to be with other people that are taking care of them.

So having a nanny, take care of them, sending them to daycare, sending them to school. All of these things are really appropriate for their emotional development.

**Stephanie:** Talk to me about... because we've talked about this a lot too. Talk to me about secure attachments. What is it? Because it would seem like for our kids to be really attached, that means that they are like always on your hip. But that's not what we're talking about. That's not the kind of attachment.

**Christen:** Exactly. No, no, no, no. We actually don't want our kids to always be attached to our hips and to start crying the minute that we put them down, or that dad takes them or grandma takes them. Sometimes it's developmentally appropriate. Let's say that. Let's normalize that.

**Stephanie:** They are getting nanny appointment right now.

**Christen:** And love their mama so much.

**Stephanie:** They really do.

**Christen:** That's appropriate. It's totally appropriate. We're gonna go through cycles where they need dad, or they need mom, or they can't leave each other's side. That's normal. It's okay, I'm talking about if it is that way for every single time that you go to put them down and they start screaming, then we want to look at some things that maybe we need to tweak within the parent-child relationship. It doesn't mean that you're loving your kid wrong or anything like that. It's just maybe we need to really focus on that attachment piece.

So what does it mean to be securely attached? It means that mom's gonna leave the room if there's an adult there, dad, or grandma or a friend or a nanny, whatever. Mom's gonna leave the room, your kid's gonna be like... they're gonna notice, "Huh, mom left. Okay, well, I'm gonna keep playing with my blocks." And then mom comes back, "Oh, hey, mom, look what I did while you are gone." That's a securely attached kid—one that's not breaking down every time that mom leaves the room.

And once again, there are seasons where that's 100% developmentally appropriate. But we don't want that to be happening every single time. What we really want our kids to know is somebody that loves me is going to go away, but they're going to come back so I don't need to worry about "Where did they go? Where did they go? Are they coming back?" I don't need to be anxious about that.

**Stephanie:** I really love that. The girls are totally in it. They're coming out of that a little bit, but they're in a moment where the last, I would say, like month or so where they just, just want to be with me. But it is starting to fade a little bit. And they're remembering how much they love Carl.

And usually if we drop them off someplace where they're, you know, with their grandparents or if they're with a nanny, they cry when I leave, but then they get over it pretty quickly and start playing with the blocks.

**Christen:** Exactly. That's very, very common and that's what we want to see.

**Stephanie:** Like, overall, it's a good thing for our kids to be taken care of by different safe adults, not just by us?

**Christen:** Yeah, for sure. It absolutely is. I mean, your girls... I know your girls. I don't know your listeners' kids. They're just such a delight. Why would you not want to share that delight with other people, with your nanny, with their grandparents, with your friends?

That's another way to look at it. You're sharing your kid who brings so much joy to your life and is really precious and does all these cute, lovely little things. You're sharing that with somebody else. And that's going to bring joy to somebody else's life.

**Stephanie:** It is cool because I feel like they learn so many different things from the different adults that they have in their lives. And it's like when one person is tapped out or like if they were with me in Carl all day, like we both still have to work. At least one of the adults in your house has to work in order for you guys to like eat, which means that they have a lot on their plate, which means they're not really the most

fun to be around for a kid. Like answering emails isn't fun for me, let alone for my girls.

So it's so fun to hear about all the things that they are doing at, you know, Carl's parents' house or the things that they're doing with their nannies or to get pictures of what they're up to. They're having such a better time honestly than they would if they're with me all day.

**Christen:** Hearing little squeals in the background while you are checking your email, right? That's just really darling. It's a moment of joy in your day.

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Speaking of getting work done, one of the things that we've talked about a lot is what it looks like to be working parents. Can you talk to us a little bit about just really anything that you have for parents as they're either headed back to work for the first time after having their baby or anything you have for just working parents in general? I know that it's a lot to have on your plate all at once, especially if you already had a full plate, and then you have a baby, and now you have like four full plates that you're trying to balance.

**Christen:** Right. So two things come to mind here. One is some women and some dads are really excited to get back to work. And that is fantastic. So let's celebrate that. Not everybody has the story of "Oh my gosh, I'm gonna have to leave my babies and go back to work and I don't want to. I just want to stay at home all day." If that's your story, that's great. That's fantastic. But let's remember that's not everybody's story.

