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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.

I'm so excited about today's episode. Today we're talking about how to create your dream home, and why it's not as out of reach as you might think. I'm excited about this episode because, for most of us, home is a really important part of who we are. It's where our lives happen, and so many sweet memories are made.

And if you're anything like me, you want it to be a place that feels comfortable and beautiful and inspiring and feels like you. And also you want a space that really functions for you and your family and almost takes care of you in a way. But is it possible to create our dream home even if we don't have a huge budget or tons of experience with home renovations? That's what we're talking about today.

Our guest for today's episode is my new friend, Noell Jett. Noell is the creative force behind the popular Jett Set Farmhouse, where she and her husband Daniel, along with their five children share their lives, DIY tips, cleaning and organization hacks, and their home-building journey with their millions of followers.

She recently released a new book called *Create Your Dream Home on a Budget: Practical Advice, Inspiration, and Projects* and I cannot wait for you to hear her heart behind it.

But before we dive in, I have a resource I would love to share with you. It's called *The Between Places: 100 Days to Trusting God When You Don't Know What's Next*. Now, here's the thing. We all find ourselves in-between places throughout our lives, especially these days, right?

Maybe you're waiting for something, longing for something, or working for something, but it just hasn't happened yet. Maybe you know where you want to go, but you have no clue how to get there. Or maybe you know, you're not where you want to be in life, but you don't know exactly what needs to change or how to change it, and you don't know how to figure any of that out.

Maybe you're trying to make a big decision and you have no idea which option to choose. Or maybe you're feeling like the whole world has turned upside down in the last handful of years, taking your life and your plans and any sense of security right along with it. And in all of it, you're trying to trust God with the future, but you're just not sure how to practically do that and how to quiet the fear and anxiety, all this uncertainty it has brought up in your heart.

Friends, that's what *The Between Places* is here for. Through a hundred guided prayer prompts, *The Between Places* will help you trust God with the trickiest, most uncertain, and most important parts of your life. It'll help you believe more fully than ever that God is good, that He loves you, and that He's taking care of you. It'll help you live today with more contentment, step into the future with more courage and faith, and rest in God's peace knowing that He's with you every step of the way.

To pick up a copy, just head to my website. It's Stephaniemaywilson.com. Again, that's Stephaniemaywilson.com. That link will also be in our show notes.

All right, friends, you ready? Let's jump into the episode with Noell.

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Stephanie: Friends, I am so excited for who you get to meet today. I'm sitting here with my new friend, Noell Jett. Noell, thank you so much for coming on the show.

Noell: Thank you so much for having me. I'm excited to be here.

Stephanie: This is so fun. For women who haven't gotten to meet you yet, can you tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself?

Noell: Absolutely. Like you said, my name is Noell. I live with my husband Daniel and our now five children in beautiful sunny St. Augustine, Florida. For those of you that may be dealing with snow and ice and cold right now, I'm looking now at a beautiful blue lagoon and a sunny sky.

Stephanie: So we live in the wrong spot is basically the truth?

Noell: Yes, you live in the wrong spot. So my husband and I renovate and build homes and do lots of DIYs and share our lives on social media. We homeschool our children. And a fun fact about me is I love salt, specifically mold, and sea salt flakes. If you have never tried them, you are missing out.

I may or may not carry a little Ziploc baggie of them in my purse so that I always have them on hand because they make every dish taste so much better. And I have

never got arrested for crack or cocaine yet. My daughter has always teased me like, "Mom, that looks like a little baggie of drugs."

Stephanie: They're like, "Careful at the airport, mom."

Noell: I know.

Stephanie: That is amazing. I've never tried the salt flakes, but now I'm like, "Okay, I need to." So you just put it in everything?

Noell: Anything. It's a finishing salt. So literally just right on the top of anything you eat.

Stephanie: I have heard salt on chocolate makes it like-

Noell: Oh, absolutely.

Stephanie: I have tried salted caramel, salted chocolate but like I've never DIY salted either.

Noell: I like taking on the caramels that I like and literally dipping it in the sea salt flakes. Oh my gosh, it's so good.

Stephanie: That is impressive. Okay, okay. All right. We all need to go out and get it. Do you need to-

Noell: Baby, do you want to bring him in here? She knows what's going on. I can feed him real quick. As soon as I feed him, you can take him back. Okay, okay.

Stephanie: Oh my gosh.

Noell: He's a really loud eater. I hope it doesn't pick up on the sound. Sorry.

Stephanie: Moms need extra awards in life. Just-

Noell: Seriously.

Stephanie: Yes.

Noell: Okay, sorry.

Stephanie: You're fine. I need to know, you have a new book out, right? It's out now.

Noell: Yes.

Stephanie: It's out everywhere. It's called *Create Your Dream Home on a Budget: Practical Advice, Inspiration, and Projects*. So before we dive into all the things I have to ask you about today, can you tell us a little bit about your background? Growing up, what was it that led you to have this passion for creating dream homes?

