

538: When Good Women Stop Being Nice with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife



Full Episode Transcript

With Your Host

Jody Moore

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Some of the most downloaded episodes of this podcast by far are the handful of episodes where we have been lucky enough to have Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife. And I decided it's been far too long since we've heard from her, and luckily she was gracious enough to agree to come back on the show.

Today, we're talking about what happens when good women stop being nice. Why nice is overrated and actually not living in our highest integrity most of the time. We talk about a bunch of other subjects as well.

But before I introduce you to her, I want to speak to anybody who's tired of feeling busy and overwhelmed, like you're working hard, and yet you're not getting everything done. You can't possibly accomplish enough to feel like you're doing all the things you want or need to. And or maybe you're procrastinating and avoiding some things that you want to get done, and you can't figure out how to get yourself moving. I am going to be teaching Better than Busy in January. We're enrolling for it now, and it's a five-day challenge at a no-brainer \$49 price point.

Not only will you get the five-day virtual live challenge with me, but you will also get my exclusive planner, which alone is worth the cost of the program. We will send it right to your doorstep. It's gorgeous, and it has a system that works specifically with your brain. I create it every year, and every year, everybody asks me how they can get the new one for the next year because it works that well. And you cannot buy this planner. The only way to get it is to join me at Better than Busy. So head to JodyMoore.com/busy. Again, JodyMoore.com/busy. I'd love to have you join me at Better than Busy.

Let me go ahead and introduce you to Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife, in case you haven't heard of her. She is an LDS relationship and sexuality coach with a PhD in counseling psychology. She is the author of *That We Might Have Joy: Desire, Divinity, and Intimate Love*, which is a phenomenal book, by the way. We talk a little bit about that on this episode.

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She's also the creator of six online courses that help individuals and couples create happier lives and strong, intimate relationships. She also hosts Room for Two, a popular sex and intimacy podcast, and is a regular guest on LDS themed podcast discussing relationships, faith, and sexuality. So without further ado, here is my conversation with Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife

Welcome to *Better Than Happy*, the podcast where we transform our lives by transforming ourselves. My name is Jody Moore. In the decade-plus I've been working with clients as a Master Certified Coach, I've helped tens of thousands of people to become empowered. And from empowered, the things that seemed hard become trivial, and the things that seemed impossible become available, and suddenly, a whole new world of desire and possibility open up to you. And what do you do with that?

Well, that's the question... what will you do? Let's find out.

Sometimes, listening to a podcast is enough. But sometimes, you'll feel inspired to go deeper. If you hear things that speak to you in today's episode, consider it your invitation to a complimentary coaching workshop.

On this live, interactive Zoom call with me, you'll get a taste of the power of this work when applied in real life. You can participate, or be a silent observer. But you have to take a step if you want to truly see change in your life... two steps, actually. Head to JodyMoore.com/freecoaching and register. Then you just have to show up. Your best life is waiting for you. Will you show up for it? JodyMoore.com/freecoaching. I'll see you there.

Jody Moore: Okay, we have Dr. Jennifer Finlayson-Fife on the podcast today, and it's so long overdue that I sent, I sent her, I'll just let all the listeners know, I sent her like a five-page outline of things that I want to pick your brain on, Jennifer. So, hope you have all day.

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Let me just begin by saying that I was thinking about this morning, I still remember the day I discovered you on some random podcast somewhere, probably eight years ago, and went down the Jennifer Finlayson-Fife rabbit hole of like voraciously consuming everything I could find and thinking to myself, oh my goodness, like where has this woman been? Anyway, I'm so appreciative, as I know everybody is to you, of your work and your courage. And anyway, you continue to offer such valuable insight, especially for somebody, you know, in my situation who's a member of the LDS church, there's some slight nuances to the challenges that we deal with. And you've just been such a leader in that space. So thank you for what you're doing.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Thank you. No, it's such meaningful work, and I love it, and I'm so glad it makes a difference for people. So, yeah, it's been wonderful.

Jody Moore: So, Jennifer has a new book out which we'll talk about a little bit later. So if you are new to her for some reason, if you've been hiding under a rock, I'm happy to introduce you to her and we'll get you lots of tools and resources. But the topic I really wanted to dive into today that I hope you're okay with is this idea of being nice and where it becomes problematic, especially for women. And just the idea that maybe nice isn't always serving us. Let's kind of kick off with this idea that this is something I've heard you say. I pulled a few of your quotes. Many of us mistake being good for being compliant. Can you speak a little bit to that and what is the difference?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: So, I think, first of all, one of the things I take up in the book is just kind of the path of human development, and one of the early stages is what I think Lawrence Kohlberg called the good boy, good girl stage. And that is we are inheriting a morality by learning how to comply with the standards that are specific to whatever group we belong to. We're trying to prove that we're good, that we're worthy, and we're trying to earn a sense of belonging.