So for a lot of women, like I said, it's really exciting for them to be able to get back into their career, get back into the workforce. Now, for those women and those men that it's maybe a little bit harder for them, that's okay. Feel your feelings. That's the first thing I like to say. It's hard. Sure. Yeah, you're gonna miss your kid. Absolutely. And that's okay.

Let's talk about those feelings. Let's give you the space that you need to just really sit in your sadness, or your anxiety, or whatever it is that you're feeling in that moment. Odds are it's a lot of things. But let's give you some space to sit in that and feel those things and recognize this is normal, it's appropriate. It means that you really love your kid, which is really what we want to hear at the end of the day, right? It's okay to be sad.

From there, we still have to go do the thing. You're dropping your kid off with the nanny or at daycare for the first time. One thing that I really like to tell my clients is like plan something you can look forward to right after that. So maybe it's you get yourself a special latte from Starbucks, or you go to your favorite local bakery and

pick up your favorite treat. Or maybe it's not food related at all. Maybe you go to a yoga practice afterwards.

But just save something that you can have to look forward to right after that drop-off. Odds are it's going to be really challenging. If you're already not looking forward to going back to work and then you're having to take your baby to nanny, daycare, grandparents, whoever's gonna be responsible for them, that's a hard transition.

So if we have something to look forward to on the other side of that, it's not going to negate all of the sadness or whatever it is you're feeling. But it is going to be just a little dopamine hit, is what it is. Yeah.

**Stephanie:** Yeah.

**Christen:** Just a little pick me up. And then from there, just give yourself time to get into rhythms, getting into what's helpful and not helpful as far as logistically speaking. You know, maybe the mornings are super chaotic. So, okay, well, let's look at your evening. What can we do at night to better prepare you to have a smooth transition in the morning?

Anything that you can do to extend that kind of kindness to yourself to make... however the morning needs to go to make that a little bit easier, that's really what we need to focus on from there. After we've given you the space to let you feel your feelings and acknowledge whatever is going on emotionally, okay, well, let's look at logistics here. What needs to happen to set you up for success, to do the drop-off, and then to get to work?

**Stephanie:** That makes a lot of sense. I really like that. One of the things and I've thought about this in a whole bunch of different seasons of life, but this is something I think about a lot when it comes to the girls and when it comes to work is I think that we can either... like there's a world in which every time I go to work I'm thinking about the babies, and then every time I'm with the babies I'm thinking about work.

And it feels like that no matter what's happening in life, my physical body is in a place, and my mind is in a place. And it feels like in that scenario my mind and my physical body are always disconnected. And so it means I'm never mentally present where I physically am.

Something that I've tried to do in seasons of life... And I mean, this is so much of what my Love Your Single Life course is about is trying to be mentally and emotionally and spiritually and everything present where my actual body is because there will be a time to be in another place also.

So when I'm with the girls, I really, really try to just be there, to savor it, to be there with them, to play with them, to just have my mind and my body in the same place and to give them the best of what I have. And then when I'm at work, trying to do the same with my work. Because I just feel like it doesn't benefit anybody for them to get my body but not my mind.

So I don't know if that's helpful for anybody but that's just sort of a discipline that I've been trying to cultivate for years now of just mentally being where my body is. And it just feels so much better to know like if I missed the girls during my work day, then I can go, "Okay, well, I'm going to see them tonight." And when I see them, I'll really be there with them.

Or, you know what? I need to get this done tomorrow, but I have a block of time scheduled to do this thing. And when I'm there I'm really going to be thinking about it. I'll really be just totally present there. So yeah, I don't know if anyone else can resonate with that but that's been really helpful to me.

**Christen:** Mindfulness. Yeah, that's fantastic, Steph. The practice of mindfulness There's a reason why it's kind of a buzzword. It's because it works. It's really important and it works.

**Stephanie:** I love that. I love that. I don't think I'd put that together. That's what that is. You're totally right. Something I know a lot of women feel is guilt. I think it's just this really common and really accepted... It's almost like, "Here's your free gift with purchase." It's like, "Here's your baby and here's the guilt that will automatically come with them."

Talk to me about guilt. How do we stop feeling like we're not doing enough, being enough, being around enough? How do we find some peace from that guilt?

