



The Remarkable People Podcast Season 1 Episode #12 Jill Johnson | Facing the Loss of Loved Ones & Experiencing Joy Daily

[00:00:00] **David Pasqualone, Host:** [00:00:00] Hello friends. This is Dave Pasqualone with The Remarkable People Podcast. Season 1 Episode 12, the Jill Johnson story.

Intro/Outro Reel: [00:00:09] The remarkable people podcast. Check it out. the remarkable people podcast. Listen, do repeat for life.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:32] Hey Jill. Thanks for being here today.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:00:34] It's my pleasure, Dave.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:35] Oh, I can't wait to do this interview for you as the audience. Just so you know how Jill and I met few years ago. We live in Pensacola and I was trying to find an optometrist for my family and I, and for about two years we visited optometrist and we just could not find someone that we thought was giving us decent care.

And then we met Jill and it was amazing. So thank you. First off.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:00:59] My pleasure.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:00:59] Yeah. And then not only that, but then right after we met you, your business was sold and change names, and we were so afraid. We're like, no, we're going to lose her. We just found her. So we're, I'm really happy that when the business change, you guys are still together and the practice is there for our family and many others, so thank you for that.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:01:20] My pleasure.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:01:21] And then also when I knew Jill as just the optometrist, she always had a smile on her face and joy in her heart. And I had no idea what was going on in her life. And then we actually met her again in our connect group at church, and we started being coming friends, her husband and I, Keith.

And then I learned more and more about her family. And you truly have a remarkable story. So thank you for coming on today and sharing this with our guests and listeners to help them as well.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:01:51] Very good.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:01:52] All right. So today, I do not want to steal Jill's thunder or tell a lot or a story, but we're going to talk about dealing with family, tragedy, grief, and loss.

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And Jill has, again, quite the remarkable journey, and she is still filled with the joy of the Lord, smiling her face, positive, always there to help people. So Jill. Take us back as far as you see fit, where you want to go. The format of the show is you're going to talk about the past, the struggles and difficulties you faced, how you overcame them, and then we'll go where you are today and where you're headed.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:02:28] Well, first of all, God has been the center of my life. For my entire childhood, for my entire adulthood. I was very blessed. My first husband, Philip, was the spiritual leader of our family. We had two beautiful boys and then somewhere in our mid forties, we got this overnight change in the dynamics of our family from being this perfect family of four to, Hey, guess what?

Philip has this terminal disease. It's genetic and it's going to kill your children also.

Wow.

And so immediately there's those priority shift. I mean, God was always the center, but now the days really means something. There's more of an urgency to, to connect with God and to connect with people. And to, you know, live out the faith.

We've been teaching in the youth ministry at that time. my husband, Philip, died of a very rare genetic condition. He was the first occurrence in the family, so there was no way to predict it. We had about 20 months together after his initial diagnosis. we went through multiple surgeries, including a colostomy, meaning he had a colostomy bag that we had to deal with.

he went through chemotherapy towards the middle of his treatment. He started to hallucinate and. he would have these beautiful hallucinations of people giving him gifts. He didn't, he never became violent or hard to live with, but there were times my children would wake me up and say, Hey, mom, dad's talking to the treadmill again, like it's a person.

And I would say, go to sleep. Let me go deal with this.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:04:05] And how old were your kids at this time?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:04:06] They were 5 w we got the news on Richard's 16th birthday. And William was probably 12 at the time. Okay. And you know, there was about a year and a half transition til he passed. Well, when they told us this is genetic, of course we had to get the kids tested.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:04:23] And what was the name of this condition?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:04:24] It's called Gardner since syndrome. It is

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:04:28] like in the garden,

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Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:04:29] like in the garden, it's part of the F a P family, and that stands for familial at a Noma to polyposis, lots of polyps in the GI tract and you die of colon cancer. Okay. when they checked the kids, Richard, our oldest did not have polyps and William dead.

So between Phillips demise. William also started his journey on battling this disease with a [00:05:00] colectomy, meaning a reverse of the colon and a, ileostomy bag. And, he's been through chemotherapy, so it's like round two, but round two started. Before round one finished in the middle of that, my mother became sick.

So she died shortly after my husband died. So we had three family members, you know, between my dad and myself that we would shuttle back and forth to the ER, or various doctor's appointments and this kind of thing. So where does God come in and all of this, I don't know how people survive without a church family.

My church family did things for me. I didn't know they would do. they would show up and do my yard work for me. They would show up and bring a casserole dish for me. And this was just showing the love of Christ to help me get through. And my part in this was to work as many days as I could and work was a saving grace.

Cause I could just put my problems aside and focus on my patients because everybody's going through something and I can bring a smile to one person's face. That's a victory in the face of death. And I, I absolutely would recommend that stage one, make someone else smile when you can't. That is a big, big step.

The other thing that I could not have survived without was praying through the Psalms, being a, math, science oriented person. I'm not real in touch with my emotions. Okay. And so when you're going through something really emotional, I tend to just kind of close off and not speak about it. And that's not healthy.

