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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.

So as I mentioned in last week's episode, we're kicking off this season by sharing a few of our favorite past episodes having to do with singleness and dating and relationships.

Today, we're sharing the conversation I had with my friend Jena Dunay in Episode 75. At the time, she was Jena Viviano. But little spoiler alert, she ended up marrying the amazing guy she talks about in this episode, which is so fun. I'm so glad you guys get to hear the beginning of their story.

Friends, Jena is incredible. She is the chief learning officer for a wealth management firm, and she's just a total boss. She's also an alumna of my online course Love Your Single life, which you'll hear more about in this episode. And the fact that she took my course makes my heart so happy.

A little while back actually Jena and I were at lunch and we were talking about some of the things that she learned along the way in her journey of singleness and dating. And I love her heart and her perspective so much. I just knew that we had to record this episode. I'm not kidding when I say that this is one of my favorite Girls Night episodes of all time.

One of my favorite takeaways from the episode is a story that Jena shares about a time when she completely broke down at a Thanksgiving breakfast from feeling defeated in her single life. And I think that's an experience so many of us can relate to. But what really amazed me are the words that her friends said a few days later that she will never forget and that I believe so many of us need to hear too.

Friend, if you can relate to feeling tired and discouraged and disappointed by your love life so far, this conversation is for you.

But before we dive in, I have some really exciting news for you. Registration for my online course, Love Your Single Life, is officially opening up again on October 17th. Guys, I'm so excited about this, and I would love to have you join us.

This is one of my favorite parts of my job. And it's because God has been doing the most incredible things in women's lives through this course. I wanted to share a DM I received from one of our amazing alumni, a woman named Jenny. Jenny gave me permission to share her story and I'm so glad she did.

Here's what she said. She said, "Hi, Stephanie, this is overdue, but I wanted to share with you how Love Your Single Life impacted my life. It started on New Year's Eve 2018 when my sister shared that she had taken the course. It was the highlight of her year because it made her live more fully, step out of her comfort zone and try online dating. At the time, she just started talking to a guy and now they're getting married in March.

I was so inspired by my little sister's example that I decided to sign up for the March 2019 Love Your Single Life class. And I have to say it totally changed my perspective, made me a better person, and helped me be open to people I wouldn't normally have sought out.

I met an amazing guy that September, he proposed in March, we were married this past September and now we have a baby due in June. I credit all those blessings to God and to your course. Thank you so much."

All right friends, I am going to cry if I spend too long thinking about her words. So let's jump into some logistics. If you haven't had a chance to check out the course yet, here's what it's all about.

Love Your Single Life is the only digital course and study for Christian women that teaches a step-by-step plan to help you savor, enjoy, and truly make the most of your single life all while setting yourself up for amazing relationships and marriage in the future.

Here are just a few of the things we talked about in this four-week course. We talk about how to start really enjoying your single life and making the most of every moment. I'll teach you a powerful tool for building confidence, which also happens to be your dating secret sauce.

We'll talk about how to find good quality men to date even when it feels like you've run out of options. We'll talk about how to invest in your friendships, your relationship with God, your calling, your passions, and yourself.

We'll talk about what to do with your sex drive while you're single because it doesn't wait to show up until we're married, right? We'll talk about how to stay

close to your girlfriends even when you're in different stages of life and so much more.

Registration for the course only opens up twice a year. So make sure to mark your calendar for October 17th and put your name on the waiting list. You can find the link with all the information and get your name on the waiting list too at loveyoursinglelife.com. Again, that's loveyoursinglelife.com. That link will also be in our show notes.

The other thing I wanted to say is I know some of you guys may be listening to this after the registration window is closed. That's totally fine. Head to the website anyway, put your name on the waiting list and you'll be the very first to know next time the course opens back up. I can't wait to share this with you.

All right, you guys ready? Let's jump into my conversation with Jena.

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Stephanie: All right, friends, I'm so excited to welcome my sweet friend Jena Viviano back to the show. Jena, thank you so much for being here.

Jena: Oh, you're so welcome. You know I love always coming and hanging out with you.

Stephanie: Oh my gosh, we were hanging out a couple of days ago and dreaming together and working on things together. We ended up having such a great conversation about this particular topic that we decided, like beyond the shadow of a doubt, that we had to have you back on the show, and soon.

So I'm so excited to get to hear more of your story and more of kind of the personal side of your life. Because last time you were on the show, we got to hear a lot of your professional life, which maybe we should have you introduce yourself before we go any further. Tell us who you are, what you do, and a fun fact about yourself.

Jena: Sure. My name is Jena Viviano. I'm a career coach and entrepreneur who has worked with close to probably like a thousand people at this point, helping them figure out what they want to do with their lives and then teach them how to get there in their career. So I specialize in mid to senior level professionals, it's super fun, one on one coaching. Yeah, I love it.

So that's what we talked about on the last podcast episode. So it is kind of fun to talk about some more personal side of things. And coming to work as a whole person is super important to me.

For my fun fact, when I used to work at the New York Stock Exchange, I actually got the opportunity to interview Jeff Gordon, the last NASCAR driver on the floor.

I remember we got off camera, and he turns to me and he goes, "Jena," he's like, "How did you get into this?" I'm like, "Jeff Gordon, like the top NASCAR guy is asking me how I 22 year old Jena got into this line of work." So it was just a really fun experience. He was so kind and really nice and I was very flattered that he asked me that question

Stephanie: Oh, I love that. That's so fun that he was so nice and that he was interested in you. That's amazing. If you have a photo of that, I feel like-

Jena: Oh, I do.

Stephanie: Okay, we're gonna need it. We're gonna need to see it.

Jena: Yes. I'm also like a foot taller than him.

Stephanie: Really? Is he short?

Jena: Well, I'm also really tall. I think I was wearing heels that day. And I remember like giving the microphone down to him and I was like, "This is so awkward."

Stephanie: That is like tall girl problems. Jena, how tall are you?

Jena: I'm about 5'10". But I wear heels.

Stephanie: Okay, okay. I'm 5'9" and I wear heels sometimes. One time I got to meet... I had some girlfriends that I'd only Skyped with or talked with on the phone. And the first time that we met in person, they were like, "You are so much taller than I thought you were gonna be."

So I don't know. I don't know what height we look like from, I don't know, Instagram or whatever. If anyone else can relate to tall grow problems, we're here with you. We understand the high water jeans.

Jena: Yeah, yeah.

Stephanie: Funny pants to fit. Things like that. Okay, Jena, we mentioned that we're going to be talking about some more personal stuff today. I just have loved getting to see your story unfold over the last, I don't know, like year that we've known each other. God has been doing the coolest things in your life. I love where you've been and I

love how you got to where you are today. So that's what we're gonna be talking about.