**Christen:** I think that's a lifelong for everyone, regardless if it's mom guilt, dad guilt, or just in general guilt. It's a lifelong thing to navigate. I like to really distinguish two things: shame versus guilt. Are we feeling guilt or are we feeling shame?

Shame tells us that we are a bad person. Guilt tells us that, oh, we've done something bad. Are we feeling shame?

If you're feeling shame for leaving your kid to go to work or to go meet up with a girlfriend for coffee, then that's... we actually need to look at a little bit more in detail. That's when someone such as myself and other therapists would be really, really helpful to unpack that a little bit, because that's telling me that there's some

other things going on internally and mentally that are not awesome. And then you deserve some relief from that.

But with guilt, you know, it tells us that, "Oh, you're doing something bad. You need to rethink this behavior right here." And what's tricky about that is it's not bad to leave your kid. In some scenarios, maybe, but for the most part it's not bad to leave your kid. You're doing them a favor, you're doing yourself a favor, so that when you finally do come back together at the end of the day or the end of the afternoon or whatever, you're enjoying each other, you're able to be fully present with each other.

Mom guilt is just a thing that we're gonna have to navigate. And there's no completely eliminating it. It's all about, "Okay, I'm feeling this way. Let me acknowledge right now I'm feeling guilt. Why do I feel guilt?" "Well, I'm feeling guilt because I've missed my kid a lot this week. I've been spending a lot more hours at work this week and I'm feeling really sad about that."

Okay, well, instead of guilt, let's sit in that sadness. Let's sit in that for a minute and let's just acknowledge "I really miss my kid and I really want to just play with my kid for the afternoon." Okay, well, maybe can we schedule a time next week for you to take the afternoon off of work and you pick your kid early from school or daycare, and then just go have ice cream, go to the playground, go sit at home and snuggle up under a blanket and read stories, right?

So let's look at why we're feeling the guilt. And then from there, do whatever we need to do to kind of address that in a more specific way. That make sense?

**Stephanie:** Yes. I like that so much because it's not just letting your feelings run the show. It's like having them almost account for themselves. So I think when we think of mom guilt, I think, most of the time it's shame. And it's this shame that says that we're not a good mom or that we're not enough.

And to just accept the data thing is crazy, because that's not a thing. It's not true at all. And it shouldn't be allowed to walk around like it is true. So stopping it and going, "Hey, what is actually happening here?" And then yeah, there is sadness when you miss your kids or sadness when you don't get to be or do the things that you want to be or do for your kids. But also like responding to that, instead of just believing the first thought that you're failing or you're not good enough.

**Christen:** The first thought is important. The first one is always important. So let's always acknowledge that. But then we get to decide from there, "What am I going to do with this thought? Am I going to sit in it? Am I gonna dwell in it? Am I going to stew in it?" Or I can acknowledge it and I can say, "Okay, yeah, I feel guilt or I feel

sad, or I feel really frustrated with myself because I was really short-tempered with my kid. Okay, well, what are we going to do to rectify that? Then we get to decide what do we do with that emotion.

So let's not discount that first thought or that first emotion and let's not label that as bad. It's not. It's an automated thing that is just gonna happen.

**Stephanie:** But it's what we do with it next.

**Christen:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly. What do we do next? That's the thing that really we want to focus in on.

**Stephanie:** This is totally tied to this. One of the things that I've learned from you that has been so helpful is... and I think I'm gonna call it the wrong thing... but like the repair cycle?

**Christen:** Yeah. Okay.

**Stephanie:** I feel like there's feeling you have to be perfect. Like, what did you do? You snap at your kid and you feel really bad about it. And you feel like, "Oh my gosh, have I ruined everything because I was frustrated and hungry and snapped at my kids?" But you've talked to me about something about like as long as you can get through the repair of it, that that is really good. Can you talk to us about that?

**Christen:** Yeah. Yeah. So let's just go with this example of you're really frustrated and you snapped at your kid. Okay, it happened. Oh, it feels terrible that it happened. And also you're human. You have your own range of emotion outside of your kid, right? And you're never going to be the perfect parent.

Okay, so what are we going to do about that? We can sit in that, we can stew, we can ruminate, "Oh my gosh, I'm the worst mom ever. I can't believe I snapped at my kid while all that he or she was doing was asking me for a hug."

