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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.

Friends, I'm so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how to work from home and actually get work done. I've been wanting to do this episode for years now because while I've been working from home for almost 10 years, wild, right, I know that it's a newish thing for so many of us.

We know that work from home has become so much more common in the last few years. Especially since the pandemic started, so many of us work from home either sometimes or have hybrid schedules, or are fully remote. And while working from home has its perks for sure, it also has a whole new set of challenges. And that's what we're going to talk about today.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend Elizabeth McCravy. Elizabeth is a Nashville-based wife, mom, podcaster, and website designer. She designs and sells the most beautiful Showit website templates, which we'll be sure to link to in the show notes along with the discount code, and she does all of that while working from home.

She has so much wisdom and insight to share on the topic of work-from-home life and I cannot wait for you to hear from her.

But before we dive in, speaking of things that we can do from home, did you know that you can have a counseling session straight from the comfort of your couch? With one of our amazing girls named sponsors called [Faithful Counseling](#), you can do just that.

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.

You may have heard me talk about Faithful Counseling before. But just in case you haven't, I wanted to tell you four quick reasons why I love them so much.

First, it's easy to get started. All you have to do is go to their website, 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 them 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. 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 have to find a counselor you really connect with. And oftentimes 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 is super 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 make it so easy to find the best fit possible.

And then the last reason is that it's easier to fit into 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, especially in a time when the economy's in flux. But Faithful Counseling is significantly less expensive and they have financial aid available. And if you sign up through this special link 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. That link will also give you 10% off your first month. Again that's Stephaniemaywilson.com/counseling for all the info, and you can get 10% off your first month of counseling there too.

Okay, you guys ready? Let's jump into the episode with Elizabeth.

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Stephanie: You guys, I am so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my new but also how are we not friends already friend, Elizabeth McCravy. Elizabeth, thanks so much for coming on the show.

Elizabeth: Oh, I'm so thrilled. So, Stephanie, I looked actually on Apple podcasts. You know how you can like see when you first subscribe to show? And I've been a Girl's Night listener since like early 2019. So when it was around like 50-ish episodes. So long time. We have so many mutual friends. So it's a long time coming. I was so grateful when you asked me to be on because I'm a Girls Night listener as well, like everyone listening to us now. So it's really fun.

Stephanie: I didn't know that.

Elizabeth: I know. I waited till we started recording to tell you that because I was like, "I want to tell her that while we're all listening." But yeah, I love the show.

Stephanie: I totally didn't know that. I'm so honored. Yeah, we really do have mutual friends, so your name has come up in all kinds of moments for me. I love your work. I love the way you work. So I'm just being inspired by you. I feel like I've had a business crush on you forever. Also, we both live in Nashville. So I'm like, "How has this not happened?"

Elizabeth: We need to hang out.

Stephanie: Yeah, we need to hang out. Okay, so for women who haven't gotten to meet you and follow along with your work forever, tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact.

Elizabeth: My name is Elizabeth McCravy and I'm a Christian. I'm a wife to my high school sweetheart, but like senior year high school sweethearts, so not the whole time of high school, but senior high school sweetheart Adam. And we have a son, one son who's a year and a half years old. We live in the Nashville area in Franklin, Tennessee. So like you said, close by. So fun living here.

And I do a lot of things but the main thing in my business is that I create and sell Showit website templates. I'm a website designer. They're really easy-to-use templates, very personality-driven, and made to grow with your brand.

I also teach other designers how to build their business through my course Booked Out Designer. And I'm a podcaster, too. So Breakthrough Brand Podcast is the name of my show. And it's like a lot for business owners, marketing, productivity, motherhood, in business, website, tips, things like that.

And then my husband and I also do real estate investing, which sometimes I forget to mention that because it feels still so new. And it's very much like our little big-ish side hustle where we have five rental properties across Middle Tennessee and one in Alabama. So that's another endeavor we have.

And a fun fact about me. Like many people who were teens in the 2000s, I had a MySpace. MySpace was the hot thing then. And instead of just using it to post the old school, traditional selfie with a real phone, and updating your top eight, I actually had a true MySpace... I can't call it business because it made no money, but I'll call it a MySpace hobby, where my sister and I made MySpace layouts.

So we would design them and code them, market them, put them up on our page for other teenagers to use. So all sorts of like cool, fun designs. And we were really like little computer nerds, where we just loved it so much. After school and weekends, it was like, this is our thing that we're doing.

And we grew it to like a decent size friends on MySpace situation. And my dad from there was like, "Hey, y'all should make this into a business." You can Google it, but there were a lot of teenagers back then who made good money selling MySpace layouts. And as soon as we started, got the domain name, started the website process, we lost interest, it lost its luster, possibly due to it starting to make money and we're in age of like facing out of it. But that was like my thing growing up.

And it's cool looking back now because I make website templates, Myspace layout is very similar. So it's cool seeing how God weaved that in a super early interest I had no idea could be a business, and now it's like what I'm doing. So I love looking back. And it's just fun memories with my sister too of us kind of building that thing together.

Stephanie: That is so cool. That is so cool. Like totally out of space. Changing your top eight. Like the thing that was... Like you'd pick a music that would play when you'd go on your page. I think mine had like glitter fall. I don't know. I love that.

One of the things that I love thinking about is like looking back through my early interests and you know, different conversations I had with people along the way. Like it just feels like the road is really windy as you're walking down it. But when you look back, you're like, Oh, all these things connected. That's really cool.

How did you make that jump from this early interest in coding and building MySpace layouts, how did that become... like what has your career journey looked like?

Elizabeth: I feel like most people don't realize a lot of careers that are out there... We were just talking about this. What we both do now, a lot of people like when you're younger, you don't even realize that's a thing. So for me, I had an early interest in entrepreneurship, definitely an early interest in design.

And I graduated college, decided to be a nursing major, which is like, "What? That doesn't even have anything to do with either of those things." But I also loved science. And that was a very obvious career path. Like I knew a lot of people who are nurses. It's super, super common thing. So it felt like it made sense to me.

