Opening on Joy and Motherhood

There's a lot of kind of rolling your eyes at joy. It's like, joy is a myth. And anyone who claims to enjoy their children is probably just posting that on social media for clout.

And if you were to see what's going on behind the scenes, it would look just like everybody else's. Everybody's kids are screaming at each other all day long.

Nobody's sleeping. Nobody's eating anything but chicken nuggets and powdered donuts. Like, let's not fool ourselves. This is reality. I welcome back to the Integrative Health Podcast with Dr.

Jenn. Today will be such an amazing episode for all the mothers out there and the spouses too to give support. We are going to be talking to Abby Halberstadt.

She is an author of so many amazing books for mothers. Her newest book, You Bet Your Stretch Marks, is her most recent amazing work of art, and she brings Christianity into motherhood because I agree that is the best balance.

If you don't know Abby well, she is a homeschooling mother to 10. She actually is a homeschool graduate herself. She's a fitness instructor. She used to teach Spanish to high schoolers.

And she's also wife to a very good Renaissance man, she says. So Abby, welcome. We're so excited to have you here. Thanks for having me on. I'm glad to be here.

Yes. I just love, especially the last few years, I feel like your books have really dug into how women are just complaining about being mothers. And it's very hard to see on social media.

And really, misery does not like company. It does not work if you have a bunch of mothers together complaining about their kids. So how do you shift this mindset with women?

And you talk about it in all your books and so helpful because you always point it back to scripture and Jesus. Yeah, I mean, my goal is definitely to bring it back to biblical principles every time.

I don't think that anything I share that's not based on the Word of God is going to hold water ultimately, if I'm completely honest.

Biblical Mindset Shifts for Moms

And I do think that is where we are seeing a lot of what you are referencing, where people aren't seeing a lot of value in motherhood in and of itself because we have such a self-focused mindset.

And like, what is this offering me? What comfort is this bringing to me? This is hard. I don't like hard. How does hard serve me? Do I really need to stick with this?

We see a lot of this and then you see the banding together of social media, which I think has exacerbated all of these trends because the misery starts huddling together and we have these platforms that really facilitate people's ability to come and Ideally, we would come together on social media with shared experience so we could encourage each other, but so often that's not the case, sadly, which is where you get accounts that are essentially saying the only honest truth about motherhood is that it's kind of the pits and every stage is kind of the worst.

And then all of these me too's and yeah, absolutely's and almost like a misery one-upmanship contest where people are like, but has your kid done this?

My second book is called Heart is Not the Same Thing as Bad, the perspective shift that could completely change the way you mother. And when we can shift our mindset from how does this serve me to make my life easier to how does some of this hard or how do some of these challenges actually grow me to be a better person, to be a better mom, to be a better wife, to be a better contributor to society, to be a better follower of Christ, man, that can really flip the whole narrative on its head.

Yeah, your book, Heart, is not the same thing as Bad, but that really shook me a little bit. You know, we were struggling with my middle son with some pans and pandas, neuroinflammation problems and his behaviors.

I mean, we were at the Henry Ford Museum in Detroit and he literally laid on the ground in the middle of everyone and was just going in a circle because he was so inflamed and flared.

Gratefully, you know, for God's sovereignty. I had read that book. I was in a book club with mothers that we were not complaining, but digging in deeper to bringing these experiences, bringing us closer to God.

And, you know, and we all rallied around it and we get through it and you have to look for the positives. Like, he's still functional. He's getting better every day.

Most people don't even know he has anything going on. But we can instead complain about it, feel bad, find other women to complain about it. And, oh, it's just so toxic.

And it's really hard if you are in a group of females that surround you that aren't applying biblical lens to things that you can really get stuck and and get depressed probably.

I mean, these women aren't happy, I don't think. No, there doesn't seem to be a theme of joy. In fact, there's a lot of kind of rolling your eyes at joy.

It's like joy is a myth. And anyone who claims to enjoy their children is probably just posting that on social media for clout. And if you were to see what's going on behind the scenes, it would look just like everybody else's.