And you'd go, I went to, you know, therapy because I wanted to be well, and I said, help me deal with this. And they said, you need to get in touch with your emotions. Praying through the Psalms. I can find the words in the Psalms. I could identify with. I said, this is what I'm feeling. The neat thing about the Psalms is when you're reading those woes.

Almost all Psalms, but one have a positive light in them also. And so that was my clue to find that positive light in a day. Whether it was when I went for a run in the morning, there was a rainbow or, we gave a child glasses for the first time and their face lit up cause they could see the leaves on the trees, those kinds of things.

So praying through the Psalms was great.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:07:17] Let's pause for one second. Some of our audience, they're believers in Christ. Some of them are not believers in Christ. But what we always explain is the same foundational truths will work for everyone. So with that in mind, the Psalms is a book within the Bible and it was written by David and explain it to the audience, just how you interpret it.

Cause this obviously made a huge difference in your life. So explain it. One is a song.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:07:43] It's a poetry writing. It's poetry written to God. It talks about how we're feeling. It talks about God's goodness. It talks about, how to turn our sorrows into joy. So it is poetry and it's not fast reading. It's not a story to make you feel good.

It's something you can go word by word. And really sink your teeth into.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:08:09] And it's how David back then dealt with his pain. Yes. So, okay. So that for you as a listener, the whole Bible's amazing, but at different points we have different needs. So what Jill's talking about is how God used that work of Psalms to give her strength.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:08:24] Yes.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:08:25] So let's do a quick recap. So you're going through life, everything seems literally almost ideal. Yes. You're working as an optometrist. Your husband's good. Your kids are good. And then suddenly becomes ill. you're dealing with him sick. Then while he's sick, you find out your kids might be sick and one was, and then your mother gets sick.

So this is a daily process. You're saying that you're making somebody church was helping you. Going to work was a relief. It's a key to make someone else smile, to help bring others joy that brings you joy. And then you mentioned something. Not only the Psalms, you were there and your go deep into that, but you mentioned running.

Yes. How did that

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:09:12] help you during that? Well, it was a great way to start. The day I would get up and before anyone knows was up. I could go for a run and do something just for me. Now keep in mind, when my husband was first going to sleep at night, that's when the hallucinations would happen. So many times I would sleep on the floor in front of her bedroom door so that he would have to trip over me if he was going to go out and walk somewhere cause he could, you know, during the day he was okay, but at night he would just, it's almost like Alzheimer's.

He just. Would do funny things and he could sell any, it could be harmful to himself without realizing it. So that was a defense mechanism, but he was deep and slumber early in the morning. That's when I could go and and run.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:09:55] You could be at

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Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:09:56] peace. He's fine. He's fine.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:09:59] Yes. That's [00:10:00] crazy too. Did they? I've never personally met anyone who had medical problems to the point of this hallucination.

Zach didn't have unpleasant, who's in Asians are scared. He was saying

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:10:10] he's the only one. I could tell you what it was amazing, funny story. If there's time, you can cut it out. But

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:10:20] for the show listeners, you don't mind. Right. We can always,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:10:22] right, right. He, he, woke up one morning and like I said, he thinks clear in the morning.

He looked at me and he said, did the entire Pittsburgh Steeler. A football team, give me the winning football from when they win the national championships last night. I said, no, sweetheart, that was a hallucination. It's not even football. So he goes, dang it. I was hoping that one was real. I mean, the sense of humor he had was amazing.

Just amazing. He, Like I said, we went to counseling and therapy and this kind of thing cause we hit head thing on hit heads. Th things head on cause there's just no other way to deal with it. You can't hide it. you know, and then as you move forward in the story, he passed away. We had a beautiful celebration of life.

Many people came to Christ at his funeral because of the way he lived his life.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:11:12] Two things on that. Yes. How long was it from the diagnosis to 20 months. 20 months. 20 months. What did he do for work? What was his career?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:11:21] He was my office manager. Oh, yeah. So I mean, I was the doctor, he was the office manager.

So, about three weeks before we found out his diagnosis, we sold the practice and he was going to go into business for himself consulting. Okay. So God already took care of that for us. And so I'm working for someone else when we get the news, Hey, guess what? He's terminal. Wow. So he never did go into consulting, but,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:11:45] but you had that clean

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:11:46] bread, that clean break and transition.

It was already done without any stress or worries.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:11:51] That's amazing.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:11:52] And God is always amazing.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:11:53] Okay, so now you're at the funeral

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:11:55] funeral. Many people come to Christ because of this, because of the witness. He helped plan his own funeral. We had a recording of him singing for his own funeral. I mean, he just, we hit head things head on and dealt with it.

And I'm about. Two months after he, passed. I, was on a website about widowed too young. I was 43 at the time, you know, widowed had been married 21 years to them, you know, and this ad came up. for Christian mingle. So kind of as a joke with my 16 year old, well now he was 17 year old son sitting next to me.

I created a little profile. Well, sure enough, I met someone and he is a chaplain and I said, you know, I'm a new widow. We had a lot to talk chaplain for hospice. Yeah. A chaplain for hospice. Yeah. He'd been in hospice for 11 years, so we started communicating and ended up dating and got married about six months later, and that is my current husband, Keith.