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So when we're younger, it's perfectly not just normal, it's adaptive to do that because you're inheriting standards and a language and values. The challenge though is that as we move into adulthood, a lot of us have learned lessons either from our family or our religious culture or even just out of our own anxiety of displeasing where we don't grow into deeper honesty or deeper authenticity or deeper ability to discern what is the most right thing to do because it can be so uncomfortable for us, especially if we learned the way that we will be valued is by being compliant, right? It's very easy to just go along with what is wanted from you than to do what you think is most right, which might sometimes displease people. So, in short, it means tolerating invalidation, tolerating people's displeasure.

And I actually think, not just because of how we're socialized, but also because women I think are wired to map the minds of other people. It's a survival thing for a baby to be able to intuit what that child, that non-verbal child needs. We can sort of over-read the room and know people's displeasure or discomfort and it can be easy to manage our own discomfort in seeing that by going along with what others want sometimes at our expense.

Jody Moore: Can you give examples of when it becomes then problematic?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Well, I think anytime that you're giving just to manage your discomfort or your discomfort with someone else's discomfort, but it's not necessarily the right thing. For example, a child, a teenager is unhappy with your limit. This is, you know, you don't think it's good for them to have their cell phone in their room, for example, but they're so mad at you and they're telling you're a terrible parent. And you don't want them to dislike you. You don't want them to be unhappy with you. You don't like them being uncomfortable, and so you cave on the phone, even though you don't believe it's right for them to have it. So that would be an example. Or in your marriage, you want to deal with some difficulty in your sexual relationship or your differences around money, and you just are so

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uncomfortable with your spouse's anger that you go along even though you don't feel at peace with the decision, even though you don't think it's necessarily good, even though it might mean that you don't feel like you belong in your own life. And so when we start prioritizing people not being upset with us over what in our core we feel is good or right or good for our lives, then resentment starts to grow, a sense that we can't be ourselves in our own home starts to grow and that has a lot of cost to it.

Jody Moore: Okay, I have a few follow-up questions. One of them is I hate to even use this word because I feel like it's overused, but I want to hear your thoughts on if it's an overused buzzword right now, is codependency. Is this codependency? And I know codependency is not even like a real clinical diagnosis, but can you talk to us because I've been listening to a lot on this topic lately, and I feel like there is this innate drive as a mother to want to see my children happy, right? And then it crosses a line at times to becoming problematic. If I really just want them happy, they just eat ice cream every morning for breakfast and never go to school, right? But what are your thoughts on that topic in general and how do I know if I'm crossing over into unhealthy behaviors versus, you know, being a mother?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: So a word I use sometimes instead of codependency is enmeshment and that is like we're psychologically too entangled with the feelings and fears of the person we love. And so we have a hard time doing what is actually loving when we are enmeshed or codependent because we're trying to regulate our own feelings by regulating someone else's.

So, in motherhood, just to normalize it for a second, it's functional at first to be hyper-identified with that child's feelings because you are their protector. You are the one who's going to make sure they get food and that they're safe because they can't do it for themselves. And so to be overly identified is functional. Where it starts to become dysfunctional is if you start to recognize that you can't disentangle what they need from how you feel.

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Because if you're actually going to do your best work as a mother, you're going to work your way out of a job. You're going to no longer be needed by them. And for many of us, we need to be needed. Our sense of self is kind of linked to feeling that we are important to our child. This children are just one example of this, but I'm important to my child. I make a difference for them. I can relieve them of their distress.

And it used to be when you had like 11 children and you were trying to survive on a farm, you didn't have time to even map the minds and the feelings of all 11 children. So you couldn't be that enmeshed in a way. You couldn't be, you couldn't hover. In our modern era, when we have, you know, 1.8 kids, we're hyper-invested in our kids. And there's a lot of upside to that. The downside can be that we're struggling to give them the autonomy and the room to fail that their development needs because our sense of self is so entangled with their choices and their feelings. And so then we can get confused about what is good for them versus what is good for how I want to see myself.