Everybody's kids are screaming at each other all day long. Nobody's sleeping. Nobody's eating anything but chicken nuggets and powdered donuts. Like, let's not fool ourselves.

This is reality. And the fact of the matter is, it can be. I mean, it's not that that can't be something that we find ourselves sliding into. But the assumption that motherhood equals struggle and nothing else has never served any mom ever.

And it's not the whole truth. the fact that there will be struggle in motherhood is true. And we don't want to downplay that. We don't want to demean somebody's individual experience.

So I have two sets of twins, and both of them were huge challenges, especially in their really early years. My younger set are my last two children, my ninth and 10th, and they are five now.

And I was just talking with my husband the other day about the difference between them at five and their ability to play independently and happily together for a decent amount of stretches.

We homeschool and having five-year-olds who can play with blocks on the floor beside you for 45 minutes and allow you to complete a subject with multiple children, that is a huge win.

when you have had two two-year-olds that were disrupting every moment of your homeschool day all day long. And so just like you were talking about, he is getting better.

I think there is a lot of value in recognizing progress, however small, and recognizing seasons.

Hard Seasons and Finding Perspective

When we recognize that nothing lasts forever, not the easy versions, not the hardest versions, that everything, the Bible tells us this, for everything there is a season.

And that's true of parenting as well. And when we recognize like the thing that we're in that feels all encompassing and like we should probably make big life choices about to keep it from ever happening again, that's just not true.

Something about this particular set of circumstances that is it feels like it's, you know, putting us under, is going to break, is going to change at some point.

Probably one of the most common regretful DMs I get is parents who chose not to have any more children because of the current child or children that were giving them grief, in some fashion or form.

And they thought that meant any further children would do the same. And they were in such a survival season that they couldn't see beyond that. And then five years down the road, the circumstances have changed.

The kids have grown up a lot. They have executive function skills and helping skills around the house. They can do chores. They sleep through the night.

And they're like, I would love to have another kid. And I did something permanent to alter that because of the moment that I was in, the struggle that I was in that I felt like would last forever.

And there's something very freeing about, yes, this really is hard right now, but it doesn't define my existence or my role as a mother. Yeah, and I like how you talked about just admitting it's hard because a lot of people don't want to.

And I think that we're shown on social media, like you were saying, you know, the perfect breakfast, the perfect kids, all that, or where people say it's hard and then they say it's awful being a parent and they don't like it or whatever.

And it's like, can't we have the middle where we all are committing? It's hard. But we can get through because we are strong because, you know, Jesus makes us strong.

A new friend I met in Tennessee. Oh, she's just so beautiful. Beautiful hair. Her kids are, you know, the first time I met her, she had the Holy Spirit glow, right?

And just such a gentle mother. And she's like, yeah, like, I struggle and I need strength sometimes, but I ask the Lord for strength and He gives it to me when it's hard.

And it's so different when you're parenting biblically or with the Holy Spirit as your team. You know, we got to use that. A lot of people aren't using this extra, you know, this extra wind that we have, which is the Bible, which is Jesus.

Yeah, parenting when you're powering through on your own can feel very lonely. It can feel very confusing. And it can feel like your kids are your enemies or your spouse is your enemy.

I hear that message a lot. I get that a lot in my emails and DMs of moms that are like, I just don't really like my kids and I don't really know what to do about it.

And that's a very defeating and discouraging feeling as a mom. And when we operate from the knowledge that the Lord has given us everything we need for life and godliness in His Word, and that His Holy Spirit convicts and directs and leads us toward truth, that's so freeing to say like, okay, then I know where I can go back to.

I know the principles that I can apply here and trust that they may not be an instant fix for whatever I'm dealing with, but applied patiently over time in prayer and perseverance and character building that this will have an effect on me if no one else and will have an effect on our children as well.

Abby, if someone is dealing with a victim mentality and it's like, They're watching all these mothers that agree with them on Instagram. I mean, what would you suggest that they unfollow those accounts that are feeding into that or cut those friends off?

