

# The Lovelight Stories

## PODCAST

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### Ep: 5 | MY PERSONAL STORY: FOLLOWING GOD'S CALL + MENTAL HEALTH

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00:00.94

James

Hey. So today we're flipping the mic. I'm James Barnett. I'm the founder of neighborly and I'm back on the podcast, but this time I am doing the interviewing. And I'm going to be talking to somebody you may know. Ah, she's a blogger, she has insightful video interviews, awesome really good content curator and ah, she's done a lot of work to help cultivate empathy for people helping them to understand the perspectives of others and how we can best serve one another, working with multiple nonprofits to do so. I would like to welcome Stephanie Jacobs to her podcast! Hi Stephanie.

00:40.65

lovelightstories

Thank you! Hello! Thank you, James. It's fun to be interviewed this time, and there would be no one better than you to interview me. So I thank you so much for taking the time to flip the mic today.

00:46.63

James

Um, yeah.

00:54.15

James

Well I'm so glad that you said that. I have a bunch of questions for you that you probably haven't seen and wouldn't have approved, but you said that we're going to have a good time and that we should just go off-script. So that's what we're going to do.

01:05.90

lovelightstories

Yes, yeah, well this podcast is all about real, and raw, and vulnerable. So we'll see how well I am at making that happen.

01:17.21

James

Yeah, well Stephanie what are some of the things that you hoped we would talk about today? And ultimately the goal here is really to just kind of get to know you, to understand your personal

story. How did Lovelight Stories come to be? What sort of life experiences have you had to kind of give us a backdrop against which you have cultivated Lovelight Stories? What are you dreaming about? What are you thinking about right now?

01:49.59

lovelightstories

Yeah, well you know, I want to share a little bit today about my personal story and how Lovelight Stories came to be because that's really the heart of all of this, of course, that's why this podcast is here. It was the birthing of my blog and all of that, and really that started with God's call on my life. It was not something that I ever thought I was going to do and he really just flipped my life upside down. But I want to before I kind of get into that, I want to share a little bit about my brother Jesse, because he was born when I was just two years old. He was born with Down syndrome, and at a very young age he taught me empathy and I ended up becoming his advocate. And it was, it was a natural thing by nature of being his big sister. I really learned a lot from him, and I have realized now after I've grown up and been on my own for a while, I've realized that Jesse completely influenced my life. So much so, that he's a big part of the purpose of Lovelight Stories and how it came to be. so yes,

03:04.44

James

Um, yeah, and you're saying that he helped teach you empathy. Do you have any earlier memories of that?

03:18.73

lovelightstories

Oh my gosh! Yes, Jesse...people with Down syndrome. Have some characteristics that are kind of generalized. They have lower muscle tone, are oftentimes slower to walk. They sometimes have a hole in their heart called a "heart murmur" and there's other things too. He actually has been very healthy. He's been healthier than the rest of our whole family, like I'm not even kidding, he hardly gets sick. He's never really had to go to the doctor. He's just been so incredibly blessed, but he developed, mentally he was slower on some different playing fields. So great example of that was when he was 4 years old he finally did learn to walk, and prior to that he was using a walker, and when my next oldest brother was born, he started to look to him as his cues for developing. So once my other brother started walking, Jesse started walking and he happened to be 4 years old, and so because he had some I guess you could say, delayed development milestones I just naturally learned how to engage with him and interact with him.

04:35.84

James

Like where he was at at that time no matter despite where you thought he should be maybe?

04:50.70

lovelightstories

Um, yes, yes, and as a young girl I was only two years old and I mean we can hardly remember things when we're 2 years old. And I do remember when he was born and wanting to hold him so bad...and things like that. I was sick when he was born so I had to wait like a month I think it was before I could even hold him. I do remember that moment I was crying and I had a mask on looking in through the window and I remember that, but I don't remember much else of course at 2 years old, and so really I basically I just grew up with him. And growing up with someone who has different needs as you, you just naturally kind of learn to be patient. You're understanding. You know how to engage and how to help them, and just all of that essentially leads to empathy.