And I went to college with that major. Never took any nursing classes because freshman year I kind of felt that like, Hey, that's like not the right thing, but I had no idea what I wanted to do career-wise. I was just very... You're very confused and only felt like I was familiar with very certain career paths and just really struggling there.

But I went to my school's career counseling center and did sessions with them. I paid to do their whole personality testing system and did the whole career counseling thing. And the guy ended up telling me, "You should major in digital media studies," which I had never heard of, that major or that concept.

It was a very unpopular major at my small college. There were only a few of us even in it. But it was a perfect fit for me. It was a combo of graphic design, computer science, and marketing. So you took classes in all three of those. And then my emphasis was graphic design.

And as soon as I started taking the classes, I really started to lean into like, Okay, I love this. Started to kind of embrace the idea of the business stuff a bit more and allowing that side of me to come out.

So that was really how I found the degree and the concept. And I got a job right out of college at a PR... not PR place. Like an ad, marketing, kind of medical marketing stuff here in Nashville. And I was very excited to be a nine to five. I thought that was going to be so great. I'm not against nine to five, even as someone who's an entrepreneur now. I think it can be a great career path.

But I was at the time like, "This is it. I'm so excited, I'm going to wear a pantsuit and work in a big building." And I hated my first job. Like truly hated it for a lot of reasons that made a lot of sense and a lot of reasons that maybe didn't. And I ended up quitting after about three and a half months and left without... Left kind of unexpectedly. I didn't give a 30 days' notice. It was like I left that day.

I think it was a total God thing because I left the job thinking, "All right, I'm gonna find another nine to five. I'm going to start applying, start that application process over again that I just did when I graduated college, and no one wrote me back. Literally couldn't find a job, even though that first job was super easy for me to find at a time where a lot of my friends were struggling to get their first job. I got a job easily and then was like, no one's writing me back.

I ended up really kind of going hard into the freelance stuff I had been doing while I was at the nine to five and while I was in college, leaned back into that, doing freelance design for people, managing people's social media accounts, things like that.

It took me about a year, but I decided like, "Okay, let's make this freelance thing my first real business. And so I pushed it that way. But I really think it was just such a God thing that the doors were not opening for me to get another job and that I had a first job I didn't like. Because I think if I had a job I'd loved it might have been years and years before I started my business.

And so for people listening to even know that like I think sometimes when we're younger, we can think like, Oh, starting a business is for people my mom's age or for people in their 30s. It's like not something for when you're in your 20s. But I started my business when I was like 22. And it was very intimidating.

I definitely was the youngest in the room forever, and still sometimes feel like I'm the youngest in the room even at 30 now. But it felt very young. I felt very unqualified a lot of the time. But I'm so glad I started when I did. And you can totally start a business that young or younger, even or older, whenever.

Stephanie: One of the things that... We've talked about this a million times on the show is I was so intimidated to start a podcast, even though my background is in broadcast journalism. I have some of the training, I guess. But it still felt really intimidating. But that was when I realized everyone is a beginner at the beginning. Everyone is a beginner.

So if you're going to start anything, you're going to have to be terrible at it for a while. So you might as well jump in and kind of get that part over with. So it's never the wrong time to start. If you're going to be bad at it for a while, you might as well start logging some of those hours early or today and with practice, you'll get better at it. I love that.

Honestly, that's really similar to mine and Carl's story. We had jobs we loved. We lost them. We both got downsized on the same day and right before our wedding.

And then we kind of found something else that worked for a while but then that fell through.

So Carl just kind of pursued his freelance design work. And that's when the bottom dropping out for the second time was when I was like, "Well, I don't have anything to lose. I might as well start writing and start taking this seriously and really pursue this blog thing as a business." I'm so glad that I did.

Well, I was talking to a group of creatives yesterday about this. That everyone tells you in college that you can't make a living creatively. I know so many women and men who are flying in the face of that. I would say more people because I'm in this industry. But I know more people making a living through entrepreneurship and creativity and writing and arts and music than I do people who aren't. It really is possible.

Elizabeth: Yes, that's so true. It can feel like you can't because again, you only see certain career paths. But once you get your eyes open to all the different things that there is out there, there's so much more. And that's cool that y'all's story is so similar. And it's just like you never know.

Sometimes you have a deliberate business starting, and sometimes it's more of like things happen that leads you to that path that you were meant to go on.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. So because you've been doing this work for so long, you've been doing it from home for so long, I really wanted to just pick your brain like crazy about how you get things done. I think when COVID happened, so many of us who were wearing pants suits, and who were in offices, all of a sudden started living kind of more this entrepreneurial lifestyle, you know, no matter who you're working for, if you're working for yourself, if you're working for someone else. So many of us are working from home now.

It can be a really tricky thing. It's not something that we're all just naturally gifted at. So I think a lot of us are beginners at trying to be our work selves at home. I have like a thousand questions for you about this.

So the first one is, can you walk us through your daily schedule? Now that we know what you do? Like, how do you do that throughout the day?

Elizabeth: First I want to say, with the working from home thing, you're so right that it's hard and that we aren't typically taught how to do it. And then with COVID, it's like everyone just got thrown into this. And even your employer might not know how to help you do it well.

And when I first started working from home all those years ago, I know I made a lot of mistakes, some of that we'll talk about in this episode. But like you're watching TV all day while working, not actually getting ready whatsoever, or working on things that don't actually matter and trying to focus too much on just putting in the hours but it's like really moving the needle forward, and stuff like that.

So over the years, and I know you probably have a lot of this too, Stephanie, like you figured out what works and what doesn't for you personally and just in general. So yeah, I'm excited to share about all that.

For me, like I said, I'm a newish mom. I feel like I still want to call myself a new mom but I'm new-ish I guess since he's like a year and a half old now. But we have childcare outside the home three days a week, Monday, Wednesday, Friday. And on those days, my husband Adam drops him off, I pick him up. So those workdays for me are from like eight-ish to like 3:30-ish when I go back to pick them up.

I usually take like a one hour solid break in there or I'll like stop the workday and take a short lunch, stop the workday early to give myself like an hour or so before I go pick up Colin. So that's Monday, Wednesday, Friday.

