

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 46-LISTEN TO THE WINTER OF YOUR SOUL

I'm Jill Baughan, and you're listening to the podcast called Find Joy...No Matter What.

This is Episode 46.

If you're in a tough place right now, your joy may seem like it's hiding--or gone.

I understand. But it's still there, I promise, just waiting to be resurrected. And this podcast is designed to help you do just that...no matter what else is going on in your life.

For just a few minutes each week, I'll tell you a story--one that just might inspire a way to uncover a piece of joy you might be looking for. Then, we'll consider how it might speak to your life, because even though you'll hear quite a few of my stories during our time together, I believe you'll find your own in every one of mine.

Finally, I'll offer a benediction to send you into your day--or into your night.

So. If you're up for doing joy shots with a friend today...have a listen.

Well, here we are deep into January with no spring in view yet. Depending on where you live, you may or may not be bundled up, but let me ask you a question:

What are some words that come to mind when you think about winter? (pause)

When he was living in Chicago, minister and writer John Ortberg asked this question and answered it himself: *ice, hypothermia, wind chill, snow, shoveling snow, salt trucks, black ice, dead batteries, stuck cars, diminished mental capacity, recreational eating.*

Obviously this sad description is why so many people head south for the coldest months of the year. Our physical bodies crave sunlight and freedom and warmth. And--though we might not be conscious of it--our souls do too.

If your heart feels heavy right now, know that, as Ortberg says, *"You might go somewhere else to avoid winter weather, but there is no place on this earth you can go to escape winter of the soul. It is essentially a season of loss—when you've lost something, when something has died in your life and you know it may never return. But nothing new has arisen yet to take its place, and you're not sure that anything ever will..."*

*--Maybe you've lost a job, experienced a deep sense of personal or professional failure, and you feel a deep sadness, even shame, because now that you've lost that job, you're not real sure who you are any more.*

*--Or word comes back from the Dr.'s lab that the test was positive; and all the dreams you took for granted—that you'll die when you're good and ready—die themselves.*

*--Maybe you feel like you've failed as a parent. Things are not right with your child. Things are not right between you and your child. And you are afraid of what will happen to that little life you had so many hopes for...*

*-- Or you become aware of a deep brokenness inside you. Maybe it came from adultery, betrayal, deceit; maybe it involved the pain of a broken marriage. Your whole world caved in.*

Maybe you've lost a dream: You never expected to be here at this time; maybe you thought you'd be married now, or be a parent or be financially secure, or healthy.

Maybe you've lost a physical ability due to age or some other reason.

Maybe you've lost an intellectual ability--dementia in someone you love or yourself.

And all our losses are compounded by the pandemic that drags on and on.

Grief over loss is a very personal journey, but to many people, it looks like a picture that came across my FaceBook feed a while back.

The sculpture is called *Melancolie*, and can be found in Geneva Switzerland. It's an iron figure of a person, seated, head down, with an enormous hole where the torso should be. (I'll post a picture of it in the show notes.)

A reporter from Buffalo, New York, originally posted it on social media, and was, as he says, *"completely overwhelmed by the tens of thousands of comments that came along. The millions of engagements from people all around the world--folks who've lost so much. Folks who've felt alone for so long. Folks who've never really been able to explain how they've felt since losing a child, a husband, a wife, [a parent]. Their words are poignant. And beautiful. and agonizing."*

When I saw this sculpture, my mother's words came flooding back to me. Many years after my father died, when she was in her nineties, she told me about that time, and said, "I just felt hollow."

It's a universal feeling: the hardest part of winter is not just that life is hard or painful or that I lose things, but because as a result God doesn't seem to answer me, and life seems completely out of control.

If this sounds like you, know that you're not alone. There's plenty of winter in the Bible, expressed with brutal honesty, as in Psalm 13, for instance, where the psalmist says,

*How long, O Lord? Will you forget me forever?  
How long will you hide your face from me?  
How long must I wrestle with my thoughts?*

I must have been channeling the psalmist in my own words in my own journal, when during a particularly wintry time in my own life, I wrote, "I was in church today when the pastor said, "God is good," expecting the appropriate, church response, which is 'He is good all the time.' And, of course, that response came. From everybody but me.

*Because I wasn't feeling it. Because, in my mind, 'good' the way we use it, means, 'pleasing to me,' as in good behavior, good food, a good movie.*

*I cannot in all honesty, proclaim in a group of people that I believe God is pleasing to me right now. So here's what: Why don't we just take out an 'o' and capitalize the 'G' and say 'God is God all the time'? No doubt in my mind, I can say that."*

Maybe you feel the same.

If your soul is in winter right now, I am well aware that a joy shot won't take away the pain, and it won't answer your questions about why--but there is comfort right now, and a different way of framing this difficult season.

Consider the words of writer and dramatist Nicole Johnson when she says this:

*Whether the work of winter is happening under 8 inches of frost or 8 feet of snow, it is still happening. This is very important, hidden work. The kind of work that forces the roots of the trees to go deeper and runs "stress tests" on the life force of everything underground. The kind of work required for the spring to arrive. Neither a warm day nor buckets of snow can stop this work until it's finished...*

*And then there is the winter in our own lives...seasons of grief or loss, times of quiet unknowing, silence between friends, times most of us wish to avoid altogether. In stillness and quiet...this work happens at the very time we are tempted to believe nothing is happening. But new connections in our brains are being formed and work is being done to repair the havoc created by stress or anguish—and this important work is invisible to us.*

*...When this winter work is finished, in cooperation with the rising temperature, it finally begins to show. Pushing its way up through the roots of our lives to show the ground above, or perhaps our own doubting hearts...Now do you see what's been*

*happening? Behold the magnificent proof of the work that was being done in quiet and stillness, in the time when you thought it was just cold.*

*What is it about understanding this, even partially, that somehow brings more ability to bear it? And not only bear it, but trust it. Not to trust in any work I've done, but in the work God does in me while the winter keeps me still enough to make it possible.*

And so, my friend,

May you understand and remind yourself that important work is happening in this winter of yours...

And may you stop and be still, still enough to ask God, "What might this season of loss be bringing about in me?"

And may you find joy in the assurance that winter will not last forever, that one day...spring will come.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who are experiencing loss right now, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on Apple Podcasts, or wherever you listen to podcasts. Or you can go to my website at [jillbaughan.com](http://jillbaughan.com), click on a podcast episode and sign up to receive episodes in your inbox. Just don't miss a single one, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Listen to the winter of your soul, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...