So he really did teach me that, and because I was his older sister and I grew up with him and I got to be in his therapy appointments and see the different exercises they were doing to help him sit up straight or build his muscle tone and things like that, just through all of that I kind of became his advocate. You know, um, and so yeah, that's how that happened.

05:55.78

James

Um, yeah, yeah, and so you know as you grew up like what's the next page in this story here?

06:05.21

lovelightstories

Um, I would say that really the next big piece looking back in the story of how Lovelight Stories came to be was when I was in college. So I was engaged with a nonprofit organization. It was a nonprofit at the time it is now for-Profit, but at the time it was a nonprofit, and they're called the 7 Mindsets. And it's a youth empowerment program and they teach 7 mindsets to happiness and success that people have shared throughout history that they've had in common.

06:39.14

James

Um, give us your favorite. What's your favorite of the 7?

06:55.88

lovelightstories

Oh my gosh, my well, there's 2 of them. One is "Live to Give", of course. I think we're called to live to give. And the other one is "Everything is Possible". And I really believe that - that's a strong tenant in my life as well. So um, those are 2 of the 7 mindsets. I was actually a student of their program myself when I was just graduating high school, and they really influence my own life. They helped me see that everything truly is possible and that the time is now to engage and make your dreams a reality...those types of things. Because it influenced me so significantly I was like, "I want my friends to experience this, like they need to see this too! They need to learn this. They need to believe this. This is awesome!" So anyway we ended up taking the 7 Mindsets and bringing it to my community which was Fargo North Dakota at the time. That's where I went to school and through that it just snowballed. I really kind of caught wind of what it's like to live for something greater than yourself and yeah, yeah...

07:55.44

James

You said snowball and Fargo, North Dakota and what you said then, you said wind. I don't know what you just said. But yeah, are you doing puns on purpose here or?

08:03.20

lovelightstories

Ah, oh no, but my husband would love that you just said that because he thinks puns are so funny! It's true. Fargo is very windy and there is lots of snow. Um, and anyway I joined through that whole initiative. We brought the 7 Mindsets to the community and I became part of a steering committee for the 7 Mindsets community, and then I was also part of their nonprofit board. Getting to be so involved, it just really lit me on fire. Um and looking back I would say that's kind of one of the other turning points, but it isn't the reason why I started Lovelight Stories of course. It's just a bread crumb if you will in the story.

09:00.41

James

Now, are they based in Atlanta? Are they based up in Minnesota? Fargo is where you were with them for a time and is that kind of what brought you back to the south? I say back, but...

09:18.35

lovelightstories

The 7 Mindsets actually led me to Atlanta and they're based in Atlanta, a northern suburb. Yes, it is. Exactly, yes. I was going to school in Fargo. I was part of their nonprofit. I Loved the work and everything and they invited me to come on down and join them full time.

And so I did that and that brought me to Atlanta and thankfully it did I absolutely love it in Atlanta And that's kind of where the biggest part of this whole story begins. Because once I got to Atlanta, I couldn't tell you what it was, but all of a sudden I just started...my eyes were opened. I started to really just feel for people who I was seeing living on the streets. I was really tugged towards helping people who are in poverty. And it was like, it just stood out to me everywhere and it wasn't just visually, like where I was. I think, you know, moving to a bigger city and somewhere new you start to notice those things and that probably had an influence. But it was bigger than that. I remember watching \$2 a day, that documentary, and I couldn't believe that someone could live off of \$2 a day and I just started thinking about if that were me what would I do. And my answer was "I do not know" and it just brought me to tears. I just I just felt so strongly for people all around the world who are living on less than \$2 a day and that kind of was the the start, and then I started like feeling a tug towards other things too. And kind of the next thing was people with down syndrome. I wanted to spend time with them and I tried to get involved with organizations that were focused on supporting families with a Down syndrome member in their family and things like that, and it was just, it was just overwhelming. I started to almost every social issue you could think of, I started to really see it differently and started to see it in a different light. I didn't know where it was coming from or why, like I didn't know why it was happening. It felt like overnight. This was just such a change of heart and everything and I I knew it was coming from God, and it was. And I started spending more and more time with God every day and just really craving him and his word and prayer time and um silence with him and I just found myself constantly seeking him and asking him what are you doing? Where are you leading this to? why? Why am I feeling this way? And just, you know, that hunger and that longing, knowing like your heart is aching for something that breaks his, but not knowing what you're supposed to do with it.

