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**Intro:** Hey friends! Welcome to Girls Night. I'm Stephanie May Wilson and I am so happy that you're here. Each week I have a girlfriend over and we talk through one of the biggest questions we have about our lives as women.

We're talking about friendships and faith and relationships and self-confidence, about our calling in life, and how to live every bit of our lives to the full. Life is so much better and easier and absolutely more fun when we navigate it together as girlfriends. And I cannot wait to get started.

Today we're welcoming back my dear friend Ainsley Britain to Girls Night. Ainsley is an author, a podcast host and an Enneagram coach helping young adults embrace their confidence, date healthy and discover their identities in Christ. She has a new book out called *Don't Date a BooBoo Dude: Raise Your Standards, Realize Your Worth, and Remove Shame from the Dating Game*. And that's what we're talking about today: how we deserve to be treated in a relationship.

Here are just a few of the things we're talking about in this episode. We're going to be talking about what you deserve and what you don't deserve in a relationship. We're talking about what an unhealthy relationship looks like and how to know if you're in one, and then what to do if you are in an unhealthy relationship, if you're in a relationship that's less than you deserve. We're going to talk about how to ask for the things you want and how to know if you should give this person another shot, or if it's time to end it. And that's just the beginning.

Friends, if you've ever found yourself settling for less than you want in a relationship because you're worried you won't be able to get more in there, by the way, this episode is especially for you.

But before we dive in, there's one thing that has transformed my relationships more than anything else. And that's counseling. And so that's why I'm so happy to get to tell you about one of my favorite resources, [Faithful Counseling](#).

Faithful Counseling is a website where you can get matched up with a Christian counselor for professional online therapy sessions. This is truly the easiest and most affordable way to find a faith-based counselor. Now, you may have heard me talk about Faithful Counseling before, but just in case you haven't, I wanted to give you four quick reasons why I love them so much.

The first is that it's easy to get started. All you have to do is go to their website and fill out a form about yourself, what you're going through, what you're looking for in

a counselor. And within 24 hours, Faithful Counseling will connect you with a licensed, vetted, faith-based professional counselor.

Second reason I love it is that it's easy to schedule. Once you're connected to a therapist, you can start communicating with them in less than 24 hours. You can also log into your account at any time and send a message to your therapist and you'll get timely and thoughtful responses back.

You can also schedule weekly video or phone sessions. And the best part is you can do it all virtually. No commute, no awkward waiting room time, less time away from work and you can even do your sessions in your PJs.

The third reason I love them is that it's easy to find the right counselor for you. In order for counseling to be truly beneficial, you need to find a counselor you really connect with. And often we don't find the right person on our first try. So then we're stuck going through the whole process of breaking up with our counselor, which can be awkward, and then starting from scratch to find a new one.

But with Faithful Counseling, if you don't love your counselor or if you find that you're looking for something different, you can switch by clicking a button. It's easy and it's free. They really make it easy to find the best fit possible.

And then the last reason I love them is that it's easier to fit in your budget. While I love traditional in-person counseling, it can cost more than \$100 per session, which just makes it a total no go for so many of us. But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and they have financial aid available.

And if you sign it through the special link that they gave me, you can get 10% off your first month. Friends, if therapy is something you've been considering or something you think might be helpful for you right now, head on over to [stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling](https://stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling). That link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again, that's [stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling](https://stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling) for all the info, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too. Thank you so much to Faithful Counseling. I just love getting to partner with you.

Okay, now, are you guys ready? Let's jump into the conversation with Ainsley.

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**Stephanie:** All right, friends, I'm so excited for who we have back on the show today. I'm sitting here with my dear friend Ainsley Britain. Ainsley, thanks so much for coming back to Girls Night.

**Ainsley:** Of course, it's my favorite place to be, in real life and online.

**Stephanie:** Yes, absolutely. I mean, really same. Ainsley, we've had you on the show before and we're going to link to our previous episode in the show notes because it was so good. We were talking about healthy and unhealthy relationships and what to do if you're in an unhealthy one. And you have just an absolutely wonderful perspective and just practical help for when we find ourselves in moments like that. But I'm really excited about today's conversation.

But for women who haven't gotten to meet you yet, tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact.

**Ainsley:** I am an author, speaker, Enneagram coach, and I help young adults embrace their confidence, date healthy, and discover their identity in Christ. Oh, the fun fact. Oh yeah, I always forget that.

**Stephanie:** I know. I know.

**Ainsley:** Okay, the fun fact and I think I don't... I always forget about myself. You know, there's like this thing that's in the filing cabinet in the back of my head, and I'm like, "I should pull that out more." I was in Vogue magazine when I was seven years old.

**Stephanie:** What?

**Ainsley:** Kids Vogue. It's called Vogue Bambini, which is, I guess, children-

**Stephanie:** A child.

**Ainsley:** Yeah. So I was in that when I was like seven years old. And it was me and a friend of mine. And the photographer said, "Make a silly face." But I guess he had an accent or something. I don't remember. But I remember I made the silly face and my friend did not. So I'll look like a fool in print for the rest of my life. I don't show anybody because I'm like, "I'm making a silly face."

**Stephanie:** And she's just like smiling.

**Ainsley:** And she's just smiling.

**Stephanie:** That is an amazing fun fact. I mean, Ainsley, you can say no to this, but I feel like we need to see that picture.

**Ainsley:** Oh, no, I'll say yes. Are you kidding me? I do not care at all.

**Stephanie:** I'll need to see this picture.

**Ainsley:** I'll find it and send it to you.

**Stephanie:** That sounds good. I mean, you mentioned that you're an author. You had a book come out... three months ago? Four months ago?

**Ainsley:** Yeah. Oh, my gosh, I think it's three months-ish.

**Stephanie:** Is it?

**Ainsley:** Yeah.

**Stephanie:** Honestly I'm not sure what day is-

**Ainsley:** Same.

**Stephanie:** ...and I was there celebrating with you but I don't know what month that was. But it's so good. It's called *Don't Date a BooBoo Dude: Raise Your Standards, Realize Your Worth, and Remove Shame from the Dating Game*. And I love this because I think that we all have...

