

EPISODE 043 - BOOK | YOU ARE THE GIRL FOR THE JOB WITH JESS CONNOLLY

WITH NANCY RAY

Intro

I think you're really going to enjoy this conversation I had with my friend Jess Connolly, who is the author of *You Are the Girl for the Job*, which is the first book in the Nancy Ray Book Club of 2020. I'm really excited. We talked about a lot of different things, and I'm just going to let you jump into the episode and listen, but I wanted to give a brief introduction to Jess in case you weren't sure who she was or you've never heard of her before.

So Jess is a woman who wants to leave her generation more in awe of God than she found it. That's kind of her trademark line, and I love it so much. She is the author of *Dance, Stand, Run* and *You Are the Girl for the Job*, and co-author of *Wild and Free*, and *Always Enough, Never Too Much*. She's the leader behind *Go + Tell Gals*. She's the host of the *Go + Tell Gals* podcast, which is great. She's one of the founders of *She Reads Truth*, and she and her husband lead *Bright City Church* in Charleston, South Carolina, where they live with their four kiddos. You can follow Jess at JessConnolly.com and I really hope you enjoy our conversation as much as I did.

You're listening to *Work and Play* with Nancy Ray, Episode 43.

Much of our daily lives can be divided into two categories: work and play. Simply put, that is where our life and our legacy take 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

Nancy Ray:

Jess, I am so thankful that you are here on the *Work and Play* Podcast. Thank you so much for joining me.

Jess Connolly:

My literal joy. Thank you so much for having me.

Nancy Ray:

Well, I am going to start by kind of introducing you, and you don't know I'm going to say all

these things, but I didn't want to do this apart from you being on the podcast. I wanted you here with me because I wanted to tell you these things, because they're really special to me and I don't think I've ever had the chance to really tell you. Also, if I say anything that's not right, please correct me afterwards because I'm going to give a recap of your work and your life for the last little while.

Okay, so I first kind of got to know you through Naptime Diaries, which is your blog, and what was first your scripture print shop, that turned into a business while your four kids were really little. Then you founded the Influence Network, which is so cool because I spoke at the Influence Conference years ago, that's how I met you, and knew you and Hayley, and to this day I have friends from that conference. To this day we still text each other. My friend Amy Hawthorne and I were bouncing our babies in the back of the conference, and we locked eyes with each other and literally, it's just history. Since then, we have been close friends, we've stayed in touch with each other. So thank you for that.

I heard you speak at Pursuit four years ago, I think when Milly was an itty-bitty baby, and you taught me how to do a headstand outside.

Jess Connolly:

Yes.

Nancy Ray:

I was terrified. Did not think I could do a headstand, and now I do them regularly, and now I just want you to know, Milly knows how to do a headstand. She does.

Jess Connolly:

I love it.

Nancy Ray:

We do it together, it's amazing.

Jess Connolly:

I love it.

Nancy Ray:

You co-wrote several books. We'll you've written several books, you've co-written, I don't know if I'm saying that right, co-written a book, Wild and Free: Always Enough, Never Too Much with Hayley. You've also written Dance, Stand, Run, and You Are the Girl for the Job, which is the book we'll talk about today. You're a church planter, your husband is a pastor of Bright City Church. So the Naptime Diaries print shop turned into All Good Things Collective, which you closed at the end of last year, just like I closed Nancy Ray Photography at the end of last year, and it's been really sweet to just like know, solidarity. After pouring your life, like a decade of your life into something, just moving into a new season is good.

So anyway, I'm recapping all of this with you here because I want to tell you what I admire

most about you. I think in summary it's that you stay in tune with the Holy Spirit and you actually obey what he tells you to do. I feel like, Jess, you give me bravery to step into whatever assignment he has for me in whatever season I'm in because that's what you've done. Your life has changed, your assignments have changed, but I just see you kind of not even looking back, like saying, "Yes, Lord." And letting one thing go to step into the next, which is hard to do as a human. It's really hard to let go of a good thing, but you've done that for the better thing so many times. So I just wanted to say thank you. I've watched you from afar. I've heard you speak. Your voice, an example in my life is really significant, and I wanted a chance to tell you that because anyone who is listening, I just feel like they should listen to you because of the things you have to say. They're God inspired, they've been so helpful for me in a practical level but so inspiring for me as well.

So anyway, that is my introduction to you, and I just really genuinely wanted to say thank you for the friendship that you've brought into my life and just for being the voice that I didn't know I needed so much, but I've really needed it, so thank you.

Jess Connolly:

That means so, so much. Thank you, Nancy. Yeah, man, I mean, I'm glad for women like you doing the same, talking honestly about closing things, and ending things, and listening to God because it makes it so much less mysterious for all of us who are just trying to be obedient.

Nancy Ray:

Right, right.

Jess Connolly:

We need real women talking about it and saying honest things, and I'm so grateful for you.

Nancy Ray:

Well, thank you. Ecclesiastes talks about this, there is a season for everything and there's a beginning to things and an end to things, and we get really excited about the beginning of things, but we never really talk about the end of things, and that transition out, and that's hard in a lot of ways. It's not as glamorous or shiny, but you have to end things in order to get the new thing or in order for God to take you from glory to glory. I've just watched you do that, like closing the Influence Network, closing All Good Things. Those aren't easy things, but I've seen him pull you into something new every time, and it gives me hope for my life. I'm I guess behind you, your kids are older, you're further along, and I just look to you so much. I'm like, "Man, that's comforting." Because I'm seeing God's faithfulness in your life and I know that he'll be faithful in mine too. So it's good.

Jess Connolly:

Thank you, friend.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. Well, I want to talk about You Are the Girl for the Job because that's your most recent book that you released, and just so you know, I don't know if you know this, I do a Nancy Ray

Book Club every year and I choose about 12 books, sometimes less. If I have a baby, I'm like no, I'm choosing like six books for my book club. But this year I've chosen 12 books and yours is the first one. I really wanted this to be a message for us to kind of get into our heads and our hearts January 1st, the month of January. So at the time this podcast is airing, January will have been wrapped up and everyone listening is probably going to be super excited because you're on this podcast and they've just finished reading the book. But I just want to talk about a couple of things, and then per tradition, I release a podcast episode and just kind of go through my three biggest takeaways from the books that I read, so I wanted to share those with you and also get your input on them.