Noell: Absolutely. So I was actually raised in what I describe as a cult, a religious cult, and a very sheltered, very poverty-stricken area. The only access to beautiful homes and designs and all of those things were some magazines that my grandmother always kept on her front porch. So she always had like Country Home or Country Living and Beautiful Homes and Garden, all the stuff. She had those on her front porch.

And she had this old Victorian home and I would love to sit on her front porch swing and flip through these magazines because it just gave me this idea of a life that I had no idea existed in reality. And I was always so enamored by them. Little did I know that they were really fueling a fire inside of me that would take another 20 years to come to light. But that was kind of how that initial seed was planted.

And then as far as the DIY aspect of it, growing up in poverty, if you wanted anything done, you had to figure out how to do it yourself. You know, you definitely didn't just hire things out. So my dad renovated my entire childhood home over the course of 20 years. When I say he DIY-ed in it, I mean, literally, we go down to the creek beds and pick rocks and bring them home and put them in the fireplace. Like you know, sourcing the materials from the ground itself. So that was something that was just ingrained in me as a little girl.

So when I met Daniel, my husband, and he shared with me that he had a lifelong dream of building his own home with his own hands, I didn't think twice about it becoming our dream, a shared dream. And instantly from the moment he told me that, it became something we started working toward bringing to life together.

Stephanie: That's amazing. I think one of the biggest pushbacks I see when people start talking about dream homes is kind of it must be nice. You know, a dream home that feels like it's something that's only attainable for some people. And I feel like you've gotten to prove that that's not the case.

Noell: Absolutely. Absolutely. I mean, I can definitely thank my parents for that aspect because my dad he figured it out. He may not have been able to afford to, you know, just order whatever building materials he wanted but he figured out a way to make an absolutely adorable home that had just the coolest rockwork ever and got it for free.

So it doesn't always have to be something that you're spending a fortune on. And it doesn't always mean that it's huge either. It can be very small and not have a ton of extra space and still be exactly what you dream of. It doesn't always mean something large and extravagant.

Stephanie: What was the process like of you guys building your first... bringing that to life? Were you able to save up as much money as we think we're supposed to?

Noell: As you're supposed to think, yes. How much we actually needed nowhere near what we thought we needed. So for the course of seven years, so after we met, got married, for the next seven years, we had that goal but it was like a faraway thing that we were working toward. But we started looking for land.

Where we live in Florida, it's just really hard to find land. It's not like out where I grew up in Missouri where there's just, you know, you want land, you go get it. Here, if you want to be anywhere close to things, you just have a really hard time finding something that's not low-lying or does not have any pretty trees on it. It's just not abundant here. So we kind of casually would look.

One day I saw a lot for sale just up the road from us and I sent it to my husband. And I said, "I know you're not gonna like this because it doesn't have any pretty trees on it," which was one of our qualifiers, "but it is a really good price. Maybe..." And he's like, "No, but I was on that exact road the other day and at the very end, there's a vacant lot and it's beautiful. I wonder if maybe they would be interested in selling it."

So we went on the county appraiser's website, found these people's address. At first I wrote them a letter, and I explained who we were and what we were trying to accomplish, and I was gonna mail it to them. Well, the very next day, Daniel calls me and he's like, "Hey, I just happen to be right by those people's house. Do you think it would be weird if I knocked on their door and asked them if they would sell the land to us?"

And I said, "Well, they're either gonna love you or they're going to shoot you." So just get your words out really fast, like what you're trying to say." So he did. He stopped by and he talked to them, and we ended up purchasing the land from them. That was the very first step and many, many more that were very challenging.

Stephanie: That is so wild. What was the next step after that? So you buy a piece of land and then?

Noell: We started looking at house plans. Like, what do we want this house to look like? Daniel came at it from a very budget mindset and I came at it from a very aesthetic

mindset. So I would find these beautiful houses with cables and porches and he's like, "Nope, that's not practical. Nope." Everything I found that I loved he was like, "Aah."

Finally, we come across this one, which is the one we ended up building. And I swear, the second we both laid eyes on it, we were like, "That's it. That's the one." So we get those plans and then we take them to a local architect and we completely customize the inside. So we used the exterior shell and then we just completely redid the inside to what we wanted.

So the things we were looking for to make it budget-friendly were as rectangular of a shape as possible, because every time it goes out, like a jet is what we call it, your price goes up, and you have a place for water intrusion. So the more rectangular shaped, you can keep it the better off, it's going to be from a price perspective and just down the road.

And then building up versus out. So you want something... You know, two-storey is cheaper to build than a one-storey that's bigger. So that was kind of the qualifiers we were looking for. And then a simple roof plan as possible. At one point, the architect was like, "Did you mean to make this one roof this way?" And Daniel's like, "Yeah, we did because we're trying to keep it as low cost as possible."

