

# EPISODE 023: THE FEAR OF BECOMING A MOM WITH KATELYN JAMES

BY NANCY RAY

## Intro

For the longest time I was really afraid of becoming a mom. I thought that I should have these longings to be a mother or I really should want to have a baby, but I never did. I was really happy with my marriage and my life before babies. I loved my work, and I was really fearful of what it would do to my life, my body, my sleep, a lot of different things. I remember having a conversation with my friend, Katelyn, about this and was nervous saying it out loud. She looked at me and was like, “Me, too. Me, too. That’s crazy. I haven’t heard anybody else say that before.” We connected on that level because we felt weird or alone or like we were the exception to the rule in women.

Today I am going to interview Katelyn on the podcast. If you follow me or Katelyn, you know that both of us are mothers to three children. I have three young children. She also has three children, one of which is in heaven. The conversation that we have, our hope as we have this conversation, is that you, if you’re in the same boat ... if you’re afraid of becoming a mom or aren’t ready and don’t know if you ever will be ... is that our conversation would hopefully make you feel a little bit more normal and not alone.

You’re listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray, Episode 23. Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy takes place. This is a podcast all about learning to work and play well, which leads to a healthy soul and a fulfilling life.

Listen in.

## Content

Before we jump into the episode with Katelyn, my interview with her, I wanted to say a couple of things. First of all, Katelyn and I have known each other for years. We have been on this motherhood journey together. We’ve both had three babies in the last four to five years. It’s been really neat to have ... Neat isn’t even the right word. It’s been so sweet and really enriching in my life to have a friend who has struggled with the fear of becoming a mom. We became moms around the same time, to walk through that together and learn from each other has been really, really sweet.

I admire Katelyn on so many levels. If you know Katelyn, you know she's an amazing photographer. She teaches and equips photographers and business owners to lead profitable businesses and purposeful businesses and purposeful lives. She lives in Virginia with her husband and two children. She is just a gem. She shares from her heart. She's authentic. I think you're really going to enjoy this episode.

A couple of things I want you to be aware of: It is a longer episode. I did this on purpose because Katelyn has such a rich, emotional story to share. We're going to just dive in, and I gave it as long as it needed. I'm going to do a handful of interviews throughout the year on very specific topics with specific people that I have in mind to dive deeper on some of these more sensitive issues or just a topic that I feel needs a little bit more time and space. I hope it's encouraging to you.

Also, if you are listening, I know you'll probably listen. You might think, "Oh, my goodness, Katelyn and Nancy are trying to convince me to become a mom." And that's not the case. We're not trying to convince anybody. If you're listening and you're afraid of becoming a mom or you've made up your mind you don't want kids, or maybe you're just teetering on the edge and you don't know. Or maybe you're just afraid and you know you want what kids. Our heart is to do nothing but share our experience and our story. We honor you wherever you are in this journey. I just want to give you a place to not feel weird. To feel a little bit normal and just to honestly share the hard things, the great things, the joys, the sorrows, everything just from an honest perspective of what we have been through.

I hope that all in all you're just encouraged by the fact that we were really afraid to become moms and now we're moms and we love it. I hope this episode blesses you today.

Nancy Ray:

All right. Well, today I'm super-excited to have a dear friend on the Work and Play podcast. Katelyn James is here with us today. Katelyn, I just want to thank you so much for being here and say a warm welcome. You're our very first guest on Work and Play with Nancy Ray.

Katelyn James:

I'm honored.

Nancy Ray:

Thank you.

Katelyn James:

This is so exciting.

Nancy Ray:

It's so exciting. Well, tell someone who might be listening just a little bit about you and your family and what you do.

Katelyn James:

Okay. This is always such a big question because it used to be when I would do podcasts I'm like, "Well, I am a photographer. I work with my husband." But now I need to introduce my family. I have a family with extra people. Michael and I were high school sweethearts. We got married when we were right out of college. Then we were married for six years and had our daughter Evy. Then we got pregnant with our second baby, which was baby James. If you've heard our story before, you probably know that we lost that little boy at 31 weeks, but that was our second child and a huge, huge part of our story and our testimony. Then the Lord just blessed us with a third baby who was born this past April, baby Graham, and so we are technically a family of five with a sweet baby in heaven. But on Earth we are a family of four.

Katelyn James:

We are wedding photographers who are also educators. We photograph weddings, but we allow photographers to learn how they can run profitable and purposeful businesses. That's what we spend our weekdays doing. But we also just we love our church. We love our immediate family. We're really close to our immediate families. Yeah, we really love the season of life that we're in.

Katelyn James:

I'm just excited to talk about a little bit of life before I was in this season and what the transition looked like. Because I honestly could say with all the bumps and the things we run into, this is the best season of my life. That's a little background about us.

Nancy Ray:

I love it so much. What's so sweet is Katelyn and I have run similar, kind of parallel lives in a lot of ways, which is really sweet. We have known each other for several years now. I don't even know how many years we've known each other. But both of our husbands were on staff at churches as youth pastors. Michael, your husband, stepped aside and stepped down from his role there to pursue your business endeavor for the last I don't know how many years that's been since he's done that.

Katelyn James:

Right. Yeah. Oh, gosh. I don't know. Six years maybe? Seven years.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. It's crazy how much life has happened between then. Anyway, just for anyone listening, their story and Michael stepping away really impacted my husband. He was on staff at church, and we were praying about what we should do next and heard their story. Then my husband stepped down from his role as a youth pastor at church. It's just been really cool to see God's hand of faithfulness in both of our lives in very different ways at different seasons.

Nancy Ray:

I'll never forget standing at a Southern Weddings launch party with you guys and Michael. I

think it was me and Will and you and Michael. I think, correct me if I'm wrong but, the first launch party, we told you your story impacted us so much it's changed the trajectory of our lives. We all just stepped away in our career. Then I think it was a year later at the next launch party where we were talking about how we were afraid to become moms or how we weren't ready. We felt like everyone around us was really ready.

Katelyn James:

Yeah. What's wrong with us?

Nancy Ray:

Yeah, we were like, "We feel so bad saying this. But the idea of having a kid, we're not there yet. We just don't want a baby yet. We're not there yet." I was fearful of it. But it was really sweet because I feel like even at a distance you and I connected in a lot of ways throughout different steps in our journey. But it's been neat to see now how different our lives look now and how God was so faithful every single step of the way.

Katelyn James:

Right. I almost feel like that season of life when we started our friendship, it's almost like God gave me a person, an example of another woman to show you like, "Katelyn, you're okay. You're not broken. Nothing's wrong with you. Here's a friend who's going to make you feel okay about the fact that you're not like all the other women in your life."

