

Grit 'n' Grace — The Podcast  
Episode #213: Harnessing the Unexpected Power of Joy in Your Life

Okay. Susie you start *Joy Keeper* by sharing about a year in your life that you called scarred to talk to us about what you walked through that year and how counter-intuitively that it led you to write a book about joy.

You know, when I look back at that year, I had no idea that once I turned in that manuscript about joy keeper having walked through that year, that honestly, I was going to get to live it again. And so the year called scarred was a year when it felt like the enemy was swinging wildly at everything I held dear body, soul, mind, family, and every time I took a deep breath, and I thought, Oh, we made it through that something else would hit me So what I began to do, Amy is I began to look at my heart, which was sad and confused. And yet I looked at the promises that God gave the Bible gives about joy. And I began to dig deeper. And eventually that led me to redefine joy.

Well, and I got to watch, I'm tearing up listening to you, because I walked through some of that with you. And two years later, we're starting to see some redemption and all of that too. But you walked through even the hard, sad places with joy and it was a it was amazing to watch you do that?

Well, and I think it's important that people understand I wasn't skipping along with this, you know, I wasn't giddy. I wasn't. But one of the things that I started to understand is that George is more than a feeling that it's knowing, knowing who I am knowing who's I am knowing where to turn, knowing what the joy stealers are and how to meet them with truth. And most importantly, knowing that the plan that God had for me hadn't gone away. It had not been stolen away from me. And so, one of the definitions of joy that I began to really live in through that year and I'm still there, Amy, you know, I'm two weeks out from my last surgery from my second bout was breast cancer. And all of that took place after I turned in the manuscript.

That one yeah, it was two scarred years and now there's like literal body scars, right

look like a human quilt that.

But one of the definitions that I found is as I begin to look at this word joy as Jesus spoke, Get one of the definitions is that joy is consciously walking into God's love and care. Hmm. And may I can't begin to tell you the moments that on the outside my circumstances didn't look like joy. How I felt in my heart in that moment, it didn't look like joy, but walking consciously into God's love and care, there, I found

joy. And it was a deeper joy. It was a rooted joy. It was a grounded joy that would hold me and it was a joy that didn't go up and down during circumstances. I want to paint a little picture real quick. And one of the hardest times that I walked through which was not physical it was through. My son came to us during that year called scarred and he was I had a family and a thriving business. That he had started, he was a writer and a speaker. And he called us one night to say Mom and Dad, I'm in a dark, dark place. And I don't know how to get out. And I gotta tell you beat me up. But when you hit my children, which affects my children's children, you know, that's hard. And I remember laying on the carpet and just wailing before God said, I don't understand. I don't know what to do. I don't know how to fix this. And I had this image of a child and a child at a party and you know how that when a child has a balloon, what's the first thing that happens to that balloon? It's gonna fly away, it's gonna get in the tree, it's gonna pop in their hands. But what does an adult do an adult will kneel down next to that child and they'll gently tie that tie and in my in my mind as I thought about this, a red balloon around that child's wrist and wherever that child goes, good, bad, that balloon goes. It follows and suddenly I saw an image My Heavenly Father with my face smashed in the carpet snot on my face crying out. And I sent the Lord tying joy gently around my wrist like that red balloon and whether I was going to go on the valleys or on the mountain tops joy was gonna follow.

Mm

hmm. Thank you so much, Susie for sharing all of this, it it. It lands so deeply, especially with what is going on in the world right now. One of our listeners, I'm going off script in case anybody's wondering if one of our listeners asked a question that I think you the answer is implied in what you said there. She said, Can you experience joy without being happy? And I'm sure that people ask you since you've written a book about joy is joy, the same thing as happiness? Is it different from happiness? How would you respond to our listener? Who asked Can you accept brings joy without being happy. How does happiness, you know fit into this whole picture?

Man, as I look in Scripture, what I see over and over again is that sorrow is a form of worship to that sorrow is often the pathway where joy is launched. You know, I think about that moment where Jesus is about to climb on the cross, there is no greater moment of sorrow not just for Jesus as it cries out to his heavenly Father, but as mothers at his at his feet, not at a distance. There's so much sorrow in this picture, and that you and I, and everyone listening who calls on the name of Jesus, we were liberated and rescued and redeemed and restored by that act of sorrow. Or we see, we see the disciples who cry out to Jesus and say, Hey, you just came back and this is after the resurrection. And now you You're leaving us. And yeah. And yet in the midst of that grief, Jesus spoke into them. And he said to them, I'm praying that your joy may be made complete, that you're that you're my joy might be in you and that your joy might be made complete and what Jesus knew and they didn't, is that out of the sorrow that they would be launched into a early church that would change the world. So I would say to that person, that first of all, that God is not disappointed by your sadness. It's important to understand that that is hiding your feelings from a God who loves you and knows you. That's a joy stealer. But when we understand this surprising truth, God not only created you to feel he cares about how you feel. And so

when we give ourselves permission to be honest with God about how we feel, we're also giving ourselves permission to heal. Mm hmm.