Well, I really want to talk about this because when I think back to my dating life, there were so many times where I really, really liked someone and I wanted the relationship to work out more than anything. And so that was my only end goal and I kind of didn't care what else happened along the way. So I settled for all kinds of treatment of me that wasn't good or wasn't enough. I mean, there were guys that I kind of hung on with forever even though they barely called me back or they only hung out with me... I don't know, like didn't-

**Ainsley:** At their convenience.

**Stephanie:** At their convenience. Or like didn't want to tell anyone that we were dating because we weren't technically because they didn't want to actually date. But I just was like, "Something is better than nothing. I'm hanging on for the ride."

And I'm really grateful from this perspective. You know, Carl and I have been married for a while now and there are some guys that didn't treat me well that just were kind of lukewarm on me and I was all in for them that I don't know if I would have totally married them but I would have gotten like pretty far down that road with how much I liked them if they would have like let me.

And now knowing what it's like to be married, having a house, and jobs and a family and all these things I didn't have in college when I was probably dating the most, my dating volume was probably its highest, I can't imagine what my life would have been like if I would have actually married one of those people. I guess it just would have been terrible.

And those things that I was willing to overlook then would have ballooned into something that would have really deeply affected me in my daily life and my health and happiness and the health and happiness of my kids. You know, all these things. Anyway.

I think Shakespeare said Love is blind and I know how true that is when we really have feelings for someone or when we're like, "I just am ready for something to work out," we really do overlook so many things that we shouldn't. So anyway, that's why I love the work that you do so much. And that's what I'm so excited to talk through today because you have a perspective that we don't have when we're in the thick of it because we're just in the thick of it.

**Ainsley:** Right.

**Stephanie:** So before we dive into anything else, tell us what is a booboo dude and where did that phrase come from. That's like a uniquely... it's a uniquely Ainsley thing, right?

**Ainsley:** I think so. It's either uniquely Ainsley or uniquely Louisiana. Both of those things are hard to separate. I mean, we used this phrase in high school. I remember using it saying like booboo dude or just booboo anything. I still say like, "Oh, that was booboo," or whatever. It can be a movie, it can be the way I spent my time. It could be anything.

But anyway, a booboo dude specifically can be a wide range of behaviors from, you know, just not texting back or leaving someone on red, or on the back burner, you know, that kind of level, all the way to toxic or abusive behavior. It's really just someone who leaves you on red or leaves you wondering where you stand with them, potentially as a manipulation tactic.

And at the core, it's really a guy who's just not treating you how you deserve to be treated. And that is kind of the all-encompassing definition of booboo dude. But I do think that it's been a phrase that I've used. Whenever I think about the phrases that I use on a regular basis, I'm like, how am I an author? Like I'm not even using English. Like I'm saying booboo dude. Sometimes if I'm sick I feel like booboo pop. What's that? What is that? It's Louisiana. It's Louisiana.

**Stephanie:** I love that so much. I love that so much. There should be like an Ainsley dictionary. That is so amazing.

**Ainsley:** It is so random.

**Stephanie:** It's so good. It's so good. We talked about this a lot in the other episode that we did together. And so we'll link that. But for women who haven't heard that, can you give us kind of the Cliff's Notes of why this message is so important to you in particular?

**Ainsley:** Yeah. Yeah. I mean, I found myself in a toxic relationship that turned abusive in college, but I didn't know that it was abusive. I just genuinely thought that that was normal. And I think that I thought that because I had settled so many times before that my self-worth just got slowly chipped away at until not much was left. And so, you know, the bar was so low that it turned abusive.

Again, I didn't know that. I honestly didn't call it abusive until three years later, when I talked to someone else who had dated him after me and was like, "Yeah, that's what that was." And I was like, "Oh, my gosh, I just had no idea." I felt that but no one had confirmed it, kind of.

So just after that, I was looking back at "how did I get there?" because I'm very generally a pretty confident, loud, just out there kind of person. I'm the kind of person that you'd look at and you'd be like, "There's no way that you were controlled, you know, that someone successfully was your mouthpiece," because I'm just so not what you would think whenever you think of the profile of a victim, quote-unquote.

So anyway, whenever I started looking back at like, "Well, how did I get there?" I realized, Oh, well, in that relationship, I let that guy treat me this way. And I settled there. And it was just these little steps of settling that I think lent to the ultimate settling of that relationship.

So that's when I was like, Okay, I've got to tell girls not to settle even for those little behaviors that you let happen, even for those little things that you're like, "Ah, it's just how he communicates." Mm-mm, it doesn't have to be. It doesn't have to be. It doesn't have to be.

You know, I just kept bowing to whatever... I guess bowing is not the right word, but bending to whatever the guy was doing versus what I wanted because I was so in love with his potential or just hopeful for his potential or just like the attention. There's very much, you know, that card at play as well.

And that's whenever I was like, Mm, we need to call these out and we need to... you know, those guys need to be bending for us before we've bend for them in that kind of way. And we need to challenge them to rise up instead of letting them kind of walk all over us.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, yeah. Like I said, I've totally overlooked things because I'm like, "I like him so much." I don't know that I would have said this out loud, but there's a chance I would have, would have said, "He's a terrible texter and I never know when I'm going to hear from him, or if I'm going to hear from him, but I am willing to live with that because I like him so much." But I don't have to. I didn't have to. Being a terrible communicator is not an okay trait in a relationship.

**Ainsley:** Yeah, totally.

**Stephanie:** Being on the outside of our individual relationships, can you give us as many boobo traits as possible? Because I think I still would have been like, "That's fine. It's fine." But I think hearing things out loud, going, "Oh, that was on that list," like maybe this... it just helps us to have a clearer picture of what's going on. So yeah, give us as long of a list as you can of some boobo behaviors.

**Ainsley:** So I wrote a bunch in this book and I'll read a couple of them. But I'm thinking of real-life conversations that I've had recently. And I want to start with them because it's at the top of my head. So I'm thinking about the time recently that someone said that the guy that she was dating the night before, you know, like they were dating yesterday, they had broken up, and she was walking home alone at night from wherever they were out and he let her walk home alone at night.

And it may have not been far, maybe like a quarter of a mile but I don't really care. I don't care. She shouldn't be walking home alone. Or just going home alone at night. At least, I don't know, make sure that you are going home safely and not alone, period, no matter what because it's just dangerous out there in the streets no matter where you are.