And Tuesdays are my mom-day where I don't work at all. I'm just at home with him doing mom Stuff and sometimes working during nap time. But I try not to. I try to let that be a day of where the nap time is a time of rest for me because it can be long doing a full day alone with a toddler.

And then Thursdays my husband is home with Colin doing his dad day. So I'm working that day with baby in the house, also kind of like going a bit more back and forth between family life and work life. Because they are just downstairs, so it's like we might lunch together. I might take a break to go to the playground. I might work a little longer that day. Since we're not going to pick him up at preschool, I can work a bit longer.

And then weekends are very much for church, family time, time with friends, resting. I try not to work at all on the weekends unless I'm in a launch mode.

What I'm doing, I'm like, gosh, my business, like I said like, is design and courses. I sell templates, make courses, I podcast. So I spend a lot of time creating content, whether it's outlining for my show and recording, doing a guest interview communicating with team members on like Slack and Clickup, designing templates and working on design stuff, dealing with customer support things, updating a course or a training I'm working on and things like that. And then giving support to

students at Booked Out Design through coaching calls and in the Facebook group. So a lot of random stuff all day long.

I feel like no week or day is the same. I do have a decent amount of meetings and things I have to navigate to schedule time around.

Stephanie: That makes sense. That sounds familiar. You described so many things about my day so well. I feel like I can never answer that question well. So I'm like, yeah, like that but I'm not really designing things the way that Elizabeth is.

What have you learned over the years about organizing your day so that you can actually get the things done that you need to get done and so that you can finish the day feeling like you've actually moved the needle? I like what you said about like you can just toil away at all kinds of things if you're just trying to get some hours in. But when you're working from home, that's not really the point. You actually want to make some progress. So what have you learned about that?

Elizabeth: One thing that I've done that was a huge game changer for me when I first implemented it is like... I like to call it serious calendaring. So basically using... It could be your preferred digital calendar. For me, it's Apple calendar. I know a lot of people for Google Calendar or any other.

I do think a digital calendar works best for this though, because it's nice to have it with you on your phone or be able to quickly and easily move things around. But basically, the way it works is you would start on ideally Sunday or Monday morning, like before you start the workday, get out a blank sheet of paper and write down... And it maybe multiple blank sheets of paper, like scrap pages. Write down all the things you're needing to do that week.

And you can put them into categories of like, these are the personal things I want to get done. Like my child has a doctor's appointment. I'd love to work out two days. I need to buy groceries. It can be things like that, kind of categorize those together.

Work things that are truly on the calendar, as in they have to have at a certain time. You might write that, you know, Tuesday you have a meeting with your boss, Thursday's this podcast interview, things like that. Write those in.

And then write all the things that can kind of fit into your life and calendar wherever you want them to. Like they don't have a specific due date necessarily and can kind of be worked on whenever. So for me, it might be things like I need to work on making these three pages on a template, I need to get back to my team about this, I have to record this solo podcast episode, all those different things.

So you want to be brained up all the things you've got to do, categorize how you want to. It might be multiple sheets of paper. And it might be like when you look at it, like, Oh my gosh, it's so many things. So I start with that big brain dump, and then I go more granular into like, what tasks have to happen in order for the top-level tasks to happen.

It really stinks when you get something on your to-do list and you're like, "Wait, I can't even do anything on this because I had to ask this person this or this person has to get back to me, or actually, I had to make this big decision or whatever before it can happen.

An example of that would be I could say, "I gotta do this podcast episode and is due next week." In reality, it's like multi-step. Like I need to come up with a topic. I need to outline. I might need to ask a team member something first, then you have to record it, then you have to get it to everyone.

So then you want to take the list and write down the multi-steps after. Maybe on your agenda, you have a meeting with your boss on Wednesday but in reality you need 30 minutes before that meeting where you're going to prep your notes for what you want to talk about. So you want to kind of like break down those sub-tasks.

And then get out your digital calendar, start putting stuff on it. Start putting things on it that are like have true times, which ideally, those things would actually already be on the calendar. Because if you're scheduling through a scheduling software, or you put them on at the time that event was scheduled, it's going to already be on there. But then you start putting the other things. You can put your workout on there. You can put that you need to buy groceries on there and when you're going to do that.

And you can really like plug and play and be strategic about when things are going to happen. So you might look at Monday and say, okay, Monday, you already have two meetings that you know you're going to get ready for because they're important, you're going to do your hair and makeup and get dressed. So maybe that's a good day for you to record the reels you need to make for your business or work on something else that requires that front-facing look.

Or maybe you know that you want to write three blog posts and Tuesdays you don't have any meetings. You just have a completely free day. That'd be a great day to like go spend three hours at a coffee shop working. You can kind of prioritize and really, again, get granular of like what makes sense when. You just put on the calendar.

I do color coding where different things are different colors. So it's like I have multiple calendars on Apple calendar, where they all go into. And I'll also leave plenty of blank spaces because things might take longer than you think. And when you first do this, it's hard to know how long things are going to take.

Like you might think the meeting with your boss and the prep is only an hour and a half but really it's two hours or three hours or whatever. So you kind of learn as you go. But I think that's so helpful. And it gives you direction in knowing that you have a plan. It helps you be more deliberate with your time.

It's so seasonal. Like I for years did this. And I think that was a huge part of me growing my business without working too much. Because right now, I work about 20 to 30 hours a week, as a working mom who really is mainly working part-time a lot at the time. But before then, before I had my son, I was still not working 40 hours a week as I built my business. So it's kind of this intense scheduling helped me do that.

Stephanie: That's so awesome. Do you work more in spurts or do you work more...? Do batch work at all?

Elizabeth: I do. I like to do a lot of timer work. A good app for that is called Focus Keeper, if you've heard of it. That lets you kind of do a timer where it does like, "You're 20 minutes on, 10 minutes off," like break ways that way. So I do that some, especially when I'm doing a task that is really unpleasant, where I'm like, "I don't want to do this, I'm avoiding this." That can be really helpful to like, just set a timer on your iPhone for like 30 minutes, and you're gonna get a break once you're done. So I do think that's helpful.