We can stew in that or we can do an action. We can go to our kid and you say, "I'm so sorry. Mama was really frustrated in that moment. I would love to give you a hug because I love you, I see you, and you're important to me. And also mama sometimes has really big feelings just like you have really big feelings." That's the repair.

So what is that doing? It's repairing that relationship with your kid... Or not relationship, but just the little wounding that's happened. That's a more appropriate way to say that. It's repairing that little wounding that's happening.

And also it's teaching your kid a really valuable life skill of "Guess what? I'm gonna mess up sometimes, but that's okay. Because if it's a safe, secure relationship, I can go back to that person and I can say, hey, I'm really sorry that I did this thing that hurt you. Can I offer you that apology?" And then receive forgiveness on the other end of that, right?

So it's important. It's not like, Let's dismiss and act like this didn't happen, and then everybody will get over it. No, that's gonna cause more harm down the road. Let's address it head-on and just admit, "You know what? I didn't present my best to you and I'm really sorry for that. Can you forgive me for that?" That's the actual repair. That's also aiding into that attachment piece that we were talking about earlier. That's another thing that really helps build that stable, solid, secure attachment style.

**Stephanie:** And that's like even more... Like this might not be true the way I'm saying it, but that's a beneficial thing. That's not second best to being perfect parent, right?

**Christen:** Correct. That's correct. For so many reasons, you're being honest with your kid of "I have faults and I have moments where I'm not going to be perfect. And also I'm really sorry when I hurt your feelings. That is never my intent to hurt your feelings because I love you deeply."

**Stephanie:** Because your kid's not gonna get to be a perfect person either.

**Christen:** Exactly.

**Stephanie:** So if they think that that's the expectation, then that's a really hard thing to live up to, instead of being like, "Hey, when you are imperfect because you will be, here's how you handle it."

**Christen:** Yeah, yeah, absolutely. That's such a great point, Steph.

[00:27:52] <music>

**Sponsor:** Our sponsor for today's episode is a company I love called [Green Chef](#). Now, if you guys aren't familiar with them, Green Chef is the number one meal kit for eating well with plans to fit every lifestyle. If you guys have been around our Girls Nights for a while, you know two things about me.

The first, my schedule is busy. I know yours is too. And the second thing is that I'm just not a great cook. Truly, I'm pretty bad at it and I don't enjoy it either. Don't get me wrong, I love food and I love eating great food. I'm just not the best at making for myself. And that's why I love Green Chef.

Each week Green Chef sends out meals with fresh produce, premium proteins, and organic ingredients that you can feel good about eating. Everything is handpicked and delivered right to your door. The ingredients are pre-measured, perfectly portioned, and mostly prepped. And because of that, when you use Green Chef you're reducing your food waste by at least 25% versus buying food at the grocery store.

Not long ago Carl and I made their roasted crepe pork chops and they were amazing. They had this creamy coconut yogurt sauce that was drizzled on top and it was incredible. The best part is it was super easy to make. You guys I love what Green Chef is doing because they take over the meal planning, the grocery shopping, and most of the prep for us week after week.

Also, Green Chef is now owned by HelloFresh so there are even more meal plans to choose from. I love switching between the brands and now my listeners can enjoy both brands at a discount with me.

With that said, Go to [greenchef.com/girlsnight135](https://greenchef.com/girlsnight135) and use code GIRLSNIGHT135 to get \$135 off across five boxes plus free shipping on your first box. I want to see that again just to make sure you have all of the info. If you go to [greenchef.com/girlsnight135](https://greenchef.com/girlsnight135), and use the code GIRLSNIGHT135, you can get \$135 off across five boxes, plus free shipping on your first box.

Thank you so much to Green Chef for sponsoring our Girls Night. We just love having you.

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**Stephanie:** That took a lot of pressure off of me. I think about that a lot. That it's important to show the repair, it's important to get to the repair, but that you haven't messed up everything.

**Christen:** Absolutely, yeah.

**Stephanie:** Okay, I have just a couple of things I want to touch on. One of the things that was really challenging for me that I know we talked through a lot is that there are so many decisions to be made with babies. And it seems like everyone has very strong opinions about what the right thing to do is.

So that's like bottles or breastfeeding, or swaddling or what kind of toys they play with their, how they sleep or where they sleep or sleep training or whatever. And it is so wild because everyone is absolutely positive that their way is the only right

way. Like if you Google it, you will find people on either side being like, "You're going to damage your kids if you do it any way other than mine." How do we wade through some of that noise and figure out what's right to do for our family?