What about the girl wanted to avoid the guy? Like they were just not on talking terms, they ran into each other physically, like in a class, outside of a class and she walked away. Like she just turned around and walked away. And he texted her and was like, "Oh, you're really gonna act like that?" Mm-mm, don't let that phrase ever come across my screen. Don't like that phrase "you're really going to... blank. Oh, you're really going to do that? Oh, you're really going to act like that? No. Because you know what I want her to say? "Yes, I am because that's my boundary." But anyway, we'll get there.

Those are just like two examples that I'm like, "Oh, yeah, that just happened." You know, ghosting, obviously, that's going to be a boobo behavior right off the bat. What about Casper? This one is the friendly ghost, where he ghost you but then he's really nice in person and you're like, "I'm sorry, what?" You know, there's the one ghosts that just is gone. You never see them again. Caspers are friendly ghost where he stops showing up on your text or Snapchat or whatever but then when you see him in person, he acts like nothing happened and you're like, "What?"

**Stephanie:** That is so crazy.

**Ainsley:** That's so confusing. Or they cut off communication with someone but still interact with them on social media. Like not in-person, not in text, but only on social media, you're just-

**Stephanie:** You're like, "He watched my stories. I can see that you watched my... Don't do that to my brain.

**Ainsley:** Breadcrumbing, where they'll just toss you a little communication here and there just enough to keep you hanging on. Kind of like what you were talking about: You don't know when you're going to hear from them but they'll just keep you hanging on just a little bit, just a little bit.

And this one is my... mm, this one kills me. It's the circle that guy... This is the guy who you go through the relationship breakup process about every six months to a year because he waits long enough to come back for you to forget why you hate it. You know what I'm saying? That drives me nuts because I'm like, "I forgot this is why I'm so mad with you. This is why you should like... I'm not getting back with you because you keep doing the same thing."

**Stephanie:** Yes! Yes!

**Ainsley:** I'm trying to think of any more. Do any more come to your mind? I know you and I have had this conversation multiple times.

**Stephanie:** I think it's boobo or a red flag if someone's like, "I'm not looking for a serious relationship, but I want all of the other things from you." No, the commitment has to come first. Like all the other stuff of like spending a ton of time together, talking about everything, you know, your title needs to match the relationship. And when there's a disconnect there, it's time to disconnect.

I dated a guy who... we were like actually dating, we were actually in a relationship but he felt weird treating me like his girlfriend in front of basically anyone he knew. And I still don't have a clue what was up with that. And I was not



trying to make out in front of his parents or something. Like listen, let's have some boundaries here, let's have some general sense of decorum, I guess.

But we would like, I don't know, go to church together or something and he didn't want to talk to me in front of people. His reasoning may have been so honorable or I mean, his reasoning may have been-

**Ainsley:** Maybe.

**Stephanie:** ...good in his mind or something. But even if it was, it made my mind go nuts. Like, "What is wrong with me? Are you ashamed with me?" Anyone who doesn't want to be seen with you or sort of take ownership of the fact that you guys are in a relationship in front of other people, that's a red flag I would say.

**Ainsley:** Yeah. And I think that the phrase right now that actually I've seen before, but I saw it again on TikTok the other day was... it was like she was showing texts between... she said, "Me and my situationship." I'm like, Mm-mm, get out of there. Get out of that situationship. Like, bye.

And the thing is the text that she was showing, I just can't believe that those texts were ever exchanged between two people because they were so rude and degrading. And then on the next slide, it was like, "I want to cuddle with you right now." And then calling her B word and all this stuff.

And I'm like, You're going back and forth from rude to kind to rude to kind. And I'm like, "This is awful. This is awful." There's no way that this rela... well, situationship is life-giving and is challenging you to be a better person and reminding you of your value. There's no way. Because I'm reading your text messages and I don't believe it.

**Stephanie:** Honestly, I didn't think to go there. If anyone calls you names or cusses at you or yells at you-

**Ainsley:** Even if it's a joke, even if a joke, it's not funny.

**Stephanie:** It's not funny. It's not funny. If someone disrespects you or doesn't care about the things you have to say or doesn't listen to you or doesn't honor the things that you tell them are important, someone who doesn't... I mean, we kind of talked like make time for you or-

**Ainsley:** Show up.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, show up.

**Ainsley:** Someone who doesn't show up.

**Stephanie:** If you don't know that he's going to show up... Okay, this was one of the most like "I can't believe this is happening" moments of my whole life. Right after my girls were born... So I had a C-section. So you go into like... I mean, I haven't had actual surgery in a really long time other than this, so I don't know how it normally goes.

So after the C-section, they brought me into this like recovery area and it was just a big room with curtains in between the beds. And you were in there for like a couple of hours before we were moved to our room. So it was weird because it was like November 2020. So it was like in the thick of COVID. I'm like in the room with a whole bunch of people and I haven't been in a really long time.

So I could hear another mom who just had a baby in the next curtain and so she's probably like eight feet away from me or something because there's curtains I couldn't see her. And she is on the phone with her person, her partner, her situationship, or whatever and she is like, "Where are you? I thought that you were gonna go get something from the car. Did you leave?" And then she goes, "Are you at a bar? Where are you? You need to come back here."

I mean, they're kind of fighting over the phone. She had had surgery no less than an hour before. Like, had had a baby-

**Ainsley:** Oh, my gosh.

**Stephanie:** ...was in surgery recovery. I mean, the anesthesia is still like... I mean, we just got out of surgery and she's next to me. And yeah, he went to go get something from the car and then ended up leaving and went to a bar to have a couple drinks with a friend or something truly right after she had surgery.

And that was one of those moments where I like... I mean, I'm like, "What do we do? Is there anything we can do for her?" What does she need? I know she can hear me and so I'm texting Carl. So I have like two 20-minute-old babies lying on my chest but I'm texting Carl trying to like not let her see me, like, "Do we need to say something?" I mean, is she okay? Is she safe? What is happening?"

And someone not showing up or not knowing if someone is going to show up is less of a big deal when you're just hanging out with friends on the weekend. But then at some point it becomes like your birthday, and then that really sucks. And then at some point it becomes an important event or dinner with your parents or a time when you need help, or your basement floods or you had a baby like 20

minutes before. Like not showing up is a really huge deal. And I think it just we don't picture it that way.