Nancy Ray:

Right, and that, I think, is my hope for his podcast episode. It can feel pretty lonely. I just want whoever might be listening to know there are other people like you out there who might not be ready for kids yet. Or you might not feel as maternal. Or you might think, "Hey, what's wrong with me? I don't want a baby. I don't have this deep longing to have a baby or to get pregnant like a lot of women around us do." I even struggled with how do I reconcile that with the fact that a lot of my close friends are walking through infertility? How do I even voice that when I feel this way? I feel so heartbroken for them because that's such a hard journey.

Nancy Ray:

Anyway, I agree. It felt like a gift when we just had that side conversation. We're like, "You, too?" Like, "You, too? We both feel this way," which was instant.

Katelyn James:

Oh, yeah. You just feel instantly connected because I just didn't have anyone else that felt that way. Even my sisters, my closest friend, and all she ever wanted to do was be a mom. I'm like, "But I don't feel that way. Oh, gosh something ..." "And I also didn't feel maternal, and so I was just ... And my husband wanted children. I'm like, "What in the world am I supposed to do with this?" Then meeting you just gave me this perspective of like, "Okay. Well, at least it's not just me. At least something's not wrong with me. I have an example or just a friend to walk through

this with it.” It was truly like such a gift. It was such a God-ordained thing.

Katelyn James:

Because the only reason you heard our story is because we said yes to doing a video series for friends who were doing this marriage series online. You watched Lara’s ... Lara Casey did a video and that’s how ... I mean it’s just so crazy. We said yes to this one thing, and it resulted in this sweet, sweet friendship.

Nancy Ray:

Yep. I totally agree. You and Michael were married for six years before you had Evy, right?

Katelyn James:

Yes.

Nancy Ray:

Tell me a little bit about those years and what it was like for you and Michael and your story leading up to the point when your heart was or wasn’t ready, or when you found out the news you were pregnant. What was that whole journey like for you?

Katelyn James:

Oh, gosh. I mean honestly, it is so good to sit down and think about that season. Because now that I’m in a different season, it’s hard to remember some times.

Nancy Ray:

It really is. Yeah.

Katelyn James:

It really is. I think for me there was a lot of things happening in my mind. A lot of insecurities that came up in regards to thinking about motherhood, but a lot of scarcity mindset as well. But let me start with what our life was like, and then I’ll get into that.

Katelyn James:

Michael joined me, started in the business with me, in 2013. Evy was born in 2017, so we had a good chunk of time where we were just working together. While there was a lot of work and we were so busy, the busiest we’d ever been with work, and growing more than we had ever grown very quickly. We also had a lot of crazy freedom. I was getting asked to speak at all these conferences. Michael just got to go with me. We just, we’d go to California. I’d speak at a conference, and my husband would go with me. We were just this young couple with so much freedom, a lot of work, but so much freedom. I loved that.

Katelyn James:

I felt like the topic of kids kept coming up in the midst of when I was growing and hustling and things were moving forward at lightning speed. I remember thinking to myself like, “Oh, I can’t consider being a mom or having kids because my business will fall apart,” so scarcity mindset. Then I started thinking, “I don’t think I could be a mom because I don’t desire

to be a mom, and that's horrible." You can't have kids if you don't desire your whole life to have kids. Something's wrong with me.

Katelyn James:

There was a lot of things about our life that I didn't want to give up and that I thought would have to change. There was a lot of things that blinded me. Michael and I were very happy in our life pre-kids. We just had a lot of adventures and, like I said, a lot of freedom. That's the word I keep coming back to is freedom. I feel like there was also a lot of brokenness. Gosh, I could literally talk about this for six hours. But basically in a nutshell the hustle season of our business together was so productive and profitable and the business just grew and grew and grew. But Michael and I were probably the unhealthiest we'd ever been in our marriage.

Katelyn James:

Towards the end of that, before we got pregnant with Evy, we had began doing these relationship coaching life transformation coaching calls. I just started to realize more and more and more about myself that I had never really paid attention to. What I found was that I was living in a very limited mindset of my life and that God had a lot more for me. The mindset that I had about myself, it was defined by insecurity but supported by things that I truly believed about myself that were actually lies. For example, compared myself to my sister, which I'm sure you struggled with this, too, Nancy, because your sister has a ton of kids.

Nancy Ray:

Yep. Certainly. Yes. I know. My sister has five kids, a girl, triplet boys, and another girl, so, yeah. I totally, totally get that. Continue.

Katelyn James:

My sister's younger and had just gotten married and didn't have children. But I just knew when she did have kids, she's just going to be the greatest mom, and I don't even know how to cook. It wasn't just that I was focusing and really being overwhelmed by the thought of being a mom. But everything I was insecure about maternally and domestically, the things that I couldn't do well, I just focused on them. I let them create a false narrative in my mind about who I was.

Katelyn James:

I mean, in my mind, I had decided that I'm Katelyn and I'm just good at business. That is my thing. That's what people praise me for. That's what I thrive at, and I'll never be good at X, Y, and Z because this is my area of expertise. Which is so funny because as a dreamer and a business owner, that's not my natural inclination. My natural thing is to dream and think of crazy things and produce products and resources that are so successful. It's not in my nature to limit things. But when it comes to myself, I felt like just Satan just limited me in the view of myself. It really stripped away all the hope I had of being a mom and being a good mom.

Katelyn James:

So, when it comes to the season of life where we were like, "Okay, maybe this is the time to start having kids," I didn't get there easily. I think I remember, maybe you remember this. Do you remember our retreat we went on?

Nancy Ray:  
Yes.

Katelyn James:  
Is it Fearington Village?

Nancy Ray:  
Yep. Fearington. Yep. I do.

Katelyn James:  
I remember we were there with a lot of other successful women. You were pregnant, I think, with Milly.

Nancy Ray:  
Mm-hmm.

Katelyn James:  
Yes, yes. I just remember being there, and all these other women were realizing certain struggles that they had and just certain seasons of life that they were working through. The reoccurring theme of that time together was I felt like the Lord just kept telling me, “Katelyn, you’re ready to be a mom. You’re ready to accept it. It’s not going to happen instantly, but you’re ready to accept the fact that you could let yourself even think of that possibility.”

Katelyn James:  
I remember crying at a table with women who have four or five kids and being like, “I think I’m ready to consider being a mom. I think I can do this.” That decision, it seems like it shouldn’t be that hard, but it was really hard for me. I had to overcome a lot of fear and really disrupt a lot of false things that I was believing about myself.

Nancy Ray:  
Talk to me about the fear. Because I feel like that, I always say like, “I was afraid to be a mom.” Can you boil down the things that you were afraid of? Do you know what it was? I know you mentioned maybe the loss of freedom. But was there anything you were afraid of?

Katelyn James:  
It was a loss of freedom. But I would honestly say, and I don’t think this is normal, but I think one of my other big fears was it seemed almost too vulnerable or weird for me to view myself as a mom. I know that sounds so strange.

Nancy Ray:  
No it doesn’t.