But before we get to those, you have been coaching women for years to help them really discover who God wants them to be and what they want to do, and I loved the picture you painted of this in your book. As I was reading and you were kind of illustrating like, "We sit at this table with these tall high back chairs, and I feel like a queen, we have a Sharpie and we just get to town." I was thinking to myself, "I want in on that. That sounds so good." That is amazing. But what started, how did you get started with that? What pulled your heart to start coaching women to release them into God's kingdom assignment for them?

Jess Connolly:

Such an interesting question, and also one I really like answering because I think so many of us find our gifts in interesting ways, and sometimes we have to look at sideways parallel stories that might be happening. So honestly, genuinely where I think I realized, I think I might be a coach, I think this might be kind of my core calling, was in the early, sorry, late 2000s. So just before 2010, so a little over a decade ago, my husband and I moved to Seattle, Washington to run a maternity home, and it was a really random dream idea calling that we had. We were really newly married ourselves, we didn't realize how newly married we were. I think we had been married two years. We had one baby and one on the way, and we just kind of perceived this freedom in our season and we said, "You know, we sort of know what the rest of our life is going to look like. We know we're going to be leading in the church in some capacity." We knew Nick was going to be going to seminary in some capacity, and so I said, "What if we did something just kind of crazy on mission for a little bit? What if we did something even that I just got really excited about, because it feels like the rest of our life is going to be something you're excited about."

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

Which had I known the actual trajectory of our life, that mission was not going to end for me, then I probably wouldn't have said that, but that led me to Googling ministry jobs in Seattle. The first one I found was to be house parents at this maternity home. I thought, Well, there is no way. I'm 23. I think Nick is 24 at this point. Maybe, not even, there is no way. I was probably 22 and he was 23. We had one baby, one on the way. We live across the country, and we thought, "There is no way they would want us to be house parents and house these pregnant teenagers who are either going to learn to parent their children or give them up for adop-

tion.” And we applied, and they took us. They were like, “Come on. Come run this maternity home.”

So baby Nick and Jess move with their one baby and one baby on the way out to Seattle, Washington, and just lived through some of the most interesting and wild years of mission that I think, I mean, stories, upon stories, upon stories that just aren't ours to tell that we got to be a part of. But one very interesting part of our story is that I got to help really give birth really often. So I wasn't a doula, I wasn't a midwife, I was just a friend. More than that, I wasn't just coaching them through birth, but most of the young gals that we were coaching through birth were also preparing to either go through the hardest and most strenuous season that they'd ever go through, or the most painful and devastating, heartbreaking one of placing their babies for adoption.

So something came alive in me in those coaching moments where I just found myself really coming alive, telling them, “You've got this. He's mighty in you. Let's keep going.” And I knew something about me, especially even on those heartbreaking days, I think I knew something was there that I wanted to tap into on a more frequent basis, and I didn't really know what. So after that, the next few years we go through a season where nobody would be wanting my advice. Nick and I went through just an incredibly busted season in our family, in our lives, spiritually emotionally, financially, the recession hit, we left that maternity home, we were coming out of ministry. We had just a ton of babies, we were battling a lot of sickness, and I was struggling with postpartum depression. So that part of my personality, that position that likes to give wisdom or encouragement, or even just hold a mirror up to women and say, “He's mighty in you.” That would go dormant for several years because just nobody really wanted to be encouraged by me. I was in a season of needing much encouragement myself and needing much building myself. But something began to shift and happen.

So around the time that we opened our print shop, which you know this whole story. It was like a happenstance, I didn't have a business degree, I had no graphic design training, nothing of the sort. I made a print, I didn't even know to call it a print on PowerPoint on my computer. I put it on Etsy, it sold.

Nancy Ray:

That's still my favorite dirty little secret of yours, is that you made most of your beautiful scripture prints of PowerPoint.

Jess Connolly:

Every single one.

Nancy Ray:

That's still ... Talk about being resourceful. That's the best. That's amazing.

Jess Connolly:

Every single one I ever made was made on PowerPoint. All of a sudden that took off and people wanted to buy those things. So I had to learn really quickly about business, and learn

really quickly about small business, and finance, and all the things, and shepherd myself as a creative, and get training. I was probably only a year and a half into it when I just looked at Nick and I was like, “We should help other people do this.” We can do this, anybody can. If we can do this, absolutely we can encourage other people to do it. I think I was just a year and half into that that I opened my first coaching mentorship session, and then I started coaching women individually. Then I started, women started flying to Charleston to do all day session, and it was around that time that I realized everything I did was coaching. Writing books was coaching, teaching the word was coaching, being on a podcast, coaching, and that was such a sweet gift from God because I had always felt like I was this kind of octopus woman with all these different things going on, and all these different side projects, and it helped me so much to realize it was all under the umbrella of coaching, but yeah, that particular gift came from being alongside teen girls in labor.

Nancy Ray:

I feel like that answer is so not what I expected. I never knew that you worked in this maternity home. How did I miss that? But that’s such a huge part of where you are today. Just out of curiosity, how many births do you think you got to witness and be a part of?

Jess Connolly:

Oh, man. I’ll also say now that my friends know that’s my thing, I have a lot of friends who are really kind and are like, “Okay, you can be in my birth. We might not even be that good of friends, but you can come.”

Nancy Ray:

You’ve done this before, you can be in the room.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah. I feel like I have to promise, like, “Guys, I promise I’m the girl you want.” I will be on your team. I think I’ve probably been in 30 births.

Nancy Ray:

Oh my word. So I feel like I’ve seen and witnessed a lot, but compared to that it’s not because, I’ve photographed several.

Jess Connolly:

Well yes, yeah, photography. Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

Photographed several. I mean, I had three of my own babies, so those three count, I was there for those.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah. I know, I mean, it helps that my sister had six, so you know.