So we got our plans all done. And at this point, we were probably planning on doing, you know, most of the work ourselves. But at this point, it was not an all-in project. When it changed was we went to lunch with some two representatives from BMC, Building Materials Company.

We were there to talk about Windows, and one of them mentioned something called ready frame. And I was like, "Wait, what is ready frame?" And they kind of described it to us as like an old Sears kit house where the whole house arrives on like a package and you just kind of put it together like a puzzle. They had figured out a way to do it that didn't have the flaws that originally drove the Sears kit homes to stop being produced.

So they take your plans, optimize them in their system, make all your cuts for you, bundle it up and send it to your house, and then you just assemble it, adding in your [inaudible 00:13:35]. So we got a bill workbook about this thick, you know, five inches thick, and every single wall had a diagram, and you just follow the workbook and you put these nails together.

And we said, "You know, on a scale of one to ten, how difficult would you say this would be?" And they're like, "Ah, we'd see a three. Your 12 year old daughter, whatever she was at the time, she could do it. She can get out there and help you

guys." So we were like, "Man, that would save us like \$40,000 if we can frame this house ourselves instead of hiring a framer." And that was a big portion of our budget. So that's what we did. We dove in headfirst and figured out how to frame the house ourselves.

Stephanie: Oh my gosh, that is wild.

Noell: Very wild.

Stephanie: Was it a three?

Noell: Most of it. There was even a one, I would say. Once you got going and you kind of figured out what you were doing, it was super simple. However, some of the things were definitely a little bit harder than a three. I mean, especially when you got into the trusses and all that aspect of it. Which thankfully we had a friend that had framing experience and he came over and helped Daniel do that part of it.

Stephanie: So you guys had the walls up essentially or the framing done. How much more of it did you DIY?

Noell: We did all of it ourselves except for the rough plumbing, the insulation, like the spray foam insulation, the roof because I told Daniel it was far too dangerous and scary for him to get there doing the roof. So we had someone come in and did the roof. And then there was... oh, to shoot on drywall. We had someone come in and do the drywall. It's just way more cost-efficient to have someone come in and do it. Because two people painting drywall would take forever, whereas if they come in with their still similar little screwdrivers, and they had it done in like two days.

Stephanie: So you guys did everything else yourselves?

Noell: Everything else, yeah, in house.

Stephanie: I mean, so you had this five-page workbook for how to do-

Noell: That was just for framing.

Stephanie: How did you figure it out? Were you like YouTubing stuff?

Noell: Yes, literally YouTubing things, looking at books, talking to experts. Daniel has been in the construction industry doing tile flooring. So we had a lot of connections and friends that were GCs and electricians, plumbers.

So we would just talk to people and say, "Hey, you know, this is what we're doing and pick their brain, get their advice, or we pay them like a fee. And they'd come over and walk us through it, make sure Daniel knew what he was doing, follow up and make sure he'd done it properly, pull the permits for us. We just thought outside the box and figured out ways we could DIY it and figure it out for ourselves.

Stephanie: How much money did you end up saving by doing it yourself?

Noell: Oh, my goodness. I don't even know that answer. But generally, when Daniel bids out a project, you're usually looking at 50% of your margin is going to labor. But I don't know. We still hired some teams out. So I don't know if I would say we saved exactly 50%. But I'm gonna say I did 30% or 40%.

Stephanie: That is so wild. That is so incredible. I guess kind of in the same way that they told you that that kit was going to be like a three out of ten difficulty, if someone is thinking, you know, I want a dream home, I don't know that I can go out and buy one that's already done, or I'm gonna need to figure out a way to think outside the box. It's like, how difficult is this? Is this something that a normal person can do? Or is this like, if you weren't born Chip and Joanna Gaines, it's not gonna happen?

Noell: Well, I have another mindset that anything is figure out-able. So if it is truly something you want to do, and you have the time and the ability to figure out the resources available, I don't think anything is out of the realm of possibility. But it does come down to how much time do I have available and how much am I willing to learn and figure out?

So if you're a scrappy person that is like, "You know what, I'm going to make this happen," I think it's doable for anybody. Would I recommend starting with something a little bit smaller than we did? Yes. We couldn't have started with like an 1,800 rectangle, one-storey house. Like no, we had to start out with this gargantuan massive thing. Oh, my gosh, it was so big.

Stephanie: How many square feet was it?

Noell: I mean, it wasn't that big. But for a first-time house, yes. It was 3700 heated and cooled. And then I think like 4,500.

Stephanie: That is a large house.

Noell: Exactly. For DIY, yes.

Stephanie: That's really incredible. We kind of talked about the fact that a dream home can mean a lot of different things to different people. How do we figure out what a

dream home is for us, like size or how it functions? Especially because I think if you spend any time on Pinterest, or Instagram or something, the ideas of what a dream home looks like is perfection and huge and millions of dollars. It seems like that's what a dream home should be. What else can dream home be and how do we figure out what that is for us?