So to get everything kind of kicked off, can you give us just a snapshot of what your story has looked like up until now when it comes to singleness and dating? Like where have you been? Also I know that you mentioned to me the other day that dating was really healthy for you. So talk about that, too. I want to hear about all that.

Jena: I mean, for me, singleness and dating has always been the biggest struggle for me personally. I have never had a Valentine since I was like 16 years old. I'm about to be 30. It was always the constant theme of my life. I was always single. I never really had any boys that were really interested in and I wasn't interested back. I was always just struggling being single. So singleness was a huge, huge barrier in my brain for all of my 20s.

I was probably 18, I went to college, no boys really interested in me in college. I didn't have a boyfriend. Like the singleness train, like I was living in the wilderness. I was living in the wilderness of what it felt like to be single.

So it really wasn't until I had dated... I started to date actually when I had moved to Nashville. So I lived in Manhattan for about five years, really didn't date anybody there. I was struggling with some other personal things. I had an eating disorder at the time. So that kind of took precedence. I was focusing on my career. But all the time I was just so... I hated being single. Like I just hated it.

And then when I moved to Nashville, I decided that it was time to start dating. And I had to figure out a way to start doing that. So after a string of really unhealthy relationships, I started to kind of use dating apps. And for me, it was a super, super healthy experience because I hadn't dated in my early 20s. I really hadn't gone on a lot of dates. I had focused on my career.

So when I went actually on these different dating apps, it was really healthy for me to start to see like what did I like, what did I not like, what was my gut telling me, what was Lord telling me during this whole entire process. And being able to start the process of trusting myself and trusting God with my love life.

That probably took about two years until about the end of last year when I had kind of hit a low point. So if you're listening to this, and you've been that girl that seems to be always passed up, that was me.

I had gotten to this point to enter last year, and one of my best friends... two of my best friends actually got engaged within couple days of each other. And they were

in my what I call always be single box with me. And they suddenly moved from not being single to very not being single and I didn't know how to handle that. And I like hit the lowest of low points.

And it was at that point that I said to the Lord, "Okay, God, I think it's time for me to face this fear of singleness head on." And that's kind of right around the time that we really got introduced.

Stephanie: I wanted to ask you, going back a little bit, when it comes to dating apps, I think that they can be really intimidating for a lot of reasons. I think, especially if you haven't dated much... Like anytime we're stepping into anything new I feel like we want to do it right. And, I don't know, especially if we've had a lot of time to think about it.

You know, if you've been prepping for something for a long time or imagining what something would be like, then when you actually step into it, I mean, it's hard to actually make that step. And you really want to... I don't know, you have an idea of what it looks like to do it right. So what was your mindset? How did you actually bite the bullet and start like getting out there? How did you do that?

Jena: So, for me, in my professional life, I was really confident. And I knew I was not confident. I was like scared to talk to boys.

Stephanie: Which is so funny because you're talking to Jeff Gordon on the floor of New York Stock Exchange, like interviewing him, and then you're scared of boys. Which is just proof that, I don't know, our lives are so connected in so many different ways but then they're also disconnected in some ways. You can be really confident in one area, and we all have different areas that are just harder for us. Take it from this incredible woman sitting in front of me.

Jena: And this relationship thing was just so, so hard for me and I just could never... I mean, my girlfriends had tried to coach me through it. I would go on dates... It was just always the bane of my existence.

But when I decided that it was time to start dating, it was kind of used almost like a professional exercise and networking. I thought about it in my brain and I was like, "Okay, this is gonna be a way that I'm just gonna have to force myself to try and be confident around boys."

Like, if I screw up, this is... whatever. It's okay, I won't die just like I won't die if a certain business venture doesn't go well. I had to kind of put it in the frame of reference that I was familiar with, which was my professional life. I was pretty confident there.

And so when I started to think about dating like that, it got to a point where I was just like, okay, I was just gathering information. And I was actually really starting to enjoy the process and really started to enjoy meeting new people. I was praying a lot. I was like, "Lord, okay, whatever you have for me, I'm here for it." And I was just really trusting that he was going to kind of bring people in front of me.

So for me when I actually kind of got over the initial fear of going on dating apps because I really didn't know how else to meet people. Especially being new to a new city, I was like, "I'm just going to try and figure this out." Once I got over that initial fear, I actually starting to let myself enjoy the process. And that's when things started to get a little bit easier and actually could gather information about what dating actually looks like as an adult who had never dated before.

Stephanie: Yes. I love that you let it be an experiment. I feel like I've been learning the opposite thing with my work and with my writing that for... failure is really scary. And it feels like if you fail or if someone doesn't like you back, whether that's professionally or personally, it feels like that is just the hammer coming down on your worth.

And it was maybe a year ago, maybe two years ago, something like that I heard someone talk about just the importance of treating, you know, new ventures in our lives as an experiment, and kind of throwing our hands up and going, "I'm gonna give this a try and if it fails, it fails. But I'm gonna have fun in the trying and I'm gonna learn something along the way."

And that's brought me so much peace when it comes to my work life. If I write something that totally flops, well... I think that mindset helped me understand that I'm not a flop, I'm not a failure. And so if so and so doesn't text us back, or if we go on a date, and it doesn't go well or if we, you know, say something we wish we didn't on a date or something, it's an experiment. We're learning something along the way.

Jena: I think you make a good point there where if I... and I want to be clear it wasn't all sunshine and daisies. There were moments where I was like, "Oh my gosh, this guy didn't text me back. I'm so anxious. I wonder what I did wrong. What's wrong with me? Why is the one picking me? Am I too much? Am I not enough?" all at the same time." It's like, "I can't win. What is the deal?" So there were moments with that.

But just as much as there were moments with that feeling, it was also a moment of like, "I feel like I'm getting a step closer. I feel like I'm getting a step closer to actually seeing and knowing what I'm wanting quite frankly."

And then also to hold it a little bit looser every single time, which was really freeing for me who had held clenched really, really tightly. My best friend she said to me when I was talking to her I'm probably crying over salad while I was talking to her on the phone, she'll was in Boston, and she goes, "You know, Jena, the things in your life that always turned out really good, you went into them with open hands. And this dating thing and this relationship thing you've really been going into it with like you're gripping for dear life as if you're on a roller coaster." And when I acknowledged that that was true, I said, "Okay." And that's when the dating became fun.

Stephanie: I love that. I just want to ask one more question on this because I feel like there's someone listening who's thinking, "Okay, I want to trust God with this. I want dating to be fun."