Nancy Ray:

Exactly, yeah. So true. My sister had five, except that her second one she had triplets, and I

wasn't allowed there. She knocked three of them out at once. But I was there for the first one and the last one, the girls. But yeah, it's wild, and I think, I mean, you never understand what birth is like until you witness it and you're in that room, and it is such a sacred beautiful place, and it is such a place of coaching, which people don't realize how desperate the woman giving birth is for coaching and for words of hope, and truth, and affirmation. "You can do this" is I mean, literally life changing words in the midst of that. I see you have gone from that place of coaching women giving birth to now coaching women who are giving birth in other ways. Giving birth to ideas, or businesses, or dreams, and I just think that's such a beautiful analogy. That's really, really great and totally caught me by surprise. I just was not expecting that answer.

Jess Connolly:

I love it. I want to share one more thing about maternity. I've actually never shared this. I've told that story a ton about yeah, and it's just true, that's where I feel like the gift came from. I've never shared this on a podcast, not on an interview, and it's worth capturing, I just put it together myself. What's interesting that a lot of people also don't know is that I've had four C-sections, I've never given birth myself.

Nancy Ray:

How do you think that relates, yeah?

Jess Connolly:

Well, I think it gives me an intense gratitude for the ability to give birth naturally or even just giving birth rather than have the C-section. So I think it makes me really grateful for the ability, for them, on behalf of them. I'm like, "I'm so happy you get to do this." There's some longing fulfilled for me in seeing other women do it, but what's interesting and just worth capturing here is with coaching, I tell people all the time, I believe and expect that many of the women who I coach are going to have exorbitant fruit on earth and in the kingdom that I couldn't even imagine having myself. I believe and know that many of the women, I mean, I tell people all the time, I've coached future authors who have gotten bigger book deals than I've gotten. I've coached business people who have multimillion dollar businesses and the kind of revenue that I would never imagine seeing. There is some extreme gratitude and freedom that comes when you say like, I get to be the one encouraging them. I get to be the one they're calling. And that means I get to share in the fruit and the joy of it.

Nancy Ray:

Absolutely.

Jess Connolly:

So it's funny. I've always noticed that about my coaching. I love that I get to be on the front lines of people doing things that I might never get to do, and even seeing fruit that I might never get to see. But I've never also related that back to the fact that also I've never given birth.

Nancy Ray:

Well, I think it's so interesting because somebody who is listening probably has disqualified themselves from something, from some sort of position because they haven't had enough experi-

ence, or they haven't done this thing, or whatever, and I just love, I think it's so important that you shared that, and thank you because it's vulnerable, and honest, and beautiful because it's going to free somebody to go do the thing that maybe they don't feel qualified for, but God's calling them to anyway because God's the one that qualifies you. He's the one that gifts you. When you put your trust in him and the gifts he's put inside you, it doesn't matter what your past history is, or what you have or haven't done. All you're responsible for is showing up and doing the thing he's asking you to do. That's really amazing. Also, you've got to coach me now. I mean, come on.

Jess Connolly:
Let's do it. Come on.

Nancy Ray:
Let's do it. Okay, let's just play this out. If I were somebody getting coached by you right now on this podcast, what would be the questions you would ask me?

Jess Connolly:
Yeah. I usually start with why are you here?

Nancy Ray:
Yeah.

Jess Connolly:
What's going on? And you would not believe what a wild question that is for people. A really easy next one that people don't get asked is, what do you want? What do you want? I think there's something really intrinsically for those of us who walk with God, Spirit-led about answering that question, and we often don't know how to answer it, but when we do, a lot is untapped. But genuinely, so much of my coaching, I don't coach women by giving them advice or telling them exactly what they should do. I don't coach them by setting a path for them, or even usually setting goals for them. I say that I do a lot of mirroring. So I do a lot of listening to what you say and just saying it back. Okay, so you want X, Y, and Z. What do you need to do to get there? What do you need to do to make that happen? You say you want to do X, Y, and Z. Maybe you're going to have to stop doing A, B and C, right? Do you think so, right? Okay, when are you going to stop doing that? You know?

Nancy Ray:
Right.

Jess Connolly:
But yeah, I would probably start with what's going on, why are you here? I mean, we can take that one even further. Why are you here on earth? Where are you headed? What do you want? What do you need? That's another wild one.

Nancy Ray:
Right, so true.

Jess Connolly:
Yeah. I mean, so I start mostly like that. Sometimes I'll take it a little bit deeper and say, "Tell me

what your three biggest pain points are in life right now? Tell me what are the three things getting you excited right now?" And from there we can usually, usually most of us are coming up against one big thing that makes us feel stuck in one way or in another in our life, in our mission, in our calling. I just find so, so, so often women know the truth about what it looks like to get over that, to get around it, to move past it, and they just need somebody to say it out loud to.

Nancy Ray:

That's exactly what I was going to say. Your voice is this voice of authority. Almost just speaking back over their life, what really is inside them the whole time, but nobody has the time or space to really just sit with those thoughts, and desires, and needs, and wants.

Jess Connolly:

100%.

Nancy Ray:

So just having your voice, right? I love your voice because I've heard you speak to a room of hundreds of people, thousands of people. I've just talked with you in a conversation before, but I think one of your gifts is that you do carry a certain authority with you, and I think that's such a gift of a coach, because you think about a coach on like a athletic team, and you want someone to sometimes just kind of get in your face a little bit and say the hard thing right in your face. That's a gift. I don't think that that's you, I don't think you're always yelling in my face or anything, but I do think that you carry a divine authority, which is beautiful, and I think people are hungry for that because in our minds we can just be so wishy-washy.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

My next question was ... I think I've already answered this. But my next question was, how can we hear from God so we can catch a fresh vision? How do you hear God's voice? But I think the answer might lie in kind of sitting with some of those questions and getting quiet. I don't know, what do you think?

Jess Connolly:

I think you're right. I mean, my perspective on hearing from God is this. I like to say if I did not have the Spirit of God living inside of me, I think that I would think about bagels a lot. I think that I would think about reality TV.