**Ainsley:** Especially in that moment whenever you're younger, I guess, because you just think it's not that serious. And the relationship doesn't have to be a serious relationship to affect you seriously. Like you can be seriously affected by a casual relationship and not realize it because in your head, you're like, "No, this is not a big deal. It's casual. I'm not falling for him." But you're settling for him because of XYZ reasons. And that's going to chip away at you like it chipped away at me. And then you're going to look up and you're going to be like, "Whoa, how did this happen?"

**Stephanie:** I was actually just talking to friends about this the other night. I don't know if I ever... I mean, I probably was in a couple casual... Like I definitely was in some casual situationships. I don't know that I was ever looking for casual. Like truly. I mean, I know that it can be fun. It's like, "I'm just trying to have fun. I'm just trying to, you know, whatever. I think that for me personally, you don't need to go into a dating situation knowing that this is your person. Anyone who says that you do is like... hasn't dated. It just doesn't work that way.

You need to know someone's last name and their coffee order and something about their life and their past before you'll have any clue whether or not this is your person. Like you just need to spend some time with them first. So dating is fun.

And you can go into dating with a light heart. And you should because it makes it so much easier and more successful. But like anytime I would meet someone that I was remotely interested in, I was, of course, hoping that it went somewhere. I was hoping that things progressed, that he liked me, that I continued to like him. I was hoping for a relationship every time.

So I think that there's something to be said for really examining your heart and being honest with yourself about what you're looking for. Because I do think that if I would have—and I mean, I did this some—if I would have like casually dated and said it was casual, I'm not being honest with myself or the other person about what I'm actually looking for, and so I'm not getting what I'm looking for.

The other thing about... and I'm kind of skipping ahead, but this is a soapbox I could stand on forever is when you're dating someone who you know is not the right person for you or like it's not going anywhere or you're like hanging on with an ex-boyfriend, you guys are still basically acting like you're together but you're not officially together or whatever, there is a... I've talked about this so much, but there's like a top spot in your life for a person romantically.

I picture like an Olympic podium or something. There's a spot for one person at the top. And if you have that spot filled by the wrong person, you're not going to have room for the right person when the right person comes along. Dating someone new is hard. It's awkward. Going on a first date, especially when you're on like 20th date level with somebody else, that first date person does not stand a chance. You're going to be so uncomfortable with them. They don't know your history. Starting over with them is so uncomfortable.

And so if you have a comfort person, like if you have a person that feels like old, worn out sweatpants and someone's offering you like stilettos, you're going to choose the sweat pants every time. You're not going to give this stiletto guy a chance to break in and becomes sweatpants and a pair that actually fits you better because your top spot is occupied.

And so that's why keeping someone on the backburner or breaking up with someone but not actually really breaking free and making it a clean break is so damaging because just no one else has a chance. Like if you have really strong feelings for someone, no one new has a chance with you. And so you're going to miss out on actually the right relationship because you're so busy-

**Ainsley:** Entertaining something else.

**Stephanie:** Entertaining the wrong one. Yeah.

**Ainsley:** Yeah. I think that I even said whenever I was casually dating, quote-unquote, I had the same hope that you did that you were talking about. I absolutely had that same hope. But I said that I didn't care. I was like, "Well, yeah, whatever, no big deal." But the truth is I cared a lot. It was a defense mechanism, right? If it didn't work out, I didn't want you to know how disappointed that I would be. So I was trying to get ahead of whatever that looked like.

I also had students whenever I was a high school minister that would say the same thing. Like, "Well, I'm the one that doesn't want anything serious." And I'm like, "a) are you sure? And b) you don't think that's a reflection of something that might be hurting? You don't think that there's some core longing that you're trying to fill in an unhealthy way?"

And that's honestly one of the reasons I became an Enneagram coach is to identify these core longings that we are looking for in empty places, and we're putting our worth in the hands of the unworthy over and over and over again. Why? Why are we doing that? It's these micro-decisions that lead to this macro impact.

I think the Enneagram is such a helpful tool in identifying "Oh, it's because I want to feel wanted." And this is just a really quick fix on how to feel wanted. It's not fulfilling, but it's the thing I can text and hope to get a text back. And that text back tells me I'm wanted. But does it? Does it? I don't know.

Those are all the things that I think play into those settling in those little micro-decisions that lead to you filling up that podium spot or wearing the old sweatpants that probably stink at this point because you haven't washed them long enough.

**Stephanie:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. There's a difference between good old sweatpants and it's time to go.

**Ainsley:** Yeah.

**Stephanie:** I love how you said a little while ago, that it doesn't have to be a serious relationship for it to seriously impact you. That's one of the things that we've talked about a lot in my Love Your Single Life course is that will... One of the exercises we do is we go back and look through past relationships. And a lot of women will be like, "I don't have past relationships. There's nothing for me to look back at."

And we always talk about it. It's like, it doesn't have to be an official relationship for you to like look back at it and learn from it and kind of take a look at what happened there. And one of the things that a lot of women will discover is they'll be like, "I liked someone and I never told him," or "I never like went after this thing at all. I never even tried to be near him enough where he could actually talk to me and get to know me." And was like, "Okay, but why? Like, why? What was keeping you from going to sit by him so you could strike up a conversation?"

So those are the kinds of things that we end up talking about. But one of the relationships that impacted me most was just with a friend. And we were never more than friends but we were always more than friends. Someone awesome. Not Carl. This was all pre-Carl. But someone who was a great person. I met them and they started to really pursue me just for like, "I like you. I want to get to know you." We're doing all the right things.

And I remember one time, like really early on when I was talking to this new person, and they're really doing all the right things. Like this is a relationship... and we ended up dating for a year. This was a relationship that was starting. But I remember one of the times when I'm talking... So I'm talking to this new person, but being with this friend of mine. And the new person could just... I remember just sitting there comparing them and being like, "I'm happy and grateful that this

person is pursuing me this way but I so wish it was this guy instead. I so wish that my friend would do this instead."

It just was really hard for me to even accept or acknowledge any of the new things that were coming for me because my heart was just already gone. Like it just was already occupied. I think I was with a group of friends and I got a text from the new guy and I just like... If my friend didn't exist, I would have been so excited, I would have been so into it, I would have totally fallen for him. But he just looked so new and unfamiliar and like, I don't know... I didn't want to start over. I just wanted this other relationship to work out.