Jody Moore: That's so fascinating, yeah. So a good question to ask is, I would love your thoughts on this, but am I making this decision so that they will feel better so that I can feel better? Or is this about what I think serves the child best? Which is also a question mark. I think this might serve the child best, but I don't know.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: That's so true because if we simply knew, it maybe be easier to tolerate our discomfort. But often when we're doing, often we don't know and we're just trying to discern with limited information, certainly limited experience. I mean, we learned how to be a parent by parenting basically. And every child is different. But I think it's also sometimes when you're doing the most right thing, especially for your adolescent, they're telling you what a terrible parent you are. And so then it's like, wait, is this good data or is this just that they don't want to live in the consequences of that limit, but I need to hold to it. And it's not easy work and it takes a lot of

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emotional self-regulation for a parent. It means you walk right into invalidation to tolerate sorting out what is best for them.

Jody Moore: I'd love to shift a little bit to talking more about just our adult interactions though as well here, especially, you know, a lot of my listeners are members of the LDS church or some other maybe conservative group. And so when you're a part of a community like that seems to have standards and norms, I think it's natural and normal that you're not always going to agree with all of them or not all of the traditions are going to feel like the right thing for you specifically. How do we navigate that space? And can you talk a little bit about being kind or compliant versus authenticity and the problems that we create for ourselves there?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yeah, 100%. And I think that again, like any religious group, the real strength of it is that you have a deep sense of belonging, deep sense of purpose, clear ideas about what is good behavior and what is not. And when we're younger in our development, that's very, very valuable. I mean it really is. It infuses you with an identity, a sense of purpose and direction, limits that often facilitate the development of capacity within yourself.

When it starts to become a problem though, of course, is when you're like, "Wait, I don't see things that way," or "this is too simple," or to actually, you know, I've learned that love is the highest law, and yet this principle seems unloving in this situation. So how do I deal with the tension or the incongruity that I'm experiencing? I don't want to lose belonging. I value my community, but I don't want to be dishonest. And it can feel, I think, like everything is going wrong right then when in my opinion, I think that's precisely the moral path that we're supposed to walk right into that wall, in my opinion.

Because, even in my opinion, like the Adam and Eve story is that. You know, or when I work with clients, I see people that they've inherited values, and then those values are in conflict around real life situations. And

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it requires of us to assert ourselves into that situation. What do I believe is the most right thing? Sometimes we overreact in extremes, either I'm just going with the letter of the law, I'm not going to deal with the complexity, that person is the problem, the situation is the problem. I'm just going to get rigid and orthodox, or we throw everything away and we just say, well, this obviously is wrong and bad, and so I'm just going to go into kind of an anti-compliant position.

But both can be immature responses to complexity, rather than is there a way to hold on to the best in this structure while being true to the spirit of the law? To what the larger principle is, to what all of these inherited principles and values have created in me, and now allow me to assert what I really believe is most right in this situation. And I actually think that is a step forward in our moral progression. You know, that our agency, our ability to choose into complexity is what develops our souls even when we do it imperfectly. Right? I mean even going back to raising teenagers, I know I as of like a week ago, I no longer have any teenagers. They have all matured into...

Jody Moore: You made it. You did it. Congratulations.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: I did it. It was great. But you know I like teenagers actually, but yes, the...

Jody Moore: Complexity is a good word.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: What did you say? What's a good word?

Jody Moore: Complexity.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Complexity. Exactly. And you know, I mean, talk about not knowing what you're doing sometimes. I mean, the one thing my son said to me years later was, I always knew you and dad were really trying to figure out what was best. And that mattered. That counted for a lot. Because at least you know that you're loved. And I guess what my point is

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in saying that is that it doesn't mean when you're choosing into complexity that you know this is the most right thing. But when we sincerely are striving for what we think is most right, not just trying to keep people happy with us, not just trying to find safety in obeying, we're really trying to do what we think is most right. That has a deep moral value to it. It's because it's linked to love. It's linked to a kind of faith in the good. And so it matters what our intention is, even if we learn that it wasn't the right thing or we learned the errors in our thinking, even that is good because it helps us mature and stand on different ground from which to make the next choice.

Jody Moore: So when you talk about walking into that difficult path and leaning into it, does it look like being more honest with people, telling the truth? What does it look like?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: It's a good question and it depends a lot on the situation. I think it is sometimes about breaking the rules for the higher aim. Sometimes it's about being more honest about your disbelief or your seeing things differently and why. It has a lot to do with self-revealing. You're not just masking your mind so no one is upset with you. You're being honest with yourself at a minimum, and then discerning how much you reveal yourself into a group.