Katelyn James:  
But it really comes back to identity. I had this view of myself that I was really great at busi-

ness. I was a leader. I don't think I'm dominating, but I just have a take-charge personality in some cases. The role of being a momma just sounded to me like that is ugh. I kind of cringe like, "That's not me. I can't fit into that role." And it's so funny because I've never really verbalized this, but it definitely was a part of the fears that I cannot put myself in a position to view myself as being a momma. It just sounds so not me.

Katelyn James:

A lot of that was just rooted in I had just written this storyline that of who I was. I put up these walls, and I wasn't letting God transform me into who he wanted me to be. He wanted me to be a momma. I was afraid of being in a role that didn't seem to fit me, afraid of losing freedom. I was afraid of losing my business. It sounds crazy, but I think I was also a little bit about afraid of losing myself to my child and also just I was afraid of loving being a mom.

Katelyn James:

Because what would that mean to everything else that I know that's true about me? I'm barely getting everything done in my business, and I am full steam ahead. How in the world could I create room to love another human being? Women say having a child, it's like having your heart beat outside of your body. I don't have space in my life to do that. What does that even feel like? It's scary to think about that. I think a lot of women normally are just so excited for it, but to me it was terrifying. I think those were all of my fears but, honestly, as we keep talking I may realize I have more.

Nancy Ray:

Totally. It's so crazy because I am almost being transported in my mind back to that place in my life where there was almost this ... This is kind of embarrassing to say, but almost like a disdain, like a, "Ah, I don't want to be a mom. It's going to hold me back from all of these other things that I could do." As I say that, I think about Milly or Lyndon or Beaufort listening to this one day. I get teary about it because I think about like why did I have that in my heart? Now that I'm on the other side, and then I'm jumping ahead in the story. But now that I'm on the other side, it's like this how could I have felt that way now knowing what I know?

Nancy Ray:

Because it's been the greatest gift.

Katelyn James:

Yeah. I'm getting all teary.

Nancy Ray:

I know, and I know you understand because we've walked this journey together. But it's crazy. I think that just as I'm listening to you talk, in order to walk down this path and go from being terrified of becoming a mom and what it will do to your marriage or your business or your freedom. Or, I was terrified what it would do to my body.

Katelyn James:

Oh, sure. Of course.



Nancy Ray:

I was so scared of I'm losing all of those things that I was so comfortable with and so happy with.

Katelyn James:

Sure. Right.

Nancy Ray:

But getting to the point of being okay with becoming a mom and then going on to get pregnant and then going on to have a baby. Then going on to have another baby, there is a transformation that takes place. The thing that you have to realize is you have to be okay with changing. Your identity does, in fact, change. I think that's the hardest part for me, too. I just so relate. It's rooted in identity and what you're telling yourself. What your natural desires and giftings are for sure.

Nancy Ray:

But also just being okay with loosening the grip on some of those things that you've said for so many years. Whether it's something you said to yourself in your mind or something you've told other people like, "Oh, you know, we're not ready for kids." Or, "We might not have kids," or whatever. You have to loosen the grip of that and say, "Lord, if you're doing something in me or if you've wanting me to change this in my life." Surrendering that to him and being good with that. But, yeah, no. I totally relate.

Nancy Ray:

Tell us a little bit about your pregnancy and having Evy and what that looked like and your journey and then that whole kind of heart transformation.

Katelyn James:

Ah, man. I don't know. I don't know if it was you getting teary or what, but I'm sitting here thinking, "Oh, Katelyn, you're going to have to hold it together. You got a lot more to share."

Nancy Ray:

I know. I know. It's okay. We can just cry through this episode. It'll be fine.

Katelyn James:

Yes. Everyone listening will be like, "Oh, those poor women. They really are having a hard time." Gosh, thinking aback, I just have been through so much the last two and a half years that it is hard to even put myself back in the place of being pregnant with Evy. But I was such a different person. We got pregnant. We started trying around January, which is so funny because I don't want to make this TMI, but we were like, "Oh, we're trying," which really meant we're just kind of sort of thinking about it and not doing anything to ... We weren't really trying.

Katelyn James:

But I didn't know that. I mean we never tried to get pregnant before. After a few months of it not happening from just us like kind of being nonchalant about things ... if you know what I mean ... we started really paying attention to things. I got pregnant in May, so it took us almost half a year and which I know is not a long time to wait. But I did have thoughts of, "Well, what if this doesn't hap-

pen?” I think the Lord used that six-month wait and that window of time to really allow my heart to settle in. I’m like, “No, I do want this. I do desire to start a family with Michael.” I can tell because we’re saying we want this, and it’s not necessarily happening.

Katelyn James:

After three, four, five months, I started thinking like, “Well, I’m sure it will happen.” But I am realizing I do want it, and that was a gift. I’m really glad that it didn’t happen just instantly. We got pregnant with Evy, and I was overjoyed and so excited. But I wouldn’t say that that was a maternal switch that went off. I think I was pregnant, and I started accepting that I was a pregnant woman. I started showing, and I’m like, “Okay.” Buying maternity clothes, and I could tell that I loved this baby, but it was not like the love of a mom. It’s not the love I have now. I didn’t understand that yet.

Nancy Ray:

I agree.

Katelyn James:

I was still a workaholic, which that’s a whole other story, but definitely a workaholic. I realized that the year that I was pregnant with her. I think the Lord in a lot of ways, he used my pregnancy with Evy to break me of some pretty serious strongholds that needed to be broken in order for me to be the mom that I wanted to be. It’s so funny, I almost said, “To be the mom that I’ve always dreamed of being.” But I honestly never had a dream of what being a mom would look like. But I knew once I was pregnant like, “I want to be a present, loving, faithful mom. I want to be able to live into this vision of motherhood that I’m starting to form.” I think God knew, well, Katelyn, there are things about your life and your priorities and where your identity lies that you’re going to have to be stripped down in order to be ready to be a mom.

Katelyn James:

I was, gosh, eight months pregnant with her when I developed an incredibly serious intense hand tumor in my right hand, which is the hand, it was actually in the knuckle of the finger that I used to take pictures. The trigger finger that actually takes the pictures.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah, your pointer finger. I remember this.

Katelyn James:

Yes, my pointer finger. I had a tumor that was being supported and spurred on by pregnancy hormones. Once I hit a certain part of pregnancy, it blew up. It cracked my knuckle open. It was eating away at all the healthy bone of my knuckle to the point where we finally realized what was happening. I got sent to a hand oncologist. He rushed me into surgery 48 hours later at this time nine months pregnant. I stayed awake for the whole surgery. Here I am laying on an operating table. This is a crazy story to just throw in here, but it’s really important in my motherhood journey.

Nancy Ray:

It is.

Katelyn James:

He's like once we get in there, we'll let you know whether or not we need to amputate your finger and your knuckle from your right hand or not because we don't know how much damage has been done, and we don't know if your bone can grow back. We also will let you know ... I'll take it up to pathology, the tumor, and I'll let you know if it's cancerous or not. If it is cancerous, we'll talk about if we need to take the baby early, which is fine because I was nine months, and start treatment. I'm like, "What? Oh, my gosh."