So I just remember sitting there going, "Oh man." He almost doesn't have a chance because my heart is already given away to someone who hasn't asked for it and doesn't deserve it.

**Ainsley:** I always think about like... I think when I was younger I would always be like, "Yeah, male best friend's like not a problem. Like there's no wrong in that. Like you can have a best friend of the opposite sex. And when I thought about it, I'm like, sure, there's not necessarily a problem all the time. But think about what you're building whenever you have a quote-unquote male best friend in that position. Because whenever you're married, your marriage is built off of friendship. It's often an intimacy that you work on.

And when you think about it, are you working on this with another person? Think about the foundation that you're building with a friendship and where's it going to go? And then would you be okay if your significant other had that kind of foundation built with someone else? We see in movies all the time that it doesn't work out.

**Stephanie:** And they end up with the friend. It's like you come home at the end of the day, and you had a big day, and you know, you have a lot to process. And you like come home and you like say hi to your spouse, and then you hop on the phone with your best guy friend and you tell him all about your day. Like it falls apart somewhere. And at some point, you're giving something to a friend that your spouse wants. That's why you're married. That's what they want from you.

And it is different from like... I don't know, it's so nuanced because I think some people are like, I could never have a best friend. I could never have a best guy friend and have it not be romantic. But then other people are like, "I totally can." But I think it just gets a little more complicated. And then yeah, it brings up questions with, like, if this is your best person, your closest person, how is that going to feel to someone who wants to date you and marry you? The hope is that that is your closest person. Exactly.

**Ainsley:** And I still have friends that are male. They're my friends.

**Stephanie:** Totally.

**Ainsley:** But as far as that inner circle, the people that I'm going to call whenever I need a shoulder, whenever I need... Whoever's in my emergency contacts list, it's not going to be my male friends. They are still great people. They're great people in general. Awesome. Love them to death. But I think there's a difference in the proximity and the foundation and the things that you're investing in these people that, you know, you're nearest and dearest.

And I think that that's really what matters to me. And that's what differentiates it from me. Because you can have relationships with whatever, whoever, but it's what you're investing, what you're pouring in, and is it misplaced? Should you be investing and pouring in elsewhere? And are you looking for something in that that maybe you're trying to find fulfillment in that you should find it elsewhere, right, in your own self-worth, in your own self-confidence? Like, I don't know, those are my differentiations whenever I think about that.

**Stephanie:** I love that you said that because it's not one size fits all. And like there are people who are able to have great friendships. Like I have girlfriends who have great girlfriends that they have really strong relationships with.

I mean, the other consideration is like, how will this guy's wife feel about him texting you all the time. I think it's not impossible, I think it has to be a really unique situation for that to not be crossing any weird lines. And for her to feel okay with it, like his wife to feel okay with it and your husband feel okay with it. It has to just be a really unique relationship for that not to be something that harms each of your marriages.

And then the other thing is I like how you said investing. It's like you have a limited amount of dollars. You know, it's like, say you have \$100 and you get to invest that in different people in your life. If you're pouring it all into one place, that means it's not going into a different place. And so that's like another way to kind of think about it is not where is it going, but where is it not going? And does someone else need it more?

I mean, we have to think about that with all of our relationships. I think you and I are both probably in a... you and I both have new relationships in our lives in our kids. We have tiny humans who need us more than anyone has ever needed us. So that means that we just don't have as much, like, you know, meet a new friend for

coffee kind of time because like our \$100 is being used a little bit by these tiny human beings.

But that won't always be the case. They'll be a little bit more dependent or they'll go to school or something like that and we'll have some of that money back and we'll be able to put it in a new place. But we're always trying to figure out how to dole out the resources that we have and our time and our energy and our love and our intimacy. Those are some of those resources. And if we're giving them to someone, that means we're not giving them to someone else. And just making sure that they're going to the right people.

**Ainsley:** Absolutely. Anytime that I commit anything with work, you know, work wise, I always think my yes to this is my note to Goldie. And is it worth it? I have two trips coming up next week and I have to make sure that these trips are worth it because my yes to them is my no somewhere else: to my home, to my husband, to my daughter. So which one is more valuable? And can I afford the loss? You know, is the gain greater than the loss?

And I think that often when I was living in a scarcity mindset, or whenever I was grappling for any kind of success or attention... I'm thinking of this from a work lens, but you can also think of this from a relational lens. When I was in a scarcity mindset, when I had lost hope, whenever I was desperate for something, I would take the lowest-hanging fruit. And that yes was more sacrificial than if I just would have said no and waited for something better.

You know, I sacrificed much more of my time, of my energy, of my effort. And if I just would have waited, if I just would have waited, there would have been so much more on the other side of the waiting. And I think that that same thing can be applied relationally, where it's like, if you can just say no to these little settling moments where you're letting this guy treat you as a convenience rather than a priority, if you can just realize your worth, you will wait.

On the other side of that waiting is your confidence, is your value that you're able to step into, and that you will not make any compromises, that you won't be on the back burner for anybody because you won't settle for it. And man, you're going to meet someone who has the same kind of standard. And that is going to be a partnering rather than a settling. And that is going to be so fulfilling and so exciting. And you're going to be like, "Oh my gosh."

I just had a student that recently entered into a relationship like that. And she kept saying, "No, it's just weird because it's boring. There's no fighting." And it's funny that the word that she used I've heard it a couple of times is "boring" for a relationship where you're not fighting or arguing or something like that. And I'm



like, Okay, we probably should change that word because boring has a labor connotation. But let me tell you, the boring, quote-unquote, is so fulfilling. I'm like, it's so refreshing to be bored, you know?

**Stephanie:** Yeah. To not feel like your hair's on fire and you're constantly-

**Ainsley:** And you're wondering, you're pacing, you're spending so much mental energy on whatever he's doing. And you're like, No, it's because we're a partnership or relationship more than a situationship. Like you don't know what's going on.

**Stephanie:** I love that so much.

**Ainsley:** That was a long tangent. Sorry.

**Stephanie:** No. I love this so much. I think you really hit on... One of the things that I think keeps us in these situationships is that we feel like something's better than nothing. I think that that's just not true. I think being in any old relationship or any relationship is... being in the wrong relationship I think is more lonely than being alone.