We've been married now for seven years. Nice. Yes. and that was very fast. All of the experts in grief will say there is no right path, but then they'll turn around and say, wait, that's way too quick.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:13:10] Yeah. They, you see at least a year for grieving, then start dating.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:13:14] That's suppose

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:13:15] that's the way, that's a statistic that

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:13:16] says, exactly.

That's just not the way it was. But then again, he is the grief expert. Case in point. when it came time for us to get married and him to move into the house. he said, I know that our pre-marriage counseling told us, Hey, you should both sell your homes and create a home together. He said, your children aren't ready for that.

He said, let me move in. Keep all the family pictures of your deceased husband up at a couple of me. I will tell you when they're ready.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:13:43] So you're super understanding and exceptional. It

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:13:45] never would've happened that quick if it hadn't been him. And four months after we were married. My son Richard came to us and said, I need help.

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Well, what do you need help with? Apparently instead of taking advantage of the therapy session, he self medicated and without going too deep in his story, he needed to go through the friary, which is a program to clean you up chemically. And you know, again, he came to ask for health. Had I not been married at that point, had been just dating someone at that point, I would have totally cut them off and said, I need to focus on my child.

But what I had instead was I life partner saying, Hmm, let me give up my chaplaincy job, which he did, so I can be home to make sure these kids are going to be okay. One Richard's gonna need to and from after his rehab, and we don't want anyone knocking on the door after school when William's home by himself.

For the younger one. Man.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:14:43] That's amazing.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:14:44] Yeah, so, and just long story short, Richard has made recovery in one shot. They told us that never happens, that there's always a relapse. It's been seven years. There's been no relapse. He is currently serving in our military. He is married. I mean, [00:15:00] yes, yes. That's a God blessing.

I couldn't have done that without a life partner, my husband. So having it early, I see God's plan in it. Not long after that was when William started to decline his health. This is the younger son who has the same genetic condition, and Keith, again, because he wasn't working, was able to take him to and from all his doctor's appointment to his from all his chemotherapy appointments to, you know, sit with him.

Now when there was surgery, I took time off. But there wasn't surgery. I worked. so, and his condition is so rare, it's not treated just in Pensacola. The doctors we see are at MD Anderson, Texas. Okay. So we go to Houston once a quarter.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:15:42] Okay. Wow.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:15:43] Yeah. So my darling loving husband takes care of all that.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:15:49] and how old is William

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:15:51] now?

William is now 21.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:15:53] 21 and he's still receiving treatment.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:15:54] He finished his last chemotherapy about six months ago, and we were told against all odds, they're not growing.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:02] Amen.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:03] So he's been chemotherapy free. He's been able to move out of the house and live on his own. It's truly remarkable.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:09] Wow. And is he on any kind of special diet or is this not diet?

I mean, everything is diet related to a point,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:15] you know? That's a good point. He doesn't have a colon. He has to be real careful not to dehydrate. Oh yeah. Nutritional. you know, when you take a pill of anything, it's going to go pass the room before it absorbs. So he has to do with liquids. So he has to be very careful with his nutrition.

There's no restrictions. He just has to be very careful

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:33] and wise with, yeah, you can eat a doughnut, but that's probably not the best thing to do right now.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:37] You know what, whatever he can tolerate sometimes

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:41] eat it,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:42] eat it.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:43] Okay.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:43] Yeah.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:44] Well, let's go back. Let's go back. So you had your husband get Hill. your mother passed away

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:51] too, about two years after my husband did.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:16:53] Three years after your husband did. Your son didn't deal with things at that

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:16:59] time

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:17:01] and like, you know, you always say you can't run from your problems and he self medicate, which we all do. Every one of us, the listeners, me, you sure. We will all medicate if it's not treated right. Some of us are porn through alcohol, through drugs, through anyone, through overworking.

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Everybody's going to medicate somehow unless we deal with it. Right? So let's go back. That's really important. You are going through all of this tragedy, what most people would call tragic and not. You have great optimistic attitude. But for the listener right now, struggling and getting the pressed and not knowing where to turn to.

Let's talk about counseling cause it's like doctors, attorneys, any profession, secretaries, janitors. There's good and bad in all kinds. And when you're letting somebody in your brain, it's really important to get someone who knows what they're doing and cares. So talk about counseling, how it should look, how to look for a good practitioner.

You know, how it helped you, because there's all sorts, as a Freudian kind of, where you sit in a coach and smoke, I mean, snort cocaine and talking about your mother, you know, everything's your mom's fault in that. Right? But you know what I'm talking about? How, what counseling helped you and how,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:18:15] so the first thing I did is, I went to my primary care physician. I have a great relationship with my primary care physician and I said, my husband's just been diagnosed with this terrible illness. I don't know how I'm going to deal with this. This is a paradigm shift, and this was before we knew about the other son having it and my friend, the other son self-medicating a mom being ill, and this is at the very, very beginning, like the day after he was diagnosed and he said, I am so sorry.