It doesn't mean we just always are saying whatever we think at any time, of course, because we're discerning between, you know, one of the things I teach a lot is that as human beings, we are always trying to work out a tension between two competing needs or desires, which is the desire to belong to others and the desire to belong to ourselves. You know, I want to belong to this group, but I don't want to betray myself. Or I want to be true to myself, but I don't want to ruin my relationships. And so much of our development is in calibrating the tension between those two and sorting out what is the most right thing right now. Sometimes it's being quiet, but it's more out of discernment that it's good rather than just fear. Sometimes it's speaking up, right, even though you know it will make people

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uncomfortable. You know you're uncomfortable, but you still feel it's the most right thing to do.

So there's not an easy answer in terms of what it looks like, but it is, I would say that almost always, and one of the reasons why it's hard to move out of our compliance mindset into a more authentic or self-determining mindset is because it always requires the risk of invalidation, of rejection, of people disagreeing with you. Because in order to move from what do you desire from me to what do I desire from me, which is that moral progression, or what do you want me to believe versus what do I believe, that for it to genuinely be an expression of ourselves, it can't be driven by the desire to please. And so there is always implicit in that then a risk of displeasing.

Jody Moore: Yeah, I think that's such powerful work to do also because it does require if your connection with yourself is not well-established, it requires that you do that work to develop it. I sometimes what I see is somebody who maybe has been abandoning self for a long time in the name of compliance and people pleasing and whatever we want to call it, who has this realization, right? Oh yeah, I have been denying myself and abandoning myself. And then seems to sometimes swing or I don't even know that they necessarily swing all the way over to what we might call selfishness or lack of care for others, but they sort of almost have to pretend it has to be like, "No, I'm sorry, what you think doesn't matter right now. I have to focus on what I think." And maybe that's a natural swing, but I notice often, especially when I'm working with people in their personal relationships, that it can come across that way to a spouse or, you know, somebody is like, "Oh, so now you just don't even care." So, can you speak to selfishness...

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yeah, it's hard stuff, I have to say, because, first of all, sometimes when people start to wake up or they no longer can justify their choices, they feel angry about it. Like, oh my gosh, I've been giving up so much and I thought what I was going to get was everybody was going to

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love me and value me and instead people just take advantage of me or whatever it is. But the rules that you had been engaging, you find out are not actually giving you what you thought they were. And so sometimes that is met with some anger and then a desire to do it differently. But we kind of, there's a couple of things here. We can use some of our victim energy to justify kind of being like, you know, I'm doing it my way now. I've given so much, now it's my turn. And it can have a kind of rebellious in it that is kind of selfish. Right? That is to say, it's kind of fueled by a self-righteous anger. Like, you took it from me, now I can take it from you. And if that were my client, I tend to challenge that a little bit. First of all, even when we're in a compliant model, we're complicit in it in some way. Like, if I do what makes you happy with me, I don't have to think about what I desire. I don't have to take the risk of sorting out what I desire. And so, rather than I've been acted upon, I have been a participant in this system that I want to grow out of.

On the other hand, what I would say is that sometimes it does mean a little bit of just kind of shutting off other voices for a moment. If you are so bombarded by what other people want that you have a hard time sorting out your own thoughts. Right? And so there is some level of trying to just, okay, yes, I know that person wants that. Yes, I know that. What do you want? I mean, for some, for many of us, that can be like, I have no idea. All I know is that I don't want what they want. I don't know what I want. So it's, it can be a process. And I do sometimes say to people like, "Look at your resentments." because they're telltale signs that you're giving where you can't back up what you're doing. And you either need to back it up honestly and claim the way that you're giving and take responsibility for it or you need to do something different that you can really stand by. But it's not about taking, it's standing in a new position.

Jody Moore: I've heard you say this before about resentment, which I love this idea that when you pay attention to your resentments, you notice your

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opportunities to self-assess. Now when you say that it's an indicator that you can't back up what you're doing, what do you mean by that?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yeah, so I tend to talk about it this way, which is usually when we resent, we're making choices that we're actually giving responsibility to someone else for. "I have to go to Thanksgiving because my mother-in-law will be so mad, so I'm going, but it's her fault," okay? So that is to say we make the choice, but we give the responsibility for that choice to someone else. Rather than, "Look, I don't like my in-law's displeasure with me, but I have to either choose it or not choose it. Say I'm going to go and take responsibility for going or say I'm not going to go and tolerate the unhappiness of my in-laws or whatever, right?" This is a made-up situation here. So that's one of the things is that we often will just make choices to please people, but then we are mad at them for the pressure we felt from them. And it's certainly understandable. I'm not saying like, you know, that this isn't very human behavior, but the more we push ourselves to claim our choices and either fully own them and go to Thanksgiving and bring your best there, or say I can't do it and don't do it, but you're owning it as your position, not a rebellious position or a compliant one.