You know, you mentioned the role of prayer in it, and that you were asking God to put people in front of you. Talk to me about what that looks like practically. Because you're opening up an app and there are countless options, you know, and you are sorting through these options as they sort through you, as they sort through theirs.

Who did you say yes to as you're going about this carefully, as you're also trying to take some pressure off of it? Talk us through the logistics of what that looked like.

Jena: I'd say, for me, is I was pretty good... Once I had started going on a couple of dates, I started to figure out what was most important to me. So when I was praying through it, I knew that there was like a couple of non-starters for me. It was like, as much as this sounds super vain to say—I'm a tall girl, we talked about this—so they kind of had to be a certain height for me.

I've tried to date guys younger than or shorter than me and it just never worked out. I always felt uncomfortable. So for me, that was the number one thing. It just was that.

And I wanted to make sure that they said Jesus in the profile or Christian, God, something in the profile. And it wasn't just like part of they could pick a religion and they picked that one. They actually had to have it in their profile. Because my whole thing was my time was valuable and I did want to make sure I was spending time with people that were moving towards the direction of who I wanted to be with.

So those kind of were like the strict things, if you will, that I was focused on when I was doing dating apps. Just because you got to weed out some way. And you don't

want to be spending your whole entire time on your phone, you actually want to be present in life, because hey, you might meet someone in real life.

So for me I was really strict about kind of who I initially went on dates with. And then I would like ask the Lord after I went on a date, I was like, "Okay, God, should I go to another one?" And I would try to really listen. I wasn't always quote-unquote, "correct." But I would try to listen to like my internal compass and what the Holy Spirit was telling me in terms of like should I move forward on the next date or not.

And so it was kind of just like this volley back and forth of like, I made the initial move, okay, if this guy wanted to ask me out, we go on another date, and then we kind of go from there. And I would allow that person to pursue me or not pursue me. And then if it didn't work out, I had to have a conversation with the Lord. I said, "Okay, well, we might be one step closer."

Stephanie: I love that. That's super helpful. You mentioned this earlier, that you kind of hit a rock bottom moment last fall. Talk to us about this. Something happened to Thanksgiving breakfast. Am I right about that?

Jena: Yeah. Yeah, totally. So my parents were in town. My grandmother was in town. My grandmother was actually staying in my apartment. And I was making breakfast on Thanksgiving morning before we're gonna have the big feast at a restaurant actually later in the day.

And I opened up my phone and my best friends that I lived with in New York City texted me. And she texts me a picture of her and her now fiancé and a ring. She had just started dating him probably seven months prior. Not that long. It wasn't like they'd been dating for a couple years. It was very soon.

And I had just gotten ghosted by a guy actually like a week prior. It was terrible. I had been a fifth wheel on a trip. I had gotten ghosted, and I had decided I was going to be done with dating apps for a little while because for my heart, I needed to take a break and take a step back.

And my grandma looked at me, she goes, "Honey, what's wrong?" And I just started breaking down crying. I'm like, "It's never gonna happen for me. I don't know what the Lord is doing. This is so frustrating. Why am I the last single girl in the world? Why does no one want to date me?" I mean, I went down the rabbit hole that you could possibly go on.

And then two days later, the same thing happened with another really good friend of mine who also had been dating around the same amount of time period. And I

was like, "It's just never going to happen for me. It's never going to happen. I guess God just wants me to be single, and I'm gonna be miserable the rest of my life."

Stephanie: I feel like everyone's nodding as they're listening to this because they're like, "Oh, my gosh, I've said those words." I have for sure said those words. Every single one of them. It's yes.

Jena: It was really, really awful feeling of like I want to be happy for my friends too in that moment. I really wanted to be happy for them, and I was mad at myself because I felt selfish because I was so sad for myself.

But the one friend who I live with in New York, she called me on the phone after kind of a week or two had passed and she said, she goes, "How are you doing?" I'm like, "I'm good." She goes, "No, but really how are you doing?" And I said, "I'm okay. I'm okay." And I'm starting to like... I could feel it coming through... You know, it's just at the top of your neck.

And she goes, "You know Jena, it's okay, you can be happy for me and be sad for yourself. Both can coexist." And that for me was such a freeing thing for a friend to say because I was feeling so guilty because I was so mad that it wasn't me.

Stephanie: Yes. Yes to all of that. My best friend Kelsey was the first... or one of the first friends of mine to have a baby. I mean, if you guys have read my book, *The Lipstick Gospel*, it's that Kelsey. She's like a huge person in my life.

So I was home for I don't know what. I was home and I was at her house, and she hands me a card. And I'm like, "Okay, what is this?" And I open it up and it says, "Only the best friends get promoted to auntie. And there was a picture of an ultrasound in there."

And I started sobbing. I mean, I'm laughing, but I'm really crying. And I'm happy but also I was really sad because to me, I mean, I hadn't really had any friends... Like none of my friends and really had kids. And in my head having kids meant our friendship was over. I hadn't experienced my friends going through this big transition and us surviving it and our friendship, which we absolutely have.

But Kelsey looked at me, and you know, I mean, we're laughing, I'm like, "Tell me what happened?" Well, I know what happened, I guess. But she looked at me and she said the exact same thing. She said, "Steph, it's okay if part of you is crying because you're sad." And I'm just so glad because your friend is right.

Like, we're going through our own story. We are living our own story. And parts of our story involve a lot of waiting and a lot of sadness in that waiting. And it's made extra hard by watching people around us get the thing that we're waiting for.

Jena: I just remember that feeling of feeling like everyone was moving on and I was stuck and I couldn't do anything about it. And I'm a go-getter and I like to make things happen. Make things happen career girl. That's what someone has called me before. And I kind of like pride myself on that.

So while my career was going amazing, I was like, I better jam packed my schedule with a bunch of other things to make my single life worthwhile was kind of was the mantra I was thinking in my brain because it just felt like everyone else was moving on with their lives and I felt stuck.

What I wish I would have done looking back on that was really acknowledge the sadness, which I think is important, but then also recognize what a gift singleness really is. And that sounds like such a cliché thing. But I wish that I really would have entered into that and been like, "Okay, God, this is the time period you have for me to do all these other things that I probably wouldn't be able to do if I was dating someone. I'm going to enter into that and be really grateful for that moment."

And I remember I had a mentor of mine who said to me... she told me about the story where her husband had lost her job. And she said, "In that moment, we actually thank God that he lost his job." And I was like, "That's a mind blowing thing. Why would you thank the Lord for the fact that he lost his job." And she said, "He must have something really great around the corner for me."