Or what do they do? Man, I would go farther than that. I would say you need a social media detox. And then when you come back, I would say that you curate your feed very carefully with people that do exactly what you mentioned earlier.

Acknowledge that, yeah, there are challenges in this. Jesus said, in this world you will have trouble, but be of good cheer for I've overcome the world.

He never said you're not going to have hard times, that everything's going to be easy and hunky dory and Pollyanna. There's never any promise. even close to that in God's Word.

But when you can find those accounts where you're like, oh, I feel encouraged and I feel convicted, those are the two words, interestingly enough, that people have used about my books the most, like almost an uncanny amount of times that a review has said I was encouraged and convicted.

I was convicted, but I was also encouraged. That's the goal. That's what you're looking for. You're looking for people to come alongside you and say, yes, you can because Christ is doing it in you.

Keep going. This is worthy work. This is kingdom work. This is legacy building. It is a complete mindset shift. And I really don't think that you can do it by halves.

So my suggestion would be a 30 day social media detox where you get yourself out of that addictive cycle of going for validation and dopamine hits. to your phone or, yeah, your phone.

That's what people are stuck on these days. And then should you feel like you need to come back? Find people who are using social media to create honest and encouraging content that points to the truth of God's Word.

And get rid of the other stuff. The Bible says very clearly that bad company corrupts good morals. And so if you feel like you started out with great intentions and you were reading your Bible and now you notice like you don't really reach for your Bible, you reach for your phone, and you can't really think of any good things about your family, you're always thinking about the negative things, that is the creep, you know, that is the slow overtaking of a sinful focus on self and struggle and wishing you could kind of get rid of it instead of seeing the benefit of it.

And once you start to kind of recognize those things, it's easier to say, you know what, I don't even need this in my life.

Social Media Detox and Honest Encouragement

This is benefiting me. Not even at all. Right. Yeah and the algorithm kind of banks on the fact to get us addictive and get us like depressed addictive to it.

It's horrible. Yeah doom scrolling. There can be motherhood doom scrolling too for sure. Now do you ever think that this happened to me over Christmas I just had this thought that and I know you've talked about it you know in your books like flying with the kids and stuff that You know, when you raise Christian children or you're trying to raise them up biblically, it's harder.

I mean, not only are you getting spiritually attacked more possibly, but it's harder because you have to say no. You have to say, no, you can't be on your phone 24-7 or no, we're going to…

Or no, you don't even get a phone. Yeah, I feel like, you know, sometimes, because I felt I just, you know, I lamented this, you know, in prayer and to my husband, I'm just like, oh, like, sometimes it's just, it would be easier to not raise our kids like this way and move to Tennessee, so they could be raised around people like this.

I mean, how do you support or encourage women that feel like that sometimes? I think that you have to Acknowledge the truth that a short-term easy that it produces a long-term hard is not worth it and that the flip side absolutely is Yes, it is easier to hand your small child devices to give yourself more free time We even if it's like you're like listen Abby I'm not handing my kid a tablet so that I can check out and get my nails done I'm trying to get a shower in you know?

Like, we are fighting for our lives over here. But I will tell you this, that when we falsely equate the I'm doing this because I have to, there's no other way to get the basics in my life.

And I say falsely because I do think that it is a little bit of a lie to ourselves that this is just the only way I can survive. There are seasons, first trimester puking and exhaustion where your kids may watch too much Winnie the Pooh or Bluey or something and there's grace for that.

When we boil the ability to get anything done in motherhood down to having our kid distracted and quote taken care of, especially by technology, because that's going to be the most obvious available to us, quote unquote babysitter, right?

We have gone around the truth that it's much harder to train them in the short term, for example, to read a pile of books on the bathroom floor while you take a shower if they're a very young child and it's okay, they're in the room with you.

And B, interrupted. I mean, how many showers have I taken while holding a two-year-old? I mean, I'm washing my hair with one hand and holding them and then switching arms to rinse it out, you know?

That's okay. That is inconvenient and I didn't get my me time, but I still got my hair washed and I didn't convey to my child that if I'm going to get anything done, you must be distracted.

