

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 50-PRAY ANYWAY

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

This is Episode 50.

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.

Do you pray?

And if you do, and even if you've been at it for a long time, do you ever have questions about the whys and the whens and the hows and the what fors?

I'll be honest, this can be some tricky territory for me--and even though I pray a lot, I have a rather complicated relationship with prayer that started a long time ago.

I told the particular events of this story in more detail in Episode 8, but I want you to know what happened to my conversations with God as a result.

The first time I remember praying was one hot July night when I was ten years old. My father had been sick for about a week--with food poisoning, the doctor thought. I hated to see him so ill. He tried to chuckle and joke around, but even I could tell he just wasn't himself.

So naturally at bedtime I was moved to pray, "Dear God, please make my Daddy well." Then with childlike faith, confident my prayers would be answered because in Sunday School, they told me that God hears and answers, I rolled over and promptly fell asleep. It was Tuesday.

On Wednesday he looked a little better. The doctor came out for a visit (Yes, a house call! This was quite a while ago.) and announced that he was much improved. That night I happily thanked the Lord for that good report, and prayed, "Dear God, keep

working on him till he feels good." And again, knowing my prayers were heard and answered, I rolled over and fell asleep.

On Thursday, my Daddy died.

He had been misdiagnosed, and didn't have food poisoning at all, but rather an ulcer that burst; peritonitis set in, and by the time he got to the hospital it was too late.

I didn't know what to say to God then.

A kind woman at church assured me that God *did* answer my prayer--just not the way I expected. My father was very well indeed, she said, now that he was with Jesus. I took her words in, wanting to believe her, but giving her a sort of spiritual "side eye," thinking that it sounded like a really mean joke for God to play on our family.

And for a long time after that, when I'd pray for my brother to get home safely from a date or for my mother to feel better soon, I'd P.S. my prayers with "You know what I mean." I really was afraid God would give me another trick answer.

To this day, I won't lie in bed at night and ask God to heal someone.

As the years passed, I stockpiled a LOT of questions about prayer. "Why pray?" I asked, "if God is just going to do what He wants to do?"

But no matter how many answers I didn't get to those questions, I couldn't help it; I prayed anyway. Because in praying anyway, I discovered something that surprised me: **Even when He didn't give me what I wanted, He always gave me *something* to get me through.**

In this case, God gave me my older brother, who picked up the baton as well as a sixteen-year-old boy could. He took my friends and me out to play miniature golf, he drove my friends and me around Trick-or-Treating, he even subjected a couple of girlfriends to hauling my friends and me on a date or two. He took my friends and me to my first ever concert (to see Paul Revere and the Raiders), he filled the shoes of my Daddy on "Daddy Date Night" in high school, acting crazy and making us all laugh. And on my wedding day, he walked me down the aisle.

I will never stop thanking God for the gift of my brother.

Years have passed since that difficult time, and as I've looked back, I have come to realize the truth in Anderson Cooper's statement: "There's something about experiencing loss very young...You never feel safe but at the same time you know that everything is possible--both good and bad." (*New York Times* 12/28/14)

Like years later when my daughter's husband left her.

That story is hers to tell, but suffice it to say, when your child hurts, you hurt too (you may know all about this) and maybe you, like me, pray, "Dear God, do anything you want with me, just please leave my baby alone."

It was, in general, a terrible time for us all, full of unanswered questions and grief and fear.

We prayed for him to grow some sense and come back, and for her to find forgiveness and for their relationship to be restored.

But no.

She was living hours away from us, so night after night I lay in bed, thoughts running wild, worried about every single thing that could happen. Again, you too may know how this feels--when your body is lying down, but your heart is up prowling around, pounding like crazy while your brain obsesses about every single hideous possible outcome of this problem.

One particular night, I was praying for God to keep my daughter safe and sane, and the notion of the God of Trick Answers rose up out of my past, filling me with fear. And I actually SAID, "*You* know what I mean."

But then, there in the dark, a picture came into my mind. I knew I'd seen it before; it was a pencil drawing of a big hand—God's hand—with a yawning baby cradled in that hand, peaceful and protected. The longer I held that picture in my mind, the more peaceful I became until I finally fell asleep.

The next morning, I was driven to find that drawing. After a few hours of brain strain, I remembered I had seen it eight or nine years before at a women's retreat, but the only information I (and the retreat planner) could remember was that the artist's name was Jonathan. So I started some research, but seriously, do you know how many artists there are name Jonathan in the world? Like, a billion. But eventually, I found the right Jonathan, and found that picture. So I ordered two copies and framed them, one for us and one for Jamie to remind us all that she was being held, somehow.

She kept hers out where she could see it, and we did the same with ours.

I will never stop thanking God for the gift of that picture.

Because that picture, after 13 years, continues to remind me He's got my daughter. And me.

He's got you too.

And whatever funky thing is going on in your world, please know that, even with a headful of unanswered questions and a pounding heart, you can pray anyway.

Oh, God might grant your wishes, and He might not.

And as a result, you may not feel like talking with Him because you are so sad or so angry or so worried. If that's the case, I think it's perfectly all right with Him if you just sit there.

Because just sitting there, even if your arms are crossed in defiance and your jaw is set and your teeth are clenched and you might be giving Him the spiritual side-eye...well, that, too is a form of prayer.

And so, my friend,

May you be reassured that when you're ready, He'll be there (as He has always been), reminding you that He's got you in His hand.

And may you find joy in knowing that whether or not He gives you what you want, He will give you *something* quite wonderful to get you through.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who have questions about why they should pray to a God who may or may not answer in the affirmative, 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, 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.

Pray anyway, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...