Jody Moore: Sometimes I even find it helpful to go, "I'm going to Thanksgiving because I would rather deal with my own discomfort, maybe I can't even bring a positive my best self, but I'd rather deal with my own negative emotions being there than my mother-in-law's negative emotions if I don't come." And I think you're right. I think just taking back the ownership for the choice, obviously that's how we have that's empowerment, right? I guess if it's her fault, then I have to change her before this can be solved.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: That's right. And we, you know, myself included, we often want a world that we don't have. That is where people do the things that we want and the way we want. And instead what we have is who am I going to be in the world in which I live where people are going to want

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things from me that I don't want to give? Or they want them and I actually agree that it's legit that they want them or they want them and I don't agree. Nonetheless, I am in an environment in which people are going to put pressure on me. That's just the nature of relationships and my work is and always will be determining who I'm going to be in the face of those implicit pressures of being in relationships.

Jody Moore: Yeah, that's the work we're up against. I want to talk for just a minute if you don't mind about women and ambition. This is a topic I've always been interested in and I've found myself unusual relative to many of my peers in that I have always loved working and then built a business. And you know, people will thank me sometimes for building my business and putting my work out there. And I always think, "You should be like," you know, they'll tell me what a great job I've done. I want to be like, "You should be celebrating me for putting away my laundry," because that I don't like doing. But like talking about this stuff, I would do it all day every day for free. Like I just, I love it.

I don't know if ambition - if I have more ambition than other people, but it shows up in different ways sometimes than other women that I'm familiar with. And I'm discovering more and more women that are suddenly though entertaining the fact that they could be good mothers and pursue some of their own goals and ambitions and yet this back to the word selfish does keep coming up, especially if it's not, you know, something I need to do to help support the family or if it's going to mean sacrifice sometimes on the part of people in my family. Yeah. I'd just love to hear your thoughts on this topic.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Okay, there's so many. So, so yes. You know, I remember when I finished my PhD and I had I gave birth to my child right at the point of my graduation to my second child. Just a couple months later, my first child was diagnosed with autism. And here's my point is that I had been somebody who'd like worked, earned my way through school, done

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my PhD. I was always kind of engaged in this world of creating and doing. And then suddenly I was home. And I chose to be home. It was a very deliberate choice. I had an opportunity to take a job I would have really loved, but I really was like, I want to be the one home, particularly with a special needs child. And so I made that choice and it was hard, hard. I was like, I am so used to being able to go out and conquer and do what I want. And I have a child who has pretty significant challenges and I can't even get a shower anymore.

Yeah, so I think that desire in me was always present. And I think at a certain, you know, I was home for a number of years. And at a certain point, before I started training to become a psychologist, I studied design for a couple years. And this is just something that I really loved. Like if I was going to be another thing, I would have been a residential architect. I love that kind of stuff. So anyway, the point is that at a certain point when I was in the thick of raising my kids, we were going to add on to our house. And I remember like leaving to go away for a couple hours to go choose countertops and feeling guilt and like, "Are the kids okay? And you know, like I'm betraying something." And I remember like coming back home after being away for a few hours and just coming back so happy. Like feeling myself again, enjoying my kids more, realizing they actually got good care for those hours with a sitter, you know, and it was a win-win.

And that was so counter to my thinking actually because my mom had been a full-time mother and one that really loved being a full-time mother. And I felt this sense of like anytime away, I'm kind of taking from them. So this is my long-winded way of saying, I think we can inherit that idea that attending to another aspect of ourselves rather than the nurturing part of us can feel like it's detracting. And it can, okay? If you just like neglect your responsibility to your children, whether you're a mother or a father, because you feel a sense of control in a vocation that speaks to you, it can be easier than parenting. You know, you know, it's easier to feel in control if you have something that you love doing. But on the other hand, I think sometimes we

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really do a disservice when we say to women like, "This is the most high calling, the way to be a good woman. And if you do anything, you are undermining your children's well-being." I think that's both false and creates - when we don't allow women to thrive in their own gifts, whatever they are, then we really interfere with a life energy that I think really can offer, that is really valuable for good parenting.

I think it's hard to balance these two, especially if your gift is being an attorney or something. It's very hard to do something in a way where you can be flexible and attentive to your kids and pursue another goal. But I think that we would do well to understand that developing our gifts is part of being a good caregiver, is part of offering our best to our children.