Instead, I conveyed to my child that if I'm going to get something done, you're probably going to have to come in here with me and follow the instructions that I give you or be really close to me and up in my business.

And that's okay too, because again, it's a season. And it won't last forever. And I can tell you from personal experience that while there's no formula, if you put in this much effort with this much scripture and this much prayer and out will pop this perfectly compliant child, that's not how it works.

I can tell you that there is fruit when you faithfully plant and water and the Lord brings the growth. And again, I emphasize that the growth, I say this a lot and you got your stretch marks, but even if you don't see obvious growth in your kids at certain ages that you would love to, you will see growth in yourself and you will be modeling that growth to them.

And that can't help but have an effect on the experience they have growing up as children, the mother that they get. The reminders that the Lord will give them in adulthood, even if they aren't making good choices and they've rejected some of the things that we've said, those seeds are planted and the Lord is the one that brings the harvest.

So when you're asking, how do I encourage a mom that's like, man, it sure would be easier too. Yeah. Yeah, it would in the short term, but in the long term, you will have established patterns that beget habits, that beget convictions, that beget practices that last through a lifetime, Lord willing.

And that is way better than an easy shortcut for now that feels like it saves your bacon for five minutes. Yeah. Yeah, that's so encouraging. And you talk about in your book that hike you took with your husband and you weren't with your kids and you saw a family.

And this happens to me when I travel, I sometimes bring an older kid with me, but even so sometimes when I'm doing something without my kids, you ache for them a little bit, you know, and, and you're like, even though it's harder when they're there and it makes things more complicated or slows things down, but how do you deal with

those times and with you having older children?

and taking that one-on-one time with each. I think I hear from a lot of moms, especially with trips, which most of my trips these days would be if I go to a speaking engagement for, like if I fly in, speak on that day, fly home the next day.

Parenting with Faith and Boundaries

So pretty quick turnaround, but still it's time away for my kids. But sometimes it's a trip with my husband, like that anniversary trip was, and I hear from moms who are like, I feel so guilty.

if I ever leave my kids. So it's kind of like you were talking about, it's that wild swing of extremes of kind of like people, moms that are trying to escape their kids at all costs.

Like if I can just get away from them, I'll be happier and then my tank will be filled and I'll be a better mom when I am with them. If it's a shorter amount of time, I'm sure I'll be a better mom.

That's actually not usually how that works out. And I found this to be true for me personally. If I go on a trip and it's supposed to be this fill me up trip, not that I really think of them that way, but like if I'm on a trip with my husband, technically I should come back all relaxed and ready to be a great mom.

And a lot of times I'm tired from the trip and the return to reality is a bit of a jarring bump to my expectations. It's not like filling myself up with escapism, not that a trip with my husband is escapism, but if it were, if that's how I were approaching it, is going to mean that I'm a better mom.

That's a false statement. That's a false argument. But also, you have moms that feel as if, since they are a mom, any time spent away from their child is kind of stolen.

And yet, especially when it involves marriage, it's not because as we prioritize our marriages, as we pour into them, we are establishing this firm family foundation.

We are told to leave and cleave to our spouse. We are not told to leave and cleave to our children. And yes, of course, we invest and pour into our children day after day.

That's an assumption. And we are called to bring them up in the training and admonition of the Lord. And that is not a one-time thing. That's not an hour a day thing.

That's a day in and day out as we lie, sit, walk, and stand like it talks about in Deuteronomy 6, 6 through 8. But the specific example that I gave was sometimes if I'm with Shawn and we're investing in our marriage and I think, oh man, it would have been great if the kids were here, I'm not being grateful for what the Lord has given me in that moment.

I'm trying to borrow trouble. My kids are home with my parents having a blast and we come back and we go right back into investing. So kind of just that attitude of I'm grateful for what I have in the moment that I have it and I'm not going to borrow guilt, borrow trouble or be stressed, but instead be present.