12:28.30

James

Yeah, yeah, like you've got your why, and you're now like, but how? What's the how, and the what's the what.

12:34.68

lovelightstories

Exactly, and so that was really kind of a low point for me. Honestly, it's not my lowest low by any means, but it was hard. It was joyful because I knew I was being called by God to something greater, and I could really feel he was leading me to my purpose, but I just didn't know what it was, and I wanted so desperately to figure that out, so I could go do it, because I just had all of this energy pent up inside of me to try to help. You probably can even relate to that having gone through some of your story but. So I prayed about it for about six months and decided that I should leave the 7 Mindsets. And I wasn't sure if I was going to pursue it yet or not because I was in the midst of it. But I knew I needed to kind of like turn quickly and go on the journey. It was like,

I would have never thought I was going to leave the 7 Mindsets, but I just I knew it was time and it was a fast turnaround really. As I was praying about it, I did end up going to get more business experience because I felt like God was saying, "I have something for you. But you're not ready for it yet and I need you to prepare yourself more in business so that you can put it to use."

14:03.15

James

Ah, that's interesting right there. I find that very interesting, because you feel this new passion your concern for people at a disadvantage and just your heart bubbling over with empathy for them. And you go from a nonprofit, which was at the time a nonprofit, to an international consulting firm, right? So it's different, right? That's different than a lot of other people, right? Because you know there's this story in scripture where Jesus starts to gather disciples to himself and he starts to call people out of their boats and to follow him and at 1 point he's saying to some people like, "hey, ditch your net, ditch your net, like put down your net and follow me. And you know it's really easy to kind of look at that story and I mean, we obviously years later we know okay, it's not about like not having nets. However, if we were to like look at that story and the disciples had deduced that nets were not welcome in the way of Jesus, "we're going to do life without nets to you guys". It's not about the nets. He doesn't love nets. Put down your nets. Get ready of your nets because what can happen is if we if we misidentify the calling versus the avenue upon which we will travel to arrive there then you know, we'll think it's about a life without nets, right? And so for 1 person it might be, "hey put down your nets." For another person, it might very well be, "pick up your nets." And the call Jesus made is to discipleship, not to a life without nets. It just happened to be that through the means of dropping their nets, they could follow him. But for you it was, it was very much like a picking up of the net in this moment, because you're like, "hey I want more experience in the business world". So why did you feel like that way?

16:08.36

lovelightstories

Yeah, that is such an incredible question because it's surprising in a lot of ways, and try explaining that to my colleagues at the 7 Mindsets! Ha. But I again, I was on this journey of literally just trying to follow God like, "what do you want me to do next?" and my pastor of my church - I had sought his counsel too and he said there's 3 things to form your conscience around trying to make decisions and really trying to follow God's lead. One is to just pray, like prayerfully discern and it's not, ah one moment I'm sitting down. It's over a period of time, just really give it the time that it needs, seek counsel from others. And do your own research. Really try to research around what you can do. Research with your head, go relationally get input, and then speak spiritually with God and once you do those 3 things, if you feel like you're led in a certain direction, pursue that and God will bring fruit from that. And so I did that. I did as much as I could.

17:23.16

James

Pray, counsel, and research.