Well, so many of the things that you just said are very surprising. I'm processing and at the end of each section, I have this little c'est la moment like, Oh, my brains catching up. So you said that there are six surprising truths about joy. And what makes them surprising?

Well, they're surprising because I think they're they're counterintuitive, as you said in the beginning, why in the world would I write about a book about joy during a year called scarred, and then be asked to live that book a second time, and then hey, let's throw a pandemic in there. And political division let's let's talk because this is not a book about cancer. This is not a book even about hard circumstances because you can absolutely be in the most beautiful, contented place of your life where everything is going well, and you're clutching joy like that balloon. so tightly because you're waiting for the other shoe to drop and so this is meeting those joy stealers and moving from what we feel which matters and matters to God that moving from purely what we feel to live in what we know

okay so that whole feeling versus knowing I have to admit I was a little bit worried when I started reading the book and you define joy as not a feeling but a knowing and I'm like well, this might be a problem for me because I grew up so cerebral but the you know the that that what is it the 12 inches between the head and the heart often didn't make a connection, but I read I read your first chapter, which is called set I'm sorry, which is called give a sister permission to feel and it completely blew me away like permission to feel not just, you can quietly go in your closet and feel but not tell anybody but actual permission to feel my first thought was, are you sure about this? So, all that confessed? Could you go ahead and walk us through this first joy stealer and how we can confront it?

Okay, the first joy stealer is the belief that God is somehow disappointed in you when you're sad or you're angry or you're frustrated, or you're confused, that somehow we have to wear a mask and push it all down and pretend to the world that we're okay. So we meet that with what we know. And again, I said, this just a moment God, God created you to feel and those feelings are actually indicators. So let's connect that to our brain, Sherry, that this is really important. You know, this is a soul brain. Way To live is that we understand that, that feeling that you're feeling right then, number one, don't push it down. Don't hide it, bring it to the light where you and the Lord can talk about it. But secondly, understand that there's a reason you're feeling that way. And when we invite the Lord into the middle of that, then there's the opportunity to process it to feel it to to let it's a sacred place, honestly, between you and the Lord. And I think about this scripture. Where are the story in scripture where Jesus meets the two sisters because their brother Lazarus has just died. And Jesus knows what's ahead. He knows that Lazarus is going to be okay. He knows that in just a few moments, the tomb is going to open and this guy is going to walk out swaddled from head to toe and shock everybody. The sisters don't know that Jesus does but what does Jesus do because they're weeping. He weeps with them. And that tells me

that I am safe. Even if God knows right around the corner, everything is going to be okay. I am saved. Bring my feelings to my Savior. Who grieves with me.

Mm hmm.

You definitely said I have goosebumps several times I've thought you know, as you're describing this so joy isn't denial in any way shape or form. Gosh,

no, that's that's, that's a lack of freedom. You know? Yeah, denial or pushing it down or putting on a mask. Now listen, it's important who we share it with. You know what I'm saying social media is not a safe place for me to put it all out there. It's just not. And and I have shared my journey to through this card here. Not the first not the first season. But the second season I have shared openly on Facebook and invited people to come along with me and they had people the goodness of God's people have just blown me away. But this is the deal is that there are safe and sacred places to share our feelings and there are plenty places where we just don't go with them. And it doesn't mean that we're fake or just wives.

Yeah. Well, so I have loved how vulnerable you that you've been on social media this past year as Richard walks through his healing from a major heart attack.

Three days after I found out my breast cancer had returned.

Yeah, that was the craziest thing because so you are waiting for the timing of your surgery. And Richard, how's your husband has a heart attack, but I watched you be a joy keeper. And so tell us what, what is joy keeper? And how is it relevant for today?