**Christen:** Absolutely. A couple of things logistically. Talk to your pediatrician. You have your pediatrician for a reason. If you don't have a great relationship with your pediatrician, I suggest go interview another one and find one that you have a good relationship with.

The other thing that maybe probably should be the first step is just being on the same page with your partner and deciding like what's important to us to make sure that we have a healthy well-attached kid that's going to grow up to be a healthy well-attached adult? Get on the same page with your partner on that.

Then if you have questions, your first person usually should be your pediatrician if it is something to do with their well-being. If it's something to do with their spiritual development, maybe go to your pastor, right?

But another thing that we've talked about is limiting your gurus which I learned that—I've gotten credit where credit is due—from sweet Emily P. Freeman. That's where I learned this concept of limiting your gurus. So okay, you know you've got on the same page with your partner, "This is what's important to us for our child and our family unit."

Okay, now we've got important people, such as our pastors, such as our pediatrician, teachers, whoever else you feel is important to speak into whatever the value system is. You're gonna go to them. They're going to be like your first layer.

And let's talk about your social media feed. You don't need to follow every breastfeeding account. You don't need to follow every formula feeding account. You don't need to follow every diaper account. You just pick a handful of people that you want to speak into your social media feed.

You don't need all the voices as an Enneagram nine, too many voices, it gets super confusing for me. And so the best thing that I can do for myself is to limit: okay, I've got five people, five influencer type people that I'm going to follow on my Instagram, social media, whatever account. I'm going to stick to those five.

If at some point those five people are no longer meeting my needs, okay, well, I'm just going to unfollow them, not because they're a bad person, but they're just not meeting my needs at this point. And then I'll either replace them or not replace them. And that's great. Limiting your gurus makes a massive, massive, massive difference.

**Stephanie:** I love that so much. I mean, Carl and I both we're anxiety Googling the middle of the night for months and months and months and just having so many competing voices about how we should handle all these different things. Everyone's had something different.

I remember when you said that, like you told me, you're like, "Steph, you need to limit your gurus," Carl and I sat down and figured out like, what was the resource we were going to lean into when it came to sleep? What was the resource we were going to lean into when it came to feeding them?"

And then when we had a question about naps or something else, we will look on their website. Because it's like everyone has the same information but everyone comes at it from a different lens. So we just had to pick what lens we felt good about. And then that was our resource.

I mean, I think about that in so many corners of my life now. Just clearing out some of the noise, deciding who I'm going to listen to. And it just makes it so much easier. Because really everyone has an opinion.

**Christen:** Yes. The thing I want to say here is every baby is different. And so every baby is going to respond to a certain method differently than another baby. And you know your baby better than anybody else will ever know your baby. So if you want to do Moms on Call, great. And you know that's going to work well for your kid, that is fantastic. If you want to try a different method, that's also fine. You get to decide.

I think that's the other important thing for parents to remember is this is your kid. You're in charge of this kid. You've been entrusted with the well-being of this kid. You know this baby better than anybody else will know this baby. Trust your instinct here. That instinct is gonna develop. The more you know your baby, it's gonna develop, it's gonna kick in. Trust that you're going to pick out the best, most perfect thing for your baby.

**Stephanie:** I really like that. And I like the idea too of talking to your partner first and figuring out kind of what your value system is. Like what is the set of circumstances you're working within? Because some things won't... If you both work outside the home full time, then you physically breastfeeding your baby around the clock is not going to work because you won't physically be in your house.

And so it's like at this point you need to decide which is more important or which is more necessary. Do you want to quit your job so that you can breastfeed around the clock or is pumping gonna work or formula? Like in which case, that's kind of how you make decisions. Like something has to give.

I don't know if this is helpful for anybody else but for us it felt like, you know, there are a lot of people who say like you can't have your kids on a schedule. Like you shouldn't have your kids on a schedule. You need to feed them whenever they sort of ask for it or feed on demand.

For us, we had to figure out what was more important. My breastfeeding journey, which is something we really, you know, gave our best shot or getting some sleep? And part of that was having the twins on the same schedule because that's something that every twin parents has and every resource ever was like, "Keep your twins on the same schedule."