So in that moment, whenever all that stuff was going on, I was like, "All right, I'm gonna thank you God, that I'm still single even though that's not the thing I want to be praying for right now. I'm just gonna thank you that I'm still single because you have someone sitting around the corner, I think, for me." Whether it's in my single life or dating life.

Stephanie: 100%. So I know that, you know, as you're processing through this, you decided that something needed to change. Talk to us about that. What needed to change? What changes did you make?

Jena: Because I think I had such a visceral reaction this time around, like it had happened before. I've been really sad that I was single. But I had had such an emotional reaction and I was like, really down for a long time that I said, "Okay, there's something to this where I have this fear of singleness." I always kind of flirted around and I thought I'd dealt with it. I really never dealt with it. I just thought

about it like kind of up here in the atmosphere, but never really dealt with it face to face.

And so I decided at the beginning of this year 2019 that I was going to look at that fear in the face of being single for however long, and just really try and work through all the gunk that goes with that, whether it was not feeling worthy enough, or feeling like I couldn't be loved because of past experiences, where it was working through those past experiences with men that didn't work out in the way that I had thought that they would, and then also just working on myself and figuring out like, Why is this so hard for me? And how can I like own the stage that I'm at with the Lord. So that's what I decided at the beginning of this year I was going to do.

Stephanie: So what did you do?

Jena: Couple of things. I'm like the queen of like, "Let me gather all the resources and experts around me."

Stephanie: I love that.

Jena: Listening to a bunch of podcasts. I started going to a really, really amazing, counselor/mentor. I had a lot of conversations with my mentor. And then I also actually purchased your course, which is I purchased that completely on my own.

So I kind of was doing all these different things at the same time to help kind of figure out what's going on with this thing that I feel like has sucked up my entire brain space that I can't focus on anything else, except for the fact that I'm single.

Stephanie: Okay, I want to hear more about that in a minute. And I'm so honored to hear you say that. Truly. I just adore you. And I look up to you in so many ways. I'm so honored that you trusted me with this part of your life and that we could walk through some of this together. That just really means a lot to me.

Jena: I wouldn't say this just so that other people know this, like, I purchased that on my own. You did not give that to me. It was like I wanted to make sure that I invested that I believed in what you were... how you talk about singleness. And you've inspired me and helped me through it. And so I was like, "Well, of course, I would want to invest in this course. I think it's really gonna help me." And so I'm so grateful that I did. Honestly, it was one of my best purchases in 2019.

Stephanie: Oh, my gosh. Seriously, I feel like she's reinforcing that, like, "Stephanie did not ask me to say this."

Jena: She didn't. I can tell you that.

Stephanie: I really didn't. And it's funny because I don't even think... You might have told me as you were signing up. You didn't even tell me you were gonna sign up.

Jena: No, I didn't. Mm-mm.

Stephanie: Which gosh, I'm honored and humbled and blushing and all the things. So I want to talk about that more in a little bit. I want to hear a little bit more about it. But one thing I know that you did in this process, and you kind of mentioned this a little bit, but I want to hear more about it, you did say that you got off dating apps for a while.

And one thing that I love that you said, we were talking about this the other day, you said some people need to take a step forward when it comes to dating and some people need to take a step back. Can you talk about this? Talk about the two different things and how you knew that it was time, that you need to take step back.

Jena: So the reason why I think a couple years ago I needed to take a step forward because I hadn't gotten any dates and I was kind of too scared to. And I was like, "Oh, that dating app thing? I don't want to do that. No way would I ever do that. That's so weird." And then I was like, "Well, I'm not meeting people either."

So to just get my like bats up and to force myself into a new and uncomfortable situation for me at the time a couple years ago was to start going on dates. So I was on the dating apps, the whole thing. Was on those for about almost two years. And then it came to a point around August of last year where I had gone on a weird date and I was just kind of talking to the Lord about it.

And that moment, because I am such a type A person and I was like AB testing different methodologies about how I went about this whole dating process, which is highly comical, I realized that for me the best thing in that moment is I needed to take a step back. That actually if I was saying that I trusted God that I actually needed to trust Him in that moment.

That wasn't mean to say that I was gonna be passive. So just because you get off a dating app doesn't mean you're being passive. It just means that you're gonna be looking in different ways and being open in different ways.

So that's what I decided for myself in that moment. It was time to close down the dating apps, it had served its purpose, I had gotten my confidence, I felt like, backup. But I needed to take a step back and actually really trust that God was gonna bring someone into my life in a more quote-unquote, "natural way."

But I was always still looking. I was in the sense of like I was making myself available is what I was doing at all times. So it wasn't like I was completely passive, I just wasn't being full steam ahead active on a dating app. I took a step back from it.

Stephanie: I really love that you just said that you were making yourself available. I had this revelation... Honestly, I was probably brushing my teeth or in the shower or something a couple days ago and I was thinking about, you know, just all the conversations that I get to have with women who are navigating being single and dating.

I think that, you know, when it comes to pursuit, and when it comes to putting ourselves out there, we have all kinds of ideas of what that's supposed to look like. As I was remembering back, I've always known this, but it just kind of became super clear in my head. I was always putting myself out there.

I mean, there were a couple of seasons where I really did take a step back knowing that, Listen, this time is just for me. I really need to like put on some blinders because right now was a moment for me to be with me and with God, not for me to be with anybody else." But for the most part, I really was making myself available. I was really putting myself out there.

And when I met Carl, you know, when I tell our story, like, you know, one, it's like whenever... Man, I could talk about this forever. When people talk about not wanting to be on dating apps, I think, you know, one of the things that I hear a lot is, "It's not a romantic story."

We've talked about this on the podcast before. My girlfriend Carly and I had a conversation about that. And we both realized really the moment you meet someone is never romantic unless you're the one person where it's raining and there's only one umbrella or something. You know what I mean? I guess there are very few stories.

I mean, I walked into work and met Carl at work. So anyway, a dating app is not a less romantic story than just walking into the office one day. But the reason I say that is because it sounds like meeting Carl just happened to me. And in some ways it did. God had so much to do with us being in the right place at the right time. But also, I was flirting and I was available, and I was dressing my best, and I was putting out the vibes.

I mean, I was doing all of those things. And I really always was, I think, that a lot of times in an effort to be pursued. We want to be pursued. And that's a big part of

it. But we think that we can't put out the vibes at all because that means we're not letting ourselves be pursued. But I think really, what we're doing is we're hoping lightning's gonna strike us, but we're sitting inside.

Like, if lightning's going to strike, we need to be at least outside if we're going to... You know, I know that in two years on dating apps you probably had some great first dates, and some epic failure first dated.