Nancy Ray:

Those aren't things you just nonchalantly say. Like, "Oh, and if you have cancer, this is what we'll do." Like, "What?" That's insane.

Katelyn James:

Yes. I know. I laid there and they have a blue wall of paper up so I can't see them operating. Then I'm using my other hand to hold my stomach and feel my little girl kicking and moving around. In that timeframe, from the time that the tumor flared up to post surgery right before delivery, I could not work. I could not type. I couldn't do emails. I couldn't do anything. I was instantly stripped of everything that gave me my purpose and my identity as a working woman, as a business woman, as Katelyn James, whatever that title means. To me it meant a lot and it carried a lot of weight, and I lost all of that the month before I became a mom.

Katelyn James:

That was the greatest gift to me ever. I don't think most people would ever say that. But having a giant cell tumor just show up in my hand and almost steal my knuckle and my finger away, I'm going to tell Evy one day when she's old enough to understand that God allowed me to walk through that. That for her was one of the greatest gifts because I was a different mom because of that experience. That experience really changed so much of my motherhood journey and the way that I viewed being a mom. It stripped away the workaholicism that I struggled with. I think God had tried to take that away from me and heal that part of life previously, but I was too stubborn. I don't think he said, "Oh, Katelyn, you're being so stubborn, let me give you a tumor." I think he's a loving God, and he's like, "Katelyn, your life is going to change and you're going to miss the goodness and the sweetness of being a new mom if you don't learn to step away from work." I think he allowed that season to heal me of that.

Katelyn James:

Then it comes time ... There was other crazy things. I had gestational diabetes with Evy. It was my first baby. No one knew if I could deliver a big baby, but she was measuring over the 95th percentile, and we assumed that was because of my diabetes. I had an awful OB who told me I couldn't deliver her. She was too big. She actually scheduled a C-section for me without me knowing it. The hospital called and wanted to confirm my surgery time, and I'm like, "Um."

Nancy Ray:

Oh, my word.

Katelyn James:

That was awful. Here I am. I just got done with surgery. My hand is full of stitches. I'm healing. Now I'm having to worry about how I'm going to get this baby out of me. It was a battle for weeks. It was a battle. I was told that if I tried to give birth to this baby vaginally then I would be a bad mom because she would have nerve damage in her shoulders because surely her head would get stuck. Just horrible things you should never hear from an OB. But I decided that I had a peace about working with midwives. I was in a hospital, and I ended up giving birth to a nine-pound 10-ounce baby with no problem.

Katelyn James:

I remember them putting her on my chest and, of course, I've never experienced this before, ever. But to me I was pregnant. I loved this baby. But people said there was a magical moment when you hold your baby for the first time. I'm like, "Oh, of course," You know?

Nancy Ray:

Right.

Katelyn James:

Everyone says that. But it truly is what they say and 10 times more. Because they put her on my chest and everything changed about what I cared about in my life. I remember touching her elbow, which is so weird. But I remember touching her elbow and being like, "Oh, my gosh. You're real." Like, "Oh, my gosh, I'm a mom." It was the beginning of a beautiful transformation in my life and I walked into that day, that I had her, I have never felt more accomplished. It's funny, I felt more accomplished in the moment of pushing her out and bringing her into this world than I ever have in any season of business. I have accomplished some pretty big things in business. Oh, it was just, still to this day, there's nothing like that first holding your first baby. I'm sure you can relate with Milly. It's just the best.

Nancy Ray:

It is. And Shauna Niequist, I think, talks about in one of her books about thin places. I don't know if you've ever heard of this?

Katelyn James:

Gosh, no.

Nancy Ray:

But it's like where heaven and Earth, the separation between heaven and Earth, get really, really thin. It's almost like you can feel ... It's like for a second they kind of collide.

Katelyn James:

Of course.

Nancy Ray:

You feel like it's so sacred and so precious that it's like the supernatural and natural collide, and it just becomes really thin. That barrier between the supernatural and natural and heaven and Earth.

Katelyn James:

I love that.

Nancy Ray:

The birth of my babies, I always think, it's that thin place of feeling like you're touching a piece of heaven. It is supernatural and it's the wildest experience when you do pull them on your chest. You're like, "It's not just a baby. It's another soul. It's another life that has come into Earth." It's incredible for sure. It's not something that I even ... You don't have the frame for that before you're a mom. It's the kind of thing, and I think being a mom in general, you just have to walk through it.

Nancy Ray:

You might be listening to this podcast and thinking like, "Well, I'm there yet." Or, "I don't get that," and that's okay. You don't have to get it until it's your time. That's fine. But when the time comes, you'll know. You just have to experience it. You have to walk through it and feel what that's like. But, yeah, I totally relate. It's the hardest you'll ever work and the greatest accomplishment you'll ever make in life.

Katelyn James:

Oh, it is.

Nancy Ray:

But it's incredible. Yeah.

Katelyn James:

It is. I wish I could say that I had this step-by-step process of being ready to become a mom. But my process to being ready to be a mom was so extended over a long period of time. God used different people and different stories and different experiences and traumas almost in my life. There's so many things that went into Katelyn becoming a mom. It wasn't just this day where I woke up and went like, "I'm ready. I'm just ready." I don't think anyone will ever experience that.

Katelyn James:

As I was thinking about our time on this call, I was trying to think back to what is something else in my life that I didn't understand until I was in it. Kind of like getting married. I remember before we got married, because we didn't live together before we got married, so I had this strange like, "Oh, my gosh. What in the world is it going to be like to share everyday life and live with another person? To live with a man be committed to him forever? What is marriage going to be like?" Becoming a mom is similar to that, only I think 10 times more intense because you just really cannot understand the beauty and almost the glory of being a mom until you are in.

Katelyn James:

That is a huge risk because it means you've got to walk into that journey and be okay and surrender control trusting that the other side is going to be as beautiful as you thought. That is very risky. I remember feeling that risk, and it was such a real thing to me.

Nancy Ray:

Absolutely. It's I feel like we have to wrestle with these messages that we're constantly getting like

“Oh, being a mom is so wonderful and it’s bliss and it’s incredible.” Then there’s also like, “Being a mom is the hardest thing I’ve ever done and it’s so difficult. I’ve never experienced sleep deprivation like this.” It’s these kind of like a wave of all these mixed messages you get before becoming a mom. Well, is it great? Or is it hard? What is this thing? It’s all of it. It’s all of it.

Katelyn James:  
It is.

Nancy Ray:  
But it’s worth taking on all of it. It’s worth taking on. I’m speaking for myself and for you, Katelyn, that we have found that it’s worth it.

Katelyn James:  
Yes. We know.