So that was something that we had to kind of figure out. And ultimately, them staying on the same schedule and all of us getting some sleep trumps really because it had to, being able to feed them on demand. And so like my breastfeeding didn't go maybe as well as it could have otherwise, but the alternative wasn't sustainable. Like none of us would have made it through if we continue getting as little sleep as we did.

So just figuring out what set of circumstances are you working with? What's really important to you? And what's important to you enough that you can sacrifice some other things. And then finding a couple good resources to help you with that.

**Christen:** Exactly.

**Stephanie:** Speaking of finding people to speak in your life, I want to kind of finish out by talking about therapy. I don't know how many women think of their first few months as a parent as a time to seek therapy. But I think more of us should. So I'd love to hear from you why therapy is so powerful just in general, and then why it's so powerful in this season of life specifically.

**Christen:** I believe that therapy is sacred. Regardless of your belief system, it's still sacred. You get this beautiful opportunity to come and bare your soul and talk through your deepest traumas, or even just "I'm having a really hard time at work and I just really need a safe space to go talk about."

It's really sacred and it's really valuable. You're getting healing. You're getting a change in perspective. And those are always, always really helpful things. And they're always really beautiful things.

With motherhood or anytime within perinatal in general, so whether it's conception, pregnancy or postpartum, any part of that, infertility, whatever it is, that's so valuable because we have all of these messages thrown at us. "It should look this

way. You need to do it this way. Follow this routine. Don't do this routine." And it is overwhelming. And it's confusing. And it can be scary. And it can just be full of anxiety, and it can be full of sadness.

And to have that space, you can go one hour a week or every two weeks or once a month, whatever that looks like for you. Just to be able to talk things out without fear of judgment, without fear of "my therapist is going to go and tell all of her friends my deepest, darkest secrets, or shame me for feeling a certain way," none of that's going to happen in the therapy space.

And we all deserve that. We all deserve that time to be able to just dump it all out, to unwind a little bit, talk about what's going on in our heads and in our hearts and spiritually even. Talk about that. Have some wisdom poured into us or just have that empathy of a person just sitting there with you in whatever the messiness is that you're bringing into the therapy space.

You know, I think even more specifically with motherhood, there's just so much changing at one time. You know, we've talked about the identity shift, we've talked about launching into a new life cycle, the physical demands on your body. We've talked about all of that.

There's no time that's greater in a woman's life and so necessary to have somebody come and navigate that alongside of them and to say to them, "Hey, I see you in this really hard thing. I see you. You matter in this. What's going on inside of you? Let's talk about this really hard thing. Let's figure it out together. How can I help you? How can I support you? I'm not judging you. You're having this really scary thought that's going on in your head about your kid, about them being hurt, about something happening to them. That's really scary. That happens a lot. Let's talk through this. How can we help you through this?"

There's nothing greater on this side, like on the clinician side, to be able to sit with a woman in that time of just confusion, hardness, messiness, whatever it is. It's just such a joy. But then on the receiving end of that, to be known and be seen by a person, even if they don't know you at all outside of therapy, right?

But just to have somebody acknowledge, "This is really hard. This is really messy, and I'm so sorry, you're going through this," and then offer help, help navigating this. There's something that's just so beautiful about that. I think, for me, it's a beautiful picture of the gospel and action, that for me, I would just be really sad if more women did not take that opportunity or if I wasn't able to offer that service to women. Does it make sense at all what I'm saying?

**Stephanie:** Totally. Totally.

**Christen:** I'm saying a lot of words.

**Stephanie:** I love it so much. No, it's so good. And I think like, especially this season of life, Carl is one of my go-to people to talk through things. But he was just as tired and just as stressed and just as in the thick of it as I was. So he wasn't a good sounding board in that season. He needed a sounding board just as much as I did. And so having someone outside of this situation.

And then also, you know, one of the things that we've talked about is, when you're in a therapeutic relationship, that is such a unique relationship because you're not friends. Like you may get along, you may really like each other, but you're not friends. So that means that I don't need to impress you, it means I don't need to worry about what you think about me.

It means if we have a conflict or if I say something that is really, you know, messy to you, it's not going to jeopardize my whole social circle or my family. You know, it's just this really, really safe space with a lot of freedom to just be as messy as you need it to be and to kind of put some things back together.