**Ainsley:** Yeah, 100%.

**Stephanie:** It's like if you don't put someone who doesn't treat you well in that top spot, then you can sit in that top spot, God can sit in that top spot, your friends can sit in that top spot. Like you have more time and energy for things that are actually going to give you something back. And then also you're more ready for something great, you know, a romantic relationship when it comes along, because of all that work that you've done and because of the spot that you've saved him because you didn't give it away to someone who wasn't going to appreciate it. I feel like it's like the difference between eating like, I don't know... This analogy is totally gonna fall apart. So don't like...

**Ainsley:** You're the best in analogies. There's no way it's gonna fall apart. I'm here for it.

**Stephanie:** No, I think it's gonna fall apart. I need to work on this a little bit. It's you're sitting down to eat a Twinkie. Like when was the last time you eat a Twinkie? Those things don't decompose, right? They just like live forever. You're basically putting Styrofoam in your body that's gonna make you feel weird and gross, and like you're still hungry because you just ate Styrofoam and it's not going to ever break down.

So that's like settling for something that's just not going to fulfill you. I mean, it might keep you full for a couple of minutes. Versus eating something that's really good and nutritious for, actually, your body. And that's investing in yourself and

investing in your other relationships and growing as a person. And then really you've turned down a Twinkie for like the best pasta dish you've ever had in your life. Or like... insert your favorite food here. Like don't fill up before the good dinner. And if you do, if you're going to eat something, at least eat something that's good for you.

**Ainsley:** Right. I actually think that's a really good analogy because there is so much tied up into just, I don't know, the picture of all of that. Like you can see it. You can see the settling. Last night I ate some candy. And I was like, "This is not as good as I remember it. This was not as satisfying. I'm upset that I wasted time, energy, and a craving on this because I'm now going to have this sugar spike that I don't want. And it's going to crash. And that's kind of how those emotions are. Wherever you settle, your emotions have a little spike and then they're gonna crash down because it's not sustainable.

And the difference between what you're talking about before, like loneliness versus aloneness, they don't have to be the same thing. Just because you're sitting in your apartment alone doesn't mean that you have to be lonely. Fill that time up with self-improvement or self-care. Read about the Enneagram or learn more about yourself. Because the more that you learn about your worth and your value, the more you'll hold on to it and the more you'll start to believe it, and then the more you'll start to hold someone that you're dating to that standard to treat you as well.

If you are being treated... No, no, no. What am I trying to say? I'm trying to say that you have to be treating yourself well in order for someone else to treat you well. Just think about the time... What are you doing when you're alone? Are you treating yourself well? Are you feeding yourself well, exactly what you're saying, exactly lining up your analogy? Are you getting your body moving? Are you treating yourself well? Because whenever you are and someone else isn't, then you're gonna be like, "No, that's not... that's not how I'm to be treated?"

**Stephanie:** Yes!

**Ainsley:** And then they will either fall away or rise to the challenge.

**Stephanie:** I love everything about this. I think that that's one of the... You know, if we're in a situation ship, you know, we've talked about boundaries so much on the show, because I am obsessed with them. I just have learned so much about boundaries in the last handful of years and it's been so freeing.

But when it comes to setting a boundary with someone, a new boundary with someone, you need to figure out what the boundary is first for yourself. So that requires that time of like self-reflection, of understanding yourself, of actually

understanding what you need. I mean, that's the process of being like, "Am I looking to just be casual or do I actually want a relationship? Like you need to figure that out. Or what makes you feel loved? Or what makes you feel safe? Or what makes it not feel like your hair's on fire, and you feel like this person is on the brink of disappearing? What do you require in a relationship? But then you have to communicate it to the person.

And so we can't hold people accountable to live within boundaries that we haven't communicated. So we have to tell the person, "Hey, listen, I need to hear from you on a regular basis. And you know that is not too much to ask. But there has to be sort of a consequence for it, where it's like, if I'm going to be in a relationship with you, I need to hear from you at least every other day. That's a pretty low bar. That is a very reasonable thing to ask.

But then the second half of that is if I don't, I can't keep doing this. And you have to actually mean it. And it has to actually happen. And I think you'll give people like two chances or something. If it is hearing from someone every other day, like let's say he does it for a while and then he just drops off the mat for like a week. And then when you do talk again, you're like, "Hey, in order to be in a relationship with you, I need to hear from you like every other day. I can't have you just disappear for a week. So I want to give this one more try but if you can't hold up your end of the bargain, then I'm going to need to end this." And then you give him one more try and then if he disappears again. Then you actually need to end it. That's what setting a boundary looks like.

I think that a really natural response from someone who is unhealthy, from booboo dude, is when you ask for what you need, they respond with telling you that you're high maintenance.

**Ainsley:** Sure.

**Stephanie:** So how do we figure out what we need and actually, one, believe that it's not too much to ask? What can we ask for? Let's start there. What can we ask for from a relationship? What is legitimate? If we're saying like, I would like a dozen roses delivered to my house every day, that is too much, that is expensive, that is wasteful. You do not need that.

Currently, my girls are learning how to talk. And they learned how to say, "I want this." But now they're saying, "I need this." So they'll like reach for anything they can see and say, "I needed it." And we're like, "Buddy, you don't need to hold the car keys. You want to hold the car keys. You don't need a popsicle. You want a popsicle." Anyway. So it's like, you don't need a dozen roses every day, you may

want that. So how do we figure out what we actually need and what's realistic to ask for?

**Ainsley:** Here's the thing about the high maintenance thing. I want to go back to that, because whenever you think of maintaining anything in your life, the better you maintain it or I guess the higher you maintain the thing, the better it is. The more often that you clean your house, the cleaner it is, the more peace you will have in that area.

I'm trying to think of different examples. But if you're thinking of friendships, the more that you put into your friendships, the more you're going to get out of them. The more you do, the higher the maintenance, the more fruit that you're going to see and you're going to have.

So I don't buy it. I don't buy high maintenance for a person. Because I'm just like, that shows me someone who just knows how to take care of themselves and the people around them and their things and their life. If you want the guy to come to the door, if you are picking you up at a date, if you want the guy to not just honk their horn whenever they come get you to let you know they're there, I don't think that's a problem.