Noell: I think redefining it for yourself is so important. I think I'm really glad that Pinterest wasn't as big of a deal and I wasn't even on social media when we first made our plans because I think it's so overwhelming, because you just get on there and there's so many ideas and so much you can do. And it's like, how do you weed through all of that and figure out what you actually want?

So stay away from all of those resources. It's just so overwhelming. And you can get decision fatigue so easily. Turn more introspectively. What brings me joy? What brings me peace? What makes my soul happy? Like, do I like more traditional things? Do I want to be a little more modern and push some boundaries? Do I like bright colors? Do I like calm colors? Like what brings me joy in my soul?

Functionality, I think that's a big thing for most people, because no matter how big or small your house is, if it's not functional, you're gonna go crazy. So whatever it looks like, taking the time to really think through, how does my family function like? What are our needs? Do we work from home? Do we homeschool? Do our kids, you know, are they in sports? Are they out in the dirt all the time and they need somewhere to clean off before they come in my house? Do we entertain? Do we have a lot of people over?

Really thinking through how you want your life to look like living in this house will allow you to really design it with a functionality that works for you. And every family is different. So you can't just look online and see all these other ideas because your individual needs are going to be so custom to your family.

Stephanie: I love that. I'm thinking through the different houses that we've lived in since my husband and I have been married. Like our old house didn't have any sort of mudroom or really entry. And that was fine when it was just the two of us. But then when we had our girls, all of a sudden we had a stroller, and it was huge because there were two of them and shoes and coats and all these things. And we just never had a good spot, like any sort of drop zone or mudroom or anything.

I mean, our stroller ended up just sort of living in our living room along with all of our shoes. So it's things like that that, you know, as we moved about a year ago, and that's one of the things that I'm so glad that we have is just like a little... It's just kind of a little drop zone, but it makes all the difference.

Noell: It doesn't have to be big. Honestly, even that house, 3,700 square feet, when you think that it's four kids at home homeschooling, two work-from-home parents, it's not that big. And if you walk in it, or if you see pictures of it... One of the greatest compliments the lady that ended up buying it from us says is it just truly feels like home. Like it just feels this cozy feeling.

None of the rooms were just big to be big. Like they were appropriately sized but it didn't feel like, Oh, this is just so big that it doesn't feel warm and inviting. It doesn't have to be big. It can be a small space, as long as it has the functions that you need to put your stroller, to fit your dirty shoes, to put those things, that's what's more important than just having...

Where we live at, there's so many cookie-cutter homes. Like one of our friends, they have this primary bedroom and I'd say three-quarters of it they don't even use because it's just so big. Like what would you even use that for? Big space does not equate to happiness at all.

Stephanie: Yes! I love it that the woman who bought your house said it feels like home. As you've been doing this work are there some specific things that you found really make a difference in a house feeling like a home?

Noell: I think so. It may be any different for other people, but putting the functionality in the place. But then just lots of natural light. That's something that's you can't fake, you can't put it... You know, it's hard to put it in later. So it's something that is so simple to add when you're designing the house. Just put in some extra windows, some extra doors. Your cost goes up minimally but it truly makes a space feel so comfortable and inviting by having natural light.

And then just using different materials that make it feel like home. So it's not just like one sterile environment. You got different wood textures and tones and different materials throughout the home that really just make it feel cozy.

Stephanie: I heard something... I think I wrote it down. I don't know where I put it though. I truly just wrote it on a piece of paper a couple days ago. But it was something where someone was describing a home and they were saying that the things in your home should have a story behind them. And the best homes are things where you can walk around and tell a story for everything that you see.

Noell: One of the coolest things about that house was there wasn't a single room that was just drywall. Every single room had something in it and a story behind it. Like this is how we got the brick that we put behind the bed in the primary bedroom. This is where we got the ceiling in our living room. This is the story behind that... Every single thing we did had a story.

And then the decor for me personally—and this won't be the same for everyone—I grew up in the Midwest. My family were farmers in the years past. And a year before my grandfather died, he said, "Hey, do you want to come pick my barn with me?" And I said, "Absolutely."

So we go out to this barn that has generations worth of stuff in it. And he says, "What do you want?" And I said, "No, no, that's not how this is gonna work." I said, "I want to walk around with you and I want you to tell me what you remember about every single item that we talked about, like who it belong to, what it was used for, any memories you have about it."

So he did, he spent the entire afternoon going through telling me all these amazing stories about these random antiques. And then at the end, I loaded my car up, and I brought him back to Florida with me. He passed away a year later. So I'm so thankful that it happened when it did.

Most of those items were displayed in my home. I know those were trendy at the moment but that was something I truly loved. I always have and always will. And it's a piece of me and a piece of my family and my history. And having those things in the home, just the feeling that... It's just indescribable.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that.

[00:26:15] <music>

Sponsor: Hey guys! Our sponsor for today's episode is a company that I just love. It's [HelloFresh](#). Now, I know that lots of y'all have heard of them. But just in case you haven't, HelloFresh is America's number one meal kit that shops, plans, and delivers your favorite step-by-step recipes and pre-measured ingredients so you can just cook, eat and enjoy.

