

TRANSCRIPT FOR PODCAST EPISODE 155-INVITE GOD INTO LOSS

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

This is Episode 155.

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.

Ever in your life lose a beloved pet? It's excruciating.

For many people, it was our first experience with heartbreaking loss. Unfortunately, none of us would be destined to escape the pain of losing someone or something dear, but one way to make loss more bearable is to invite God into our misery. Which sounds great.

You may, however, like me, have questions about how you might do this. I have questions about everything, always, it seems.

But in his book, *Walking with God*, author John Eldredge talks about the time when their beloved golden retriever, Scout, passed on, and I was so encouraged by how he invited God into his hard story, I wanted to share it with you.

It's hard to describe this loss, because you would have to have known Scout and what he meant to our family to understand. This is more than the passing of a pet. Our boys grew up with Scout. He was part of our family. Not merely because of our affection for him—affection can raise the status of a stuffed rabbit to something special. Scout WAS special. He had a huge heart and a sensitive spirit. He was loyal and true. Always happy to see you, always game for whatever was afoot. He slept in the boys' bedroom. He took walks with Stasi every morning as she said her prayers. He always was at the door when we got home from the day, barking hello, tail wagging.

He'd play ball with you, but he'd never want to give you the ball. And if you were sad, he'd come up to you, gently, lovingly, tail wagging. He'd nuzzle his face close to yours and comfort you. He could tell.

We were sad last Monday night. Really sad. The cancer that he shown up last summer had returned, with a vengeance. The vet gave Scout a month at best. But we could tell he was fading fast. And we didn't want him to suffer. He was yelping in pain in the night. So we talked with the boys about putting Scout down before the cancer got to the point we could no longer manage his pain. We all wept. And Scout—who had been unable to get up the entire day on Sunday because of the cancer in his shoulder—got up and came into the family circle, began to come up to each one of us, tail wagging. It was as if he was saying, "It's okay. It's going to be all right." Here he was, comforting his family right to the end.

I cannot tell you how much I wanted to be able to pray and heal Scout. But you have to be so careful with your heart and your faith when it comes to healing prayer...When the disciples asked Jesus about a man born blind, Jesus said the man had been born blind so that the work of God could be displayed in his life (John 9). And right then and there he healed him. But there were a lot of blind people in Israel at that time whom Jesus didn't heal. So a few weeks ago I began to ask, "Jesus do you want to heal Scout? Is that what you want to do here?" I sensed the answer was "No Not this time."

Eldrege goes on: In learning to hear the voice of God, one thing is certain—if you cannot hear a "no," you will have a hard time hearing God at all or believing that what you think you've heard is in fact from God. This is crucial—hearing God requires surrender, giving all things over into his hands. Not abandoning your desires, but yielding them to God. Of course I wanted to hear Jesus say, "Yes, I will heal him." I wanted to hear that so badly Then I have would have gone after healing prayer like a man on a mission. But I could not do that to my family unless I knew God was fully in it. I didn't want to drag them through that...

*We did not have God's promise that Scout would live. I asked God long and hard about that...And so I prayed, "Jesus, be with us in this. Help my sons to grieve. Comfort us...Heal our broken hearts, Lord. **Come into this.**"*

Inviting God into your loss—whatever it is—may not be your first response. But it could be the best one.

And exactly how can a person do this?

Well, I think it can be pretty simple. Just ask Him in, as John did, as a first step. I also think it helps, as we do this, to create a space—a corner of the day, whether it's a minute or an hour—and actually show up in that space. You may do a little journaling, a little reading, a little talking to God...but most certainly it helps if you reserve some of that space for listening in silence.

I'll be honest and say that, for me, there may or may not be great revelations every time I come to that space. But over time...over time I hear from Him. And I think you will, too...

if you settle into your space, and ask Him to sit with you and listen to you wallow for a while;

if you ask Him to help you adjust your perspective—to help you find peace, to help you find any joy that might be walking beside this loss;

if you ask Him how to move forward, to show you the next step. Just one.

John says:

Scout's passing was the hardest, most beautiful thing we've yet shared with our boys...We were all gathered around Scout. Friends who had come to say their good-byes had excused themselves, to give us the last hour with him alone. The vet was due to come by at five o'clock. And so we sat around Scout on the floor, stroking his soft fur and kissing his nose, telling him we loved him, and weeping. We talked about the things we loved about Scout. He wagged his tail a bit. But mostly we wept. I hated to see my sons grieve so, yet I knew that this was part of their initiation into young manhood. This, too, must be faced. I was grateful they could access their tears.

As the vet walked up the driveway, I told the boys, "it's time to say your good-byes to Scout now. Give him a kiss." And they did, and it broke my heart.

The vet administered putting Scout down right there in our living room. He was such a kind and gracious man. Then he slipped away, to leave us with our grief. Outside, on the hills, the light of the setting sun turned a golden color I've rarely seen. God was so present.

I believe, John says, that God preserves the life of animals. After all, the Scripture says the lion will lie down with the lamb. Then there must be at least lions and lambs in the kingdom. Why would God stop there? Many good theologians believe we will see our beloved animals in heaven. But I won't go into a theological debate here.

I asked Jesus, "What do dogs do in the kingdom, Lord?" And he said, "They run." And then I saw Scout, with the eyes of my heart, running with a whole pack of very happy dogs, near the feet of Jesus.

I shared the story with Stasi and the boys, and Blaine said, "Yes. I heard something too. Right after Scout died. Jesus said, "He won't give me the ball."

We buried Scout in the backyard, up the hill in the scrub oak. I'd gone out there the day before to dig the hole. There, lying on the spot I'd chosen, was a small granite stone about the size of your hand, but in the shape of a heart. I kept it, and when we buried Scout I showed it to Stasi and the boys. Another gift from God. He cares about our hearts. Then I placed it on top of the cairn of stones we raised over Scout.

I was afraid of Scout's death, afraid of the grief, because when I lost [my best friend] years ago, it was the most excruciating thing I'd ever gone through. I was afraid that this grief would open the door to that one. Sorrow is like that—it seems connected to all the other sorrows in your life. Like opening the door into a room where all your sorrow is stored...

[But] *there is another thing. When I said good-bye to Scout, I also said, "I'll see you again, boy." It resolved something in my soul. **Our losses are not permanent, not when they are in the hands of God. What a difference that makes.***

However genuinely hard these things are, they don't have to be brutal and lonely if we will invite God into them.

What losses have you experienced? They can range from a beloved pet to a beloved person; they can be related to health or one of those days that divides your life into before and after. Or maybe the loss of a relationship, like a marriage or a friendship. They can be lost youth, lost opportunity...

Just know that there is comfort waiting for you along the way.

And so, my friend, in the middle of your losses,

May you create a space to hear from God,

And may you show up on the regular to listen for His voice in your spirit, directing your next steps,

May you be reassured that our losses are not permanent, as long as they are in His hands,

And then may you give Him the ball, friend.

Thanks so much for joining me.

If you know people who are having a hard time with any kind of loss right now, please 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.

Invite God in, my friend. And always, always remember, if you go looking for joy, you'll most likely find it.

Till next time...

NOTE:

Eldredge, John. *Walking with God: Talk to Him. Hear from Him. Really.* Thomas Nelson, Inc., 2008.