17:34.20

lovelightstories

And so yes, during that period, I Just did that and it was my it was surprising to me as well, but I really came to, "okay I need to get more business experience so that I can then apply it later". I was pretty young I was pretty fresh out of college and I wanted to be able to really make good use of the passion that God had given me in my calling. So I decided to go to Korn Ferry. They're

a large international consulting firm. I'm a project manager by background so I was a project manager for them.

17:58.99

James

Very cool.

18:12.19

lovelightstories

And I got to work with all kinds of Fortune 500 companies, leading projects from ideation to implementation essentially across the world and it was very fast-paced and very professional. Incredible experience. Um, and when I went into it I thought that there will be a time, and I remember I wrote that in my journal..."It's okay to go here. Get business experience and when the time is right, God will call me elsewhere and I will know when that time comes". And there were moments in my career at Korn Ferry where I thought I may stay. I was very open. I again, I was just trying to go where God led me. I was I guess I don't know, I was moving forward to be a consultant while at the same time trying to really discern. I was praying constantly, like not constantly but every day, and it was a very hard period as well because I was still discerning and trying to know what it was God was calling me to and I still had the fire in my heart, but I didn't know what it was like, what I was going to do with it.

19:34.46

James

And you're at Korn Ferry and you're being given these tools and it's almost like, "okay I've got the toolbox the tools in it. What am I building?" So what happened next for you?

19:46.77

lovelightstories

Right. Right, and yeah, so there did come a time when I was so certain that God was calling me elsewhere. I Don't know, he just patiently pursued me and I there was a point in the journey at Korn Ferry where I could feel the time was coming to leave, but I was kind of scared like I wanted to leave and I could feel it was it was coming, but I was scared because like I waffled back and forth between feeling confident in my calling and what God has called me to do and the promises he has for you when you try to pursue him. But also the worldly things, like "Are we going to be okay financially" "What will people think" ...all of those things. I waffled back and forth on that for a little while.

20:49.68

James

Were you married at this point?

20:59.49

lovelightstories

Partially like shortly after we got married, I did leave Korn Ferry. We were engaged for a lot of this.

21:08.49

James

As you said "we" I was curious how Sam is processing all of this.

21:18.14

lovelightstories

Yes Sam. Yes, That's great. We need to clarify. That's important. I need to make sure everybody is tracking with me...So, I could feel the time coming and I was really praying about it and eventually,, I Just...I can't describe it other than there was this one day that it kind of just washed over me and I just felt like it was time, and I know it was God 100%. I will never denounce that. God was speaking directly to my heart. And one of the verses, it's Isaiah 55: 11-12 in my bible. It really stood out to me that day and I just sat with it, and it says, "So is my word that goes out from my mouth. It will not return to me but will accomplish what I desire and achieve for the purpose for which I sent it. You will go out, enjoy, and be led forth in peace." And really, my reflection from that I also wrote in my journal, because I was just if you've ever really had God speak directly to you, you know it's Him, and I wrote it down because I wanted to remember it forever. My reflection was that "His thoughts are higher than mine and He wants me to come to Him and listen and my soul will live. He is strongly telling me to go out and live for the purpose He sent me, to listen to Him that it's time. Once I do, I'll be joy-filled and go forth in peace led by Him. His word is to tell me to go, and when I go I will be doing what He wants, thus His word will be fulfilled. I will do, go, and seek." And I just remember feeling so certain that while I was scared, while I didn't know exactly what I was stepping into,vHe had a plan as long as I Just do go and seek.

23:12.42

James

You know that's wild. There's this story in Acts chapter 8 where an angel wakes this guy named Phillip up out of a dream and says go down this desert road to Gaza and just long story short, He never ended up going to Gaza it was just that the angel had wanted to position him in a place of obedience and faithfulness on that road so that something else entirely different could happen and it was, It was almost like you could say well he was told to go it was time that. It's time to go out and live like you said the purpose that they sent you for to listen to him and that it's time. And that you'll be joy filled, right? But it wasn't it. You know, the destination really wasn't within sight, right? It was just this "hey get up and go."