There's nothing better than a good home-cooked meal. But as you guys know already, I'm not the best at it. Now, I've definitely become a better cook over the years. I still don't love meal planning or cooking. It's just truly not my gift. And plus these days, cutting down on shopping time is absolutely essential for us. And that's why I love HelloFresh.

First of all, with HelloFresh, there's something for everyone, with 40 recipes and over 100 seasonal and convenience items to choose from each week. I made these incredible HelloFresh chiquitos recently, and you guys, they were so good, I'm going to be thinking about them for ages.

And not only is the food delicious, but the process of making it is so easy. All the ingredients come pre-measured in handy labeled meal kits so you know which ingredients go with which recipe. That means there's less waste.

And I'm telling you, I am a beginner in the kitchen and even I can get these recipes. They are so simple and they kind of outlined on pictured step-by-step instruction cards. They walk you all the way through the whole thing and it actually feels like a fun cooking lesson.

I'm also a huge fan of HelloFresh because it's cheaper than grocery shopping and 25% less expensive than ordering takeout. This is great news for those of us on a budget, right? Plus HelloFresh owns Green Chef, another one of our amazing sponsors, so there are even more meal plans to choose from.

I love switching between the brands and now my listeners can enjoy both brands at a discount with me. Speaking of discounts, I love HelloFresh even more, because they want to give you a promo code for 50% off. If you go to hellofresh.com/girlsnight50 and use the code GIRLSNIGHT50, you can get 50% off plus your first box ships free.

Again, go to hellofresh.com/girlsnight50 and use code GIRLSNIGHT50 for 50% off plus your first box ships free. HelloFresh, thank you so much for sponsoring our Girls Night. We just love having you.

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Stephanie: Backing up a little bit, you know we were talking about social media and Pinterest and how it can be so overwhelming because there's so many ideas. Do you have any suggestions for where we should go for inspiration without getting so caught up in biting off more than we can chew or starting to feel like nothing I do is going to be good because I don't have a, you know, \$12 million budget or whatever it is that we're looking at?

Noell: Sure. First of all, I like to go through what to make categories. Whether you do like a physical file, like a physical box that you're printing things out and putting it in the box or just on Pinterest making boards, and really just ironing out what you really love. And instead of seeing all these things that are so different from each other, try to figure out what it is about all those different things that you like.

So there may be one super modern kitchen and then one super farmhouse kitchen and you love them both. Well, what is it about both of them that you love? Is it the feeling that it evokes? Is it the open shelving that maybe they both have, the color they both have? Like what is it about those two extremes that you love so much?

And just really defining your personal style, and then going from there and looking at the options in your budget. So you can't always afford the top dollar tile from Tile Bar, and maybe you can go to Home Depot and find something that's very comparable, that you can do a replication of what you're inspired by without going full out on the budget

Or even repurposing things. Like if you're gonna have a Habitat for Humanity near you, or somewhere that resells construction goods, check those guys up, Facebook Marketplace My husband is the king of Facebook marketplace. So you can find so many amazing things on there.

Stephanie: That is amazing. That is amazing. Now that you've done this as in-depth as you have, the fact that you guys built your house, you've touched every piece of your home, where are some places where we should spend the money? Like just spend the money.

Noell: Spend the money.

Stephanie: Versus "don't spend money on that. What are some things that fall in each of those categories?"

Noell: So it kind of depends on the perspective you're looking at it. If you're looking at it from just a room perspective, where are you going to spend your most time? For me, I love to cook. With as many kids as I have, I'm in there a lot. So I wanted a kitchen that I truly loved. I'm going to spend my time there, I wanted to be organized, I wanted to be beautiful, I want lots of natural light coming in. So that was something that was a big priority to me.

If you prefer maybe entertaining, so you're going to put your money onto a beautiful back porch and your landscaping and maybe put a pool in. Wherever you want to spend your time, that's where I would focus most of my energy.

But then as far as the materials themselves, when you're doing anything, every single trade is going to try to upsell you. Like, you should upgrade your insulation, you should upgrade your drywall, you should upgrade your flooring, upgrade, upgrade, upgrade, right? By the time you get to the end, your budget is gone.

So you have to remember that while some things may be valuable, the finishes are what you're going to look at on a daily basis. So making sure you save enough money so that the faucets and the lights and the countertops, the things that you're going to be looking at every day, that is where you spend the bulk of your budget. Not the bulk, but you save enough to make sure you can do what you want there.

Because once that drywall is up, you're not going to see that insulation again, you're not going to see those two-by-fours again. You're not going to see what's underneath there again. So yes, some of those upgrades are nice and they do have energy efficiency and whatever... There's a pro and a con to all of it. You got to balance it all out. But just remember when you're allocating that budget, what you're going to be looking at every day and making sure you save the budget for that.