And I try to do a lot of things like in batching mode in a sense. So like with meetings, there's some days I'm doing meetings, there's some days I'm not doing meetings. I do batching of podcast interview recording. Not so episodes as much. But I do some batching in that sense. And I do think that's really helpful.

Stephanie: I think paying attention to how... It's really a learning process. Like you try scheduling your day one way, you know, putting all your meetings in the afternoon, and then try to have some focused work time in the morning. We try different things.

And I think that different things work for different people. I think a lot of times we forget to stop and go Okay, how did this go? Or like I'm always getting caught in the after... Like, I'm always so tired by 3 pm or something. Okay, so what do we need to do differently?

I love that idea of getting everything out of your head and onto a piece of paper and then finding the time on your calendar. Because then you can look back at the week and go, "Oh, how did this go?" Or I never got to that, why? Or I avoided that thing. Okay, well, why? Or I was so tired by the time I got to that thing.

I also think that it avoids some of the dread of feeling overwhelmed. I'll write down a to-do list and feel like I have to do every single bit of it that day. Instead of like, well, this is my to-do list probably for the next two weeks. I just don't think about it that way because I forget to sort of get to that next step of actually getting it on the calendar.

Elizabeth: Yeah, putting on your calendar allows you to be like you're making the decision ahead of time and then you just need to execute it, which can be really helpful if you often feel like you plan to do something, but you don't actually take action on it. You can kind of like let your calendar be the boss in the sense and be like, "Hey, I pre-decide this myself earlier this week when I was having the energy and all that decided that I was going to do this."

And that method might not work for some people. So you might be like, "Oh my gosh, that's too intense. I don't like that." Or my schedule is too unpredictable.

And another option that has worked better for me in this current season of life because we've had the current child care situation we're in for only about three months now. And my husband's a counselor, is also in graduate school and his schedule changes a lot and then my schedule is more flexible since I work for myself. So it's like I have to navigate his a lot. So it does feel harder to do that.

And another thing that I do more frequently now that I think is really helpful is I come up with like a top one to two things for each work day that I want to get done. And it shouldn't be more than one to three things because in reality, the one to three things that they're really moving the needle forward probably do take a bit more time.

And when deciding what are the top one to three things, I'm asking myself, if this was the only thing I got done today, would I be satisfied with my work day?

Stephanie: That's so good.

Elizabeth: And that's how I can know like, it is something where it's like... Because there's so many things that feel important, but really it's just because they're urgent. Like our inbox often is that. Like it can feel so important, but really, it's just urgent. And it probably isn't necessarily moving the needle for that much.

So I'll write down what are those top one to three things and then what are all the other things that might be more like five-minute tasks. And then often like do a little bit of things like this meeting we're in right now might be on the calendar but then other things might not be. So that's what's work for me in my current season.

But I do think the other way, though, what I just shared is also really effective. So it's all about finding what works with you and your brain in your current season of life. And as a mom, on my mom days, something I do that I'm just obsessed with because it's almost like a fun little game for me is back on the scrap sheet of paper, I get that out and I'll write down the different things I want to do that day. That's more like, you know, things around the house, things for my child kind of day.

So it might be like, I wanted to get laundry done, I've got to unload the dishwasher and my house would be that, like, I need to outline a podcast episode. Or I really want to pick back up that fiction book I'm reading, I want to do a devotional time and prayer time today. I want to go on a walk.

I write all those kind of things down and then I just pick whatever highlighters I have available. So it might be like, you know, green is for stuff while Collins awake, and yellow is for stuff during nap time. I basically look at the list of like, Okay, is this something I could do with him or while he's playing independently?

So like folding laundry, at least for him at his current age of a year and a half, that's a great task to do with him. There's really no reason to use your precious nap time to fold laundry. Same thing for unloading the dishwasher. Maybe you can let him play with some pants on the floor. And then you unload. But then like me sitting down and outlining the podcast is like, no, I need that to be something I'm doing during nap time or while he's doing something truly independent. So kind of mapping that out and then you get to mark stuff off.

And for that I do keep it just scrap paper, because I can just leave it in the kitchen, we're at home most of the day. And that works really well. It can help you kind of have some structure on a day that might otherwise feel like I didn't get anything done. I'm just like reactive. It can give you a little bit of proactivity.

Stephanie: I love that. Also, there's like no better feeling than checking things off the list. I was trying to find this quote. Just like everything else is like, did he actually say that? I don't know. But I like it. So there's this Mark Twain quote that says, "If it's your job to eat a frog, it's best to do it first thing in the morning. And if it's your job to eat two frogs, it's best to eat the biggest one first."

This is maybe the most consistent thing that I've done over the last handful of years is like the one top one to two things that I need to get done. And then I really do get

kind of that like I'm procrastinating on something and so then now I'm really dreading it, now I don't want to do it. And it could be anything.

So that idea of eat the biggest frog first, what is the thing where you're like, I have to get this done? If I can do it first thing, then I don't have to think about it for the rest of the day. So that's like, this is what I need to do today in order for this to be a productive work day or to move the needle forward. And then maybe whichever one you dread the most, do that first.

Elizabeth: That's such good advice, and so hard to do. So like if you are like, Okay, I'm going to take what Stephanie just said and do the thing that's most important first, but you find yourself instead being like, let me scroll Instagram, I want to open my inbox or let me respond to this other thing or this thing so much easier, maybe let yourself have like 10 minutes of doing the easier thing. Because sometimes it can be like our brain needs a second to like go into work. But then do the hard thing and maybe set a timer. Give yourself a reward after spending an hour on it where you take a break. And doing those sorts of things.

Especially when you're short on work time. If you don't have that many hours, it can feel so much better to get that really good thing done before lunch and then be able to like do something more relaxing and less intense the rest of the day.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah.

Sponsor: Hey friends! Our girls night sponsor for today is an amazing company called [ZocDoc](#). Now, I know you can totally relate to this, but leading into the spring and summer months, my schedule tends to fill up quickly. As a result, if there's something that's going to make my life easier, I'm all ears.