24:03.24

lovelightstories

Um, yes.

24:08.60

James

Well, how do you like...that's pretty scary to most folks, because we need we need some flesh on the bones of the idea. How did this sit with you at this time right? What did what did that feel like?

24:10.86

lovelightstories

Oh my, yes.

24:23.30

lovelightstories

Yeah, exactly I mean that is such a great example and I think that's why I discerned this for so long and even waffled back and forth because I knew I was getting to the point of being told to go and then this one day that I'm talking about I knew it was time and because I had so much confirmation from God that day, it was just a real spiritual encounter with him, I was certain and I was no longer afraid or uncertain anymore. But I still didn't know exactly what I was going to do I did have the idea of the blog, because he kind of revealed to me in my prayer time that really just

like Jesse and growing up with him as my brother opened up my eyes, I knew we could see and understand more through the stories of others' lives and that was something from the very beginning that God kind of revealed to me, but I didn't know what that would look like and so by the time I decided to leave Korn Ferry, in this moment when I was really feeling called by Him and so certain I still didn't know really what I was going out for but I kind of did have a starting place. To start a blog and start sharing stories and getting involved with nonprofits and learning as much as I can. And you know what's interesting is that scripture from Isaiah I mentioned said "You will go out, enjoy and be led forth in peace". When I gave my notice I think it was the next day to Korn Ferry that I'd be leaving I had such an incredibly wonderful and warm response from my colleagues in such a way that I hadn't anticipated and I had such a strong sense of peace and joy. And those were the words that I had for it. I was so excited I felt like this is exactly what God is calling me to do. I don't know where I'm headed, but I am right where He wants me right now. And I had so much peace and I no longer, you know, I didn't feel the fear or concern or anything that I had for all those years leading up to that moment. So I really felt like scripture was kind of coming full circle for me, because it was so joyful and so peaceful in that moment.

27:07.47

James

That's good. That's good. That's good was there anything else that encouraged you during that time?

27:14.62

lovelightstories

Um I think...no. I think for the most part it was just really holding onto God and walking with Him and being open, as wide open as I possibly could be. That was honestly all the encouragement that I needed as cliché as that sounds He was everything.

27:41.96

James

Yeah, sure that's great. That reminds me of a Rhino. Did you know you're a Rhino? And don't take offense to that. Okay because Rhinos they charge with lots of force. They run super fast, but you know they don't have great eyesight. They can't see very far in front of them. But yet they still charge like they're about to go through a wall, right? Yeah, that's cool. You're a Rhino. Then when do we pivot to Lovelight Stories? Like how did it go from this like you know, Him calling you out saying "hey it's time. Let's let's go". How do we get to Lovelight Stories here?

28:22.70

lovelightstories

Yeah, well my grand plan was to get involved with nonprofit organizations and learn as much as I possibly could and kind of see where it led. Um, but while I did that I wanted to blog about those experiences and create a space for people to learn alongside of me. And that started to evolve pretty quickly because as I started volunteering with nonprofits, meeting people, having conversations, I went on my first mission trip to Haiti the same year that I left Korn Ferry and then I started to lead mission trips back to the same community and really build deeper stronger relationships with people there. Which I still have friends there. I can say that's been one of the most incredible experiences of my life. Um, but anyway, as I started to really kind of dig in the trenches and engage and learn about poverty alleviation models and different things like that, I realized like "oh my gosh. There is such a wealth of information here that people if they only knew, would love to understand". And I started to pivot my thinking in that way, that there's a lot of stories here that could really help us understand humanity. And I started to think and realize as I was hearing stories personally that these stories once you hear them and know them and

understand them, it changes your perception and you don't forget that. And I started to experience how powerful stories really can be and then I started to research and started to understand the actual research behind storytelling and um...

30:20.30

James

Um, like give me give me a piece of that, like what? what do you mean? The research behind stories....