Stephanie: That is so tricky the upgrade thing.

Noell: Yes.

Stephanie: When you said that I got a mental picture of like taking my car in for an oil change. And all of a sudden, it's like, If the person tells me that my car needs something and they use some words that I'm not totally sure I understand, I'm gonna believe them. So when you're talking to you about insulation, my first thought is like, "I should probably do the upgrade because I don't want to be cold or hot."

Noell: I know. Or hear noises.

Stephanie: So how do you know... Where can you go?

Noell: What's worth it and what's not?

Stephanie: Yeah. Like, "You really do need to do this." Where's the source you can go for the...?

Noell: I need to write another book.

Stephanie: Seriously. Seriously.

Noell: I have a really in-depth blog series that I did talking about doing a builder-grade house and what you should upgrade with the builder versus what you shouldn't upgrade with the builder. That's at jettsetfarmhouse.com. That's a good place if you're doing a builder-grade house. But you know, I'm gonna stay in touch on every single item. But just researching.

So when it comes time to do that installation, talk to... if you have any friends in your life that are contractors. Get online, do some reading. It is way more important to research than it is to actually do the things. Because spending a few extra hours researching it and making sure that you're getting all the information that there is to get will save you so much time, headache, and heartache later on down the road.

Stephanie: And money.

Noell: Yes and money.

Stephanie: If you spent two hours being like, okay, this insulation versus this insulation, you can figure out like... if you have someone in your family who is a drummer, then maybe where you keep the drum kit is like that room need some extra soundproofing or something like that.

Noell: Exactly.

Stephanie: You can figure out if the upgrade is actually important.

Noell: Exactly. I think it's true. Like you said or like if you're doing a podcast, do I need a room that has extra insulation? Yes, I do. So I want to keep this quieter. So yeah, just think through the functionality of it. And just really research every single item. Don't just take any contractor's word for granted, and just hook line, and sink and be like, "Oh, yeah, sure."

Even if it is something, though, and you're like, "Oh, yes, that would be a lovely upgrade but I really need that budget to go toward that kitchen sink that I really want, then just keep that other point in mind that you're gonna look at that kitchen sink every day. Once that insulation is in place, you're not gonna see it again.

Stephanie: It sounds like it's a lot of just waiting.

Noell: Like, why do you think we haven't started our new build yet?

Stephanie: You're kind of stuck on all those things?

Noell: We're in a rental right now. We sold the house, bought land and we were gonna start building right away, moved in here, and a month later I found out this little bun was in the oven. I was like, "I can only build one thing at a time. Right now I am building a baby and the house is just gonna have to wait because it is so much." Like it truly just consumes you. All your decision-making, all your thought process is about that house. And I'm like, "I just want to save for this pregnancy and the newborn stage. I really just want to enjoy this baby. That house can wait."

Stephanie: "I can build one thing at a time." I need to write that down. That's amazing. Well, okay, I want to get some clarity on this. Let's say that someone is thinking about doing some renovations to their house. I think probably more people listening are like, "I have something that I'd like to change in my house. I'd like to have my

kitchen cabinets be different colors or something like that, then completely starting from scratch." What are some projects that are easy, lots of bang for your buck fixes? Things like, "Yeah, you could totally do that yourself" or like, "No, really seriously, hire someone. Don't try to do that yourself"?

Noell: Well, again, it comes back to time versus money. So if you have the time to research and figure it out, I don't think there's anything that is just totally off the table that you should not take on yourself. I mean, electrical plumbing, if you're going into that kind of stuff and you have no clue what you're doing, yes, please hire the professional, or at least have someone that knows what they're doing come in and work with you, as far as just the regular routine stuff.

But bang for your buck, your kitchen, and your primary bathroom are the two biggest things that will always give you a big ROI on your house. So put it backslash in, paints your cabinetry. This was just very simple, inexpensive. You could put a backslash in for like \$200 probably. Materials have gone up a little bit, maybe a little bit more. Anything you can do the kitchen will give you a good ROI-

Stephanie: Is it possible to paint your cabinets yourself?

Noell: Absolutely.

Stephanie: I feel like someone told me that it's easy to mess up or something.

Noell: It is. Do your research. Really know what you're getting into, know what you're doing, make sure you're doing it right, spend the money to get the proper equipment, and set everything up properly. But absolutely. I have several friends that have built their own cabinetry.

Stephanie: I feel like that would make a huge difference.

Noell: Oh, absolutely. Especially if they're newer cabinetry, but just not the right stain, yeah, absolutely. If you have late 1990s cabinetry with all the arches and stuff, hey, doesn't make as big of a difference. But if you have really good shapes, like real standard shapes, and then you paint them, that's totally update your kitchen so fast.

Stephanie: All right. All right. So kitchen and bathroom?

Noell: Yes, kitchen and bathroom are the best two places that you can invest your money.

Stephanie: Okay. Okay. Yeah.

