

# Jill Baughan

## TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 96-ASK A LIFE-CHANGING QUESTION: "WHAT IF?"

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

This is Episode 96.

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.

Then 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. (Music fades)

If you recall, last week in Episode 95, we talked about the value of asking questions, and I promised you that January will be all about questions here in this space--just one a week, but every one of them will be a great one that can lead you to joy, adventure, and God only knows what else.

This week, I invite you to ask, "What if?"

Because here's what's so life-changing about this one: As John Hittler writes in a *Forbes* magazine article titled "The Genius of Asking 'What if?'"

*Questions literally open up (and close) pathways in your brain. Like an itch, questions need to be scratched. When a great question is posed, whether in a team meeting or at a family*

*dinner, our brains race to answer them (or in the case of teenagers, avoid them like the plague)...*

*With a normal question, your brain quickly and transparently uses previous information, data or situational experiences to concoct an acceptable answer.*

*With a 'what if?' question, your brain usually holds no previous precedent, paradigm or example to rely upon for an acceptable answer, so the answer heads to a different area of the brain. When this happens, we often say out loud, 'Great question!'*

*'What if?' questions force us to imagine or create, often calling forth strong emotions. Consider the structure and possibilities of the following two questions:*

*--'Where are we going on vacation this year?'*

*--'What if we enjoyed our best vacation ever this year?'*

*Both deal with the quality and details associated with an annual ritual for many families, a great break designed for fun, relaxation and togetherness.*

*With the first structure, 'Where are we going on vacation this year?' notice how your mind immediately conjures up options that are most likely known entities: perhaps a traditional family meeting spot or favorite 'comfort' vacation like a lake house or cottage.*

*With the second structure, 'What if we enjoyed our best vacation ever this year?' you notice that the structure of the question produces a new mandate: 'best ever!' That standard or mandate could certainly be achieved by the structure of the first question; however, it is not required. Hence the power and the subtle genius of 'What if?!'*

Here's his advice on how to start:

*If 'what if?' questions are so powerful, he says, when can you utilize them best? The answer is simple: Any time when a change, large or small, is what you're after.*

*Consider these areas/themes to ask great 'what if?' questions:*

*--Health: 'What if I felt energetic, focused and ready to go every morning?'*

*--Adventure: 'What if I took the most outrageous adventure of my life this year?'*

*--Learning: 'What if I finally learned to fill in the blank.'*

*The list seems endless. Where the mind can conceive it, the question can be asked, and then answered in the form of a powerful, world-changing [or life-changing] declaration. Declarations have that power. Simply asking the question and making the declaration to change shifts your entire world and the quality of your life.*

*If you are going to change the world or at least your little part of it, start with one theme or category. Pick a simple theme that will pay big dividends. Health is a great one, as everyone can envision a higher version of vitality, energy, weight and strength.*

*Ask a simple question, Hittler says, like, 'What if I were in the best shape of my life?'*

*You'll transform your world [or **the** world] more so than if you were standing still.*

On another level, my mind went here:

Who thought, "What if we used a camel to talk about 'hump day' in a Geico ad?  
Who thought, "What if we designed a piano to look like a giant shoe?" (Lady Gaga's set designer must be brilliant.) (There's a photo in the show notes.)

Who thought, "What if we could land a human being on the moon?"

Who thought, "What if we had phones that let us see each other while we were talking?"

I once thought, "What if I sent myself in a box to my husband at work?" (It was an enormous source of joy.)

And "What if I rented a chimpanzee to play at our house?" (We created an iconic family memory, not to mention 300 priceless photos.)

And "What if I applied to be the Chick-Fil-A cow?" (I had an insight in that suit that began a ministry.)

And "What if I asked this boy to a dance?" (We ended up married.)

What if philanthropist Bob Goff hadn't asked a big "What if?" after he did so poorly on his law-school entrance exam, he was turned down?

Writer Marci Seither tells his story:

*Without an acceptance letter, Bob walked into the school of his choice a week before classes started and introduced himself to the dean. He acknowledged his poor LSAT score, but explained that he needed to become a lawyer to make a difference in the world. The dean politely turned him away, but Bob was persistent. He sat on the bench outside the dean's office—and waited.*

*"You have the power to let me in," Bob told the dean when the man passed by the bench. "All you have to tell me is, 'Go buy your books.'" For two weeks Bob waited for a chance. Finally, the dean stopped in front of the bench and said, "Go buy your books."*

*Bob's start in law school certainly wasn't typical. He took a risk, [asking himself, 'What if I just sat outside the Dean's office as long as it takes to get him to let me in?'] hoping to be*

*given the chance for a new adventure. Today, that same risk-taking, adventurous spirit has led Bob all around the world. He has come to the legal defense of children trapped in sex trafficking, taught tribal witch doctors in Uganda to read, traveled with food supplies to remote African villages and encouraged millions to live an extraordinary life through his book Love Does.*

Bob Goff's "What ifs" really have changed the world.

Donald Miller once wrote a blog post about asking the "what if" question, and said that often when an author is writing a story, and the story starts to get boring, that author often asks "What if?" to propel the story to excitement or more meaning.

Then he challenged readers to write five "what if?" questions of their own.

So I believe I'll invite you to do the same. What are five "what ifs?" that would propel your own life story toward more excitement and more meaning? More peace? More joy?

And as you begin this adventure, my friend,

May you open your mind and spirit to the potential of "What if?" What piques your curiosity? Your sense of adventure and possibility? Your desire to solve a problem?

And may you ask questions like, "What if I learned how to rhumba?" "What if I painted my bedroom red?" "What if I organized my living space?" "What if I were not such a procrastinator?" "What if I invited my neighbor over for dinner?" "What if my dad and I had a healthy relationship?"

And in so asking, may you partner with the God of limitless possibilities to change your world...and **the** world.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know someone who needs to open up to what could be, I invite you to share this podcast with them, and subscribe yourself on iTunes, 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 an episode, because I so look forward to being with you again soon.

Ask "What if?" today, friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...