And that's why I was instantly intrigued by the ZocDoc app. Finding a doctor through their app is a seamless process with just a few taps on your screen to find quality care you need. Not only is it easy, it's also reliable.

ZocDoc has thousands of medical professionals that are ready to help you, listen to you like a friend, and help you get the care you need. If you're not familiar with them already, ZocDoc is the only free app that lets you find and book doctors who are patient-reviewed, take your insurance, are available when you need them, and treat almost every condition under the sun.

When you're just not feeling your best, the last thing you want is to use all your energy browsing the internet for hours trying to find a doctor with decent reviews. But with ZocDoc, you can just click a few buttons on their app to connect with the

doctor that aligns with your needs. And that means that no time is wasted and you can feel like yourself again so much faster.

One of the best parts of the app I think is that it has verified patient reviews from real people who've made real appointments with these doctors. And I love that. Every month millions of people use ZocDoc, and I'm so happy to be one of them. It's my new go-to when I need to find a quality doctor in my area, and it has saved me so much time.

Friends, I'm so happy to get to share ZocDoc with you. If you go to zocdoc.com/girlsnight, you can download the ZocDoc app for free, then you can find and book a top-rated doctor today. Many are available within 24 hours. That's zocdoc.com/girlsnight.

[00:35:26] <music>

Stephanie: Anytime people find out how long I've worked from home, I mean, it's been like years and years, they're like, "I don't know how you do it. I can't concentrate when I'm at home." I think it's partially because, I don't know, like your TV is at home. You would never watch TV while you're at the office. So there's distractions like that. But then also, there are things like, you know, the dishes need to be emptied, and the laundry needs to be folded. So when you're at home, but you're in work mode, how do you stay in focused work mode?

Elizabeth: I think it's hard navigating that. Especially if you're working in a room where there's a lot of stuff that needs to be done, if you're working at your kitchen table, and you look over your shoulder and your sink is full of dirty dishes and the dishwasher just finished running and your kids toys all are all over the place, it can feel very much like this is a distraction to what I'm trying to get done. So it could be helpful to do those things before you start your workday.

I love to have the place I'm working be generally organized. At this point in my business, I do have a home office. But for years I worked in our guest bedroom. I had a little thrift store desk that I spent \$50 on painting white. And then that was my office was like mixed in there. But having the space that you're working in feeling like ready to go so that you can maybe ignore some of the other stuff I think is really helpful.

I also think it's okay to like take breaks, as long as it works with, again, your employer and the rest of your work schedule, to take breaks to do some of those things around the house. We are fooling ourselves if we think we can just sit at a desk looking at a computer screen for eight hours straight and actually be

productive that whole time. Your productivity is going to dwindle and dwindle the longer you're working.

So taking what people call micro breaks is really helpful. And I think for every person how long those breaks are and how long they should be for you is gonna depend on what you were just working on and your own personality, your energy at that time of day and all of that. But I will do things like take a break from sitting at my desk to go unload the dishwasher and move my hands, move my body. I think that's helpful.

Some breaks, like just sitting on your phone scrolling Instagram, might feel like satisfying, but might not be as productive of a break. Whereas doing something like going on a walk outside, again, something physical around your house even can be a nice productive break.

I find reading to be a good break for me as well. Again, away from maybe the screen open a physical book. I think it's like a balance of allowing yourself to do some of that but also making sure that you're not all of a sudden looking at your day and you're like, "Oh my gosh, I spent an hour doing housework when I'm supposed to be working."

And that's where the timer thing can be nice. Like you set a timer and you're like, Hey, I'm going to tidy the kitchen for 20 minutes and then I'm gonna go back to doing what I was doing.

Stephanie: I really like that. One of the things that we had to figure out early in marriage was like... I think Carl asked me one time... He was working at a co-working space and he came home from work and he was like, "Hey, you know, during the day, if you think of it, you can empty the dishwasher." And I was like, Uh-uh. I was so mad about that.

Because really in my head I may be home, but I am at work. I do integrate things more now. Like I'll do a little bit of this, then I'll come back to this. So a little bit of this and I'll come back to this. But I didn't really know how to do that yet. I needed to really be at work even though I was at home.

So I think we had one conversation about that. But neither of us ever again has expected the other person to do home things during the workday because we treat each other like we are going to work even though we're still in our house. But yeah, there was that one conversation where I was like, "No, I'm still at work." And he's like, "I'm sorry, I'm sorry. Yes, you are."

Elizabeth: Oh my gosh, that's such a thing with people who like if you're not used to... If people just assume that because you're at home, you're just at home, you can just do whatever, that's a good point. I think depending on maybe how long you've been working from home, when you're just starting, like you're saying, it might be more like you really need to be like this work-life separation and not let those things distract you and let yourself be treated like you're in an office setting can be really helpful.

Stephanie: Yeah, yeah. I love it. You said that about having a home office. I know that that's not totally realistic for everybody. In our house right now, like I said, both Carl and I work from home. So we both have an office, which we chose our house on purpose to have this space because we work at home.

But we actually each have a guest bed in our office still because we want to have space for our parents to come in. I want my sister and my parents to be able to come visit us and having guestrooms is really important to us. So basically, it's like we have beds in our offices. We like maybe take occasional naps during the workday. I don't know, I'm just saying.

But that's such a good way of having a room do double duty is either having an office/guest room or a guest room/office. Those are two functions of rooms that I think tend to go pretty well together.

Elizabeth: Yeah, they go great together. I'm with you. We both have home offices too. And it's nice having that space, but it's also like you can utilize it for more. And you can totally be productive and be efficient and effective working from home without having an organized like, Hey, this is my office space too.

Stephanie: I didn't have an office for a really long time. Or I did but I would never use it. I'm a total couch worker. I love working on the couch. But now that there's so many more people in our house and they're running around and they want my attention, so now I have to have a door that I close.

Elizabeth: We use a sound machine outside of my office when I'm doing things like this and Collin's home because if he hears my voice, he's gonna be like, "Let me go in there." So it's like you gotta really hide once our kids are around.

Stephanie: Yes. Yes. The girls will walk past my door and like, do you use no one in here? I don't know that you do. But it's better that you don't know I'm in here.