Nancy Ray:

Amen, yes.

Jess Connolly:

And really cozy beds, and maybe how to get rich but not work hard. I think I might think about, I don't know, fries. I don't know what I would think about, but I know before I met Jesus, I know who I was before I met Jesus and I was very selfish, and I wanted what I wanted and I wanted it right then, and I did eat a lot of bagels, I also still eat a lot of bagels now and sometimes I do feel

like that's from God.

Nancy Ray:

Me too.

Jess Connolly:

I don't know. So my perspective is, if I have a thought that brings glory to God and serves other people, and lines up with God's word, I'm calling it I heard from God.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

My reasoning is I just don't want to get to heaven and God say like, "I talked to you all the time and you never listened to me, or you called it your good ideas, or you put it on an Instagram graphic and quoted it yourself." I just, I might get up there and he might be like, "All right, girl. You really thought I was talking to you a lot and that was not me, you had a bad burrito, or you were just making stuff up." That might be the case, but I just would rather give him more credit. So I think when we hear the phrase hearing from God, that feels so mysterious and wild to us. Just like you and I talking about closing businesses, and talking about that. A lot of that was probably reason, and logic, and desire, right? And we called it God because he works and speaks in those ways too. Sometimes it's not reasonable and sometimes it's not logistical, but if it serves other people and we can bring him glory in it, and it doesn't negate his word in any way, I'm going to go ahead and say like, "This was His idea."

Jess Connolly:

Yeah, but I also do, I give a lot of credence and space to the more wild ways that people hear from God. Dreams, or prophetic vision, or things like that, but for me, those happen rarer than just the normal occurrences of okay, I've got two free hours, I've got 20 bucks, I want to love and serve my kids, I might go get them Chick-fil-A today. That's what happened today. So I could say like, God told me to go get Chick-fil-A, or I could also just say like, God gave me the wisdom and he gave me the 20 bucks, and I have the two free hours, and it doesn't negate his word, so I think I'm going to go for it. You know?

Nancy Ray:

Listen. God always tells us to get Chick-fil-A, so that's just something we can all write-off as God's voice, okay? I'm just kidding.

Jess Connolly:

It's always God.

Nancy Ray:

Always.

Jess Connolly:

Always God. So funny.

Nancy Ray:

That's too funny. No, I totally agree and I feel like when I've talked to people about hearing God's voice, I say a lot of times it sometimes feels like a spontaneous thought that might jump in my head, and sometimes I think, "Was that me or was that God?"

Jess Connolly:

Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

And sometimes if I'm not thinking about that thing at all and it is a thought that jumps in my head, and it does line up with His word, and I feel confirmed in my Spirit that this is good, this is from him, then I do feel like that's God voice. A lot of times we overcomplicate it. I think, too, on your point of almost giving him too much credit, we also just have to own the fact that we are humans and we might get it wrong sometimes and that's okay.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

Because God knows that we're going to get it wrong sometime and that's okay. He knows that. I texted my husband or was talking to him on the phone like a few weeks ago, and I was like, "This is the Word that I felt like the Lord dropped into my Spirit for you today." And I was really excited about it. He was like, "I don't need that right now." I was like, "Babe. I'm so sorry." And this was encouraging, he was like, "I appreciate it, but that's not the word that I needed." And I was like, "Okay." And it was a hard afternoon for me because I wrestled, I was like, "Lord, am I not hearing from you? Was I totally off base?" And I was! And he just gently told me like, "You're not going to get it right all the time but I'm really grateful that your heart is in the right place and you're continuing to listen." That's what He wants.

Jess Connolly:

Right.

Nancy Ray:

So it's okay to mess up a little bit.

Jess Connolly:

It's totally okay.

Nancy Ray:

And kind of get off the track.

Jess Connolly:

It's totally okay, it's the whole thing of, the first time a baby falls walking, we don't tell them, "You're bad at that, you should not do that again. You're totally going to hurt somebody by walking."

Nancy Ray:
Right.

Jess Connolly:

No, we can experiment with hearing from God. We can try and get it wrong. There is not one Bible verse that says like, "It's our responsibility to get every single thing right for the rest of our lives." When in all actuality, a whole of the Gospel speaks against that.

Nancy Ray:

Totally, yeah. Man, I feel like we could just talk a really long time. I'm going to move on to my three biggest takeaways from the book, and I wanted to share them with you because these are the things, I mean, there are so many things in your book that I underlined and highlighted, and turned on the pages so that I could go back to, but three that really stood out to me. First, home girl, Mary Magdalene, holy cow. The whole description that you went into about Mary Magdalene in your book and the fact that I had always compartmentalized her in my head as a prostitute, and you totally debunked this whole thing. So I want you to kind of tell me about why you talk about her so much in your book.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah, and why that is so, I don't know, that messed with me in such a good way. That she was this woman who came alongside Jesus on mission and helped, you can correct me if I'm wrong, maybe helped fund his ministry and supported what he was doing and was there through the deepest, most intimate moments. I just fell in love with her in a new way because of your book. So anyway, tell me about why you chose her.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah. Well, I'll tell you what happened. It was about a month before I was going to start writing *Girl for the Job*. It might have been about two months before I was about to start writing *Girl for the Job*, and I was at a conference. When you read the book you'll read, in the first three chapters I basically say, I started writing the book in the midst of extreme pain. Our life was kind of falling apart in some ways. That's not fast forward, fast rewind two months before that and my life feels fine. Everything feels fine and tidy. Not tidy, but okay, stable. I was speaking at a conference and I cannot tell you to this day what I was speaking on. I honestly can't remember the city. I could probably go back and look at my calendar, but they had just given me a little freedom speaking at the event. They were like, "Come and speak on whatever you want to speak on." And then they were like, "We also have this kind of section during worship and we just felt like we wanted to tell you if God tells you to say anything in that moment, you can say it." I was like, "Okay, well."