You're going to have to go through this. Wow. As a physician, if you're a physician out there, that's a fantastic line. I am so sorry. You're going to have to go through this and I will be here to help you. And he wrote down the name of three different counselors. He wanted me to Google, look up at their ratings and see which one I thought I do best with.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:03] Okay. Awesome. So you have a really excellent PharmaCare.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:19:06] I do. Sure I do. and so I did that.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:09] You researched, I researched is going to fit,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:19:12] but if he had just, if he gave me three specific ones that that was helpful for me. If you give me too many options, I take too long to decide three specific ones. And I picked one, I called.

I'm

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:24] going to start there too. What were you looking for?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:19:27] A female around my age, who wasn't just going to write a prescription would actually talk to me. And a while. It didn't have to be only Christian based she needed to understand that that's where my heart was.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:44] cause all truth comes from God. Yes.

And no matter who you are, you need some reason to apply biblical practices, even if they don't credit the Bible. And that's what's going to bring success.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:19:53] Exactly.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:19:54] Okay. So your, your research consisted of reading their websites and [00:20:00] literature, looking for the criteria, bottom line female, someone who understands your worldview.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:20:05] And that doesn't mean a male couldn't.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:20:07] No. You just felt comfort with it.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:20:08] That's what I felt comfortable with. That's just what I felt comfortable. Yeah. and when I called and spoke to the lady who answers her phones and said, okay, here's who I am. Here's how I'm getting here. Here's in a nutshell what's going on with me.

And she said, your name sounds familiar. And it turns out that her receptionist goes to Sunday school. With my dad and already knew this story because my dad had shared with his Sunday school, please be in prayer with my daughter, and I went, well, if that isn't a sign from God, this is where I'm supposed to be.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:20:42] Small world.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:20:43] I was like the first one I called, I felt comfortable with done. Done. And, we had weekly sessions for a while, then monthly sessions for a while, and then she said, you're doing great. Call me if you need me. And so after he passed away, I called her and said, well, he passed. I guess I should come in.

I came in twice and she says, you're doing fine. Processing this. If you have questions, call.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:21:05] And this is great because you do have a Christian worldview, but whether you're a Christian or not, there's a huge stigma. Against counselors and against getting help. A lot of times people feel like, Oh, it's wrong, or if I go, I'm weak, or they're just whack jobs, and there is some truth to that because there's some bad in that field.

But there's also a lot of good counselors, and if we seek them out and pray and find those. Like you said, you went from weekly section sessions to biweekly to come as needed. It's not an endless bucket of no hope. And then you get people. Would you say this person really helped you?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:21:41] Absolutely. And it's hard work.

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You don't just go in and feel good when you're done. You go and you go, gosh, I got homework to do and I feel, I feel like you've picked a scab and I mean, it's hard. It's like going to physical therapy after you've had a break in your leg, you go to physical therapy and her heart. But it's not forever.

Once it's rehabbed, you're good to go.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:22:00] Short term loss for long term gain. Yeah. That's awesome. Great.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:22:04] Yeah. That brings up another thought. anyone who's going through this, it's just a season. Things will get good again. Find those small joys until you can get there.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:22:16] Now describe that. Find the small joys

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:22:18] I like

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:22:19] is in chaos to the outside perspective.

What's a small joy you found?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:22:23] Like I said, at work, it would be making someone smile. Whether it's a coworker or a patient, at, at church. It could be just the fact that I made worship cause I'm not in the ER with a child and I'm delighted to be singing to the Lord. just any small joy. It could be, Hey, it's not raining.

So I went for a run.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:22:43] So you're really the everyday things that we sadly take for granted. You're finding the good in it and you're free,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:22:50] and it means, in dating my current husband and realizing I was going to marry him both, I've been blessed twice. Both husbands had been phenomenally good spiritual leaders, but I appreciate the second one more because I lost the first one.

Yup.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:23:09] That's fine. That's powerful. Thank you for sharing that. Okay, so let's do this. So now your son, the older son gets help. He's doing great, married, serve in our country and God and, and he's moving forward and seemingly no issues. He got help. He got the help he needed. Your younger son, you said he just finished chemotherapy.

He's doing well for the most part. And he's a

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:23:36] difficult to work full time. So he has moved out with one of his best friends, and that right now is all he really wants to do is be a normal 21 year old out of mom's house.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:23:47] Which sounds right. I mean,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:23:49] it sounds about right. I am delighted for him.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:23:52] Delighted for him.

Great. So what's your life look like today? So we went through the past. To maintain this joy in this positive outlook. What are the things you do each day? Because I know, and I don't want to put words in your mouth, you tell me if I'm wrong, but all of us, we can easily have a thought or a trigger and brings us back to the pain and we want to naturally feel sorry for ourselves or be depressed.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:24:18] Let's talk about Christmas. Okay? Christmas season. Christmas was hard,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:24:22] and just so the listeners know. Jill has this peaceful, joyful smile, and we're sitting here talking about these topics that she's kind of have to share with us. And if you're listening to this and you can relate, I just want you to know she said her with a smile on her face, not fake.