Jody Moore: I've had similar experiences, of course, and I know many women have, but I love again, this is something I heard you say, "A woman fully alive in her gifts is not competing with God, she's collaborating." And I think there is, you know, within a religious culture anyway, a desire to do, what does the Lord want me to do? What is the right thing to do? Which of course is unknowable to a certain extent. It is about trial and error. It is about personal choice. And it's a difficult space to navigate. I would be curious in your thoughts about this because I recently heard somebody talk about the scripture to be fruitful and multiply and replenish the earth, which in my simple mind and the way I was taught, always meant reproduction. Right?

And I think that is a component of that commandment, but I started thinking recently about what might that actually mean beyond just reproduction. All the things that there are on the earth that need to be replenished and all the opportunity to multiply what is already good and make it better. And even the commandment to be fruitful, you know, a fruit is something that has a seed within it. And when you consume the fruit, when you eat the apple, the seeds are released and then can grow apple trees, not just more apples, whole trees that produce... That's multiplication. That's what God

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does and that, you know, consuming of the apple, I kind of relate to me paying attention to things that I'm curious about, things that fulfill me, you know, you're going to pick out countertops and then feeling how that fulfills you. We all have different seeds within us that God's given us and I think when we neglect those, it's to the detriment not only of us but of everybody because God works with us to multiply and replenish the earth.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yes, exactly. Exactly. I talk about this a lot. You know, I have a women's course where called the Art of Desire and I'm because so many women have learned the idea that goodness is to suppress desires, it's to suppress self-development, it's to go into this kind of self-forsaking stance, that is virtuous. And of course, there is truth in that idea that especially when we're the mothers of young children, there is a certain amount of self-suppression that is a part of keeping our children alive for a period of time anyway. But when we make that like the expression of femininity or of feminine virtue, we really disrupt women's relationship to themselves and we disrupt women offering their gifts into the world and into their families.

And one of the scriptures I read to the women that I work with comes from the Gnostic gospels that was found in Egypt in the 1940s and it's from the gospel according to Thomas. He quotes Christ as saying, "When you bring forth what is within you, what you bring forth will save you. If you do not bring forth what is within you, what you do not bring forth will destroy you." So that is, you know, and it's the parable of the talents. It's the same idea that we've been given gifts and if we don't magnify them, use them, grow them, offer them, offer those gifts into the world. I mean, that blesses the world, it blesses our families, it blesses our own souls. A lot of times when we retreat, it's out of fear, not out of faith.

It's like, okay, well, I'll just be the self-denying martyr. At least I can feel superior, like a moral superiority because I've given everything, whether or not it's even good that I've given all those things and all my kids have to

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feel my resentment all the time, but nonetheless, I gave it all up, you know. We can look for these kind of perverse forms of goodness that are more driven by the fear of exposure, the fear of risking development, because development is a risk, like making choices, trying things. And so it can be easy to hide our talents and not develop them, but it's to the detriment of all when we do that.

Jody Moore: It's a really good point that there is a lot of fear in pursuing new things or developing yourself and sometimes it's easier, especially because it's rewarded, right? If I take a step back and just decide that's too scary, I'm going to just be with my children or whatever. My children prefer that. My husband might prefer that and society might even commend that. And so it's validated versus the discomfort of some people being inconvenienced and me questioning my choices and the fear of growth and progression.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: One thing that comes to mind, I've studied the enneagram a lot more, I don't know if you're familiar with the enneagram. But one of the reasons I really like that is I think there's a lot of women who are, for example, the helper type, or the peacemaker type. And then they talk to an achiever type and they think, okay, I'm just somebody who's run by fear and I just accommodate and what's the matter with me, I should be an achiever type. And I just want to be careful with that because I think we're wired differently and some of us feel more of a call to go and do and create, and others truly have the gift, and it's a necessary gift of being a helper for example, and they are really able to support and advocate and celebrate the gifts of others and it is really, truly a gift.

The thing I also love about the enneagram is that it speaks to kind of what is the indulgence in our type and where are we growing into more maturity within a type? Because for example, the helper, in some ways there's a pride in it, like I want to be the epicentre, I want to be needed by everyone. But when that helper type matures and uses their gifts in a wise way,

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they're more able to say no wisely, but they can also give with their whole heart when it's right too.

So it's still a gift, it's still the expression and expansion of a gift, even if it looks different than say, a three would express themselves, an achiever type. And so I just think that's important too that we don't think well, I'm just the wrong type of person because I've never been that ambitious or something like that.