30:25.10

lovelightstories

Yeah, well our brains essentially are built in a way that speaks and understands in story throughout all of the biological changes throughout history. We're just wired that way and so we remember things in Story. We can be told something, but if we're given a story, we'll remember it. And there's other things too that are skipping my mind at the moment but...

30:52.35

James

Ah, and we all have that, we all have a story and that's not just like the platitude like the generality like we all have a story to tell, but we do all have a story. We actually all have stories and you're telling me that this is like one of the most effective ways to communicate ideas.

31:11.69

lovelightstories

Yes, because if we can understand the true story behind something, or if we can understand the true story behind a stereotype, we can truly begin to understand each other and our perception is so much different. I know there's also research around you've probably heard something along the lines of the fact that our perception is often wrong. I learned that in psychology. I'm a psychology minor as well. And our perceptions, we think we're right, but they're often wrong, especially in conversation with people, and so we really need other people to share their stories to have our perceptions be made right. You know? And really understand the true story and I think honestly, that's what we're always wanting too. We're curious about the World. We're curious about other people, other cultures, and that's why we end up making our own stories up because we're curious and there's a void to fill in our mind. But if we have the right story we can start making, creating the right picture in our mind which makes all the difference for how we interact with people, and essentially how we love each other better.

32:27.64

James

Wow, that's really that's really profound right there. That's great. Until we enter into relationship with one another our perspective is limited by our experience, so by entering in, which will require boldness, we'll walk away with a fuller understanding of the thing we are seeking to understand.

32:49.64

lovelightstories

Exactly.

33:06.80

lovelightstories

Yes, I couldn't have said it better. It's exactly that, and you know...speaking of story. My calling actually is quite ironic. I'll share why in a minute. The fact that it was ironic really threw me for a loop too back in the days when I was still at The 7Mindsets, transitioning to Korn Ferry, really feeling God on my heart, but not knowing what I was supposed to do with it. It was hard for me too, because my story is it that requires me to enter into the margins with people in places that maybe I wouldn't be comfortable being in, and I say that because when I was in college I struggled with this my whole life and I've never really shared this um too publicly. So this is me getting more vulnerable with you here too. But I really believe it's important because it's a big part of my story and who I am. Back in college, I was finally diagnosed and I say finally because I think I was struggling with this my whole life, but I just didn't know it. I didn't have a name for it. But I was diagnosed with OCD, and the way that it manifests for me is in being afraid of sickness and germs and things of that sort. So if there's someone in my family that has the flu I got triggered and kind of went into a spiral, you know? I kind of just closed down and tried to stay away from them and it really bugged me. The worry and anxiety of that just wouldn't leave me and I dealt with that for a very long time. And I always had thought about like other countries and people in other countries and living in unsanitary conditions and you know there's disease and lots of things that we have the luxury of foregoing oftentimes in the United States and so the idea of entering into the margins with other people like places in Haiti would have never been a possibility for me years ago ever. And that's a transformation that God has done in me. I remember shortly before I left Korn Ferry, I was at Northpoint Church with Andy Stanley and he was talking about pursuing the things that break your heart that also break god's heart. And it was very clear for me my strongest calling was serving in international poverty and things like that and I remember thinking, if God ever calls me specifically that day I was thinking Africa, to Africa and I actually go, he will have done a major transformation in me because that feels way too scary, like I don't know if I could ever do that.

36:05.23

James

Um, yeah.

36:09.94

lovelightstories

And yet I felt like "that's going to happen, but I'm not ready for it". And essentially it basically did. Going to Haiti in my mind was just as scary as going to Africa and I actually did sign up for a trip to Africa, but it had to get canceled unfortunately right before covid, but I do believe I'll be going to Africa at some point too. But those trips aren't scary for me anymore and I wouldn't say I've completely, you know, gotten over OCD. But God has shown himself in me and shown how sovereign He is and how much I can lean on Him and trust Him and He takes that away.

36:56.33

James

Um, yeah, certainly somebody who's listening can identify with that. How might you encourage them?