The thing I was thinking as you were talking was like, you win some you lose them when it comes to dating. But we have to be willing to lose some if we're ever going to win some. I don't know, those are just a couple of things that popped in my head as you're talking.

Jena: So my girlfriend actually says kind of the opposite. She goes, "You win some, you lose most." And that's kind of like a joke. Like, she goes out, "You win some, you lose most." But I actually think that's really helpful in dating because you are supposed to lose most.

Stephanie: Yes.

Jena: Honestly, I went on some really lovely days with some wonderful Christian men that were not for me. And that was okay. So I think part of it was like getting over the fear of it not being okay. Because I was worried like, Well, if he's a Christian and I'm a Christian, and he's tall enough, Okay, well, why is this not working? I don't understand why there's no... I must not be..." I'm like, "There must be something wrong with me. Maybe there's something wrong with me." And at the end of the day, it's no, he was just not the right person for him or I. We just weren't a match. And that was okay.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that so much. You win some, you lose most. Well, we talk about that in Love Your Single Life. Best case scenario you're gonna have a horrible batting average. Like, you're gonna get up and you're gonna try. The goal is that we hit one out of the park one time. We want one relationship to work out. The rest are supposed to fail. So yeah, we don't ever get to win one if we're not trying.

Jena: If we're not trying. If we're not trying. And it's kind of funny. I have met up with a couple girlfriends as I was taking your Love Your Single Life course, I was like, "One, y'all need to take this course. Two, y'all need to get out of your apartment and quit talking about how you're tired of being single. Because how many boys have you met this week?" "Well, I don't know. I went to the same..." "Okay, exactly."

So, dominos, we need to go out and just be available to talk to a guy. It's just a simple thing. Go to guy. It actually helped me in my professional life, too, which is

kind of a side tangent. But the fact that I became more comfortable to talk to boys I thought were really cute actually made me feel more comfortable just to talk to people randomly and in general, which actually opened up opportunities for me to have business opportunities.

So it's kind of like if you look at it from a perspective of they're just people, men are just people. And so you may be best friends with this next person or you might not be best friends with this next person. The key is that they're human. They're not some like Greek god that you can put up on this pedestal and can tell you exactly if you're going to have value or not have value. So that was helpful for me.

Stephanie: Yes. I love that so much. I think it really does get better with practice. It just gets better with practice. The thing that's so cool is that when we are putting ourselves out there and getting up out of our apartments and meeting humans, we have the opportunity to have so many wonderful things happen.

You can, you know, network with someone from work or someone who you potentially could work with. You could meet someone who gives you your dream job or your new best friend, or your new best friend who introduces you to your husband, or a new friend who connects you to someone else who ends up being your best friend or your husband. It's just the connections that can be made when we're out there just making a bunch of connections.

It's just when we're out there we have so many more opportunities to make great connections, but we have to start making some first.

Jena: I have a lot of friends that will ask me and they'll say, "How do you make friends?" Or "how do you have so many friends? You just moved to new city, you know, two years ago or whatever." And I think this is it's very much when I was trying to go on the dating apps and just trying to be more open.

I said, "I'm okay with being rejected. Whether it's with friends or with boys at the time, I was just okay with being rejected because I knew that like the Lord was going to open the right doors and keep those doors open if they were supposed to be open and then shut them if they were supposed to be closed. And I just truly had to sink into that and believe that. So once I did that, a lot of things happened through that, not just dating.

Stephanie: Can you imagine what we could do if we weren't afraid of being rejected?

Jena: So many things.

Stephanie: Like how many chances we would take. I actually did something... I think it was last spring. I had a season where I just decided... I've had times in life where I've had to really learn to say no to a lot of things. But this was a time in life where I was like, "I'm just gonna say yes to a whole bunch of things."

And I think I like reached out to people that I had never met before who probably weren't going to write me back and just tried to connect. And a lot of them connected with me. I asked people... I mean, it was everything from, you know, "Is there an upgrade on this flight?" to "Is there a reservation at this restaurant that there's, of course, not a reservation app, but actually there was someone last minute canceled, or to this person? Do you want to get coffee? Surely they're gonna say no, but they say yes."

I think I heard a guy speak one time, who made it his mission to get rejected like 100 times or something like that. And in the process, the coolest things happened because so many of the things he asked for actually turned out to be yeses instead of nos. Really the world doesn't crash down when we get rejected.

Jena: It doesn't. We move on. We move on to the next thing.

Stephanie: Yeah, 100%. So I know that you said that so much happened in your life during that season, but tell us some of the things that happened or changed, some of the things you learned or some of the ways that you grew as you were kind of taking this time to be set apart and to heal some things and grow in some ways. Like what happened during that time?

Jena: I think the world got really quiet. And I was really ready to have the conversation with God about past relationships that kind of blew up in my face, and ask questions about that very specifically. And then also to pray for the future.

So I needed to heal the past, I needed to address what was happening in the present, and then pray for the future. Those were the three things that I feel like I really, really paid attention to during that season. And I feel like the Lord and I got super close. I felt like I had... and this was really a huge, huge testament to the woman that I was seeing from counselor standpoint. She was amazing at facilitating that.

She wasn't really like traditional counseling. It was more we would just pray the entire time, which was amazing. It was like the best experience ever.

And I feel like my prayer life exponentially increased because that was the only thing I knew what to do. You know, going on a zillion dates didn't help, doing all the extracurricular didn't help. So the Lord and I needed to have lots of

conversations about, "Do you want singleness for me? If you do, just let me know. Just let me know so I can live my life."

And it was to be like, "Are my requests that I'm looking for, are they ridiculous? What do you think about me, Lord?" Other questions I was having was like, "Okay, things that didn't work in the past, where was my responsibility in that? What was wrong about what was happening to me? Was I actually deserving of that? Because it felt like I was, but maybe I really wasn't."

So I think it was really just facing the fears of like I kind of swept those thoughts under the rug because I didn't want to deal with them. And so in this season, the beginning of this year, I really just started to like, "Okay, we're gonna go after this. We're gonna go after this and get these questions answered." Prayer life went up was the biggest thing.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that.

Jena: And then I would say that the biggest thing actually when going through your course was I really got to... you had a really great module in there that I actually hated. I hated it but I knew was good for me. But it was like to address like, "If you do have singleness for me, Lord?" The way that you brought that question up how you explained it, it was comforting and yet scary at the same time.

And for a couple of days, I wasn't ready to ask that question. But I felt like when I did ask the question to the Lord and journaled about it and spent a lot of time thinking about it, I started to really believe what I had believed since I was a little girl about what my future could potentially hold. And actually entering into that and declaring that to be hopefully true.