Jody Moore: Yeah absolutely, and that is the challenge, back to what you mentioned earlier of even the question, well, what do I want? When am I curious about, interested in is a tough question to answer. It requires a knowing of yourself and a paying attention and an allowing of whatever comes up for you. And it definitely looks different for all of us. I do find too that some people are very content overall. Contentment is a beautiful thing, I think. And not to minimize that.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yes. Exactly. Sometimes I talk about this. My husband is a nine in the Enneagram, which is a peacemaker, and he's just more content. He's more peaceful, settled, kind of my home base, right? And I'm much more out doing, striving, and I, how to say, like I appreciate the gift of his type so much because it's a balance for me. It's a place of ease for me. And I would never want him to be a different type, you know what I mean? And so that is to say, there is a real gift there. And so much of what I do is because of him, because he is that sort of re-grounding place for me. And that is never to be diminished or minimized because it's everything, you know.

So, I love the Body of Christ metaphor because it's this idea that we all are operating from different places and different gifts and learning to value how they work together and to truly value all of those gifts as necessary to the functioning of the larger body. And I think the important distinction to make though is how much am I running my life by fear or indulgence or ego versus stepping into who I am, accepting who I am and finding ways that

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who I am can make the world better, that I can express it, offer it freely, not wish I were a hand when in fact I'm a knee or whatever and, you know, bring my gifts forward into the world.

Jody Moore: Yeah, I have a similar dynamic in my marriage, of course, because we are attracted to our opposites, right? And I think that's the point I want to make here is that, you know, this is a, I don't mean to oversimplify it, but often we have gendered women as being more content and men as being more ambitious, which does a disservice to both genders. There are many women who are achievers and men who are nurturing and content. And the balance is ideal. I feel the same way. I'm so grateful that my husband balances me out a little bit, balances our home and our family with that, but it doesn't require an abandonment of self either way, or, you know, a connection with self is still an important part of what we're talking about here.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yes, exactly. Exactly. Right. The pain is when we learn to self-betray and to out of fear, hide our gifts, not accept ourselves. That's when we do a disservice to our own souls and to those around us.

Jody Moore: I want to make sure we tell everybody where to get your new book because it's so phenomenal. I'm so excited about this book. I know it's been a long time in the works. The book is called *That We Might Have Joy: Desire, Divinity, and Intimate Love*. Do you want to speak a little bit to what people can expect in the book and where to get it?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Sure. Yeah, so, yeah, so I worked on it for like four to five years. I originally said yes to the project thinking it was going to be like literally, I think we were thinking in six months. I mean, like what a fantasy, but anyway. But the question that was posed to me was, "Can you write a book about the relationship of sexuality and spirituality?" And I think one of the reasons I said yes to it was because I wanted to figure out what that relationship was. Like it's kind of implicit to the work I do, but I wanted to see if I could articulate it and express what I've seen happen between

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couples who grow in their capacity for intimacy, who grow in their capacity to love each other and to know each other, which is the core of the work I do because I could see a spirituality in it.

And what I mean by that is like a deepening of peace within themselves, a deepening of peace within the relationship, and an expansion, like a deeper sense of joy in the couple. That doesn't mean that they, you know, never had conflict and rode off into the sunset with in perfection, but they had deeper friendship, deeper ability to really be themselves with one another as I've watched couples grow. And so the book, it's written specifically... I wrote it for an LDS audience in particular, but of course, it's principles that so many of us relate to.

And so basically the first half of the book is looking at a lot of the inherited ideas that we've gotten about around our sexuality, around what it is to be a man, what it is to be a woman, and how these things interfere with a happy marriage, with an intimate marriage, and what it requires of us to grow into our capacity to love another person, to let ourselves be loved, to know another person, to let ourselves be known. That's really important soul work, that it's scary, and marriage is a great place to do that work if you're married. And so it really kind of... the second half really shows how couples have made that progression and how it accrues to a deepening capacity for joy.

Jody Moore: It's so good, you guys. I've read it and I highly recommend. Is Amazon the best place to get it?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yeah, Amazon's a great place to get it too. Yeah.