If you live with your parents and you want that guy to communicate with your parents every single time he comes in to pick you up, I don't think that's a problem. That shows you want a relationship to be built. Exactly. We're like, that's manners.

**Stephanie:** It is.

**Ainsley:** But the thing is, is that that sounds so mind-blowing to so many people right now. That's the problem. That's the problem that we've let people say that we're high maintenance as if it's a bad thing, as if it's not the reason that I asked this is because I know that I'm worth this. It's not a bad thing. Yeah, a dozen roses every day is excessive and that shows me like, "What are you trying to have someone prove something to you?" Because then that's just, you know, not nice.

**Stephanie:** That's kind of manipulation, though.

**Ainsley:** That's manipulation. 100%. 100%. So know what your intentions are. But if you know your worth and this is the treatment that you expect, live in it, ask it, expect it. And if it's not given to you, obviously, have some grace if the grace is there. If he has a broken foot, he can't walk to the door, okay, got it. No problem. Like, there's some bending for sure. But you know what I'm saying. Like within reason, take care of the things that are important to you and the other person will recognize that and they will also take care of those things, too I think.

**Stephanie:** Yes, yes.

**Ainsley:** I can go on just on examples. But now I'm like, "I'm not gonna say some of these things out loud." So we're gonna continue.

**Stephanie:** Well, I'm thinking about, like, taking care of plants. There's a thing that... Like we adapt to our environment. Our job as living things is to survive, right? So I think that plants like cacti have learned to survive with very little water because that is the environment they live in and so they've adapted to need very little water. So they are okay living in the desert, they can survive.

I think for a lot of my life I tried to adapt to be a cactus. Like, "I'm just gonna need less and need less and need less so that no one... I never am in a position where I want more than someone wants to give me. But it's like, I don't want to be a cactus. I don't want to need the bare minimum and to ask for the bare minimum and to need the bare minimum and to be able to survive on the bare minimum.

I want to flourish and flower and bloom. I guess cactuses bloom too, but you know what I mean. So yeah, I think that we adapt ourselves thinking... I mean, I had people directly tell me that I was high maintenance-

**Ainsley:** Me too.

**Stephanie:** ...and that that's why they didn't want to be with me. And I mean, I carried that around for years. But actually it wasn't true. I actually got to hear from the people that told me this, like, actually that wasn't true. I mean, that's not why we broke up. It's not. But I believed it was for a really long time and so I just tried to be less. And I think a lot of us do that.

But I don't want to be someone who expects the bare minimum and can survive on the bare minimum. I want to be invested in and to invest back. Like I just want more than that. And I love how you said like, you get out what you put in and I want someone who wants to get out a lot and wants to put in a lot. And I want to do the same for them.

**Ainsley:** And that is a relationship. It's not a situationship. It's a two-way street. If you feel like it's a one-way relationship, bye. Bye. Bye. And don't be afraid to be the one that got away. Don't be afraid to be the one that got away. Just risk it. I mean, it's just so worth the risk to be the one that got away.

I had three different guys tell me that I was the one... and I'm not trying to toot my own horn. This has actually happened. These are facts. Three different guys be like,

"You were the one that got away." And I'm like, "And whose fault is that? Mm, not mine."

**Stephanie:** And the things we're afraid of is that those guys are better than the person you ended up with. They are also like, by letting you go you missed out on the best person you are going to have. And that's not the case. It's just not the case.

**Ainsley:** Exactly. God said, "No, I love you more than that."

**Stephanie:** I think the fear in this, and I don't know if anyone else is feeling this right now, but what if this guy isn't out there? Like, what if a better person doesn't exist? What if there isn't a person out there who will treat us the way that we deserve to be treated? It feels like our options are take some crumbs or be alone. Are there people who will treat us this way?

**Ainsley:** I think that that is definitely the most common fear, I think. And that is a scarcity mindset. And my question in return is, but what if there is? Are you ready? What if there is? Have you done the things that you needed to do to be ready for someone forever? I don't know. That's just something you got to ask yourself. Everybody's different. Everybody's different.

And maybe you feel like, yes, I have because I do have friends. I do have friends that say or that I look at their lives and I'm like, "They're waiting for someone to love them well, and they really are loving themselves." And honestly that conversation I think that a) they would be better to lead and b) I think it is a... I don't know all of the answers but I do know that there's always something in the waiting.

God absolutely does not waste a single season, a single situation. There's nothing that's wasted. So there's always an intimacy with Him that can be, I don't know, improved or closer or something like that. I think that's always where I kind of want to turn whenever I feel like I'm in a scarcity mindset is what does God have for me? What does God promise me? And you don't have promises and easy life by any means. But He does promise us an identity that is very concrete and that is very fulfilling.

Now, I don't mean for that to sound any other way, but hopeful. So I'm just circling back to the question. Instead of living in that scarcity mindset, find hope in the promises of God. And I want you to ask the question "but what if there is someone out there?" If he looked at my life right now, would he want to be a part of it? Or would he be like, I mean, you're kind of settling for... What if he evaluated your exes? I saw that as a trend on TikTok. The husband would rate the girl's exes? What if you would do that? Is he like, "Oh, I'm one of them?" Would he think that you

were settling for him? Or would he think, "Oh, wow, we're equal. We both really have our stuff together. And we really know who we are, and know what we want from the other person, for the other person and for our future?"

I just think that is a question that we need to be asking because we need to be living outside of the scarcity mindset. Imagine if we could just live with the confidence that we desire. Imagine if we just risked it and let go of the things that are giving us that Twinkie fulfillment.

**Stephanie:** I love it.

**Ainsley:** That temporary gross.

**Stephanie:** Just never breaks down. It never breaks down.

**Ainsley:** Yeah.

**Stephanie:** Someone's gonna be like, "No, it actually does." That was just like a rumor.

**Ainsley:** I don't know. I think I've seen those things. They don't break down fast enough. That's for sure.

**Stephanie:** Yeah, yeah. It's like, this [inaudible 01:01:22] is 400 years old. I'm not 400 obviously. You know what I mean. The last thing I wanted to say... this is something that my friend Carly and I talked about a lot when we were about dating is the book/movie *He's Just Not That Into You*. And it is so good. It is so good.