Okay, so a joy keeper is somebody who is honest with who she is. A joy keeper is someone who knows where to turn. And a joy keeper is someone who realizes that even in the midst of battle That somehow on the other side of this battle, God is going to restore, redeem and use that battle to his glory. And, and all of that sounds super spiritual until you're in the trenches with it. You know what I'm saying? Is that when you're walking through this, there were times Amy and Sherry when like I'll give out I'll tell another little story is so we were planning this big vacation huge vacation we say five years for our kids. We're gonna go we're gonna pay for everybody gone to Disney Cruise because I have six littles. They were super excited. I was more excited than anybody. And then I find out I my cancer had recurred. And then I thought, I'm going anyway, forget this, I'm going anyway. But then three days later, I get a phone call. And my husband's on the other side. He's a marathon running healthy heart eating no symptoms. And he says to me, they I'm on my way to the hospital. And I don't know what's going on,

but something bad is happening. And I start to get in my car and he calls me again. And he says, I don't think I'm going to make it and in my head, I'm thinking, you're not going to make it to the hospital like, are you? And he said, I don't think I'm going to make it. And I called an Uber because I knew somewhere between where I was in the hospital, my husband was not going to make it. And I was going to get to him. And the next morning he did make it there the next morning sorry for this long story, but it shows this point is the next morning when I went out and I found his car haphazardly parked outside the emergency room where he had stumbled in begging for help. A freak snowstorm it come at night the car was frozen solid I was finally able to get in. I couldn't find an ice scraper but not finding the ice scraper was the tip of the iceberg and I fell apart In that igloo car I begin to wail soon, what in the heck is happening? What is going on? I was supposed to be going to Disney and what is this? And you know what? It was the most sacred, beautiful place, because I didn't have to hide a single thing from the God who knows me and loves me and marked me and has a plan for my life. And he allowed me to weep and wail and beat the steering wheel. And when I came out with that car, you know, he was with me and and that's a marker, that's the marker of faith is that we're never alone, in the midst of hard places. And what I knew that I knew that I knew, regardless of what was going to happen, is that I was not alone in this and that God saw me

Okay, I need a moment over

here. Thank you.

Oh, you know, I'll tell you what I appreciate so, so much about that story and Susie never apologize for telling a long story because your stories are amazing. Um, I've had people in my life equate a person's level of not just faith, but how much they love Jesus with the fact that they never question and that they never break down and have negative emotions. And I just I have a hard time with that. And that actually leads me into my next question, which is, you know, Amy asked you to illustrate what you so beautifully did what being a joy keeper actually is. And when I saw the cover of your book, I'll have to admit my first thought was I didn't know who the author was. I saw the cover and went Oh, brother, and I thought it was by you. And I was like, Oh, no, no, no, I love Susie but like, this is such an Amy topic. You know, I think George I think Amy she says naturally and I'm not saying you don't work at it girlfriend, but she's more naturally joyful and she has sunshine in her pockets. And just to be honest, my entire family tree the more research I do seems to have sprouted from a depression seed. I mean, like, that's just the way we're wired genetically. So, here's my actual question. How can some of us who who don't seem to have that wiring or predisposition to joy? How can we be a keeper of something that we don't even feel like we have something that feels so elusive? Like I feel like I know joy now in then but it feels more like I'm like a butterfly that flies away and I keep trying to catch more than the the balloon tied around my wrists. So yeah, how can we keep some those of us who are more like this? How can we keep something that we feel like we we don't have, I think we read a thing that

I written, we redefine it. We start with In this book, I broke it down into three areas and the first was to know joy, which is to completely redefine it and say that joy is not. Maybe Amy has sunshine in her pockets. I'm sure she does. But I've also seen Amy broken. I've seen Amy hurting. I've seen a me frustrated because we go back a long way. Amy has seen me hurting. And so redefine it to the fact that if joy is the greater reality of God's goodness in our lives, then that doesn't mean we have to all be alike or express a like or and some of the things that you're describing, you know, sure I watch your life and good grief girl. You know, you have been used by God in such an impactful way. Like you have change people's lives in the name of Christ. And maybe one of us has joy in our pockets. And one of us is reaching for joy. And it's a little further away, that God created you to be you. And redefining it says that I'm going to live in the greater reality of God's goodness. As me as Suzy as Sherry, as Amy as this listener who's listening and know that God created you, he knows you. I talked on the phone with someone yesterday, who was having an incredibly hard day. And I said these words to this friend, I said, I know you. I know you. And he said, I don't know myself right now. I said, I understand that, but I know you. And let me speak truth over your heart right now. And I feel like that that How the Lord does with us at times this joy stealer comes up and one joy stealer and I want to bring it up. I think one of the most major joy stealers is that we place greater expectations on ourselves than God does. Okay? And so we're coming at him. And we're saying to him, Well, I don't have joy in my pockets. And so somehow, I don't measure up. And that's simply not true. So we move from what we feel is that I don't measure up to what measure of Jesus do I need today, based on who I am, based on the way God wired me based on the path he has for me, and based on what he's called me to do today, you know, so good.

