

PODCAST EPISODE 139: WRITE YOUR OWN HEADLINES

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

This is Episode 139.

(Feeling Happiness eases in.)

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.

(Feeling Happiness gradually fades.)

What's the past year been like for you?

Back in 2020—you remember that year, right?—Andy Stanley, like the rest of us, had apparently had a rough go of it, and had that in mind when he wrote this:

Sometimes he said, I just want it to stop. Talk of COVID, looting, brutality. (Feel free to insert your own sources of angst here.)

I lose my way, he confesses. I become convinced that this "new normal" is real life.

Can you relate? Haven't you ever found yourself thinking, "Well, I guess this is the way it's gonna be from here on out: the violence, the dissention, the fear, the bad stuff happening, the everything else.

But *Then*, he says, *I meet an 87-year-old who talks of living through polio, diphtheria, Vietnam protests and yet is still enchanted with life.*

He seemed surprised when I said that 2020 must be especially challenging for him.

"No," he said slowly, looking me straight in the eyes. "I learned a long time ago to not see the world through the printed headlines, I see the world through the people that surround me. I

see the world with the realization that we love big. Therefore, I just choose to write my own headlines:

“Husband loves wife today.”

“Family drops everything to come to Grandma’s bedside.”

He patted my hand. “Old man makes new friend.”

*His words collide with my worries, freeing them from the tether I had been holding tight. They float away. I am left with **a renewed spirit** and a new way to write my own headlines.”*

So. If you had to write your headlines from this past year, what might they say? Try looking at the last twelve months on your calendar and scrolling through photos in your phone from this year and think of headlines of your life that come to mind.

Some of mine would include:

“Wife freaks out on the regular. Husband remains calm.”

“Obnoxious grandparents drive miles this year to and from visiting grandkids.”

“Woman gets Covid. Has minor meltdown. Husband remains calm.”

“Husband and wife clean out attic: uncover a plethora of creepy dolls from the 1960’s”

“Women do goat yoga. Find joy.”

“Husband forgets to turn on lock screen on phone, puts it in pocket. Everyone in room entertained as pants light up.”

“Woman cannot get printer to work. Throws small fit. Husband remains calm.”

“Woman attends 50th high school class reunion in unwashed underwear. Nobody cares.”

“Covid threatens to remove Bibbity Bobbity Boo from Disney cruise. Woman distraught. Husband remains calm.”

There may or may not be a theme there worth considering.

I say this because it’s important to process those headlines—your joy, gratitude, your sorrow, your frustration in big and little things.

And then-- maybe even more important than taking to heart the headlines from the past year is deliberately thinking about the headlines you’d like to write for the coming year.

And maybe even more important than that—is your determination in those headlines to make you your life story a joyful one...no matter what.

With that in mind, what headlines would you like to write?

As you think about that, consider these further words from Andy on one January 2:

I've never been happier to ring in a new year...After a year of trauma, upheaval and challenge, a brand new year is the next best thing to a reset button.

Maybe you've jotted down a few resolutions for this fresh, unmarred year or mapped out specific goals for the months to come. Good for you. Or you may be thinking: Why bother? It may be that [next year] isn't any better and is out of my control anyway.

Before you go down either of these trails, may I make a suggestion? Take time to ask yourself a simple question: What story do I want to tell?

Though we've probably never met, here's something I know about you: You would like to be able to tell your entire story without skipping any chapters or having to lie about the details. We all want that. And going forward, you can have that. But it will require you to stop mid-decision and ask: What story do I want to tell?

The decisions you're in the middle of making right now are going to be reduced to a story you tell. Once it's behind you it's a story. But the rest of your life is a story waiting to be written, and you will create that story one decision at a time.

Here's an example. If you lost your job, surviving this season without a job is going to be a story you tell someday. What story do you want to tell?

You could decide to make this the story: I lost my job. I was embarrassed. I told friends I was doing consulting work. But I wasn't consulting. I was consoling myself every afternoon with a bottle. I racked up a ton of debt. I lost the respect of my wife and kids. Maybe worse, I lost my self-respect.

Or you could decide a better story, because we each write our story one decision at a time: I lost my job. I was embarrassed. I let my friends and family know, and they not only offered encouragement, they offered job leads. And brought over a few meals. Our family worked together to cut expenses, and I worked two part-time jobs for a while. My faith grew as I trusted God for daily bread. Our family grew closer, and our compassion for others deepened.

The decisions you make in the valleys are eventually just stories you tell on the other side. Which of the available options do you want as part of your story?

(Expressive Piano eases in.)

... Considering your story draws you out of the immediate and focuses on the eventual. It empowers you to put the decision-making process within the broader context of the story of your life. Our story is future tense. And every decision can be improved by keeping this question in mind: What story do I want to tell?

One day down the road, you'll either tell your own story or have [it] told by others. You can decide today who you want to be, and your future decisions can flow out of that vision. Make your story a good one...

And so, my friend, as you consider the year ahead,

May you be reminded that you already know some of the challenges and delights in your life, but there will be others that take you by surprise,

And may you remember that you get to determine your response to everything along the way,

And, with that in mind, may you make your story one worth retelling. because you chose to let God help you look at your life through the lens of joy.

(Expressive Piano eases out.)

Thanks so much for joining me.

(Feeling Happiness eases in.)

If you know people who need to look at their crazy lives in a new way, 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, 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.

Write your own headlines, my friend. And always, always remember: if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

(Feeling Happiness fades out.)

NOTE:

Stanley, Andy. "Reset Your Life by Asking Yourself This One Question." *Fox News*, January 3, 2021.

<https://www.foxnews.com/opinion/new-year-planning-future-andy-stanley>