Nancy Ray:  
I mean just because of the transformation we’ve gone through but also understanding the deep fear and unsureness and just, yeah, confusion about our identity and everything leading up to that point. It’s hard. But I think you’re exactly right when you say there’s a risk. You have to look at it and say, “Hey, I’m stepping into this unknown thing, and I’m scared.” Those fears don’t just go away. The questioning doesn’t really go away the moment that you get pregnant or decide you’re ready. Or even when you have a baby, some mommas don’t connect with their little babies for weeks and weeks. It takes a while, but it is a slow growth.

Nancy Ray:  
Tell me about now. We talked about you getting pregnant and having Evy. But your journey has blossomed and grown tenfold since you’ve had her because of your two sons that you’ve had since [inaudible 00:38:26]. Share about your journey with baby James. I would love for you to share his story because it’s incredible and so beautiful. We just treasure him and his life so much and sweet baby Graham as well.

Katelyn James:  
He is. You’re so sweet. I always hop on the chance to talk about James because talking about him is the closest thing we have to feeling like he’s with us because he’s not physically with us. I think it’s so crazy to me that I was the girl so afraid of being a mom, and yet I was the girl who also just longs and my heart aches for a second baby that I don’t get to have here on Earth. It’s just so ironic to think about who I used to be and the way my heart feels now.

Katelyn James:  
When Evy was eight months old, and Evy’s first year of life, it was beautiful and wonderful. But it was not without struggle. She had hip dysplasia so one of her hips was not forming correctly, and so she spent a quarter of her first year ... almost a third of her first year ... in a permanent hip harness. We couldn’t bathe her anymore. We had to keep her in this hip harness to try to fix her hips. Then it was a hip brace and that took a lot of focus and energy, and lot of emotions went into that season of life.

Katelyn James:

But right when that season was ending and we took a sigh of relief like, “Okay, her hips are okay we think.” We’re moving on. Let’s relax. I found out I was pregnant. I had no idea and we had no idea. I was not planning on this. I almost said, “I don’t know how this happened,” I do know how it happened, and it was just a shock. I cried about it because I was so overwhelmed. I was going to have babies 15 months apart and that’s never what we had planned, air quotes. “It’s not what we planned.” But we quickly got very excited about this baby.

Katelyn James:

You know James’ story, there’s so much to it. But basically in a nutshell we went to his 20-week appointment. I had gotten pregnant so quickly that I started showing at nine weeks. I was huge. But we found out at his 20-week appointment that I was also a little bigger than normal because he was very swollen and full of problems, lots of problems.

Katelyn James:

You know, I remember being in the room with the doctor, and she was telling us about he has a cystic hygroma on the back of his head. His legs and his arms do not look like they’re as long as they should be. His head is somewhat misshapen. He has something wrong with his heart. We need to do some genetic testing, but I don’t think this looks good. I don’t think your baby will be able to survive. I remember sitting there just begging God like, “No, no, no. No, this cannot be happening. This is all a mistake. This is not our story.” Weeping with Michael, just sobbing when the doctor left and we had a few moments by ourself.

Katelyn James:

In some ways, how beautiful is it that you are weeping over this baby we’ve never met. I was the woman who was so afraid to be a mom in the first place. I remember thinking like, “I don’t care. I don’t care what’s wrong with him. I will stop my life. I will do everything I can for this baby. I will take him to therapies. I will take him to surgeries. We’ll pay. We’ll give everything we have to make him have a decent life. No matter how many medical complications, we will give our life to him. I just want him to live.” That’s coming out of the mouth of the woman who a year and a half prior said, well, yeah, a year and a half prior, said, “I don’t know if I can be a mom.”

Katelyn James:

We quickly learned through a test that he had Down syndrome. All of his complications were stemming from the fact that he had [inaudible 00:43:16] at 21, and so we started preparing to lose him. The Lord was so gracious because I prayed so hard. Like, “God, please let us know. I want to know how this is going to end. Am I preparing myself to lose a child? Or am I preparing myself to have a life that is very different than I ever thought, and I’m going to be a mom to a severely disabled little boy?” Which I wanted that. I was ready for that, but the Lord had different plans.

Katelyn James:

I carried him for 11 weeks just watching him decline. We went and it’s just crazy to think about it in the context of my season of not wanting to be a mom and then what we did for James. But we just wanted to try to be his parents as much as we could during the season we had him. What do you do for a normal baby? Well, I think a lot of parents are like, “Oh, we spent a lot of time in the doctor’s time. We spent a lot of time doing ...” We went every week. We didn’t need to do ultrasounds. We knew what was happening. But we went every week for an ultrasound just to see our baby alive. That

it's the only time we saw him alive was through an ultrasound screen.

Katelyn James:

It felt like as parents, we need to show up and go to these ultrasounds every week even though they're devastating. I always get in the elevator coming down from the second floor of Virginia Women's Center bawling my eyes out because of what we just saw. I want to do this because I just want to feel like I'm his parent and do things that parents would do. Parents take their babies to doctor's appointments. We just did this for 11 weeks. Gosh, there's so much I could share. That's probably for a different podcast. But-

Nancy Ray:

I'll have you back. You can come back and share.

Katelyn James:

Oh, perfect. Okay.

Nancy Ray:

But, yeah, I can't imagine. I'm just trying to and I can't. There's so much with his precious little life.

Katelyn James:

Yes. His story, we shared his story, and it changed other people's lives. When I had him, I think this is another ironic part is that when I had him I gave birth to him and I ... I hope this isn't TMI. But I basically got my period two weeks after having him, and I'm like, "Oh, my gosh." Technically, I mean it's not healthy, but I could be pregnant again. I could get pregnant again. After you live through that, especially coming from the person who's very sure earlier on their young married years that she doesn't want to be a mom ... How could she be a mom? ... I immediately wanted to get pregnant again. Isn't that crazy?

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Katelyn James:

We prayed about it. It was risky physically because I had been through a lot. I had Evy and then eight months later started growing another baby and then lost the baby almost full term, somewhat, 31 weeks. He was over five pounds. It was a real delivery if that makes sense.

Nancy Ray:

Yep. Yep.

Katelyn James:

Real as in I went through the whole labor process and it felt ... Just had to clarify that. But I got pregnant with baby Graham three months later. It was a rollercoaster of emotions being pregnant after an experience like what we had with baby James. But when baby Graham was born this past April, he's currently three months old, oh, my gosh. I just can't tell you. Holding him after I held a baby that wasn't living, it will be hands-down that I don't think there will ever be another moment quite like that in my entire life. It was one of the most beautiful gifts that I've ever experienced. Michael and I



were just weeping and so grateful for a healthy baby that was screaming his head off. I have never been so excited to hear a baby scream their head off.

Katelyn James:

I remember laying there and our nurse ... Actually I had the same nurse for Evy, for James, and she walked in right when baby Graham was being born. I remember looking at Sarah, the nurse, and saying like, "This is so much sweeter when you've experienced the complete opposite."