That's one of the things that I've seen is like, sometimes, when someone isn't like showing up for you the way that you deserve, sometimes they are not capable of doing that, which is great to know. And so, goodbye, see you later. Work on that in your own life. And I hope you get there so that you can have a great relationship. But I'm not going to be the one to a) teach you those things or wait until you have those figured out. That's not your job.

**Ainsley:** Yeah.

**Stephanie:** But then I think that there are other people who aren't a good fit for each other or like-

**Ainsley:** For sure.

**Stephanie:** I had someone tell me that they liked me. I've definitely said this on the show before, but I had someone tell me that they were like 90% sure about me. And I

spent a lot of time with this person. This person saw like all the best of me that I had to offer. And they were like, "Yeah, I like you like 80 or 90%." What in the world?

**Ainsley:** What does that even mean?

**Stephanie:** What does that mean? Am I supposed to earn the last 10? Or like... I don't know. But I think that there are people who maybe come at the wrong time in our life, or it's just not the right fit. Most of the people that we meet are not going to be the right fit for us. So I think some of the time what is happening is you're not the right person for this... you're not the-

**Ainsley:** Like wrong time, right person?

**Stephanie:** Yeah. Or just wrong person. And I think a lot of times when someone is the wrong person for us, we don't know how to handle that. I know we do this too where we kind of will lead people on or will kind of keep someone around because it feels good to be wanted. Or we'll kind of date them or we're dating them kind of trying to see if this is going to turn into something and then it doesn't and we don't know how to end it well.

So sometimes that's what's happening on the other end is like, it's just not the right thing and that person doesn't know how to tell you or they're still trying to figure it out, or they're bad at telling you. But I think that we really can trust that when it's the right thing that person will... I think you know, it's the right thing because of how that person treats you. That's the sign. You don't need any other sign than that.

And it doesn't mean that you're future husband or spouse or something. There's still more to figure out because there can be more than one person that treats you well. There should be. But I think we've seen like guyfriends or girlfriends of ours where they just were kind of like shady with pretty much everybody but then they met the person who was like... they just were like, "Whoa, this person is A for B and like they just went all in. And so I think that how we are treated by a person, if he really likes you, you'll know it.

**Ainsley:** Yeah, absolutely. I even had a friend in college that I had a crush on, he had a crush on me. We both, I don't know, treated the other one really well. It was great except that we weren't in our relationship at all or situation or anything. We're just really good friends. But the thing that I think always held me back was he was always confused about who he liked and if he liked them enough. And I was just like, "I don't want to be a... I want you to know. I want you to know without a shadow of a doubt that you want to be with me. I want you to want to come meet my family. I



want you to want to spend time with me, and take me on dates and all of those things."

And guess what? Justin wanted to do those things. My husband wanted to take me on dates. He wanted to spend time with me. My family came over to my apartment two weeks after me and Justin met, and he's very tall, so we needed something hung. And he came over and just hung it, and like met my family. And it was casual and it was like not a big deal but it was also a huge deal. Those are the things that you're like, "Oh, oh, oh, my gosh, oh, my gosh."

**Stephanie:** And you don't have to force it. If you're having to force it, something is wrong. And is not wrong with you. It's just not the right thing or not the right time. But I just feel like I forced so many things where I tried to earn that last 10% to make the other person sure or whatever. When it was actually the right person at the right time or someone who could be the right person, I just didn't have to force it.

**Ainsley:** And I'm willing to bet that if someone's listening to this, and they're squirming in their seat, and they're just like, uh uh, very uncomfortable with this part of the conversation, then they're probably having to force something. And they're wondering, are we sure there's something better out there? And just from my experience, that's the only thing I can speak to is yes. That's from my experience. From my experience, there was something so much better out there. And it was amazing.

**Stephanie:** Same. I would even say I would rather be by myself than be with someone who had to force to be with me.

**Ainsley:** Right. I would rather be by myself traveling to Europe, spending my time doing things that... going to seminars, going to conferences, meeting new friends. I would rather be spending my time doing that than sitting by my phone wondering if I was going to get a text back from someone that I felt like it was pulling teeth to even want to value me.

**Stephanie:** I think I could date myself better. I think I could marry myself better-

**Ainsley:** Yeah, exactly.

**Stephanie:** ...than that and have a better relationship. So yeah, there's better. No matter what it looks like, there's better than having to force a relationship that isn't working.

**Ainsley:** Yeah, 100%. Don't date a booboo dude.

**Stephanie:** Don't date a booboo dude. We'll circle. Ainslie, I love you.

**Ainsley:** I love you.

**Stephanie:** We're going to link to all of your things, to your book, to your podcasts, to everything on our show notes. But I'm so grateful for you. Thank you for coming on the show. Thank you for being part of our Girls Night fam. And thank you for just being such a wise, wonderful friend mentor.

**Ainsley:** No, you are the absolute best. I love everything that you do. And I am just honored to be a part of it and to get to hang out. This is my favorite excuse to just get to hang out with each other and talk.

**Stephanie:** Really this is for us. So thanks guys for giving us an extra excuse. Not like we needed one to hang out.

**Ainsley:** Exactly.

**Stephanie:** Thanks, friends

**Ainsley:** Yeah.

[01:08:28] <music>

**Outro:** You guys, isn't Ainsley amazing? I just love her and I loved this conversation. Don't forget that if you ever want to find the links for anything we talked about in our Girls Night episodes, you can always find those over in our show notes. Just head over to [girlsnightpodcast.com](http://girlsnightpodcast.com) and you'll find links for everything, including links for Ainsley so you can pick up her book, listen to her podcast and follow along with all the great stuff she's doing.

All right, friends, that's it for today's episode, but we have so much good stuff ahead this season. And with that in mind, now is the perfect time to make sure you're subscribed. Subscribing to the show is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode. It won't send you an email or anything. It just makes sure that your phone downloads the latest episode when a new one's released.

And I did want to take a quick second to ask y'all a favor. If you enjoyed this episode, or if you've been a Girls Night fan for a while now, would you take just two quick seconds to leave us a rating and review on iTunes? Those reviews help out our podcasts so much and it really would mean the world to me. So if you'd take two quick seconds to do that, I'd be so grateful.

Friends, thanks so much for joining me for Girls Night. I'll see you next week.