And so for me, I felt like the course especially just really helped me walk through a lot of the questions I knew I had bouncing somewhere but I wasn't really clear on what they were. And I didn't really know how to process through them on my own.

And so for me, having that kind of clear outline of going from step to step to step to step helped me just start to really realize that my single life was actually really awesome. I had a really cool life. My life was really great. And that I could trust God with my love life, and that whether I was going to be single for the rest of my life, I was gonna have a really cool life.

And then if I was supposed to get married and have babies, which I felt like was this strong desire in my heart since I was a little girl, that that would happen in the time that He wanted it to happen. And I just had to sink into that.

So I was able to start dreaming again about what that area of my life would look like versus squashing it. So that to me, was a huge, huge, huge gift.

Stephanie: Man, I love that. You know, we were talking about this a couple of weeks ago and you said something that just really stuck out to me. You said, When you bring things to light then you find peace.

Jena: Yeah.

Stephanie: And sometimes I think that we need space. And sometimes we need help carving out the space to bring things to light. Or we need like a safe place in which we can bring things to light. And then we get to feel God's peace in it because He can actually talk to us about it.

I know for me some of the hardest things that I've gone through are some of the things that I've been most afraid of, I don't want to pray about them. I don't even want to think about them. So it's like if I can keep them shoved deep in a drawer, you know, in the back of a closet, then maybe they won't happen.

But I think the reason I knew we had to talk about that in the course was because when I have brought things out of that drawer and out of that closet and talk to God about them, then I actually get to live a life that's not squashed by that fear. Because even though it's hidden, it's still affecting us.

Jena: And it taught me I think too to go where the peace is. And so in all areas of my life to go where I felt like really praying about stuff and saying like, "Okay, God, I've had some big decisions, like, for instance, in my business, and you and I have talked about that."

And I have really had to lean on that same principle that I learned when going through this from Love Your Single Life course. It was that same principle, just thinking, "Okay, where's the peace currently going? I need to enter into more of that and that's the direction I need to move into."

So though, it was scary, if you, you know, go backwards, when I decided I was gonna get off dating apps, even though I really wanted to date but the peace was in getting off of it, not because I was copying out or anything like that. It was just where the peace was at the moment. Though it didn't make logical sense it was the right move for me at the time and I was obedient to that.

Stephanie: I love that. I'm glad that you said the thing about not copping out because I think sometimes we think that peace is the opposite of fear, which... Like what we just

said makes it sound like it is. But a lot of the things that I know God has wanted me to do in life have terrified me, like just scared me half to death.

So I think sometimes I can trick myself into thinking, Well, the peace is over here. The peace is in my house, safe and warm, not outside of my comfort zone at all. That's where the peace is. And I think that we have to be really careful to pay attention to, "Is this actually where God is leading? Is this where His peace is? Or is this just like not scary?" Because those two things are different.

The fact that you said that it didn't make sense, I think sometimes the peace doesn't make sense. And I think sometimes that's how we know it's from God is when we're like, "That's a little bigger than I could..."

Jena: It did not make logical sense but I was like, "That's where the peace is. I'm going where that is. Let's see where God takes me."

Stephanie: I love that. You know, speaking of where God is taking you, you have a new development in your love life as of pretty recently. Can you tell us that?

Jena: Sure. I'd be happy to. He's great. I'm dating somebody. We met about three months ago. And it was actually because I was being open at the time. God and I have been having a lot of conversations about stuff. I'd actually gone on a date with a gentleman and it honestly was a really terrible date. It was pretty much as awful as one could get. It was really, really bad.

And the next morning, I had been going to a... I've been involved in a faith and work cohort that I've been doing since August of last year. So I'd been in this group with the same group of people for like nine months or whatever.

So after this date, I had to go to that class in the morning and I had to, actually that morning, give a presentation on my whole life story, which like, no pressure, right? And it was a slideshow. And I had decided like the guy and I were just not going to work out.

So I was really just feeling terrible. And I had forgotten that the last slide in my PowerPoint presentation was kind of a joke. And I had written on the slide. "I'm now taking applications for the future Mr. Jena Viviano." Like that was my joke. It's like, "Man, why did I say that?" I'm like, "Don't want to be dating anymore because this date last night was terrible."

Stephanie: You're like in this situation where all of a sudden nothing's funny. You're like, "Today nothing is funny."

Jena: Not funny. "I'm taking applications now. So if you have anybody, you know, sure." That was me putting myself out there. Literally putting myself out there. And a guy in my class, again, who had been in this class with me for a long time, he came up to me afterward and was like, "Are you serious about being serious about being set up?" And I was like, "Ah, I mean, whatever, fine, you can set me up if you want to. What's his details?"

He kind of walked me through a little bit about him, and I honestly didn't think anything of it. I didn't really think he was gonna call me or anything like that. And then fast forward a week later, he ends up being from my hometown, which is crazy, crazy, crazy.

Stephanie: Here in Nashville. You both live in Nashville.

Jena: We both live in Nashville but he's from Pittsburgh, which is where I'm from. When I found that out, I almost didn't go out with him because I was like, "Oh, no, hometown boy." So he called me on the phone. I actually thought he was a spammer because he had the same area code as me. So I was like, "Hello, this is Jena." And he's like, "Hi, this is Zach's friend. Well, would you be interested in going out for coffee?"

Stephanie: You're like, "Uh, sure."

Jena: I'm like, "Gosh, I'm so sorry. I'm so embarrassed. I'm thinking you're a spam caller. You're not." And so we went on a date and it's been like three months, which is crazy. Crazy, crazy. Crazy. He's my first adult boyfriend. Only adult boyfriend.

Stephanie: I love that so much. One of the things that I love the most is that, you know, as we've been talking about him and as I've been getting to hear about him, you've been telling me that in a lot of ways this relationship is different and that a lot of the ways that you've approached this relationship are different because of this kind of setback you took earlier this year. Talk to us about that.

Jena: I feel like for me, in years past and looking at past relationships, I was really looking to the other person to complete me in some way, shape, or form, to validate me, to make me feel like I'm not too much and make me feel like I'm not enough. And just to kind of be too much.

In this instance, though, it's been... the best way to describe it is it's just healthy. It's just like it's healthy. I was trying to figure it out early on, I was like, "Why is this so different?" He respected me, he was honest, he was truthful. The things that I was asking, not like crazy things I was asking the Lord for, but just like very

fundamental things of how I was expecting to be treated, but I didn't believe it could actually happen for me.

So I entered myself in past experiences into really unhealthy relationships because of all those other insecurities that I have. So I think because I was working through these insecurities had worked through a lot of them already prior to me starting the focus on it in 2019, it helped me not suffocate the relationship and suffocate him.