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. What a miracle. What a miracle it is. Yeah.

Katelyn James:

Such a miracle. That's our story. We now have three children but two here on Earth. I am just such a different person. I am so different. I sometimes refer to myself as there's an old Katelyn and a new Katelyn. The old Katelyn was defined by the fact that I wasn't a mom. The new Katelyn is the mom version of Katelyn and they're just two separate people.

Nancy Ray:

If you can go back and talk to old Katelyn and sit her down and tell her something after all that you have been through with your three beautiful babies ... You know, you can't even put it into words, but if you could try ... what would you tell her?

Katelyn James:

It's such a good question. It's probably going to make me cry. But I would say to her, I would say, "Katelyn, you have no idea what you're talking about." I would probably say, "You were so certain of the life you have now because you have such a limited view of yourself and what God has for you. He has a story that is so hard but so beautiful. You will be a different woman because of the way that I allow your children to change you. But it will be exactly who I designed you to be. You will be good at it, and you're not going to be floundering around. This imagine you have in your mind of you as a mom is so inaccurate. You will hold your babies and nurse your babies. You will actually enjoy nursing your babies. All the things that you are so fearful of you will be obsessed with and you will cherish. You just have no idea what you're talking about. It's okay that you don't know. How would you know? But I have something so wonderful waiting for you, and you just got to trust me."

Katelyn James:

I feel like if I was the Lord talking to past Katelyn, that's what I would say like, "Just trust me with your babies and with your journey to motherhood." Because if you believe scripture to be true ... which you either believe all of it or none of it. You can't just pick and choose ... I truly believe that he has good plans for me. I believe that even losing a child, and so now that I'm on the other side of that and I have given birth three times and grown three babies and am in the throes of having a toddler and a newborn, I still believe and I cherish the truth. That God has a plan for me and a plan for my children.

Katelyn James:

That's a whole nother podcast thinking about what God's going to do through us in our children. That

is amazing, and that is my newfound purpose and identity in this life. It's like, "God, use me in this capacity. What do you have for me here?" So many things. I feel like I've talked your ear off. But there's just so much to share about this stuff.

Nancy Ray:

It's so good. It is. I feel like your story, the Lord can use your story from so many different angles. But you can't leave part of your story out or else it's not the full picture. It's this beautiful transformation. I feel like we've all just listened to a transformation that took place in your heart and your life through the gift of your children. Ultimately the gift of the Lord giving you your three children and all of the bumps and turns and heartbreak and grief and unexpected things along the way.

Nancy Ray:

I look at you now and, like you said at the very beginning, you're the happiest. You're the most fulfilled at his season in your life than you've ever been, which is just so sweet to hear. What would you tell somebody who's maybe listening who is kind of stuck in that terrified like, "I'm not ready. I don't have that longing. I don't know what this is like, and I'm still here. I'm so frozen in this place." What would you tell that person?

Katelyn James:

That is a good question. I feel like as I sit here I'm trying to think back to what were the most encouraging things that I heard from people. A lot of women say to me like, "Oh, you'll know when it's time." I don't know if that helped me because I'm like-

Nancy Ray:

That was not helpful to me, too. I never really knew.

Katelyn James:

No. I never knew either. I was pregnant, I'm walking around pregnant, and I'm like, "I don't feel that yet, and I've already made the decision. Here I am." I think my advice to someone who is still in that season of unknown is that they have to trust that change in their life could be the most beautiful thing that could ever happen to them. I think it's hard to believe that when you love the life that you have. I think it's hard to trust in a new season and a new identity and a new role in life when the role that you have is so good and it's so fulfilling. How could anything be more fulfilling than what I had before babies? I had everything I could ever want.

Katelyn James:

I would tell them, "No matter what you believe, from my perspective, I know that God has good plans for them and that he loves his children just like I now love my children." When I believe that about what God says about me and my life, I can say that for other people. That the Lord has good plans for you. To pray and to seek peace over the situation. I think that was one of the greatest gifts that I received is that even though I wasn't completely sold on viewing myself as a mom, could I do this? The Lord did give me a sense of peace while I was pregnant with Evy. I remember that very clearly. I'd be nervous. I'd think about, "Gosh, I don't know if I can view myself as a mom. It's weird to look in the mirror and just see a baby bump. How am I going to look with a baby on my hip? That just doesn't seem like me."

Katelyn James:

But I also had this peace that it's going to be okay and it's going to fit. I don't know how, but it's going to fit me, and so I would pray for peace for those people as they walk into this new season, peace and trust. I think for me in business the encouragement I have is that it's amazing to me how in preparing to be a mom I started handing over tasks. I had to when my hand was broken. My business skyrocketed when I became a mom. I know that's not true for everyone. But it is such a story of God's faithfulness that when I stepped away and started letting other people handle systems and processes and I just started doing what only I could do ... Oh, my gosh ... my business grew 10 times more than it did before I had kids because I was controlling everything.

Katelyn James:

That's just an encouragement to business owners out there that what if everything you believe about being a mom could be completely opposite of what you think? What if there was a different opportunity there and you are just stuck in the story that you keep replaying in your mind of like, "Can't be a mom. X, Y, and Z's going to happen." But you created that what if. Who put that idea in your mind? You were creating the story. What if there could be a completely different story? Because that was my experience.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. Well, I feel like as I have listened to you tell just the story of your journey of becoming a mom and you encouraging people listening, I think the bottom line is that transformation, is it can take place and that's part of the journey, is you almost have to be okay with transformation, with a huge heart change, a huge mindset change. Everything has to shift but it's okay. It's okay, because that shift, I think, if I can put it into words, I think that shift is what I was so scared of. Is like, "Am I going to lose myself in motherhood and become a mom?"

Nancy Ray:

In a way, you do if I'm honest. But in a way, you don't. You're still the same person. You're still the same Katelyn with all of your gifts and your business knowledge and your dreams. It's just a transformation. As your friend, knowing you before kids and walking with you through this whole journey and watching you become a mom, it has been the most beautiful transformation. I've loved seeing it.

Katelyn James:

Thank you.

Nancy Ray:

I admire you so much, Katelyn, and how you run your business. But more importantly, how you and Michael are so invested in your marriage and your family, and you are an amazing momma.

Katelyn James:

Thank you.

Nancy Ray:

Such an amazing mom, and I look up to you a lot in that and in all kinds of way, which is why I wanted you on the podcast.

Katelyn James:

I'm honored. It's an honor to talk about this because I feel like no one has ever asked me these questions. I think that's because I don't have a lot of friends who experience the same worry and fear and trepidation as you and I have. I think that's why this is a unique conversation between two people who just have walked similar roads. I just hope that people will listen to this and realize that they're not broken because they feel that way. Because we're the minority when it comes to the demographic of women. I feel like I just want people to know that everything that you just said was completely spot-on.