I love that. You mentioned other people knowing how to kind of treat your workday when you're at home. And I want to ask about that. I was going to ask about this kind of more towards the end but let's talk about right now.

When you work from home, I think people in your life, like family or friends, don't necessarily know how to treat you. It seems like you might be always available if you either work for yourself or work from home. How do you draw those boundaries? If someone asks you if you can do something, how do you communicate, No, I'm at work.

Elizabeth: That is so hard. Some people really are going to struggle to get it. I know you send me these questions ahead of time. And I was like, This is so hard because I have some people in my life—and again, I've been working from home for like eight years now—who I've just accepted like that they don't get it. It's like they think I'm more available than I am. And that's some family members.

And in that case, I kind of use the language of like, I have a meeting. And I will even do that if like it's a meeting with myself of like, Hey, I'm recording this podcast episode. I am doing this important thing that I'm going to be focusing on for two hours. And I use that language with them because it helps them understand that I might be at home, and I know you know I have my cell phone nearby, but like I actually am working and I'm not available just because I'm in my house. So I think that can be helpful sometimes.

And also letting people into like what it is you're doing. Because it can be confusing of like, well, what are you doing all day while you're just at home. If they're not used to that way of working, they might think about the one time they had a sick day where they kind of worked on their laptop a little bit, but they were really watching TV and they were in their pajamas and just sitting on their couch and you know, cooked a really long dinner that day and those sorts of things are their visual.

So like letting them into when it feels like it makes sense of like, Hey, I'm working from home but this is what that actually looks like. And creating boundaries with it of like... that like, hey. Letting them know, this is the schedule and like during these hours I'm not available to do X, Y, and Z because I am working and it looks different than your work but it's still work. You can be nice about it.

I'm at a point where like, especially as a business owner, a lot of people don't understand why I do it all and I'm just like, it's fine with some of those people. But then it can be frustrating. Like you're saying when it's you know, like maybe they're intruding on your time a bit because they're assuming that you're just available. What do you do, Stephanie, for that?

Stephanie: I think I've been doing it long enough that I think most people kind of get it. But I do really lean into telling people what I'm working on because I find it so much

easier to understand and to be understanding and supportive if I guess understand more.

So that comes up a lot with Carl and I where if he's working really hard on something, or he is working kind of overtime on something, especially if that means that usually we end the day around the same time, around like 5:30, we both kind of in our work days. If he were to come to me and say, "Hey, can you do dinner by yourself with the girls, I have a lot of work to do." I'm maybe a little annoyed, especially if it's happened a lot recently.

If he tells me, I'm finishing up, I have to send a proposal to this client or something like that by the end of the day, this is the client, I'm like, "Oh, yeah, okay, like, we're on the same team, you go work on that I'll take care of the girls dinner." I just immediately feel this gigantic shift in my ability and desire to support him because I get what I'm supporting better.

It's not just like, Well, I was like, a little slow today so I need to tidy up my office before I'm done. It just helps me be more supportive. So I try to think about that a lot. That it's like, if I can communicate to Carl, to my family, to our team that helps us with the girls, if I can communicate to them what I'm doing, it makes it more of an us thing instead of just me thing and they're able to understand how to support me better.

But then also, I think I need to lean into that a little more about like, I have a meeting. I struggle with this all the time. I feel like I always talk about this on the show. But if I can technically do something for a person, I feel guilty if I don't. So it's like, well, I could scrap my entire day and go to lunch, I could technically do that. And would the world fall down? Probably not. Is it what I should do? Absolutely not. I have actual work I should do.

So being able to say, like, "No, I have meetings." Putting it in language that's a little bit easier to understand for everybody that really says like occupied, cannot do something right now, I think that that's helpful.

Elizabeth: Yeah. I feel that same guilt of being like, "Wait, should I go? I could do that. Should I? And that's where too like planning ahead can be helpful. Because if you, you know, do plan that for your lunch break you're gonna go have lunch with a friend and it's not like just popping up on you, that can also feel more like, Hey, you're using the fact that you maybe have a more flexible schedule where you get to be at home to your advantage.

Because we're not just working for the sake of work. We want to live our lives and enjoy friendships, enjoy our families, and children, all of that. So it's like, being

able to kind of integrate both together can be really nice, but helps when it's not just thrown at you, and then you're like, "Wait, I have this other thing I'm trying to do."

Stephanie: Yes, yes, just planning ahead. I think when you do that, you also can say, well, like, you know, having a sit-down lunch to me is not all that important. I totally don't mind eating while I'm working. I know that that's not the healthiest thing in a couple different ways. But maybe you say I would rather be able to take a walk at the end of the day and call my best friends.

So you're like, that kind of hour that maybe I would have allotted for lunch, I'm just going to eat while I'm working but I'm going to take that time and do something else. And I think that that's a really great way to think about it especially if you have an employer where you're like, I really am accountable for this many hours or for this work. I'm going to get this done. But instead of this, I'm going to use that time to do this because this other thing is more important to me.

Elizabeth: Yeah, you can use your lunch break for other things in that case.

Stephanie: Yes, you can. Talk to me about social media. You know, you mentioned that can feel like a really satisfying way to take a break but it really is a gigantic hole you can get sucked down into. Also maybe this might be even harder for me. I want to add on email.

Elizabeth: Oh God, yes. Emails are hard.

Stephanie: So you also sit there and just respond to emails all day and feel like we're being productive but then you never actually get any work done. What are some of the limits that you put on yourself?

Elizabeth: I do think social media is really hard. There's so much advice that is all really good advice. Like we've all heard, and if this works for you take it. But things like you don't look at your phone when you first wake up. Keep your phone in a completely different room while you're working. Move your social media apps around so you go to click on Instagram and it's something else in the you're more aware, deleting the app certain days of the week, putting the controls that our iPhones have where, you know, it closes itself out, there's only access after 30 minutes or whatever.