Nancy Ray:

I love those kind of churches. Those are the best.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah, me too, me too. I do that a lot at our church, our worship team is really familiar with me giving them the look and coming up, but I don't typically do it at other churches. I was like, "That's really kind of you. I'll stick that in my back pocket. I don't think I have anything on my heart." So we are standing there in worship and I kid you not, I think the spirit of God said like, "Remember Luke 8, remember Luke 8." A little bit of the content of the material that we'll talk about in a second, I had this flash of memory. You know how we read things and they just kind of settle on the back of our mind and we forget them? I think this was that. This was a fact I knew, it's in scripture, it was a fact I knew but I just kind of buried it and never thought about it again. So I was like, "Interesting, Luke 8." So we're in the middle of worship, I pull out my Bible, I go to Luke 8 and I see it right there, just plain as day and I'm like, "Oh my gosh." I'm going to pull out my Bible right now so I can specifically quote.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. I want you to read Luke 8 now. You're leaving us all on the edge of our seats, yeah. We want to know what Luke 8 says.

Jess Connolly:

So Luke 8 is in the middle of Jesus's ministry, and ... I'm actually, I'm going to come back to Luke 8. I'm going to come back to Luke 8.

Nancy Ray:

Okay.

Jess Connolly:

I read those few verses that day and I remember, I was in the middle of the worship service and I remember thinking like, "Wow, that's really powerful." And I got up and I said a few things on Mary Magdalene and then I kind of like went, I didn't think anything else of it. Kind of got away from it. But a few weeks later was Easter, and on Easter morning I woke up and I just wanted to read the story of the resurrection, so I went to John 20. I'm reading John 20 and I'm reading it with fresh eyes, and in John 20 is this story of Mary Magdalene going to the tomb. It is important to know Mary Magdalene was not a prostitute. That was some weird rumor that got started by I think they say Constantine. There is nothing in scripture at all that references her being a prostitute. There are women in the New Testament that Jesus ministers to that are women of the night, but she's not that, and she's also not Mary the sister of Martha, which a lot of people confuse her, those are totally different people.

So I'm reading about Mary Magdalene on Easter morning, a few weeks after my Luke 8 moment, and I'm reading about Mary Magdalene, and I'm reading this story of the resurrection and I'm realizing Mary Magdalene is the first person who saw resurrected Jesus.

Nancy Ray:

Yes, yes.

Jess Connolly:

I'm just losing my mind. I'm like, "Wait, wait. Hold on, wait. Hold on." Mary is the first person

who got to see the resurrected Jesus. More than that, in John 20, I'll read you the exact words that after he reveals himself to her, she says, "Rabboni." Which means teacher. She's acknowledging this is Jesus. He is risen from the dead, and he says, "Don't hold on to me. I've not yet returned to the Father. Go instead to my brothers and tell them I'm returning to my Father and your Father, to my God and your God." So this is Easter morning, I'm reading John 20, I read Jesus's words to Mary, and all of a sudden a light bulb came on in my head and my heart. I had been praying about this really specific thing and I had been asking God, tell me how to coach and encourage women to use their gifts for the good of others and the glory of God, when so many women are in so many different communities, and so many different contexts, and so many different expressions of what women in the church and in Christianity looks like.

So what I don't want to be is a pastor telling women, "This is what it should look like for you." But I had been asking that for months, like tell me how I encourage women to use what they've been given for the good of others and the glory of God. If I'm not their pastor, if I'm not in their specific context, if I can't speak into that, how do I do it from a global perspective? How do I do it from 50,000 feet? So I'm reading John 20 and I hear these words of Jesus, "Go and tell." To Mary Magdalene, and I'm like oh, we can tell women to go and tell. We can tell every woman to go and tell because Jesus did.

Nancy Ray:
Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

We can equip women to go and tell because Jesus did. So I immediately did what women like you and I do, is that I went and got the Instagram handle Go and Tell Gals on Easter morning, and then I bought the domain, and then I bought every variation of the domain, and then I texted a few friends and I said, "I have no idea what God just did, but Go and Tell is really important." So in that moment though, John 20, I'm sitting there Easter morning, I'm like, "Okay, Go and Tell Gals. We can tell women to go and tell." Mary Magdalene was the first person to see Jesus, she was the first person commissioned to go tell the good news. What was that thing about Luke 8? Oh, God told me to look at Luke 8 a little bit ago. There was something about Mary Magdalene in Luke 8. What was that? I go back to Luke 8, and this is in the thick of Jesus's ministry, before his death, before his resurrection, and Luke, as a lot of us know, if you don't know, it's my favorite Gospel, and the reason why is because Luke was a doctor who was documenting things really, really, really intentionally for a purpose. So it's the least emotional Gospel. It's heavy on historical accounts.

Jess Connolly:

So Luke 8 is in the middle of Jesus's ministry and it says, "After this, Jesus traveled about from one town and village to another, proclaiming the good news of the kingdom of God. The 12 were with him, and also some women who had been cured of evil spirits and diseases. Mary, called Magdalene, from whom seven demons had come out of." So this is where we realize that not only was Mary the first human to see the resurrected Jesus, not only was she the first person commissioned to go tell the good news to other people, not only did Jesus tell her specifically, "Go and tell." Not only did she financially fund his ministry, her seemingly, potentially

first encounter with Jesus was him casting seven demons out of her, which most theologians believe to mean just a ton, just a ton of demons.

Nancy Ray:
Wow.

Jess Connolly:
So that's so wildly important for all of us. I mean, full circle when you put it all together. That's so wildly important when you think about 15-year-old girls giving birth in this scary wild time, when you think about me sitting with business owners, when you think about women raising a shaky hand saying, "I think I want to start this thing." That God would write this incredible story through this one woman that he would allow such extreme proximity to himself in her, to her, extended to her, and also tell us her story like, this is the busted, broken heaviness that so many of us think disqualifies us, and yet she was the first person that he intentionally let see him. What we know is that Peter and John were at the grave. They were at the grave. Jesus could've revealed himself to them first. He waited until they left. I mean.

Nancy Ray:
That's so beautiful.

Jess Connolly:
It's so crazy. So to me it's the heart, again, right? Of why and how I coach, because our capacity is limited only by his capacity, which means it's not limited at all. What he wants to produce in us, and through us, and out of us, he will.