Jody Moore: I'm going to end with a question here if you don't mind it. So, one of the things I noticed years ago when I was first married, actually, I had a coworker who I think he might have been Catholic. I can't remember his faith, but he was about to get married and he and his fiancée were going through a series of classes through their church about marriage in general,

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but intimacy was one of the topics, money, children, all things. And I remember thinking, we should do something like that. I don't know if that's the role of our church to prepare people for marriage, but we certainly do talk about with our single people and our youth, we talk about intimacy and sexuality, and then we just get married and go off and then we don't talk about it anymore which seems a little... that's why again, you've been so valuable to all of us. But I guess this is my question is, if you were talking to newlyweds today or to engaged couples today, what is, I know you have a whole book people can go buy with wisdom on this topic, but what's one piece of advice that you wish that these folks understood?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: I would say a few things, but one of them is, first of all, that conflict is normal in an honest marriage. Difference is part of what you've just signed up for, is working around difference. You just married someone who is like very different than you on purpose. That's who you found attractive. And now you're going to try and forge a life and then you're going to be like, what is your problem? So don't be surprised when you at moments want to kill each other, okay?

Jody Moore: Is it okay to go to bed angry?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yes, it's okay to go to bed angry because you're limbic late at night and it's very hard to solve problems. So the issue isn't conflict, the issue is how we handle our conflicts and how much do we bring contempt to them versus decency and honesty and accountability. Because a marriage in its best form is a creative process. It's like, how are you and I going to build a bridge across our differences when so much of me just wants you to change? And at least for right this moment, then you can go back to who you are when it serves me, you know, that is to say like we, you know, so that's a important tension that helps us grow if we will let it instead of just resent it and wish the other person were different and bring hostility into our marriages. That's what many of us do instead.

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So if we can just normalize conflict, that helps a lot. And I don't mean that contempt is good or I mean difference is going to show up and can you be fair and can you take responsibility for yourself? The other thing I would say, if I just had like two minutes of advice to give to somebody, I would say, value the intimate relationship. It matters a lot. And it's not about orgasms, it's not about physical pleasure per se. It's about creating a space in which you both can be yourselves, that you can bring your full selves to one another, that you can enjoy each other, that, you know, your bed can be a place that you can find each other and find comfort in one another.

And however that gets expressed is not as important as finding that reality with each other. It's a kind of rejuvenation in the marriage. It's good for the soul of the marriage, and too often we dismiss it as hedonistic or just like about serving someone's needs. All of that is terrible. I mean, much more important, excuse me, much more important is finding the core meaning that we felt when we first fell in love is you delight me. I like you. You light me up. You bring an energy to my life that I am drawn to and to feel that in the marriage, even in the face of the frustrating differences, I think is really, really important for keeping a marriage alive and joyful. I saw something just on Instagram a couple days ago, is it Kristen Bell, she was saying on their 12th anniversary, her husband promised her that he would never kill her.

Jody Moore: That's very funny.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: He's like, I've had motivation to at times and, some husbands, yeah, but I won't ever do it, you know, kind of like, you know, and of course this was with a picture of them just like passionately embracing each other and it just really made me laugh because it captures something, you know. In that difference, there's these moments where, you know, or I remember Leo Buscaglia saying this, he was an Italian guy that would talk a lot about marriage and he would say like, you know, in my

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family growing up, you know, divorce, never, murder, maybe, but divorce never.

Jody Moore: So good. I love that you call it a creative endeavor because it implies that it's going to evolve, it's going to change, it's going to take some figuring out and you have to let it be a messy process. And creativity is messy and uh, it reminds me too of when I got married, my dad said it in this a little bit simpler way. He said, you know, in marriage, there's good days and bad days. There's also good years and bad years. And I was so glad he told me that because I then I didn't like you said, I didn't make it mean that something was wrong or I'd married the wrong guy. I was just like, we're just we're in a phase of sorting out some things and putting ourselves and each other and it's a great opportunity for personal growth, being married, right?

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Yes, and if you can, you know, if you have two people that can and will do that, it's such a beautiful thing what you've created is as imperfect as it is, as real as it is, you know, just that you know, you've created a life together. And it's a real, it's a beautiful thing to do it as imperfect as it is when it when it when you have two people invested in that.

Jody Moore: Thank you so much for coming on today.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: My pleasure.

Jody Moore: Jennifer, I so appreciate it. I'd love to have you back sooner than whenever was the last time. We always love having you here. So thank you for everything you do.

Jennifer Finlayson-Fife: Thank you so much, Jody.

Oh wow, look at that. You made it to the end. Your time and attention is valuable, and I don't take it lightly that you made it this far. In fact, it tells me you might be like me; insatiably curious about people and life and potential

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and connection. Maybe you have big dreams but a small budget and no time. You're tired, but bored. You're content, but dissatisfied. Sound familiar? Come to a free coaching call and see for yourself what's possible: JodyMoore.com/freecoaching to register. That's JodyMoore.com/freecoaching.