I know that sounds kind of, you know, kind of guru-esque, but honestly, it's really, really easy to let our minds go to all of these what ifs and am I doing it right and not even appreciate what we've been given right now and then we're done with it and you're like, I don't even remember that with great clarity or good thoughts about it because I was too busy worrying.

And we're specifically instructed in Matthew 6 not to do that. We are told not to be anxious. And then you said about spending time with my older kids.

So all of my children still live at home. I have a 19 year old down to two five year olds with about, you know, with

two sets of twins in there and everybody being about two years apart if you were to average it out.

And so There's a lot of different age ranges. There's a lot of different ways to spend time with them. We homeschool, so there's a lot of instructional time, read aloud time, doing just life together chores, going out and playing basketball or pickleball.

We have a family court beside our house that we built last year that's been so much fun, both to have community come in and also just to use as a family.

We go outside and hang out in the yard together, but One thing I've really, really loved about having older kids is that you can interact with them on such a different level.

You can ask their opinion on things and they give you thoughtful, well-constructed answers. You can have a moral debate with them. You can discuss scripture with them.

You can go see a movie with them that doesn't have animation and silly songs. There's just a next level of friendship that starts to blossom. My son Ezra that's 19 edits my podcasts and we play pickleball together and have such a good time just talking to each other.

And I know the best way in the world to get to his heart is to feed him really well. And so I think we overcomplicate the older kid conversation and we have this narrative that older kids don't want to have anything to do with their parents anymore.

I have not found that to be true in my personal parenting experience. Or in the parenting and family experiences of people that I look to as models, I see them continuing to really like their parents, their parents continuing to like them, of old adult kids coming home for the holidays every chance they get because they don't want to miss out on those traditions and cool things that their parents put in place that just felt like home to them growing up, of kids that want to live near their parents, want to parent.

I mean, there's a really big trend right now of kind of forsaking everything your parent did and blaming them for any struggle you have in your life. But there's also the version where you have kids that are like, I'm sure I'll do things differently, but I liked what you did here and I liked what you did here and I want to spend time with you.

And that is the sweet spot in which I find myself right now. It's not perfect. There is some conflict, but Especially with my three oldest, it's, I'm able to see, which are 15, 18 and 19, able to see like the people that they're becoming.

And it's just really cool. Like it. I like it. Yeah, I think it's great. It's really special to have one-on-one time with them too, like you said, kind of apart from everything and have some deep moral questions and answers and all of that.

Now, the one story made me tear up when I was listening to it about your son and the basketball, the three pointer, if you can describe that a little bit, because that like, that's, that's teared me up a little bit.

Marriage, Travel, and Older Kids

Yeah, it's one of my favorite memories in my life, if I'm completely honest. So my son, Simon, who plays basketball only started when he was a teenager, we homeschooled, but we had access to a homeschool league.

And they're usually pretty competitive. And so he played six man football for two years and then he switched to basketball. So he was quote unquote behind, like he didn't start basketball until the sophomore year.

Everybody else been playing little dribblers since he was, you know, since they were little kids and he hadn't done any of that. And he threw himself into it and decided he was going to get better as fast as he could possibly get better.

And I really am proud of how hard he's worked, how much he's drilled, how much he's studied gameplay and watched YouTube videos and tutorials of how to do things.

But he is not the greatest shooter. He's really good at driving. He's really good at ball handling. He's a great defender, but he's not a great shooter.

And he has shot thousands upon thousands of shots and yet during games he doesn't typically shoot because man that dynamic during a game changes completely like you're nervous you know all these things so he had made well I won't get ahead of myself but we were having a conversation that wasn't anything to do with basketball but it was kind of one of those hard mom-son conversations where we had to have an attitude adjustment and so I wanted to end the conversation on a high note and he had a basketball game the next day and that's his favorite thing and I said hey go splash me some threes tomorrow and he's It had kind of gotten to a good place in the conversation.

He just looked at me and he said, I can't mama. And he started to leave the room and I said, why not? And he said, well, I took a shot at a three pointer the other day and I missed it.