Nancy Ray:
Right.

Jess Connolly:
And he will take the woman with the seven demons and make her the apostle to the apostles.

Nancy Ray:
So beautiful, and so significant. So, so significant.

Wow, I feel like, yeah. I just want to go and study her life now.

Jess Connolly:
Yeah.

Nancy Ray:
Intensely. I just want to get to know her even more, because there's so much there. Thank you so much for just, gosh, illuminating her life. It's incredibly powerful and incredibly beautiful, and intimate. I just picture Jesus and Mary together and that he chose her, it's so beautiful.

Jess Connolly:
Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

All right, so I want to hear about Go + Tell Gals, but what I'm going to do is I'm going to just wait and you can tell us about that in the very end so people will remember it. So let's come back to Go + Tell Gals because I love what you're doing there, but I want to tell you my second biggest takeaway. So you talk about your ideal self versus your actual self, and you encouraged me when I was reading to not so much hold up this ideal version of myself, which is what I'm always striving for and doing, but instead appreciate my actual self, who I already am today. So for the girl who is listening, can you encourage her in this too and tell her what you mean by that?

Jess Connolly:

Yeah, absolutely. So your ideal self is, we have a lot of different ways of saying this. It's specially poignant at the New Year because we just all really think we're going to be so much better in December. The bad news is that we're still going to be us. The good news is that God really loves us.

Nancy Ray:
So true.

Jess Connolly:

Once you start to listen to this language, it'll make you wildly uncomfortable when you hear people that you love say it, the phrase like a better version of myself. I hear people say that a lot, especially around the New Year. Like, "I'm not trying to be a different version, a different person, I'm just trying to be a better version of me." And the problem with that is that, and I hear the heart behind it, the heart behind it of wanting to grow, and wanting to change, and wanting to see fruit in our lives, totally good. The problem is when we just forget the love, and care, and intention with which God made us. The allowance and the space that he gives us to be humans, and to grow. I don't know that I'll ever get over the fact that he could just blink, he could not even blink and we could all just be better. We could.

Nancy Ray:
So true.

Jess Connolly:

He could've written a different story. He could've made this go another way, and yet he's allowed us to experience this human existence, and brokenness, and the now and not yet, of being saint in a fallen world and all of it, and I mean, it's so crazy. Hebrews tells us that the angels long to look in on the Gospel. When I unpacked that and stretched it out, and I've asked a ton of theologians like, "Help me understand." But what I think that means is that like angels almost wish they could experience the grace that we get to experience every sin-

gle day because we're not enough and God is. They can't, because they are not fallen beings, because they don't sin actively, they can't even experience the same amount of forgiveness and the kind of grace and upholding that it takes us to even stand on Earth, you know? That's crazy.

Nancy Ray:

I feel like I need a minute to rewind and listen to that a few times. That is, it's just deep. It's hard for our minds to wrap around that.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah, it's a lot. So we have to, but it's important to know when we say, "I just want to be a better version of myself." And the angels are like, "You get the Gospel. Are you kidding me?"

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

You get grace and you just don't even want it. You just don't even want it. You just want to not need God. So that is taking a really simple statement and really stretching it out, but the reason why it matters is this. Is because I find that so often so many of us lose faith, and belief, and trust in God because he's not making us into our ideal versions of our own selves, because he's not making us tidy perfect versions of ourselves. So we're like, "I don't know. It's just God is not really moving in my life." Or, "I really hope that I see growth in X, Y, and Z." And we forget God didn't promise any of that. He actually promised we would need Him until the day we die. So that's one reason why it's so important for us to not hold out for our ideal selves because it just makes us miss the thrill of the Gospel. It makes us miss out on the power of grace right where we're at. Another reason why we should not hold out for our ideal selves is they're just not all that powerful. 2 Corinthians 12:9 says that his power is made perfect in our weaknesses.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

His power is made perfect in our weaknesses. So it's our stories of struggle, it's our honest grappling, and wresting with our needs and our inadequacies. It's this whole idea that when we actually just tell people we're sorry that the world changes. We think the world changes when we get on a stage, when we say really eloquent things, or everything shifts in the entire universe when you go to your friend and you say like, "I am sorry. I meant to hurt you because I am sinful and I was being selfish, and I was wrong. Please forgive me."

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

And everything changes. So that's another reason why we shouldn't hold out for our ideal

selves because they don't need God and they don't need grace, and so they don't get to experience his power being made perfect in our weaknesses, and our brokenness. Yeah, I mean, there's a lot on that, but I would just say ideal you, the bad news is she's not going to show up. At the end of 2020 if you've worked out as much as you're supposed to work out, whatever that amount is, please let me know someone.

Nancy Ray:
Me too.

Jess Connolly:
If you've read all the books. If you've done all the right things, or you've saved all the money, and given all the money away. If you've done all the things, you are still going to feel needy. You're not going to get over needing God. You're not going to get over needing grace, and you're not going to get over needing the Gospel. So the bad news is your ideal self is not on the way. The good news is that your actual self who is here right now, she is 100% going to change the world today, 100%, and you have been given authority and power from God to figure out how and what that will look like.

Nancy Ray:
I love that, and I feel like I'm already checking my heart, and checking my goals, and checking the things that I have set out to do in 2020. I hope anybody listening is doing the same because what's the real thing that we should be chasing after? I mean, because one of my goals this year is to become strong. I literally physically want to be a strong person, but why? Why is that a thing? Am I chasing after my ideal self, or am I looking at the body, at my body, am I looking at my body as a gift that God's given me to take care of and using that as a way to know him more, to know him deeper, to chase after him, to push myself. I don't know. I feel like there's just a lot to unpack there, and I think it's good for anyone listening to just say thank you God for my actual self. Thank you God for these legs, this tummy, these arms, this mind, this face, this hair, whatever it is that you're insecure about, or whatever you're confident, and just to thank him for all of it because he's given all of it to you, and it's a gift, and I love. Yeah, I think I might just be sitting on that for a while, which is good.

Jess Connolly:
Same, same.