Katelyn James:

I think that when you said I was afraid of the transformation, I think my fear was exactly like yours. It was stemming from the fact that I had no way to taste and see that the other side was good. I could only see the change, and I couldn't see the fruit of having children and the joy. I think it really comes down to trusting that the transformation is going to be beautiful and joyful and one of the best things that will ever happen to you. You just have to trust it because you can't know it until you're in it.

Nancy Ray:

Okay, so the last question I have is: Tell me about your freedom now versus the freedom that you had before kids.

Katelyn James:

Wow.

Nancy Ray:

Compare, because that was one major thing you said was you kept coming back to that word freedom. You and Michael before babies. You felt like kids or your perspective of having kids would tether you. I was afraid of that, too. Loss of sleep, loss of ability to travel. Why would I choose these things? But would you say you're more free now than you were then?

Katelyn James:

Yes.

Nancy Ray:

What does that look like for you?

Katelyn James:

Oh, my gosh. That's exactly. You ask that question, and I'm like, "Oh, I know the answer to this." I am so much more free now. I would almost go so far as to say that the old Katelyn didn't truly understand what freedom was. I thought I was free. When I was talking about freedom, I was just talking about a schedule. That definition of freedom was a schedule and ability to travel. The freedom that I'm talking about now, after having kids, is a freedom of the heart. I would ... oh, my gosh ... hands down want to have a heart that is free to love my children and to have fun in life. I mean we just took our kids to Scotland. We just took our two-year-old and a three-month-old to Scotland, so I don't know what I was so afraid of. We still have the freedom that I loved.

Katelyn James:

But the freedom of the heart is what I didn't even know I was missing until I had kids. To let go of work,

be okay with not being the overachiever that I always was. It was actually damaging my marriage. I am free from so much of that because my walls came down when I became a mom. That also circles back around to the vulnerability factor of I only view myself one way and I can't view myself as a mom. That's an intimate, and mothering just seems like it doesn't fit me. But when you let your walls down, you start to encounter and experience other versions of who you are that you were always designed to have. But sometimes seasons of life keep you from that.

Katelyn James:

When it comes to freedom and everything I said prior about what I was so afraid of, God had more of it and abundantly more of it on the other side of being a mom. I just couldn't see it. Now I do, and I would never go back. I would never, ever choose. Someone asked me. They were pregnant with their first and similar stories to ours. They said, "What about the life you used to have?" I told them completely serious and very, very, very serious, "I just would never go back. I would never choose to go back to the life before Evy. I would never go back to the life before any of my babies because they have changed me in the most beautiful way."

Nancy Ray:

I love that. Thank you, Katelyn. That I totally agree. I mean, I ask you question on purpose because I know you and I know you are more free. The way you live, the way you love, it's like the love that you experience for your children, it has no bounds. I think it really does show us the love of a father in the Lord. It just reveals an extra ... Not an extra piece of his heart, but it reveals his perspective on love of his kids. Yeah. It's pretty amazing, so thank you so much for sharing your story, and thank you for being on the podcast today. I'm so grateful.

Nancy Ray:

I'm going to end with just a series of more lighthearted fun questions for you just so we can get to know you a little bit more. Tell me about a book that you're loving.

Katelyn James:

Oh. Is this really?

Nancy Ray:

Or a book you've read in the past.

Katelyn James:

Yes. You know me well. You know that I'm not a great reader. It's funny. The book that we're reading right now is called Oh Crap! Potty Training, and it is really neat. It's allowed our toddlers ... When I say ours, my sister and she has a little boy and, obviously, Evy is our little girl. But they've potty trained in three days, so love that book.

Nancy Ray:

Yep. I highly recommend it, too. I can vouch for it.

Katelyn James:

Yes. That's a funny one. But I also really love It's not Supposed to Be This Way by Lysa Terkeurst. I think I'm just starting that. After our season with James, very different than her struggle that she's had when she wrote that book. Coming out of an affair and just a lot of struggles, but the book just reso-

nates with how we deal with hurt and pain and grief when you're a believer, so love that. Those are probably my two answers for the book question.

Nancy Ray:

Okay. What is a product that you're loving? It can be anything, personal, work, play, anything. Yep.

Katelyn James:

Okay, so I love there are these eyelashes that I have been using. They're magnetic, but they look like I have extensions on my eyes. I've gotten extensions.

Nancy Ray:

I noticed your eyelashes. A creative at heart. I noticed them and thought, "They are so pretty." Tell me more. I'm excited.

Katelyn James:

They're just magnets.

Nancy Ray:

Yes. Okay. Magnetic eyelashes.

Katelyn James:

Yes. It's a little bit of a splurge. But I love them because I can just clip them on whenever I am recording something or going out to dinner. I don't wear them around the house obviously. But they're called One-Two Cosmetics. That's the brand. They just clip on and they're just very subtle, but it literally gives you the volume of lash extensions without having to spend \$200 every month to get lash extensions. They're reusable.

Nancy Ray:

Do you put mascara on after you clip them on or no?

Katelyn James:

You put mascara on first and then you clip them on, and it just adds a little boost. You do have to clean them because the mascara gets kind of clumpy on them. But that is the only downfall is you have to clean them, but I love them so much.

Nancy Ray:

I really want to try them now. Thank you for that. Okay.

Katelyn James:

You're welcome.

Nancy Ray:

Okay. If you could share a meal with anybody, who would it be?

Katelyn James:

You know what? Whenever someone asks me this, I always say my grandma because I never met

her and is my dad's mom. She was a redhead. She started her own jewelry shop back in the '60s. She loved to paint. Basically, my family says that so much of my creativeness and my ... I don't even know if creativeness is a word.

Nancy Ray:  
Creativity.

Katelyn James:  
Creativity. Yeah. Okay. Creativity comes from her. I never got to meet her, and so I would just love to sit down with her. Because I just feel like we have a lot in common. I would just love just to meet her and to see, oh, my gosh, I got so much of this. No one else in my family is wired like this. It had to be from her.

Nancy Ray:  
That's awesome. I love that so much. What did you want to be when you were little? When you grew up? When you said, "I want to be this when I grow up," what did you say?

Katelyn James:  
I feel like it's every kid's response. I wanted to be a veterinarian.

Nancy Ray:  
That's cute.

Katelyn James:  
Yeah. I just wanted to work with animals. I used to have a pet worm. Oh, my gosh, literally I had a box of dirt.

Nancy Ray:  
You had a pet worm?

Katelyn James:  
Yes. I had a box of dirt in my childhood bedroom where I kept a pet worm. I would dig him out and hold him every day. It was so weird.

Nancy Ray:  
That is the best random fact about you I think I've ever heard. These questions, these are the best. That's hilarious. What are you most proud of in your life?

Katelyn James:  
My children, which is a great answer to the end of this podcast.

Nancy Ray:  
Totally.