Those are all great, and they have not worked well for me. It's like what I would say. I think for a lot of people listening might be like, yeah, I feel better with my phone near me when I'm working. For me now, especially when my son's often away somewhere else and I'm the emergency contact. I'm like, I do want my phone near me during work time. And also I like having it near me when I wake up in the morning because it's my alarm clock.

There's some things like that where practically a lot of the typical advice is not that helpful. And it is a nice relaxer, sometimes to just be able to sit and just look at something that's a little bit more mindless to have a bit of a break.

I guess what I would say that works for me, though, when I say all that stuff doesn't and I don't do any of this perfectly. I feel like I'm still constantly figuring it out. Especially since for me social media is a part of work and so like showing up on there is a work thing. And I post a lot less than I used to I think because I have been more kind of seeing like, "Hey, what is moving the needle for the most in my business, what is a good use of time.

So one thing is, as a business owner, at least I try to be on there more as a creator than a consumer. So like, if I'm gonna go on there to scroll, which I do, I love seeing what people enjoy following or posting, I love seeing the stories my friends are sharing. There's a lot of business accounts I follow around. It's so encouraging, or faith accounts where I'm seeing this like scripture and this awesome caption that's encouraging me today. That's all like, all good and great.

But I to try to be on there as a creator. So like I'm going on posting or responding to stuff as much as possible and letting that be a part of the process. And then really, truly trying to limit my time on it and like swap out social media when I'm looking for just a quick scroll for a book is something that's really helpful for me.

I use the Kindle app on my phone and got really into reading books on my phone during breastfeeding because that was really easy to just have phone right there. And I find that's a common time too that women end up getting really sucked into a lot of scrolling, because it's like you're nursing so much and then you're sitting there all day long. And that can be really taking all your time.

So I like reading on my phone. And that can be really nice and easy just to pick up and scroll through that instead. But I think just being really aware of it is something that's helpful for me on the social media front.

And with email specifically, I think we all as people, literally no matter what you do, our work is so tied to the inbox. And it can be really easy to find yourself throughout the day just clicking on that icon, whether it's on your phone or your computer and just constantly, constantly touching base with it.

So something I do is I use this specific email software called Front with my team for managing all of our inboxes. So for someone else will say it might be like the traditional mail app or like a Gmail app, or it might be that's in your browser. Do

not keep that pulled up all day. Shut the app down to where you're forced quitting it.

So then when you click on again, it's gonna do its little bouncing thing. Maybe on your phone, it's that you literally don't have that app at all. But then when you do go to click on it, be in it to actually respond to stuff. So I try to not open it if I'm just like opening it as a quick distraction, or if I'm like, it's 10 pm and I'm kind of bored. Let me see what's in the inbox.

Like, if you're not going to respond to it right then just don't mess with it. It's a really great rule of thumb because it's such a huge time suck. And we want to, in our work, be as effective and efficient as possible so that we can spend time doing the things we really, really enjoy and be doing the things with our family, the things with our friends and our loved ones when we're with them and not be distracted by work.

So like constantly opening your inbox when you're not actually going to do anything about it is really just putting your head in work mode when your body's not in work mode, because you're not actually going to do anything with it.

Stephanie: And unless you work in specifically only customer service, I would say, responding to emails doesn't actually move the needle on the things that you need to do that day. If you do work in customer service, and they're stacking up, you know, and like, how you know that you're done for the day as being able to get through an inbox, that's a different thing.

But I think for a lot of us, responding to emails is a necessary thing to do for communicating with the people we work with. It's not actually the work for most of us. It just is like this crazy trick. Like making it feel like we're being productive and we're not. That's hard.

Elizabeth: Yeah. And that's something that I realized about a year ago, maybe that I had a really bad habit of that of just constantly clicking on it. And I think too if you are using another... Like maybe the company you work for y'all have a project manager that y'all are all communicating with, something like your Click-ups, what I use in my business, but there's other ones like Trello, Basecamp, things like that, try to focus on that versus the email notifications from it. Because that's probably the thing you actually do need to respond to is like your boss sending you something on Clickup versus a random email coming in about some clothing line you're signed up for emails from. Kind of differentiating those a bit there.

But yeah, if you could make a goal for yourself even, maybe like you're checking your email at this specific time every day and then this other stipulated time at the

end of the day. Maybe it's 9 am and 3 pm. And like, when you check it, you're gonna be in there for 30 minutes each time, and you're gonna actually respond to stuff.

It's really easier said than done. I think a lot of that because it is like... I feel like emails are more addictive than we realize. Often we just talk like... I love that you've tied that in, because so often it's just social media, but in reality scrolling our inboxes and just opening stuff, and honestly, a lot of time being concerned with it, because you're not going to deal with them but then it might be like, Oh, it takes you into like this work problem, it's really unsettling and not good for... Having the separation of work and life.

Stephanie: Yes, yes. I try to be really good about that. I will scroll social media... I've gotten a little bit worse about it in the last couple months. I used to be really, really disciplined. I've gotten a little bit worse about it lately. But I really don't scroll very much kind of outside of... I really tried to just be on my phone most of the time, during work hours. And I definitely don't check my phone after work.

Because yeah, it's like you were hanging out with your kids or with your husband or having a great time with your friends, and then all of a sudden you're consumed by this work thing you can actually do anything about in that moment, or you can but that's not what that moment is for. You're off the clock. So being actually off the clock when you're off the clock.

One other thing I wanted to say. This is kind of a side note. But as we've been talking about noticing the different ways that we work well and setting ourselves up for success in our schedule and in our environment, one of the things that I noticed about myself... I thought of this because earlier you said, you can't sit at your computer for eight hours and just be productive for eight hours.

I learned that my best thinking happens while I'm doing other things. So I was really trying to crack the code on this big writing project and was trying to figure out like, what am I trying to say? And I noticed that actually, while I'm running errands, things like start kind of clicking in place in my brain more. So I started doing that on purpose. And I was doing it a lot for a while.

So I would, you know, drive here, and then as on the way something would sort of occur to me, and then I'd get there or I'd beat a red light and I'd write a whole bunch down. And all of my best thinking happened while I was doing something else.