It's real, and she's just amazing. So thank you for being on the show.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:24:45] Christmas was hard. Yeah. It's, you, you miss some of the old family traditions because the people aren't there. Your mom's not there. Your husband's not there. And [00:25:00] it's okay to be depressed. And I would tell myself, okay, so my goals today are, these may be small goals, but it would accomplish something.

I'm going to get up, I'm going to get a shower, I'm going to do my hair and my makeup. So when I looked in the mirror, I feel presented. And today I'm going to think about a new Christmas tradition. I'm going to start because now, since I'm remarried, I have a daughter, a stepdaughter. she and her husband lived two doors down with our grand baby who's two months old, excuse me, two years old.

so that is a blessing and I'm going to create this new tradition involving my stepdaughter and granddaughter, cause that's the only grandchildren I'm going to have. Because with this genetic condition, my kids are told, been told, don't have kids of your own. My son and his wife don't want children.

They said, maybe we'll adopt down the way by re. They may not. you know, William says he's never going to have children, you know, and I, I kind of believe them. so this is it. If I didn't have this, I would not have a grandchild to love on. And this is through Keith. This is through Keith. This is through Keith.

So we created traditions this Christmas. And I told her, I said, I know you're missing your mother. I know. she said, my art tradition is to make divinity. I said, let's make the vanity together. my tradition, it is a, you take egg whites and you whip them up and you let it dry out and it's just real sweet with some nuts in it.

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It's bright white. Okay. Ask your wife, she'll make yourself.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:26:32] I've never had that. I'm about to be 43. I've never had it. You have to give me the recipe. I'll put in the show notes. You got a good divinity recipe.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:26:40] Go. There you go. and you know, one of the traditions I had was making a gingerbread house. Well with a two year old granddaughter and the advent of frozen, we found a kid with the frozen to castle and made a ginger castle and just created some memories and that helped deal with the depression.

No, you can't go back. Those days are gone, but you can go forward and you can appreciate today. That doesn't mean they're all good. There are days I just want to curl up in a ball and cry. And sometimes I'll say, you know what? I think I'm gonna allow myself just to Cry for them all cry. But just, just for a short period of time.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:27:14] So you set boundaries. Yes. Yeah. Talk, let's talk. Let's, you have become good at this and you're still, we're all growing. It's not perfect, but from what I'm listening to you, it really sounds like you're working through the healing and that's amazing. And you have kids to help you in the morning and you have the Lord.

But go through these little steps cause a thought comes into your head and you literally can go from really happy to, Oh, in a split second. So how do you

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:27:39] deal with that? Is it real or is it exaggerated? Okay. in five years, will it make a

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:27:46] difference?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:27:48] Okay. And you know, if you say, yeah, it's real. No, it's not exaggerated.

Yeah. It makes a difference.

Doesn't glorify God. Okay. And if that thought of, I miss my mother, I miss her, especially at Christmas time. But does that glorify God? No. What would glorify God? I'm making a new tradition with my grandchild.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:28:13] Okay. And then you take those, you're making these new traditions and you're putting that, you mentioned a couple of times, I don't know if you're in realize it, but you're saying.

Make new traditions. That's a goal to work towards. I'm going to stay in bed, but only gonna stay in bed for one hour. That's a goal. You're always putting goals in front of yourself. You realize you're doing that, or is it just how you've learned to overcome?

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Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:28:38] Well, it's honestly been my entire life that way.

So explain that. All right. So in the fourth grade, I got glasses for the first time and realized there were leaves on trees and blades are black, and I went home and told my mom, I want to be an optometrist. And she said, really? I said, yep. I want to make people see

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:28:53] fourth grade,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:28:54] fourth grade. That's when I got glasses.

Never changed my mind. And so as you get a little older, you say, okay, so to make that goal happen, how much schooling do I need? Okay, well, to make that goal happen, what kind of classes do I need to take? Well, to make that goal happen? How much? What kind of grades do I need to make? I'm very goal oriented, so this goal step works for me.

That doesn't mean it worked for everybody else. But for me it does. Well, those were things I learned in therapy.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:29:21] Yeah. And I mean, the bowel says where there's no vision, the people perish

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:29:24] and no vision. The people perish.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:29:26] And there's always the president throat covering the covering of the Bible. But you can listen to any motivational speaker or any, you know, self help guru.

They're always hung with the importance of goals. I remember, one of the ones that stuck with me and they said, you know, Zig Ziglar, if you shoot for nothing, you'll hit it every time.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:29:41] The one minute manager

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:29:43] and then Ben Stein, you got, he talks about how then indispensable first step is knowing what you want.

So even at a young age, you knew what you wanted and you worked with his goals. And then I guess, so right now, when you're battling to depression. You're [00:30:00] giving yourself the time degree, you're giving yourself the boundaries, but when you're in that bed, it's not easy to get out sometimes. So what do you do to get out or do you just do it?

Forget feelings. Let's stick to the plan.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:30:15] Again, I'll say, well, if I don't get up now, I won't have time to go. I don't run anymore cause I have a knee problem. I won't have time to go walk. if I don't get up now, I won't have time to do my hair and makeup. And I literally have a checklist each day, and at the end of the day,

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if I have enough checks on my checklist of things I did for myself that are healthy for me, you know, I ate right.