37:03.22

lovelightstories

Um, yes I would say when there's something like that that it's irrational, it might be a fear like mine, where it's oftentimes irrational and you know that, but it's still hard to still act in alignment with it. And my biggest thing is just getting to know God and spending time and asking him to please take that burden from you. Or at least if he's not going to take it from you to start by helping to carry it alongside of you. I often believe that if we're going to ask something of God, to

also take action to try to make it so yourself so that you're "doing", because He wants to enter in with you, I believe, and so for me what that looks like is if I feel kind of my anxiety...

38:05.19

James

Like a co-worker.

**38:17.11**

**lovelightstories**

A co-worker, yes...flaring up around that to enter into it in a little bit of uncomfortableness. So for me, it was like signing up for a trip to Haiti and we weren't going the next day, you know, it was a six to nine month prep period maybe at six months I wasn't ready, but taking action and saying "God I trust you". I'm going to sign up today. I'm scared, but I'm going to sign up and then each time, "God I trust you" and just slowly back into it and pretty soon you're there and I did have some anxiety when I was there. I dealt with it. The more exposure you have I think to it your anxiety or whatever it might be, the more that anxiety is taken away because you're putting your trust in God.

39:07.87

James

Yeah,, that's good. I Think that's you know too. As even as I think about Lovelight Stories I'm like man the world is so full of hate and darkness. You know, love and light. It's such a tall order for people who...many of us feel like the glass is not even...it's empty. Like that's optimistic, you know? Um, Yeah. I think your story can really speak to that and is an encouragement to people who wonder if there's even a drop of water in the glass.

39:43.57

lovelightstories

Yes.

39:48.48

lovelightstories

Well, yeah, and that's the beauty I think of God and the redemption story that He brings, because you know, before He resurrected on the third day, on Good Friday the world was filled with darkness, and until the darkness befalls us and we live through that can we come to the light, and so that's part of why this is called Lovelight Stories.

40:18.27

James

That's great.

40:22.79

lovelightstories

Is because there is darkness and there's hardship in our world. Our world is fallen and we're human and because we're human, we all struggle with things but there's always light and hope. On the other side as well and going through the difficult things and coming out on the other side is where we really see the full transformation of our story and ourselves. And that's part of why you know I'm not afraid even to share my own issues I guess with mental Health. I deal with anxiety too on a regular basis, generalized anxiety and there's a stigma I think still around mental health, unfortunately, and I think we're changing that as a society slowly and surely. But um, yet I feel confident in sharing that as part of my story because whether you have anxiety or you have

something else happening in your life, we all have troubles and we all have parts of our story that we don't like and that's because we're human. If it's not anxiety for you, it's something else and so to instead come together in community and support each other through our struggles I think creates a much more beautiful picture and that's really part of what this space here and Lovelight Stories is all about.

41:49.15

James

Yeah, that's good and you know what I like about you too, Stephanie, I feel like you're like a window. There's this window between each other through which we observe one another and it's just muddied with bias or misconceptions or prejudice and I just kind of feel like you're like a window washer. You know, you're just like getting up there and that's what Lovelight Stories is in many ways, just like washing windows, you know, like hey, help us to see each other better in a way that that would invite us to do life together and enjoy life a little bit more.

42:30.17

lovelightstories

Ah, oh I Love that. I am going to hold onto that picture forever. That helps like crystallize so much about all of this, and it's so true. It is. It's just a window and that kind of brings joy to my heart too. As funny as it sounds. I've kind of struggled on the back end of this. I don't want to be this big figurehead behind Lovelight Stories. Well I have to be to some degree you know, I'm the host of this podcast and everything, but I don't want it to be about me. And when you say a window washer like how kind of, you know, lowly of a job and it's just a window. You look right through it, right past it, and you're looking at what's on the other side. And that is just it. I want God to work in and through me and I do not want to be out in the forefront and I think that's by His design as well like He has humbled me so significantly and I want to stay that way. And so anyway, keeping that picture in my mind is just I think it's a beautiful manifestation of it all.