Katelyn James:

But they are. I am most proud of my work as a mom and growing them and getting them here and loving them and raising them and taking care of them. But then I'm also, I just know that they are little walking pieces of my legacy. I'm so proud of them even though they're so little. That is the best part of my life right now and will probably be forever.

Nancy Ray:  
Yeah, probably.

Katelyn James:  
Yes.

Nancy Ray:  
What does work and play mean to you?

Katelyn James:  
Work and play, to me, it means having a life that is peaceful, so I think about balance even though it's hard to balance some times. But I think about if there is work and there is play, then there is this peace that is in my life, and it's beautiful. I think I love the title of this podcast because I think that this is the constant balance that we're trying to find. We want to work and produce and create great things. But we also want to have downtime and just enjoy the life that we're building. That, I think, is one of the greatest. If you can find a way to do that, I think it's one of the greatest joys of life, so, yeah. I think peace and joy. I think of work and play, and I just think of the balance and the peace that brings to our life. We're not perfect at it, but when we do have good seasons of working hard so that we can play hard, oh, it is just the best. I'll give you a quick example. I know we got to go.

Nancy Ray:  
No, you're good.

Katelyn James:  
But we're going to work all day tomorrow and then shut everything off at five, and then take our kids to a theme park for two hours. It's just this beautiful depiction of I worked and I get to play. I think that's how life should be, that we get to do both, and we get to do it for a great purpose.

Nancy Ray:  
That's so fun. That sounds like such a great day. I want to be a part of that day. That's so fun.

Katelyn James:  
You should come on up.

Nancy Ray:  
I know. Right? One last question. How do you maintain a healthy soul and a fulfilling life? It's kind of a loaded question.

Katelyn James:  
That is a very loaded question.



Nancy Ray:

Maybe just one way you do that.

Katelyn James:

One way. One way that I do that is I would say by staying in tune with truth. Because a healthy soul cannot be tainted or stained by fears and lies. I feel like I am the healthiest when I am truly viewing myself through the lens of God's view of me and not the lens of expectations of who I think I need to be. Insecurities that I have built up that I have decided to believe about myself. I've got to be free of all of that to protect my soul, and so I have to make it a huge priority in my life to take every thought captive. Like to literally think about what I'm believing and to decide if that's coming from a place of truth or a place of deception.

Katelyn James:

When I live my life being very aware of whether or not things are truthful or not, I feel like that is when I experience joy and when I experience a healthy soul. It's a loaded answer. I probably could talk about that for four hours, but-

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. I think we have like 18 different podcast episodes that we could spin off of this one and we need to talk about but-

Katelyn James:

That's perfect.

Nancy Ray:

... no, that's a great answer, and I totally agree. Well, tell everybody just where they can find you and follow you online and what you're up to these days.

Katelyn James:

Okay. I think most people in general enjoy following us on Instagram so just my handle is at Katelyn-James. We share our family and photography education and our couples. We all share all these things, but I think that's the best place to see a well rounded picture of our life day-to-day.

Katelyn James:

Then if you're a photographer, we have amazing resources that are super-fun. We do KJ All Access, which is where we let people become a virtual third shooter. They get to join us behind the scenes and watch us shoot. That's our most exciting resource and the biggest resource that we've ever created for the photography industry.

Katelyn James:

Then if you are maybe a parent or maybe you're someone who's struggled with losing a child, we have resources about carrying a baby to term with a fatal diagnosis and surviving still birth. How to help people with unimaginable situations. There's a lot of variety of what we have online. But I think it's all part of the story that God is writing in our life, and so just following us on Instagram will give you links and access to all of those things.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. One of my favorite things about being Katelyn's friend and following her is how she interweaves everything together so it's not separated like, "Oh, her family's over here and her faith is over here and her work is over here." Everything is integrated. I think that's beautiful, and I think it's the way that we should live in our work and our play. I think that our faith and our perspective and our personal life and our work, I mean, that's we're humans. It's all intertwined, but I think you're one of my friends who does that so well.

Katelyn James:

Thank you.

Nancy Ray:

I think that's why so many people are drawn to you. It's because you're so authentic, but you also aren't afraid to share your heart in all these different areas of your life, so definitely follow Katelyn if you don't already.

Nancy Ray:

Because she's just the biggest encouragement. She has a wealth of knowledge and resources, and she is working on a business course for photographers, which is going to be amazing, too. Look for that. Also, sidebar, KJ All Access is flipping hilarious. I think all of the messages that I see are people cracking up at the behind the scene of you losing your shoe or standing in a bathtub. Or just looking a total dork on a wedding day.

Katelyn James:

It is very entertaining.

Nancy Ray:

Because that's real. We are total dorks on a wedding day to get people to laugh or do what we got to do. It's just so fun, so that's awesome.

Katelyn James:

It is. It is. It's probably my favorite idea that I've ever had in education. Very vulnerable for me to let people see that side of me.

Nancy Ray:

Totally.

Katelyn James:

But I do really love it because it's real, and nothing is cut out unless the wind sometimes catches a dress or two. I'm like, "Okay. We got to cut that out." But that's allowed. We don't cut anything else out, but thank you, friend. It's an honor to be a part of this. I love what you're doing and the people that you're going to reach. You're one of my favorite people. I love your voice. I think it's such a calming voice.

Nancy Ray:  
Yes, I've done it.

Katelyn James:  
So the people are going to love, I'm like, "A Nancy Ray podcast. This is great. This is a great idea."

Nancy Ray:  
You are so sweet. I think the same thing about your voice.

Katelyn James:  
It's evolving.

Nancy Ray:  
Hopefully, we will be engaging enough to not put people to sleep with this podcast if our voices are soothing.

Katelyn James:  
Exactly. Exactly. Now wake up, people.

Nancy Ray:  
No. I'm kidding. Oh, that's great. Well, thank you, Katelyn, so much.

Katelyn James:  
You're welcome.

Nancy Ray:  
I am so grateful for you as a friend. I look up to you so much. We leave links to everything that Katelyn has mentioned in the show notes today. If you guys are looking for Katelyn, you can easily click on the links to find her and follow her and what she's up to. Yeah, our heart is just that as Katelyn and I were real and vulnerable and sharing our stories and journeys in becoming mommas that it hopefully encourages and makes someone else feel a little let alone in your story wherever you are.

Thanks so much today for listening to Work and Play with Nancy Ray. Thanks for listening to Episode 23 of Work and Play with Nancy Ray. Everything I've mentioned today can be found in the show notes at [NancyRay.com/Podcast/23](https://NancyRay.com/Podcast/23). You can find me at [NancyRay.com](https://NancyRay.com) or follow me at NancyRay on Instagram or Facebook almost daily.

I'm going to close with words from Iain Thomas. I feel like this is the perfect description of motherhood especially regarding our conversation today:

*"Everything has changed and yet I am more me than I've ever been."*

Thanks for listening, and I'll catch you next time.