Noell: And do you know like a new shower, put a new tile in, put new flooring down? Especially if you're not getting into your plumbing or your electrical, that's very simple to do.

Stephanie: Okay, okay. One of the things that we've played around with the most... We haven't done a ton of DIY things. We've always tried. Every time we've moved, we've looked at some real fixer-uppers. Like real fixer-uppers. There was one where it was like, "Be careful. You might fall through the floor."

Noell: We just finished one like that.

Stephanie: We were like, "We could totally do this." And I think we could. My husband's super... He's the kind of guy that can figure out anything. If he has the time, you can figure out anything. But every time it just has not been the right time. So we've always ended up getting fairly new houses or kind of builder-grade new builds. It's truly been like God's kindness to us being like, "You don't need that right now. You don't need..."

Noell: It comes with a lot of stress.

Stephanie: "There's a lot of other things that you have going on in your life right now, let's not-

Noell: Twin girls.

Stephanie: Yes, twin girls. "Let's not have something where you potentially fall to the floor for your first couple years."

Noell: And those are a lot. We just did one. It was built in 1920. Which is crazy, because the one we're doing now is built in 1890s. So it's 30 years older than the last one we did and it's in such better shape. The one that was built in 1920 was literally falling apart. The person that had purchased it before us had owned it for like 20 years and he had tried to do some of the DIYs himself and just he should not have... he had no business doing what he did. We would find live wires behind drywall. You just have a new drywall and call it a day. And that thing took us-

Stephanie: Those could start a fire.

Noell: I know. It took us definitely longer and it cost a lot more than we thought it would going into it. It was amazing once it was done. So beautiful. It turned out to be a fabulous project. But if you didn't know what you were doing, you would have gotten frustrated real quick.

Stephanie: Oh my gosh. Oh my gosh. If someone is wanting to flip houses or get into renovation for other people. What's a good foot-in-the-door that isn't buying a house that you're planning on living in right away where you're gonna fall through the floor?

Noell: Exactly.

Stephanie: How big of a project should we start with?

Noell: Our path to it started with, you know, we did flooring, tiles, bathrooms, just smaller things. And then like some kitchen DIYs. And then Daniel got into insurance work. So if someone had say, a flood or hurricane damage, and the insurance company, or the remediation company comes in, they dry it out, and they get the mold out and then Daniel will come in and put it back together.

And that's kind of how we started piecing all these things together and figuring out how to do stuff. And obviously, when building our own house, that was a major learning. We learned so much on that. So that was kind of our path into it.

And then after we built the house, we got our first renovation, and that was the one that was falling apart and we completely rebuilt it. But if you're someone else, say you're working full-time, you know, that's not something you're doing for a career, then maybe just start by finding someone that needs a new bathroom or someone that needs tile or a contractor that will let you come work on the weekends with them. And they can kind of fill you in on things that you would need to know to start those important pieces of the puzzle.

And then just find a house that maybe just needs cosmetic... You know, it's not structural, it's not falling through the walls or cockeyed, the beams are caving in, like the house we're working on right now. Like it just needs some paint. Like some paint, new countertops, maybe some new flooring. Just real simple things, just a quick fix. Something that someone else doesn't have the time to live in and do those things.

So you could come in and do those quick little things, flip it, make a quick buck, and then just start growing your expertise, learning how to do this before you jump into a major renovation.

Stephanie: Okay.

Noell: Start small.

Stephanie: Start small. Yeah, start small.

Noell: Start small.

Stephanie: That's awesome. Just kind of as we're finishing up, what's been your favorite part of doing this work?

Noell: Just seeing what I already see in my mind and getting to just bring it out into the world. I remember when the house we built was in framing, I was walking around on the phone, I think I was on FaceTime, maybe or maybe it was a video, and I was giving a tour, and I was like, "And here's gonna be the office and this is gonna be this, this is gonna be this.

And my mom was like, "You say it like you already see it." I was like, "I do. You don't? Like you need to see it? You can't see it in your mind? And I don't know if everyone can see it that way when they're doing projects, but I see it. And it's just so cool to just make it happen and figure out the materials and choosing all the different fun things that you get to choose and then just putting it all together, crossing your fingers, saying a prayer, and then being like, "Wow, it actually looks good."

Stephanie: That's so cool.

Noell: It's so fun.

Stephanie: The last thing I want to ask you... I'm working on a project that I won't have announced by the time this comes out, so I'm gonna sound a little vague. But I am working on a project and it has been wondering, like, how different women put the pieces of their lives together. I want to just ask everybody, like, how do you do it? And I think that part of that is, "This is what you do see, this is what people see of my life. This is what they don't see. This is how it happens. These are the things that we just don't do because we are doing these other things or these are the balls that I'm dropping on a regular basis."

Noell: Nice.

Stephanie: I want to know, for you, how do you make your life work? What are the things that people follow you on Instagram and this is what they see but what they don't see is kind of this behind-the-scenes?