**Christen:** Remember that therapy space is about you. It's not about your clinician. No part of it is about your clinician. This is all about you. It's a great place to work out conflict. It's a great place where, you know, "You said a thing that didn't really sit well with me, and I need to bring that to the table. And let's talk that out." "Great! Let's do it."

You're learning this really valuable skill of how to appropriately approach conflict. It doesn't have to be this big blown-out thing. It's just "Hey, this thing didn't sit well, can we talk about it?" You're learning that. And I think that's really beautiful.

**Stephanie:** It's a safe place to practice it.

**Christen:** Yeah, exactly. Exactly. And it's a safe place to even practice... Okay, let's say you are having a lot of messy thoughts and a lot of messy feelings, and you want to communicate that to your partner, but you feel shame about getting it out or you're just not quite sure of how to get it out. Great, bring it into therapy space, Let's practice that. How can I help you better say this to your partner? And then you get to go back to your partner and say, "Hey, I talked about this in therapy and I want to talk about it with you."

**Stephanie:** For me, one of the most helpful things is getting to figure out "this is what I actually am trying to say." Because a lot of times when you're in the thick of something, whether it's an interpersonal conflict with that person or just something

messy in your head, it's like the word salad that comes out of my mouth. And in trying to figure out what I'm trying to say sometimes causes more damage than actually effectively communicating.

So it's like then we're talking about this thing I didn't even mean to talk about because I said it in a way that I didn't necessarily mean. So getting to just actually figure out what you're trying to say before you say it is so helpful.

So I want to ask you just as one of the last things, how do we know if we've found the right therapist? Because I think it's awkward at first. And I think getting ourselves to therapy is one thing, but staying and knowing if this is a good fit for you is a totally different one. So tell me about that.

**Christen:** Let me actually flip it on you a little bit. How did you know that it was the right therapist? I'm not the only therapist that you've ever had. So tell me, how did you know it was a good fit?

**Stephanie:** I think there were certain things I was looking for. I wanted to see a female. One of the things that I was really looking for was someone who has the same faith foundation as I do. And I remember I wrote back to you when we first connected, and I wrote back thinking that I was talking to the coordinator. And I said, "Listen, I forgot to say this, but I'm really looking for someone who shares my same faith."

And you wrote back and you were like, "Hey, so I'm actually the therapist you've been connected with, but you do." So that's been such a great thing, because then that's something that we can talk about together is like circling back to kind of the foundation of our... We're like speaking the same language, which is really, really important.

I think one of the other things that was really powerful with you is that, you know, when you're talking to someone and you say something and then they repeat back what they heard like just in a conversation, and you go, "Yeah, that's not what I meant," or "That's not what I was saying, but interesting that you heard that."

You have always been the opposite of that, where I'll say something and you'll say, "So it's kind of like this?" And I go, "Exactly that." So I've always felt really understood by you.

And then I think I've always felt really safe. Like I can truly bring my whole self to the table and it's never too much. It's never too messy. I've never felt shamed or judged or embarrassed or anything like that.

And then I've also felt really safe in terms of confidentiality, which is especially reinforced by the fact that we jumped through a lot of hoops to have this conversation today. That you're like, "We need to really think through this, really talk through this, really talk about how this is going to work, really, you know, sign papers to make sure that even this conversation is had in a way that makes me feel really safe and in a way that makes our future sessions together like safe also."

**Christen:** Absolutely. First of all, I'm so glad that you feel that way about our relationship. I feel similarly. Just so you know, I think we hit the jackpot with our therapeutic relationships. But I think all the things that you said, like let's build off of that. What is important to you? Asking yourself those questions.

For some people, genders of their therapist is a very big thing. Okay, great. Well then specify that when you are reaching out to... if you're going through the type of practice like Ready Nest is where we've got a whole bunch of therapists, or there's a great resource called Psychology Today where you can find all the therapists in your area and get really specific in your search about, "Okay, are they male or female? What are they focusing on? All of those types of things. So just really evaluating "what is important to me? What do I want to get out of this?"

And then from there, you know, it really is a relational thing. It's not unlike dating or building a new friendship with somebody. You've got to give it a little bit... And sometimes you know right off the bat, "Oh, this is not a great fit," or "Oh, this is a good fit."