I feel like for me, I was actually able to enjoy him and really evaluate and say, like, Okay, God, like, this is fun. I'm gonna keep..." My one girlfriend always said to me, like, "Do you want to go on another date with him? That's all you need to know."

So I just kept on wanting to go out and more dates with him and getting to know him more because his character preceded his words and his actions preceded his words. And what I mean by that is, I think there were a lot of people in my past who spoke a good game, if you will. Girls, you probably know what I'm talking about. Spoke a good game but they didn't have any actions to showcase that.

He was kind of, I don't want to say the opposite completely, but his actions proceeded. He just was so good at pursuing me. So it's been one of the best things, experiences of my life, and was 100% worth the wait. He's probably listening in the next room giggling.

Stephanie: I'm just beaming over here. I love this so much for you. So from the vantage point of this relationship, if you could go back and tell yourself something, even three months ago, or six months ago, or a couple years ago, what would you go back and tell your single self, if you could?

Jena: I would say, chill out. I'd say, enjoy yourself and just trust in God's timing. He did not come a minute too early or a minute too late.

The other thing is he has not completed my life, he has sweetened everything that I've already been doing. He has made it infinitely better. But because I had cultivated this life that I've really been enjoying... and I think he would say the exact same thing is like, he was really enjoying his life. And then I came along, and it was like, Oh, wow, this makes it even sweeter.

I think before what I had looked at relationships is kind of like the end all be all of like, you can't achieve happiness without having a significant other. And while I love having him, I would not go back. I wish that I would have recognized that when I was single and noticed that instead of focusing so much on this future-oriented thing that I didn't know what it was going to happen for me.

I just wish I would have probably thought about that a little bit more and just enjoyed myself, enjoyed my single life. Because it does change when you start dating somebody. Priorities shift around. Things start to change. And in a good way, it's not in a bad way. It's just different.

And so yeah, I think that that's been a big learning curve for me. I've just been like, "Jena Marie, you are just not enjoying your single life and you should." I wish I found your course like two years ago. Because I think the idea of like, if you know that your person is coming in five years, seven years from now, how would you live your life? If you would just act as if you know it's going to happen, how would you live your life?

And I wish I lived more of my single life like that. I think I did the past two years, but I think I wish I would have lived way more by single life like that.

Stephanie: I love that. I love that. And it's not that you're, you know, banking on... I don't know... I think that that's how we would live if we were really trusting God. Like if we trusted that He had a best case scenario in mind and in store for us and we imagine what that best case scenario looks like, it probably won't be exactly what we imagined. It's always better. You know, there are things God knows that we don't know yet. But imagining like best case scenario in our minds. Okay, if we know that's coming, how do we live today?

You know, the reason that this course is so important to me is because, you know, I talk to a lot of women who are also married and either newly married or have been married for a while and there are all kinds of different marriage stories that I get to hear. But my least favorite one is the one where people are disappointed by marriage.

I mean, it can happen for a lot of different reasons, but the two primary ones I see is, one, marriage is disappointing or extra frustrating or extra hard the more junk you bring into it. And we always have junk. Like we always have junk.

But I finally... and I didn't do this for a while, but in my single life, I finally started working through some of my junk. And I can see fruit in mine and Carl's marriage today, from that investment, I can see things that I know would be really, really different in our marriage if I hadn't worked on those things back when I was single.

The other thing is just the thing that you said about not making the person your end all be all, I think that's the other reason that marriage can be really disappointing. And also we can kind of suffocate our marriages when we think that we're not going to invest in our lives at all, we're not going to really start enjoying them until

we meet our person. Then we're looking for that person to be all of our joy and all of our fulfillment, and all of our everything. And a human cannot do that for us.

I just love how you said that he makes everything that was already in your life even sweeter. It's like he's the icing on top. He's not the cake.

Jena: Oh, 100%. Yes, exactly, exactly. The cake stand is the Lord. Like you gotta get to the cake stand first, then you got to build the cake on top of it, like all of the different things in your life. throw in those eggs, throw on those fun things that you're going to be doing, and then he came along, he's the icing on the cake. He's just so great. And I couldn't be so grateful for him. And also, I'm grateful for my simple life.

Stephanie: I love that.

Jena: Both... and.

Stephanie: Both... and.

Jena: Both ...and can be true.

Stephanie: And I think that we really... You know, and this was so important to me to weave this into the course. This is I feel like kind of confusing sometimes when women are coming in, they're going, Okay, so I'm... you know, we talked about dating in this course, but also I'm supposed to be making the most of my single life. How do those things go hand in hand? But they really do. When we're really investing in our lives today, that's the very best thing we can do to prepare ourselves for the future.

And also, you know, enjoying your life and really living it to the fool is the very best way for you to be in the right place at the right time to meet someone great. And that's the reason that you're going to catch their eye. So it all just goes together.

Jena: And I think too you had said something that I thought about like... I think about that. I remember thinking about that when I started the course because I was doubling down on the prayer around this. Like I was doubling down on prayer around this. I was like, "Okay, Lord, I'm really going to invest in praying for my husband or praying for the future Mr. Jena Viviano."

I think that part of me was trying to figure out: how do I balance that, not get stuck in the future, but also still be present? I think that is a hard thing to do but it is possible if you're keeping your eye current. Kind of what I said before. Work on

stuff from the past, heal from the stuff in the past, be in the present and pray for the future. That's kind of my methodology.

Stephanie: I love it. I love it so much. Jena, we might take this out because I haven't talked about this yet and I don't know when this will come out in relation to it. But Jena, you and I've been talking about how I've been hard at work on a prayer journal for this exact season, for those exact things to help us work through the past, really savor our present and also pray into our future. And I'm so excited about it.

Because I just know that prayer was a really big deal. Obviously. I mean, saying prayer was a big deal for me is like just absolutely an understatement. But it really was. And I know it was for you too.

Jena: And I really didn't know how to pray. I think for a really long time of my life I didn't know what that looked like and how to... Not how to do it right because there's no one right way to pray. But just even how to like engage. Like I didn't even know how to like, "What do I say? How do I pray for this?"

Stephanie: I love that.

Jena: I just started to act like God was my friend and be like, "God, what do you think about this thing?" And then whatever I felt like washed over me I'd write it down. Maybe it stuck with me and I believe that to be true or maybe moved on to the next thing.

Whatever that looked like I started just like entering those good things into me and like really listening like, "God, what do you think of me? Do you think I'm worthy of XYZ things? Do you want marriage for me? What do you want that to look like? What do you have for me in that?" And just really asking those questions that are kind of awkward and kind of hard. But still asking.