Noell: I've actually shared videos about that before. You know, like you guys see all the fun projects and all the cool things I'm doing, but what you're not seeing is the mountain of laundry piled up. And then I forgot that it was pajama day at the kids' homeschool co-op or whatever. Like all these things behind the scenes.

As we've progressed in our lives, and I've learned to put systems into place, ask for help that I did never used to do before. So now if my laundry is piled up, there's a laundry service I can call and they'll come pick it up, and they'll bring it back folded clean and I can put it away.

I now have someone that comes into my home three days a week to help with the kids from ten to one. Like help me tutor and just make sure their schoolwork is staying on where it's supposed to be. I have a cleaner that comes in when I need her when I'm like, "Okay, I'm pulling my hair out, I need help here."

They don't need cleaning, but you know, they'll come in and just kind of help, you know, get the surface back to neutral when I'm knee-deep in a project and I'm just gone with my husband every single day. So I've learned to get help. But that's only been in the last six months probably.

Before that, I didn't have the help and I didn't have any of those things. And I do remember feeling just so frustrated because you can't do it all no matter... You know, I don't need a lot of sleep. I do have a lot of energy. I tried really hard. But even at my best, I can't. And I'm gonna fail or something. And giving myself grace I found was just so important.

And as long as my kids are fed and they're happy and have some sort of clothing on, you know, they just give me myself grace, giving them grace and just trying to enjoy where we're at in the moment and not stress about the things that I know are not getting done. Because otherwise, I would have driven myself crazy, especially when we were in the thick of that build because truly, we were over there seven days a week from sunup to sundown, and there were massive pieces of my life that were just getting dropped.

I just had to focus on the things that were important, the things that were life or death, and then just give myself grace on the rest of it. Now, here we are four years later. Do the kids remember that clean laundry or not? No, they don't remember that. They just remember that mommy was completely stressed all the time and the fun that we had together in that process. So giving yourself grace is just so important.

Stephanie: One of the things I've been thinking about so much is the fact that there are seasons for different things. Like only so many things can be at the top of your list at any given time. I mean, really, probably only one thing can be at the top of your list. But will get creative and say a couple-

Noell: I don't know. I think we can do probably three.

Stephanie: Yeah, let's do three. There are things that can be at the top of your list. But that kind of rotates. When my girls were tiny, I couldn't fit anything else on my list. Truly I was so overwhelmed for so long there. There was nothing else that could fit at the top.

But then they got a little bit bigger, we all started sleeping a little bit more, we kind of were getting the hang of how to keep them alive. And then we got more help. And then more things got to kind of float up to the top. And now we had time for just a few other things as well. But I like the idea that it rotates and there's seasons for different things. So if you're building a house by yourself, then everyone can deal with, you know-

Noell: Dirty laundry.

Stephanie: Dirty laundry. We can just wear that shirt one more time.

Noell: Yeah, exactly. And for us too, we tried really hard to involve our kids so it didn't feel like this was something that just stole mommy and daddy for them. You know, we bring them with us and you know, who can pile the most dirt? Who can pick up the most screws off the ground? We'd have competitions to see who could do different things.

And we were just talking to them about it. Because when you're a child, it's just totally different understanding of time. As an adult, we can say okay, "This is an 18 month project, 18 months of our lives this is going to consume and then we're good. Life will be so much better after that."

A child, life has changed. You know, "My mom used to be here with me 24/7 and now I don't see her right now. What is going on?" So just really talking to them, explaining the process, reassuring them that this isn't gonna last forever, this is just a season. Mommy's heart is with you. We're gonna get through this together and we're going to be stronger and better for it." And just remembering that... Just to communicate with the kids.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. Do you have any last words of wisdom for someone who is thinking about taking on a big project to really create a dream home for themselves?

Noell: Just knowing that you can truly accomplish anything that you set your mind to, anything that you dream of. If you just start taking small steps, doing your research, really trying to figure out and set those goals. You can accomplish anything.

But more importantly, learning to be content and happy right where you're at, even if none of those things. Ever come true, finding true joy and happiness in the moment, will get you so much further. Because even if you do accomplish all of those fabulous things, and you have the perfect house, and everything's perfectly organized and functional, if you've not learned to find joy where you're at in the moment, you're still not going to be happy and there's still going to be bigger house and better house and nicer kitchen and more beautiful tile. So instead of focusing outward on those things, focus inward and learn to find just true contentment and happiness right where you're at.

Stephanie: I love that. Thank you so much for being here.

Noell: Of course.

Stephanie: I'm so glad we got to connect.

Noell: I am too.

[00:50:55] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't Noell amazing? I just loved our conversation.

Note, 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 and you'll find links for everything, including links for Noell, so you can pick up her book 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 your phone downloads the latest episode when the new one's released.

And I did want to take a quick second to ask you 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 podcast 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, thank you so much for joining me for Girls Night. I'll see you next week.