And coach was like, don't you ever try that again. Their coach is great, but you know, it was just a moment where it was like, ah, what were you thinking?

You know, but that affected him because he took a chance. He missed it. And then he was told, don't take that chance again. And I said, You have been putting in so much work.

Keep putting in the work. You'll keep getting better. I can't guarantee you the next time you try to get a three, you'll get one. But don't stop trying.

Like that was not your coach's best advice. Don't stop trying. That's the way you don't go forward. And I say you try again. And he smiled at me a little bit and say okay yeah maybe I'll get you three tomorrow and he left the room and the next day we were at our whole family is at his game I have one of his little brothers in my lap and he's bouncing around he's not the least but interested in basketball I'm missing every other play but my attention is riveted by this moment where someone passes Simon the ball at the top of the three point line.

And I thought, no way is he going to do this again. And he did. It was the ugliest three pointer you have ever seen. I mean, there's no way that ball should have physically gone into the goal super flat.

Like, like it was just a line drive. And it hit the back of the room and went in and I start screaming my head off. I mean, I am like the crazy mom because I know what this means for him.

And we just had this conversation and I was so proud of him for trying again. I'm tearing up every time I tell the story. It makes me cry. And then he turned around and he raced back down the court.

And guys, all those moments where we're like, our kids don't appreciate anything we do. Everything we've said has gone in one ear and out the other. He raced back down the court with the biggest grin on his face.

And my 16 year old son in front of everybody in that place pointed at me. Like that one was for you. You said I could do this. You told me to try again and I did and it worked.

Now, that's a moment of triumph that we don't often get, which is why it's one of my favorite memories. I told my husband, I'm bawling sitting in the stands holding on to this little boy that I've just like dropped on the floor while I'm screaming my head off and throwing my hands in the air.

And I think the Lord gives us those moments of motherhood triumph. to kind of hold in our hands and rub between our fingers. Like there are lots of moments in between where we really are wondering, and I say this in the book, whether we're shoveling a pile of motherhood sand from one spot to the next and then back again.

Like is this actually having any effect? But the truth is that our words have great effect on our children. They have

either for good or for evil. And being able to tangibly see that something that I had encouraged him to do, that I had been faithful to speak life into my child and that he had been able to achieve something that mattered a lot to him and a lot to me, honestly, for everything that it meant.

Man, that was such, such a good mothering moment for sure. Yeah, it makes me tear up just thinking about all the joy that we have and the memories we're making with our kids and it really does matter and our words and words speak life or death.

And even when we're frustrated, I mean, I've said horrible things to my children and you know, you have to repent of it and move forward and just say positive or just keep your mouth shut because that is another thing that we can really wound our kids with our words and we need to be an example for them so they speak to other people well.

Absolutely. Yeah, so switching subjects just a little bit. And I really liked how you brought up women with disabilities. Me being an integrative medicine doctor, I help these chronically ill women either get pregnant, get feeling better, all these things.

And I always think that there is a root cause, and the Lord wants our body to be in homeostasis. But this doesn't always happen. Not everyone has access to an integrative doctor.

Not everyone can get that kind of care. You talk about, you know, should women with disability, you know, have children if they do, like, how does that work?

Or if they have regrets, how do they deal with that? Yeah, and that's, I say, you mentioned that I talk about that, but the only reason I talked about it is because, and I talk about this in you bet your stretch marks, that I got an email from someone who actually wanted me to tell disabled women because she was in some capacity.

She never named her disability or And I'm not even sure based on the description that she gave me that anyone has ever given her an actual diagnosis. I mean, maybe it sounded a little bit like chronic fatigue or fibromyalgia or something like that.

But she's just in pain. She has a lot of fatigue. She just struggles every day. She struggles. And that would be hard without kids. And she was she was cataloging how much harder it was with kids and she had reached the conclusion it was not worth it.

A Basketball Moment of Encouragement

She had reached the conclusion that she regretted having children and that she needed someone with a platform to go out there and tell moms with disabilities that they should avoid having children, which can you imagine if I were to do such a thing?