Nancy Ray:
Yeah, yeah. So my third biggest takeaway is we always ask what is our purpose in life, and we're all seeking that. We all want to make our mark on this world, and you summarized it so succinctly that our purpose is worship, period. That's it. We think of our purpose as our calling, or our career, but you say in *You Are the Girl for the Job* that purpose is worship. Everything else can come and go. This is something I've been wrestling with. I actually did a whole podcast episode, I'll leave a link in the show notes, on your calling versus your assignment, and how I really believe we're called to Jesus, period.

Jess Connolly:
Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

That is our calling. He, a person, He, the triune God, He is our calling, and everything else in life is assignment. It's assignment, or like you like to say, a mission. Running on mission, and doing the thing that God has given to you in the season. That's really freeing for me because it takes the pressure off. It takes the pressure off of, you're 60 years old and what is my calling still? Well, if you've lived a life of worship, that's your calling. Your calling is to Jesus. I'm 60 years old, or I'm 40 years old, or I'm 30 years old and what is my purpose in this world? Your purpose is worship, and if you're worshiping him ... I should be asking you. I'm just getting on my own soapbox because I just love it.

Jess Connolly:

I'm liking it.

Nancy Ray:

Well listen, it just meant so much to me reading it because I was like, "Yes." I held your book and was like, "Yes, that is what God has been teaching me too." So yeah, just like man, encourage somebody and our purpose being fulfilled there. Purpose is worship, period.

Jess Connolly:

Well, it's interesting. I love your thoughts about work, and obviously Work and Play, and to me here's the real gift in this thing. Not only is the pressure off, not only is it a little bit like just a reminder, you are not ... God has called you His daughter, He has called you His ambassador. He has actually not called you His workhorse or His tiny minion. So those things are important to remember. He wants to be your Father. So number one, the pressure is off. There is no one standing beside you scoring points, like how quickly did she figure out her purpose, her mission, how much did she do today, what was her rating, what was her score. So number one, the pressure is off.

Number two, so many of us when we're struggling to find inspiration or motivation, we forget that we're going to find it in worship. Gazing at God is going to inspire us to bring other people into the kingdom, whether we do that through motherhood, or podcasting, or being a barista, or being a nanny, or being a business gal. It's going to be remembering like God is so good. God is so good that I want to use what I've got to bring him glory and to bring other people to get to know him, and I get to do that through right, different assignments, different vocations, I get to do that in different seasons. But the way I stay inspired and excited about it is worship. So that's the second thing about it.

But here's a really cool thing that for me a little bit, I like to say it like made me see the Matrix. I don't know if you've seen the Matrix, when all of a sudden Neo can see all the numbers and he realized he's living in a fake world, but for me something wild happened when I realized that work and play are all worship.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah.

Jess Connolly:

And doing the dishes, and writing emails, and changing diapers, and singing, and going on a run, and doing the laundry, and reading my Bible, and painting, and cleaning my closet, and coaching, and writing books, it's all worship. There is no on and off. There is no black and white, like enjoyable and awful. There are things that are harder and there are moments where God invites me into rest, but there is not one point in the day when I'm on the hook to produce and one point in the day when I'm off the hook. I get to worship the whole day, and I've got one boss who I answer to and that's God. For anyone out there who is like, "But hold on, I have a boss." I would say like, "Well, I kind of do too." I have people who, I mean, publishers, FYI, I'm on the hook, you know what I'm saying? There is a contract. But truly, I answer to God, and He's my Father.

That's the other thing for me, about remembering that worship is our purpose and worship is our absolute highest calling, our only call. To know God, to be known by him, to enjoy knowing him, to enjoy asking questions about him, and letting him ask questions of us. For me it kind of helps me through the matrix, and all of a sudden I realize I don't know, I'm less bitter with people. I can be more generous with people, I can work harder, I can rest harder. I feel so much more free when I remember I am not Jess Connolly wife, mom, author, blah, blah, blah, I'm just a child of God, I am a daughter, and it's a good day to be a daughter every day.

Nancy Ray:

It really is, and I love just that idea of work as worship, play as worship, whatever you're doing right now as you're listening to this podcast as worship. You can stop in the middle of what you're doing and just say, "Thank you, Jesus." It doesn't matter. There is no on or off, you just. God gave us work. He gave us these ideas, and He gave you, Go + Tell Gals, and He's given you books, and He's given you these conferences. That work is good, and all of that is as worship, and so is your play, and your rest, and when you're hanging out with your family, and your kids. I think it's just liberating. Your entire life is liberating, and even sleep, right? Sleep is worship. Amen to that. We all need to get sleep, but all of that. 24 hours a day is just to worship, and that's our purpose. So if you're just living life, connected doing life with the Lord, boom, you fulfilled your purpose.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah. Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

I mean, that's freeing to me, to just be reminded of that today. That hey, this life is beautiful, it's good, and whether I'm working, or whether I'm cleaning my kitchen, or changing another poopy diaper, it's all worship—it is.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

It's just so good. Well, thank you. Man, yeah. I could just keep going on, but all I have to say is your book is beautifully written. There are so many other parts that I wanted to talk to you

about but we don't have time, like SoulCycle and that whole opener was so powerful, so good. I'm just going to leave that as a little hanger so people will pick up your book and read it. Just how you write and tell these vivid stories, I love your storytelling. It's so well done. Just my bonus takeaway is just you talking about being others minded, always, and that is your heart is always being others minded. If you're like hey, am I the girl for this job, one of the questions you ask is well, are you considering others? Then yeah, that's a really important piece of this puzzle. It's convicted me, it's blessed me. I just want to say thank you for being on the podcast and for writing this book. I'm so thankful, and I end every episode with kind of a lightning round of questions. So I'm just going to jump in and ask you some. These are very lighthearted. It can be like one word answers, just whatever comes to your mind, okay? So this is just kind of fun. What's a book you're loving?

Jess Connolly:
The Ruthless Elimination of Hurry.

Nancy Ray:
Ooh, I've heard really good things about that.

Jess Connolly:
You will love it.

Nancy Ray:
I know I will. I love the title.