I drank enough water, I got enough sleep, those kinds of things. I'm like, Ooh. Let's do a reward and a little reward could be a tiny little piece of dark chocolate. It doesn't take much. Or, maybe I'll say, Ooh, Saturday, I'll go do a pedicure. Or maybe when it's time to go get a haircut, I'll get that extra treatment to keratin treatment I want.

So I do little rewards because when it comes down to it, you have to realize that you are a precious child of God. You are a daughter of the King that makes you a

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:31:06] princess. Hmm

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:31:08] and you are worth it.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:31:10] Absolutely.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:31:11] Okay. And then your responsibility with that big gift is how are you going to share that with others?

So you have to take care of yourself so that you can take care of

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:31:22] others. That's huge. Let's go into that because I, until oof,

I see. I need understand that until maybe four years ago and I still struggle with it. I take care of everybody else, work myself to exhaustion. Yeah. Suck it up. Be a man. That's what I think. I'm 43 I've been critically ill twice in my life and it was not helping me to be a workaholic in my mind. It's work hard.

Get things done, help people.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:31:58] You know, when mine hit I, I did that, that whole workaholic thing until about 47

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:32:03] 47 or I'm a little bit ahead of you.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:32:06] So at 43 is when I lost my husband. And that was a priority shift. Cause you realize what's truly important, you know, in a way that you didn't understand before.

and I used the gifts and talents God gave me with that goal. Orientedness to get through it. Great. But I didn't learn how to relax. And be good to myself until menopause hit and I couldn't do anything but that.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:32:30] Yes. So, but for the audience listening, they may have not ever, like they talking about take care of yourself.

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I know that's selfishness. Talk about that

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:32:39] because the difference between self care and selfish.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:32:42] Yes. Cause that it's real. It's important. And like you said, if we don't take care of ourselves, we can't take care of other people. That doesn't mean be a selfish pig and do everything for yourself. Don't miss interpret.

But she'll explain to you the difference between self care and selfish.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:33:00] Okay. My body is a temple for God. I need to take care of that temple. That means I eat right. I drink water, I exercise. I take time to take care of my mental and emotional health with the journaling, praying through the Psalms, taking time to worship, doing good deeds for others.

That's part of self care for me because that gives me a happy. Yeah.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:33:29] Do you ever hear the song again? Some people have heard this on it. Count your blessings. That song. It's in the hymnals. Been around for a hundred years. Count your blessings. Name them one by one God has done. And for you, I'm sorry, I can't say, but that song, do you know how it, you know the history behind that?

There was a woman who was depressed and she kept going to her pastor and say, I need help. I need help. I need help. And the pastor one day you just like, you know what? I'll help you. We're going to meet this time, but I need you to help me first. There's somebody who needs this groceries. I think it was one of them.

Can you deliver it for me? Then come back and we'll meet. So long story short, he kept giving this woman tasks to help him, so he'd have the time to meet with her. And then she realize, wow, I've been so into myself, and not only am I helping other people, but I'm finding joy from this. But that's how that song was

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:34:20] really.

One of my favorite hymns is actually, it is well with my soul. Do you know the story behind that one with the ratio? Spafford so he goes something like this. He loses his family. And the sea voyage is, I guess wife and children. And he writes this beautiful him when sorrows like sea billows flow. And then he says it is, well, it is well with my soul, cause all he could come back to losing his entire family is he is still right with God.

And we know as Christians we will see them again.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:34:52] Yeah, absolutely.

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Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:34:53] You know, with, when William was. Super critically ill, and we thought this was goodbye. I had this beautiful [00:35:00] image of my first husband up in heaven next to Jesus and me throwing our baby up to him saying, here, catch

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:35:07] that. That's a beautiful picture and that you just, you'll be safer and happier than we won't hurt

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:35:14] because boy it is.

Whoa. It was harder to watch my late husband hurt than it was to miss him when it was gone.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:35:27] To watch someone that you can't do anything.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:35:31] It was harder to watch him hurt than it was to miss them when it was gone.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:35:34] Yeah. Okay. For the people that they're dealing with that right now, what words of encouragement do you have for them?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:35:42] It's going to get better. A promise. Keep

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:35:47] trying. And each day when they have the thousand thoughts and the thousand, the screams in their ears of quid, it's no ear.

You know, it's never going to get better. It's that discouragement. What are you telling them? What's the good

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:36:02] voice? So those are the lies of the devil. God says, you are precious and he's going to take care of you. You know, funny story. When I was praying to God after my husband passed and I said, God, you promised you would be father to the fatherless husband to the widow, and I'm calling you out on that and I want you to show up and show out in a big way.

Now, I was expecting just to feel better, to have more courage to go forward. I was not expecting him to hand me Keith, but he handed me a real life person. Big, big surprise,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:36:35] and I'm not saying this, but I mean, I love Keith. He's such a great guy. We go to the men's group together. He's a great human. You're been blessed.