Not only do I not believe that it's true, but were for some reason I to believe it and say it out loud, the nerve. of telling someone that because they have a struggle because they have a particular challenge that I don't have that they should not experience the joys and the challenges and the privileges and the responsibility of motherhood is would be incredibly foolhardy and arrogant of me and I would never do that but it got me to thinking when we have this maybe propensity to say, it's hard, so I should avoid it.

And it's especially hard for me. So should I maybe just not commit to that because it won't end up being worth it. And I am praying that this woman particularly whose children are very young, which is part of the quote unquote problem, she is in the stage and believes herself to be likely to always be in the stage of having to completely care for every single one of her children's needs.

And it was kind of I was trying to gently remind her or teach her that truth that I was saying earlier, which is that no season lasts forever, especially the season where your children are entirely dependent because before we know it, they don't need us for lots of things.

And there's joy and grief in that. And we don't want to wish those seasons away when they are so dependent because that is when we have our primary impact on them, the primary seasons of modeling and discipling and influence and disciplining and training.

And so I was really trying to encourage her while still being compassionate to what she was struggling with, not to just kick that to the curb. But I'm hoping someday she has the ears to hear that.

And it may not come to other children who are five and seven and can help unload the dishwasher and buckle their own car seats and things like that. But I think that will make a material difference for not feeling so drained physically and mentally.

But no, I hear from disabled moms all the time who are like, I am so grateful. that I get the joy of motherhood. It is one of the primary joys in my life.

Yes, it makes certain aspects of what I struggle with, whether it's paralysis or a mental disability or a fatigue issue or chronic pain. As you say, it would be ideal if we all lived in a state of homeostasis, but that's not everybody's reality.

And they're like, that is the bad part. My kids are the good part. Overwhelmingly, that is what I heard from moms who follow me, who deal with some level of disability is, no, I would never wish this away for the world.

I do not regret this for one moment. This is one of the things I am the most joyful that I get to experience. Yeah, that's amazing. And maybe that listener that messaged you wasn't walking with the Lord, wasn't in her Bible, and kind of got in this dark despair, which is going to make it worse.

And I see that a lot with patients, that there's this spiritual component for total and full health, and the Lord gives us strength. And it has to do also with our parasympathetic system, our autonomic rest and digest.

And if we're always just amped up and, you know, we talked about the social media like scrolling, doom scrolling, and then we really can't get out of bed.

So it's, you know, I also know that a lot of women, if it's prideful, right, they're not going to ask for help. or say that they're struggling. So that might be another hard thing because it's, you know, it's hard.

We all want to have this picture perfect idea. Everyone think that everything's great. And I'm sure from your DMs, and I know from me working with so many women, women are struggling.

and that's why I wanted to share you with my audience in your books because they give so much hope and so much practical tips because you've been there.

I think you've seen it probably all, right? You've done all the crazy stuff with your kids. Yeah, and I remember one podcast that I did with my best friend who has a disabled child who is pretty intensely autistic and has certain manifestations and some seizures and some things like that.

And I had her on because I don't personally have a child who has obvious disabilities. I mean, there's a huge range, obviously. So I've got a child who struggles with like airway health issues but that's not going to be the same as my friend who has an autistic child.

And in the podcast, I acknowledged that and said, this is why she's here because I respect her and honor her view of things. I've seen her do this walk faithfully with hope in Christ and with the Bible as her guide.

And I had a review from a mom who had disabled children who was like, Abby kept mentioning that she doesn't have disabled children. Like that was some sort of jewel in her crown, which 100% was not in my mind at all, like never occurred to me.

I just wanted to make clear like this is the expert on my podcast today because she has this lived experience. But so when you say I've done everything, I think there's probably not any mother who has walked every hard path in its specific detail.

So a mom that hasn't had multiples can't speak to that part of my lived experience. A mom who hasn't had disabled children can't speak to that part of someone else's lived experience.

Motherhood, Disability, and Hope

A mom who has one child versus one who has 10 Neither one of them are going to be able to understand exactly the challenges that they face of like, I am my child's sole playmate all day every day.