43:38.79

James

Good. I have a couple questions for you and then I want to come back and ask you how people who want to go deeper with Lovelight Stories can do so. But I want you to...You're closing your eyes, and I want you to picture your perfect place I want you to tell me where you are what you're eating and what you're drinking and who you're with - top-self stuff give me the top shelf.

44:02.23

lovelightstories

All right. Well, that's pretty simple for me. So I love water I'll be happy anywhere where there's water. Right now I'm at a lake, but if I could be anywhere, if I wasn't at this lake, I would be in the South Pacific, maybe Tahiti, maybe Fiji, somewhere fun like that on the beach with a mojito or maybe a strawberry margarita. Um, and I would be sitting right next to my husband with our toes in the blue blue water.

44:38.61

James

That's good. That's good now. What are you eating I read on your website you're at taco junkie. Is this true? like and if you have a high standard for tacos and what kind of tacos I'm a big fish taco guy. What kind of Taco works for you?

44:39.75

lovelightstories

Um, oh yes, oh yes.

44:51.27

lovelightstories

Well I would say I don't have high standards because I love any and all tacos. Um, when I go out to a restaurant I will order fish tacos with a side of rice and beans that always has to be um. I really really do love tacos. I probably could eat them most days of the week forever, but it's a good thing I probably don't so.

45:14.51

James

Ah, ah yeah, we like taco night around my house So that's great Okay, so tell us how can we go deeper with you. How can we bless Lovelight Stories? How how can we partner with you so that it might be a blessing for us?

45:31.59

lovelightstories

Yes, well one of the biggest things is um, in order to create this space where we can better learn and understand from each other we really need more and more perspectives, right? We need more stories. We need stories to tell. We need to be able to be vulnerable and open with each other and just engage with one another and in conversation, and so I would say the main thing is if you or anyone you know has a story that you feel led to explore and/or tell. You can always explore it with me first, and we don't have to move forward...So there's always that open door of acceptance and vulnerability. Sharing it potentially on the podcast could be so powerful. Not only for listeners but also for you as a person in the transformation that it creates in knowing that your story is helping others and serving others and there's a greater purpose for it. So That's number 1.

46:34.32

James

Yeah, and you provide a great resource. On your website you have a storytelling checklist. You've got this way for people to kind of just like throw their story at a list of questions to ask ourselves to decide whether or not we're ready to tell our story for the first time. It's a storytelling checklist and then I also have created a 28-page storytelling toolkit that's available for you as well. Um, and I can either point that to you directly or um, it will be available on my website as time goes on so that.

46:53.20

James

Where can we where can we find that again?

46:49.41

lovelightstories

Yes, yes, perfect. Yes, you can. Yep, it's on the resources tab and you'll see there's I believe 3 resources there now but there might be many more by the time you listen to this.

47:26.31

James

That's that's big. Well how much how much does that cost.

47:27.48

lovelightstories

Yes, right now at this point in time it is not for sale but it will be probably at some point. Um, right now I'm using it as a tool um to help people really feel comfortable in sharing their story. It's chock full of questions to help you think through different things, think through if you're ready to tell your story but also just digging into the depths of your story and bringing that to light.

47:34.53

James

Um, okay, great. So jump on it.

48:01.50

lovelightstories

And lastly I would say, join the Lovelight Stories Community. It's a space where we can learn alongside of each other get to know each other. There's small group chats, I also have guest speakers that come in there every once in a while to go deeper. Sometimes there are people that have been on the podcast that you can ask real-time questions to and just have like a living room or coffee chat. And then there's other different opportunities like book clubs to dive deeper on certain topics, or faith topics. It's really kind of the space you want to be if you're wanting to get to know and learn more about all kinds of social issues affecting humanity, and how to bring more light and love to those around you.

48:48.16

James

Amen That's so good. Excellent.