So we talked about. Even right. Talked about exercising, talked about selfishness for self care, the self care and journaling. Yeah. You mentioned that two or three times.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:36:59] Yes.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:00] I love doing this and it helps me tremendously. Talk to the listeners about journaling.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:37:05] I hate journaling.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:07] I don't like giving it, but I love the results.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:37:11] Journaling is like running. I like the results of running. I don't like actually running. Journaling was the homework given to me by my counselor. That was hard work. It's hard. Heart work, it's hard emotional work. It's a great emotional outlet for those who had the gift of writing. Again, I'm a math science person.

Writing is not my gift. I'm part of the brain. Different parts of the brain. But it helps you get in touch with things, and when you go back and review it, you can see how far you've

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:39] come. Yeah. And nobody reads it. This is just for you,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:37:43] unless you choose to share it.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:37:44] Yeah. Unless you choose to share it. But this is just you, I found, and I don't, again, I don't wanna speak for you physically writing on paper, pen and ink on paper tree.

That to me, engages a different part of my brain. Some people type, some people record like an on the phone or whatever, but I find writing on paper. What about you

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:38:10] definitely write it on paper.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:38:12] So you agree, it engages more your brain, different parts of your mind.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:38:16] Absolutely.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:38:17] Yeah. And then if you have bad handwriting, don't worry about it.

You're probably never going to read it again anyways. Just pour it out, right? Like how do you journal? See how I journal? Is it. I have a mind that never, I mean, it doesn't really stop. It doesn't slow down. And there's times where I become very like overwhelmed, hard to sleep, lots of nightmares. But what I found worked best for me is the first Andrew to get up in the morning, I will talk to God.

I'll take out that journal. I will literally write down everything in the Bible. It talks about cast your cares upon me. So I literally take. Every care I have and I write it out. Everything I can think of, and it doesn't matter if they're at the same thing seven days in a row or seven years in a row, I just pour it all out, shut it, pray over it, and then I go on my day and it's like, Oh, I don't even think about this stuff anymore.

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I wish I found this 42 years ago. You know? How do you journal? Is it similar or is it totally different?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:39:15] Different,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:39:17] different, different.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:39:19] Started with, Psalms and I would read through them until I found a particular verse that spoke to me and I'd write that verse at the top and I'd write, why is this speaking to me?

What is God saying to me through this verse? And I'm praying over that. And you know what? You end up with a list of burdens you need to cast on him. It just, again, you're able to do it without the prompt. I need the prompt to help me out.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:39:43] And that's, this is what's beautiful because all of our listeners are different.

We're different. And you know, I might even try that. Or, I mean, there's been times where I've read my Bible and God, did you ever have it where you're reading your Bible and it's like you've read this passage literally 150 times. But it's like bang [00:40:00] right off the page. Wow. It stops you dead in your tracks.

This is what you need.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:40:05] That's why it's a living word.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:40:06] Yup. But you find that you keep going back to Psalms, Psalms, I never even understood the songs until 2015 and I still don't feel like I have a grasp. I feel like I got 1%. What are the Psalms to you?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:40:19] So when we would do Bible studies before I'd read through the Psalms and go, I don't get it.

It's not a story. What's going on? You agree with me?

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:40:27] You can either get it or you don't.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:40:29] But then when I read through it through the lens of grief, there'd be parts of it. I'm like, I don't get it. Then I'd read a verse and I go, Oh my gosh, that's exactly how I feel. Yup. And so it's, to me, it was a way to get in touch with the feelings, to give me that prompt, to get to figure out how to express it appropriately.

So that was a huge, huge thing.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:40:53] It's crazy how two different people, two different lives, but we have the exact same experience at our lowest of low. That's when the Psalms came alive and it was understandable. Yes. I felt like I was reading a different language and then all of a sudden like, Whoa, I get it.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:41:07] That's exactly right.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:41:08] So if you're listening and you're going through tough times, read the songs, try my approach, Jill's approach it, approach it's you, and then write it and tell us what we can help other listeners with. But, it really helps.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:41:20] It really does. It does.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:41:22] All right, so. All this has happened.

We went through your past right at the present. So where's Joel

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:41:29] today? Well, today. Yeah. Yeah. Today I am enjoying an empty nest with my second husband, the grand babies two doors down. So we get to see her frequently.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:41:42] I

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:41:42] know, I know. It's wonderful having, one son in the military. So there's periods of time where there's no contact, but I'm grateful for his service.

And then, with William, we're just waiting for the other shoe to drop because this disease did not get cured. It has not gone away. This is a season of rest and joy. And if there's a family trip we want to take, now's the time because we don't know what the future holds. But the odds are he's not gonna live long, and I am going to have to say goodbye.