I love my journal for that because I can look back now... I actually have a journal entry which I won't go into because he might listen to this later of our first date and just the things I was praying about before we even met. And looking back on that now is a huge gift because I've seen some of those things to come to fruition and how beautiful that is because I have that documentation of it.

Stephanie: I love that so much. I have a journal entry of, you know, a couple of weeks before I met Carl and the day that he asked me out and just all along. I mean, I've been a huge journaler since probably sixth grade. And it's been such a great outlet to help me process my feelings because holy moly, there's so many feelings along the way.

And also like to record what's happening. Because you know, you and I were talking about this, and I think I had this revelation as you and I were talking, but our journals are our first draft of our love story, our first draft of our story.

Jena: That's my favorite thing that you said.

Stephanie: Oh, man. I mean, I think I need to... At the point that we're saying this, we're still trying to figure out what the journal is called. So maybe that's it. Maybe you guys will get to hear that. But it really is so cool.

You know, I get to see everything from how I felt. I mean, just the whole story. We just get to document the whole story. We get to really remember how it felt so we can really be grateful for how it feels. And we can also really see God's faithfulness along the way, which I think and I know, I mean, when we get to see God's faithfulness, looking back in our lives, it helps us really trust it today, because there will always be something that we're waiting on, or always somebody we're going through. And to get to see how God has shown up in the past I think it just helps us trust Him more in the future.

Jena: Yeah. I think that looking back that has been the biggest thing where I've looked at it, back at other areas of my life when I've like... When I was in the fall I was not having a good time with the Lord. We're having a lot of choice words.

Stephanie: Love it.

Jena: I just remember being like, "Why are you not making movements in this area? What is going on?" But then I would be reminded, it would wash over me other times where He has been faithful, or even other times in relationships that I got out of that was only by the grace of God that I got out of. I was kind of forced out of them. And I was looking back, it was painful in the moment, but it was so grateful for it post.

So I think that just in general, our love stories are never really about ourselves. It's really about God's faithfulness working in two people's lives, meshing together and moving forward. Like that is really what I think. That has been what I have always asked for the Lord. "Lord, I want you to write a beautiful love story. That's really what I want."

And so the only way that you can do that is that if you take two people, you bring them together, and you move them forward. And I want to be a part of whatever story that is that you create. Even though I might not be happy about it, even though I might not like the timing, I'm going to have to trust you because I think it is going to be sweeter than I probably could imagine in my brain."

Stephanie: Yes, that's why, you know, I come back to this all the time in every season of my life. But that's why I love the verse Habakkuk 1:5 so much. It says, "Look at the nations and watch and be utterly amazed, for I'm going to do things in your days you wouldn't believe even if you were told." We talk about this a lot.

The verse is slightly out of context but also, it's still true of God's character. Slightly out of context, but it's still true of God's character. And it's been so huge in my life to just remember God is at work, and He's doing things that are maybe a little bit bigger, and certainly better than we can wrap our minds around from where we're standing today.

And the midst of it, the middle of the love story is always a misunderstanding, is always lost, is always frustration, is always... We don't know how the story ends when we're in the middle of it. Nobody does. But it's continuing to be faithful and show up and do our very best and live the story the way we want to know we lived the story when we're on to the next chapter. We don't want to live with regrets. Like why didn't I at least did it? You know, why did I waste it?

Jena: My mentor back in New York, I remember I was... This was many years ago when I was also very single. I remember just crying to her. She got married when she was about 50, I think. So I remember just crying, like, "I don't know where he is. I'm not planning any trips because I just want to go with a significant other. I just want to get... I can't even get new dishes. I can't even get new dishes because I'm waiting to get married. "

And she turns to me and she goes, "Jena, buy the dishes. Buy the things that you would be doing if you were married. Just do it. Just do it." So that year, I was like, "All right, I'm planted here in New York, I'm gonna buy myself a couch. I need a new couch, I'm just gonna buy the couch. I'm just gonna do it." It was a poor financial purchase, but that's a different story.

But I did the thing, right? I let my eye stick with that all the time. It's just like, "Buy the dishes." Do the thing that you were going to do if you would have met somebody. Just do it anyways. And I have so many beautiful memories from when I did that. And I'm so grateful that I can look back on that and tell hopefully children in the future like, "Hey, do the thing. Do the thing that you feel like you need to be doing right in this moment because it could change, it could change." I didn't know he was coming along. I had no idea. I thought that even life was ending.

Stephanie: And you've spent years sitting on a crappy couch when really you could just have a great couch. I was talking to someone today. And if I wouldn't have taken the trip,

like the trip that was my big choice, I almost didn't go because I was afraid of leaving my hometown where I was certain I was gonna meet my husband in my mid-20s, which were my prime husband finding years. I was positive that if I left, I wouldn't meet him. And it was because I left that I did meet him. And so buy the dishes. I love that.

Jena: Yeah, buy the dishes.

Stephanie: Jena, thank you so much for coming on and for sharing your heart and your story with us. I'm so honored to get to be your friend in the midst of this. I'm so excited about where God is taking you and I love where he's taken you so far. I just think you're amazing.

Jena: Thank you so much. I mean, honestly, your course was a huge part of that healing process for me. And I just want to encourage anyone that's listening. If you've thought about maybe purchasing it or not, again, you should. So helpful.

But also just encouragement that like trusting God's timing, and work on your stuff from the past, enjoy where you currently are. Do all the fun things that are in where your city is, with your friends, with your family. And then just pray for the future and trust that you... enter into that with open hands. You never know what God's going to do when you have those open hands versus the closed fists. So if I could say anything to a single person out there, that would be the thing.

Stephanie: I love that. Thank you, friends.

[01:00:27] <music>

Outro: You guys, isn't Jena amazing? I just love her. And I love this conversation. I am so happy I got to share it with you.

One thing I wanted to mention quickly is I know we talked about a lot in today's episode. So if you want to find the links to any of those things, all you have to do is go to our website. It's girlsnightpodcast.com. And for every episode, we'll have a blog post with all the show notes. All the links will be there for everything we talked about, including all of Jena's contact info so you can follow her and so y'all can be friends.

The other thing I wanted to mention is that if you haven't had a chance yet, it would mean so much to me if you would take two seconds to leave us a rating and a review on iTunes. We've gotten so many amazing five-star reviews from y'all and you've left the sweetest comments. I can't tell you how much it means to me. It also

helps out the podcast more than you can imagine. So if you haven't yet, please take just one quick second to leave us a rating and a review. Thanks so much.

All right, friends, that's all we have for today but we'll be back next week with another episode of Girls Night. I'll see you then.