Jess Connolly:
Yeah.

Nancy Ray:
But I just downloaded, and there's like a Bible study on the Bible app and I'm going through that.

Jess Connolly:
I just started it. Yes.

Nancy Ray:
Really?

Jess Connolly:
It's so good.

Nancy Ray:
Okay.

Jess Connolly:
Yes. I love that.

Nancy Ray:

Okay. Well, awesome. Going to get it. That's awesome. Okay, what's a product you're loving? Could be anything.

Jess Connolly:

Such a good question. I am really loving, I've been really into Beauty Counter lately and I really like their cleansing balm.

Nancy Ray:

Cleansing balm, okay. Wait, what is that? Is that the stuff that's kind of like Vaseline? That's weird.

Jess Connolly:

It is. It's kind of like Vaseline.

Nancy Ray:

Yes?

Jess Connolly:

And you use it to clean your face, which sounds crazy, but it works.

Nancy Ray:

I am also a fan of the cleansing balm. I just forgot the name of it, but my sister does it, and she gave me this little sample and I've used it all up and I want more. So I'm going to have to get some.

Jess Connolly:

It's so good.

Nancy Ray:

Okay, so good. If you could share a meal with anybody, who would it be? It's a heavy loaded question.

Jess Connolly:

I mean, I think Beth Moore. I'm like a big Beth Moore fan.

Nancy Ray:

Oh, me too. She's been discipling me since I was like 11, she just doesn't even know it.

Jess Connolly:

Yeah. Yeah.

Nancy Ray:

So sweet.

Jess Connolly:

I did, I got to interview her a few weeks ago for the Go + Tell Gals podcast, and I really did almost lose my mind.

Nancy Ray:

It's in my queue. I haven't listened to it yet, but it's literally in my queue and I cannot wait to listen. You hinted at it in a previous podcast that I was listening to, and I was like, "Shut the front door. Beth Moore is coming." I just lost my mind a little bit. So it's in my queue. I'm saving it for a time of my life where I know I won't be interrupted by tiny kids.

Nancy Ray:

Okay. What did you want to be when you were little?

Jess Connolly:

I wanted to be a meteorologist.

Nancy Ray:

Again, with you and the surprising answers. That's the best.

Jess Connolly:

Oh no, it's too late. I'm sorry. It's a one word answer. I need to do better. I'm sorry. Meteorologist.

Nancy Ray:

You're totally fine. I love it. It's just so surprising, it's the best. Okay. What are you most proud of in your life?

Jess Connolly:

Oh, man. Wow. I mean, I don't really know how I landed my husband. That's God's grace, but pretty much every day I feel like I tricked him into dating me and marrying me. Can you be proud of landing your husband? I don't know.

Nancy Ray:

Yes. For sure.

Jess Connolly:

I feel like any success they have is more God and or Nick. I don't know.

Nancy Ray:

That's the best answer. I love that. I know Nick too. I mean, not very well. I've met him a couple of times, but I just love, I love you guys. I love your relationship.

Jess Connolly:

He's the best.

Nancy Ray:

Okay. Two more questions. What does work and play mean to you?

Jess Connolly:

Work means mission, play means joy.

Nancy Ray:

Good answer. I like that. How do you maintain a healthy soul and a fulfilling life?

Jess Connolly:

Quiet is how I maintain a healthy soul. Quiet, quiet, quiet, quiet. Quiet at night, quiet in the morning, as much as I can get it alone a bit that I can grab, I'll get. Fulfilling life. I think counting the fruit and being deeply grateful for what God's done.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. So good. Okay, those are all the questions. Great job. I really enjoyed that. Tell everybody where they can find you, where they can find your book, and I'm going to finish out by asking a question I asked you earlier in the episode. Tell us about Go + Tell Gals and what that's all about too.

Jess Connolly:

Absolutely. Online I'm jessaconnolly on Instagram, my website is JessConnolly.com. Those are the main places I hang out. Go + Tell Gals is evolving, and forming, and we're figuring out what it is right now, but we know we exist to equip and encourage women to use what they've been given for the good of others and the glory of God. So we do that through podcasting, we do that through coaching, we coach women individually, we do group coaching, and we do that through e-courses and things like that, but essentially yeah, we're just trying to come alongside women who want to use what they've got, specifically we tend to serve most women who are interested in writing ministry or a small business.

Nancy Ray:

So awesome. I had a friend I was talking to the other day and she was like, "I did one of the Go + Tell Gals group coaching and I got, I paid for it, but what I got out of it was worth so much more." I mean, she was gushing about what she got out of it. So I just wanted to mirror that back to you and let you know. It was like a huge blessing in her life, which was so encouraging.

Jess Connolly:

Thank you.

Nancy Ray:

Yeah. Well thank you, Jess. Thank you so much for being here. Thank you for your time and just your wisdom. Thank you for this book. I hope to reread it. I mean, this is the kind of book I want to give my girls one day. So thank you for writing it, and I love you, friend. I'm so thank-

ful you were here.

Jess Connolly:

I love you. So grateful for you. And this is where my kids get home. Do you hear them screaming?

Nancy Ray:

It's perfect. I think we're going to leave that in the podcast. We should. All right. Have a great day, love you.

Jess Connolly:

Bye.

Well it's time for the Work and Play Cornerstore and I'm going to keep that pretty short and sweet this week. I'm going to be adding Jess's book, *You Are the Girl for the Job*, as well as that really fancy cleansing cream that we both liked and talked about from Beautycounter. I'll leave the links in the show notes. You should totally try it and you should totally get her book because it is that good.

Thank you so much for listening to Episode 43 of the Work and Play Podcast.

Everything I've mentioned today can be found in the show notes at NancyRay.com/podcast/43, and you can find me at NancyRay.com or follow me @NancyRay on Instagram or Facebook almost daily. I'm going to close with a few words from Jess's book:

“Show me a gal who does not have time to compare the lives of other women because she is furiously busy thanking God for where He has brought her, and I'll show you a woman who understands abundance.”

Praying abundance over you today, you are the girl for the job. I'll see you next time.