So I think that that's really worth paying attention to is it doesn't make sense to chain yourself to your desk if you don't actually do your best thinking or your best

work at your desk. The whole thing about this is how do you do your best work and how can you set yourself up to do that as often as possible. Right?

Elizabeth: Yes. I love that you shared that because I actually did a podcast episode that was a short like 10-minute episode about that exact topic of like the idea that we get our best ideas, our best insight in the shower is a big one for people. There's literally a stat that I share in that episode where - what was it? 72% of people get their most creative ideas in the shower and feel more creative in the shower than at work.

But other similar things to that would be like you're saying running errands, driving's another one, walking is another one, doing something where your body's kind of just going through the rhythms or whatever it's used to doing. And then you have the quiet time to think. And it's so rare for us to have that because we often have our phones with us, our kids with us, someone talking to us and all these distractions.

And yes, for me that's huge of like looking for ways for me to have that time alone in the car, maybe not listening to anything but just thinking, walking and be able to think or pray and talk to God and listen to His voice and all that, that's so huge. Because again, we so often are just bombarded with all these different distractions and things.

I love that you share that because that's so true that we need that. So for people listening like looking for ways within your day to create that empty space to just think and work through ideas is actually working too and is really helpful for your mental health and productivity and all that.

Stephanie: And I think we're actually kind of mean about the thoughts that we come up with right before bed or in the middle of the night or in the shower or something. We're like, I wasn't working. Like that's not a real idea. And I noticed a handful years ago, like no, no, those are the real ideas. Those are the best ideas.

So like have your phone or a sticky note or something right outside the shower so that you can write something down. Because the other thing is, I'll be like, well, I'll remember this later. No, I won't. I never do. So if you have something, if something occurs to you, when your mind is at rest, just have a way to write it down. And then you can forget about it and then you can come back to it next time you are in work mode or when you can actually do something about it.

I feel like that's a way that my brain processes through things the best. And then writing them down. I can come back to them later when I might not be feeling as free or creative, and I can be like, "Oh, yeah, that was a good idea. I'll implement that now, now that I'm actually in the space to be able to do it."

Elizabeth: Yes, I do that too with like... I do notes on my iPhone and voice memos even where I'll like record. If I'm like, I don't even have time to write this down, just voice memo yourself and help yourself remember that way.

Stephanie: I love that. Do you have anything that we didn't cover? Just any last encouragement for women as they're trying to be their work selves at home?

Elizabeth: Yeah. Gosh, one thing I would say that I think is really helpful as we talk about working from home and not really having the work and personal life separation because it's all in one place like we've been saying. Having like a startup routine to your work day and a closing routine to your workday. And that sounds a lot more intense than actually is.

I'm talking like a minute on each end. But for me, what I do is, like for starting the work day, first thing is not starting with the inbox. Although that can feel like the thing you want to start with most because it feels most urgent, but likely not the most important.

But I start my workday... It feels kind of weird sometimes and I've few times forgot to unlight the candle. But I light a candle on my desk. And that kind of signifies for me, okay, the workday is starting. And then looking over your agenda for the day. And back in what you're saying, like eating the frog concept of like that most important thing, like really just taking that second and being like, "Okay, what am I starting with? I've transitioned, the office doors closed or I'm at my kitchen table now. And like this is starting work, the laptop is open. Doing a little bit of a work-stop routine like that.

And then for closing the work day, what I like to do is moving over anything I didn't get done to the next day in the planner, looking at the calendar for the next day, kind of closing anything out that needs to be closed out, tidying up my desk a little bit, which my desk is even right now as I look in front, it's like not that tidy. When I say tidy up, I mean like taking the three coffee cups that are empty down to the kitchen.

But a big one that I think feels so funny, but I do this every day, I close my laptop. I don't have a laptop, not like a monitor. So I old school like that even though I've been working from home and it was a designer, but I have a laptop. I close it and I say, All done. So like, "All done" with the work that out loud to really differentiate like, Hey, the workday is and then I'm all done with work.

Cal Newport teaches that in one of his books. I think it's in Deep Work. But he has you say "Shut down complete" I think is the way he explains to do. So whatever

you want to say. Maybe it's "all done." We teach kids to do with different sign languages. Or "shut down, complete" or whatever word resonates with you. But like saying something out loud to signify that like, "Hey, I'm leaving this workspace behind." And allow yourself to really leave it behind and like go into family mode, go into time with your spouse, go into time with your roommates and friends, and really differentiate that this is done.

I think it's helpful to do that even if you are like, Hey, I'm stopping at three o'clock to pick up my kids from school. And I'm going to work again at seven when they're asleep. Like even if that's your situation, still allow yourself that shutdown time to allow yourself to really say like, "Hey, I'm about to go be fully present with this other thing."

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. Elizabeth, I just am so grateful for you. I'm so inspired by you. I'm so grateful for you. We're going to link to everything Elizabeth McCravy on the show notes so that everyone can follow you and be your friends and learn from you and get templates from you.

You guys, if you are looking for a website, I love Showit and I love Elizabeth's designs. So it's just a really great way to like... it's like the fast track to a really beautiful website, so...

Elizabeth: Thank you.

Stephanie: Thanks for coming on the show, friends.

Elizabeth: Thank you. It was an honor. This was so fun.

[01:04:48] <music>

Outro: Friends, thank you so much for listening to today's episode. I can't tell you how much it means to me to have you here at Girls Night. Before you go, I would love it if you do two quick things. The first is to subscribe. Subscribing to the podcast is the best way to make sure you never miss an episode.

It's also a way easier way to listen because it's a way of sort of bookmarking the podcast. You never have to go looking for it again, your Apple just automatically downloads the next episode when a new one's released.

The other thing is that it would mean so much to me if you would take just a second to leave a rating and a review for the podcast. The way that iTunes knows to suggest the podcast to new people is by the ratings and reviews. That's how we invite new friends to our girls nights.

So would you do me a huge favor and take just a second to leave a rating and a quick comment about how you like the podcast so far? It would help us out so much. And thank you to all of you who have left those beautiful five-star views already. It means the world to me.

All right, friends, that's all we have for today but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night. And I have to tell you, you are going to love this next one. I'll see you then.