I never get a break or I never get a break because there's 10 people talking to me all the time, you know. So what I always strive to do is not to say, I know because I've been there in every circumstance, and I don't think you were saying that was true of me.

You were just saying like, you've had a lot of different versions of this, and I have. But instead, these principles are good, right, and true, regardless of your circumstances.

In fact, I was just on a podcast with someone before this one, and they were talking about this psychologist that had done this research on people's responses to kind of their views of reality okay so there's the glass half full the glass half empty and i said i'm neither an optimist nor a pessimist i'm a pragmatist i'm less about like this is great or this is terrible i'm more like what needs to happen i'm somewhere right in the middle and that's my natural kind of base And this person was saying that she was an optimist and that she had read this article where this doctor was saying that she'd done this research with all these thousands of people.

And her conclusion was that the way people view things is 50% their natural personality bent, 10% circumstances. That would include how many children you have, whether they're disabled, whether you have multiples, whether your husband helps, whether your mother-in-law lives close by or not, all those.

That's all your circumstantial stuff. And 40% was the choice of the person. I mean, that's a huge percentage. That gives you so much agency though. I mean, I think that that's actually really encouraging to hear that we are not controlled by our emotions or our circumstances or even our personality completely, but that we always have a choice and it's a huge part of the equation.

Yeah, and what we read, what we surround ourselves around day in and day out, influence that, most likely. Absolutely. Yeah, that's great. Well, Abby, thank you so much for all your time.

And your kids have been great. I know you had a podcast right before this, so they've been so patient. I would love to share with the audience where to find you and how to get your newest book.

Yeah, so you can find me pretty much anywhere MS4mama. So MS4mama.net, M-A-M-A is how I spell mama, MS4mama on social media. You can find my books anywhere books are sold.

You can get signed copies at MS4mama.net or you can find them in physical places. You can request them at the library. They're pretty much accessible anywhere that you need them.

I also have study guides for all three. which are a new release and add a lot of value because they have video components, extra discussion questions, places you can write.

A lot of people listen to my book because they're moms, and then they go buy the physical book because of all the things that I have at the end of the chapter and all of the scripture that I have in there that they're like, I need to be able to see this.

And then the study guides help you to take all those action steps, prayers, questions, and scripture memorization,

and then have a place to write it all out, plus there's other stuff.

So that's pretty much it in a nutshell. Yes, love it. And then to wrap up a few quick lightning round questions, okay? What career did you almost choose?

I think I pretty much ended up where I thought I was going to end up. That's the pragmatist in me talking. Well, I wanted to write and I got to write and I wanted to teach and I got to teach.

So I don't know that I had another one that I really got very close to choosing. My mom wanted me to be a physical therapist or a physical therapist assistant.

And I started out very early in college.

Where to Find Abby and Lightning Round

I started at 15 and I kind of started out with a couple of core courses toward that direction and very quickly discovered that was my mom's dream, not mine.

That's good. I mean, it's good you realized that early and got out. What is a favorite habit that rescues a tough day? Probably going outside if the weather permits, which we're in East Texas and the weather often permits, except sometimes it's 105 degrees.

Going outside or blasting worship music and dancing with my kids in the kitchen. Automatic mood reset. Yes, love it. What is one wellness rule that you happily break?

I mean, I like sugar more than I should. Anything where it becomes obsessive, anything where it's like, you can never do this because you're definitely dying of cancer within three days after you do it.

I know it's extreme, but I feel like one of the most toxic things is stress and being obsessive about wellness practices. And so there are lots that I have taken on over the years, but then the ones where it's just so absolute that you feel fear as a result, I'm not doing those.

Yeah, I agree. And last one, one word only. What is one word you want our listeners to carry with them through the week? Hope. Definitely hope. Yeah. Yeah.

Hope for all those mamas out there. Well, thank you, Abby. And be sure to grab one or all three of the books. They will bless you and bless your family.

So thank you so much for being here, Abby. Thanks for having me on.