I would make a sarcastic remark. Like I don't see in the notes any place that Suzy supposed to get all up and Sherry's business today, but I'm too busy wiping tears. To be sarcastic.

I know I watched your faces and Susie spoke truth beautiful truth every year that was amazing. And this is what part of you and may have we need to we keep our friends don't wait. I mean I that was my thought is like we not only have to be joy keepers but we should choose to have joy keepers around us for moments just like this. And Susie's been that for me so many times when I

can't even pronounce the dessert that Sherry made me and sent me in the mail. It was delicious. What? What wasn't chocolate? Ah, thank you. It was so good and sticky and wonderful. And so like the fact that a joy stealer would come at you and say because I'm not wired like somebody else that somehow I'm not a joy keeper. I would say to you baloney. Not true. That's not true. Are you are you wired in a way That you reach a little further for joy or that you have to hold on to that truth a little bit more. But when we look and we understand that God knows us, he knows us. He knows us. He loves us. He loves us. He loves us. And there is no other version of that story. That's a joy keeper truth.

Hmm. So that leads into a great listener question that will kind of end with his his joy, a choice. And why is it sometimes so hard to choose? I think we've kind of talked around that. But

yeah, you know, I'm probably going to give a different answer than what she's expecting. I don't think joy is a choice. I think Jesus is a choice. I think. I think that because, you know, I'm saying when I was in that car, I couldn't reach for joy all day long. When I was wailing and my husband's heart was just being cracked open in the other room and I just, you know, I could have said, Oh, I choose joy, choose joy, choose joy. And I feel like that's a lot like when, you know, the three men walked into the fire, it'd be the same as them saying, There's no fire, there's no fire I choose, I choose water, I choose water, I choose water. And the reality is, is that there was fire. But there was also a man in the midst of the fire with him that looked like Jesus and was Jesus. And so I would say to you, maybe choosing joy, though that sounds pretty it's great on a hat, I have a hat that says it. What we do instead, is that we meet those joy stealers. And I share them all throughout the book, to move from what we feel to what we now and we choose. Truth in Jesus and they're in we find joy

I love it that you guys are quite

well listen, I have you know I have signs all over my house I love words and yes and so I have to store by myself by my back door and I'm thinking I need a marker to go like Mark through it and put it like Jesus above it at least. Now that's a really really good

there's a whole industry that's mad at me right now because it's a slogan, and it's a T shirt and it's a hat, but I can't reach for a hat when I need joy. I just can't and and I think that for some of those listening today, they've been hearing that their whole life choose joy, choose joy. And so what good times Yeah, guilt and condemnation that comes when you say I did choose joy. Yeah. So I will say

that she came in effort not divine pouring into you know, it was really I would say

to her today walk consciously into the love and care that God has for you. There in you will find joy

and that's a wrap.

We don't even need the last

question

because you just done answered it. Wow, I you know what, I'm gonna have to go back and process the whole story of shadrach meshach and abednego I What a beautiful way of looking at that and what you're right they didn't. I choose water. That is amazing. I see. I love your perspectives on things I love, love, love, love, like they just,

I feel like I have bombed most and I'm being very honest with you. Most of the interviews I've done so far because They tend to go down, they've not read the book for one. And then they tend to go down the definition of the world's joy. And and so it's been really hard to rein it back and bring it back to this. But I want to thank you guys because this is the second conversation out of 10. That feels like we're actually talking about my book, and I'm so grateful. Wow,

whoa, I'm sorry about the other ones. I hate that. But

I know that,

that we were able to do that.

Yeah, that I love you guys.

We love you so much. Thank you so much for ministering to us this morning.

Thank you for helping me get out the word about a book being launched during COVID it is the worst time to launch a book because nothing you do. Can you do that? You do normally I that was the worst sentence ever, but you're helping me get the word out and I'm grateful for them. So, so much Yeah, happy happy to.

Alright, we're gonna let you go. And yeah, I look forward to editing this because I'll get to hear it all again. So

Happy Birthday friend.

Oh, that was good. That was amazing

and I've totally forgot to do the Patreon questions but that's okay because we got some we got the the extra with her at the beginning so Yeah, that'll be fun. All right I'll see you in just

a little bit