I'll say again. This is not about your clinician. If it's not a good fit, it's not a good fit. And that doesn't mean that the therapist that you're working with is bad. It just means that it's just not the right fit. And that's okay. Something I tell my clients often is, if you don't think that you're gonna get what you need from me, that's okay because I have a whole bunch of other qualified colleagues on this team, and we're gonna get you with the right person. So just know that if you are working with someone such as myself who has a team of other therapists that works alongside of her or him.

Be vocal about, "Hey, this isn't quite right for me. And it'll be fine. We'll get you with who you need to be with." So making sure you feel safe, making sure you feel heard. All the things that you mentioned, those are all very important things.

And it does take some self-reflection after a session or two just to be like, "Is this a good fit for me?" I operate out of my gut. And so for me, I'm just usually like, "what's your gut telling you? What's the gut feeling here? Does this feel instinctually good to you? Then go with it. Write it out and see what happens from there."

**Stephanie:** I really like that. Actually, would you mind praying for us? Just the women who are listening, especially the women who are just in the thick of it with a new baby.

**Christen:** I would love that. I would absolutely love that. Let's go to God. Let's do it. Oh, dear Jesus, I am just so grateful that we get to meet here in this space, all of us here together. And I pray for all of the listeners.

I pray especially for these new mamas that are really just sitting in the messiness of parenthood. Maybe they're dealing with some postpartum depression. Maybe they're dealing with some postpartum anxiety. Or maybe it's just hard, and they just need some space to talk. Lord, I pray specifically for them. And I just pray, Lord, that they just feel your presence. I pray that they feel your love and that they feel seen by you and that they feel known by you.

Lord, I also ask that you would just send the Holy Spirit to them and just nudge them and direct them in the way of help. Whether it's a pastor, whether it's a therapist such as myself, whether it's their pediatrician, their OB, whoever it is, Lord, just nudge them in the way that they need to go.

Let them know that they're not alone, that there are resources available to them. Help friends reach out to them, whatever that needs to be, whatever that needs to look like, Lord. I just pray for them specifically, that you would just cover them with all the resources that they need and with all the support that they need, with the courage that they need.

Lord, I just feel grateful for Steph, I feel grateful for the way that she is just so willing to share parts of her story with her audience, with her listeners, with her friends just to help normalize that this is normal for this to feel really hard and really messy, and it's also really normal for it to feel fantastic and really fun, all of it is normal.

I celebrate the fact that she is using this beautiful platform that you've given her just to really promote that all the things with motherhood are hard and they're all messy, and they're all beautiful simultaneously and that there's help available, Lord. I celebrate that. I celebrate her.

Lord, I pray for the partners of these moms who are going through a really hard time and I just pray, Lord, that You give them the strength that they need, You would give them the insight that they need, the readiness to just be really there to jump in and to action and to get their partner the help that they need or that nudge that they need, Lord.

I'm just so grateful that you're here with us. I'm so grateful that you have allowed all of these women to be moms to their sweet little babies, their sweet little babies that are on their way, sweet little babies that are in heaven and their sweet little babies that are in their arms already, Lord.

I'm just so grateful that all of these women get the opportunity to be moms. We celebrate them, Lord. We love them. We are grateful for them. And more importantly, Lord, we are grateful for you. We are grateful for the way that you love us. We're grateful for the way that you celebrate us and that you support us. In Jesus, I pray all of these things, in your most precious name. Amen.

**Stephanie:** Amen. Thank you, Christen.

**Christen:** You're so welcome, Steph.

[00:52:31] <music>

**Outro:** You guys, isn't Christen amazing? I love her. I loved this conversation and I'm so happy I got to share it with you. One thing I wanted to mention quickly is I know we talked about a lot in today's episode. So if you want to find the links for any of those things, all you have to do is go to my website. It's [girlsnightpodcast.com](http://girlsnightpodcast.com). And for every episode, we'll have a blog post for the show notes. All the links will be there for everything we talked about.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that if you haven't had a chance yet, it would mean so much to me if you would take just a second to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. We've gotten so many amazing five-star reviews from y'all and you've left the sweetest comments. It means the world to me and it helps out the podcast more than you can imagine.

So if you haven't yet, will you take just one quick second to leave us a rating and a review? Thank you so much. All right friends, that's all we have for today but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night. I can't wait. I'll see you then.