So right now it's very important to enjoy some good wholesome memories together. That's where we're at. And I don't worry about the future. It'll happen when it happens. I've already been through loss. I know God is right there with you to take care of you. So there's no fear in that. There's a sense of urgency to make sure that we make some memories.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:42:37] Okay. So

you know that he's eventually,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:42:46] he'll die before I do.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:42:48] He's going to die. And that's hard. You say it like, I mean,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:42:51] it's accepted,

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:42:51] it's accepted. How did you get to that point? And, I thank you so much for sharing this cause that's tough. I can't even imagine like losing my child. And you. Have to deal with that reality.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:43:02] I told you about my beautiful image one day I'm going to throw him up to heaven. Jesus is going to catch him and his daddy's going to be right there beside him and all is well and all is well. It is well with my soul.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:12] And you just keep reminding you don't think over the bad and keep going back to the good, the vision, the for
the

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:43:16] goal.

Yup. Yup. the things I pray for is when the time comes, I really don't want to watch it in a lot of pain. I know I can suffer through that again, but I really don't want to. That's the hard part. Missing is the easy part for me.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:36] Oh yeah. I mean,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:43:37] you know, but my situation was different. Others who experienced grief, it's a car accident.

Bam. They're gone and they didn't get to prepare.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:44] They know that time to say goodbye.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:43:45] Yeah. That's harder. Yeah. I had time to say goodbye.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:43:50] Yeah. Wow. I mean, every situation is different. Every situation's difficult. But the way we deal with it, it's all in the same core concepts of truth and this fundamentals of healing.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:44:03] So yes, taking care of yourself, taking care of

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:44:06] yourself,

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:44:06] taking care of others. Yeah. All right.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:44:10] Well, is there anything that we didn't talk about that you'd like to talk about? Something you feel it's important. So when you feel like for the people listening today, like words of encouragement, anything, anything on the planet

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:44:23] at your lowest focus on the character of God.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:44:27] Okay, talk about that. And what's that mean? Because let's say somebody who doesn't even believe in God, they're like, you guys keep talking about God. Okay, give me the practical steps you go through. But we keep telling him, God, because we know the strengths at the lowest of low and everybody's turned her back, their backs, or we have nothing.

There's this comfort and peace knowing God's there.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:44:45] They talk about the peace that passes all understanding. You don't, you can't understand it. You can't think your way around it, but it is there.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:44:54] So if someone didn't know God yet, and they're listening to this right now and they're going through a hard time.

[00:45:00] Kim, a couple of reasons to think about God, to love God, take the characteristics of God, how he's helped you.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:45:06] Well, in the beginning there was just God and he was lonely for us, so he created us to be in this perfect union. But then we chose to sin and not be in that perfect union, and that's created this brokenness and all this harm and hurt in the world, and the only way back from that brokenness back to God is through Jesus Christ.

God loved us so much. He sent his son down to die on the cross, to be buried, to be raised from the dead, to create that path back to him. It's our choice to turn. And follow him, or it's our choice not to. So it's a choice you have to make. You can't claim ignorance.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:45:56] The choices and it's not, you have to do these five things. It's just literally trusting

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:46:03] him. It's trusting him,

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:46:04] and he is a loving father, caring father, wonderful father we can laugh with and enjoy. if someone was like, all right, I just, where can I learn? I want to learn what are they're talking about?

What, what, who is this gone? What, what, how would you recommend they start?

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:46:24] I'd start in Romans, Romans chapter one. It's in the

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:46:26] Bible.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:46:29] All right? Because Romans was written to people who did not know God. The

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:46:34] Romans actually crucified Jesus. Yes.

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Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:46:36] Yes they did, but it was specifically written. For people who did not know God to tell them about the character of God, and then you can respond accordingly.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:46:48] Awesome. And I'll put a link in the show notes to maybe some passengers on Romans. It'd be more direct, but God covered to cover is throughout the Bible. The God has every moment of time in life.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:47:02] But you said you read the Bible cover to cover. There's a lot of confusing things.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:47:06] Oh, I'm not saying, Oh, no, no, no.

That's not what I'm saying. I'm saying he's all over. He's thrilled about. But even looking around, if you really think about like, people joke around what came first, the chicken or the egg. It's a chicken, 100% even if you're a straight up scientist, you have to have a parent to raise the child. If you took an egg and left it on the ground, it's not going to hatch.

Let alone have someone to develop it and feed it. So that whole lie of chicken or egg, it's a chicken. Okay, so now of course there's where the chicken come from. It didn't come from aliens. Came from somewhere. Now again, all different theories and reasons, but right now today we're talking about grief.

We're talking about how Jill dealt with it and has a smile on her face and joy. This is her story. This is how she did it through Christ. And then through these practical steps, or Joel, I thank you very much for being here today. I'd really appreciate it. You truly are a remarkable person. I counted a blessing to know you and be your friend.

to those of you listening today, if you have any questions for Joe, we'll put a link that she want, that you can communicate with her to maybe email or connect with in the show notes. Also, if this episode has helped you or if you think it can help someone else, you know, please share it. Rate it, review it, like it in your social media.

Excuse me. Especially on like Apple podcasts. And if you have any questions, let us know. Thanks for being here today. We love you and go do something with this knowledge. Don't just sit on it. Have a great day.

Jill Johnson, Guest: [00:48:35] The remarkable people podcast.

David Pasqualone, Host: [00:48:37] Check it out.

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David Pasqualone, Host: [00:48:47] podcast. Listen, do repeat for life.

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