

Episode 162

Jennifer Dukes Lee on Doubt, Deep Questions, and the Transformative Power of Journaling

Jennifer Dukes Lee, Michelle Rayburn (host)

Life Repurposed Podcast
michellerayburn.com/162

Michelle Rayburn [00:00:31]:

Let me tell you a little bit about today's guest. Jennifer Dukes Lee is a best-selling author, thinker, and question asker from Iowa. Her friends say they are scared to sit alone in a room with her because they end up telling her things they never intended to say. She's both proud of this fact and also a little annoyed at how nosy she can be. She put a bunch of her favorite questions into a journal called *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* We're going to talk about that today. It's like your own little confession booth. She's also the author of *growing slow*, and it's all under control. In her guided journal, Jennifer breaks out her reporter hat, and she creates space for people to reflect on their deepest feelings, their fears, hopes, their dreams.

She gives journalers permission to release their whole selves into God's hands, discovering the true weird, wild, and wonderful aspects of who God created them to be. In *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* you'll find fun and provocative creative exercises to help you express the never spoken thoughts ideas, beliefs, and memories that will spark deeper intimacy with God and with yourself. I had so much fun with this conversation because it was sort of like sitting down and having coffee and letting the conversation go wherever it goes. So I hope that you enjoy this little peek inside of where our brains went when Jennifer and I got on Zoom and had a conversation. I had a lot of fun, and I think you will too. Alright. Let's jump into that chat with Jennifer. Jennifer, thank you for joining me. I can already tell that this is gonna be a fun conversation.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:02:36]:

Oh, it is. We got to have a little conversation before the recorded conversation. And even that was good. I'm like, oh, right. My new bestie, I wish I lived up in Northern Wisconsin with Michelle. Well, not with you. That's a little bit Yeah. that that that's a little bit forward. We've known each other for 10 minutes now. All of a sudden, I'm asking to move in. We'd be neighbors. We'd be great neighbors.

Michelle Rayburn [00:02:59]:

Oh, yes. I have a big enough house to move people into it. It is an old church with a person attached. So it's

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:03:06]:

A hundred years old, but very interesting. I'm so fascinated. Yeah. It's fun. So I was stalking you a little bit on social

Michelle Rayburn [00:03:10]:

media And I found out we have some things in common. you're a farm girl. I grew up on a dairy farm. I my dad never had pigs, so I'm not familiar with that. We are both left-handed. I found out you liked dark chocolate. And I found out that your first car was a Volkswagen beetle. But mine was the cousin to that, the Volkswagen Rabbit.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:03:37]:

Oh, wow. Mine started on fire. Like, I was sixteen years old, and the engine do you I don't know if it was, like, this in the rabbit, but in my bug, it was it wasn't the engine was, like, in that bag. No. And I look in the rear-view mirror. I'm like, sixteen, seventeen years old, and there's, like, flames in the rear view. I'm like, what is going on? Oh my goodness. While you were driving? I'm driving home, and I, like, I lived in rural Iowa and I pulled over real quick. And, you know, obviously no cell phones because this was, like, the stone age. But, I pulled my, French horn out of the back seat and started walking down the highway, leaving my precious bug to burn. Oh. It was sad.

Michelle Rayburn [00:04:16]:

It's kind of a cult thing. Like, my dad was so into Volkswagen, so we had so many of them. My parents had the van, and I had the rabbit, and my brother had the bug. I love it.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:04:33]:

Oh, that's great. So, I mean, crazy. I still I this is how mature I am. I'm fifty one years old. And if I see a bug, I still will smack my husband in the arm slug bug, no slug bags. Remember that? So mature.

Michelle Rayburn [00:04:39]:

Oh, it's fun. Actually, I'm older than you, so I remember doing that too. And growing up on the eighties music was really fun. And that, yeah, I don't know if you've noticed. I know you have children. I have adult sons, and it's crazy how our eighties music is cool now -- I know. -- to them. I know.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:05:06]:

And I'm I feel like I should I feel like with my own children, I get to partially take credit because I've they've been in training their entire lives to enjoy eighty's music. And so now when it's making its way into the world in 2023, I just like look at the— I've done you a favor, girls. Like, you know the lyrics to these already. Be grateful. That is that's my parenting tip of the day for any moms and dads listening.

Michelle Rayburn [00:05:22]:

Well, you know, there are some 80 songs that probably aren't the best to listen to. Let's be honest. Right. Oh, I listened back to them, and I think Wow. Some of these Chicago songs had some lyrics I never really thought about before.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:05:37]:

Yeah. Gotta be careful. Put a rating system on those 80 songs.

Michelle Rayburn [00:05:44]:

And on the movies too. So, Jennifer, this is the Life Repurposed podcast. And one of the things I like to talk about is how God repurposes our difficulties in life. And I'm just wondering if you can think of an incident in your own life where God showed up and you found hope in the middle of a struggle.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:06:04]:

Yeah. Well, the story that immediately comes to mind is, a story that began when I was a child, I actually was a regular churchgoer mom and dad took me to church every single Sunday. And, I heard all of the stories in Sunday school and listened to all the sermons in church, but in the quietest places of my heart. I didn't know if I really believed it. It felt, like a fairy tale, it felt like it couldn't be real. And, I believed that, adults weren't lying to me. I knew this wasn't a Santa Claus situation. but I thought maybe they were, diluted in some way. And that, kind of fear and concern deepened as I moved into adulthood. And I wouldn't say I was an unbeliever. Because I was more like a wanna believer. I wanted to believe. I just couldn't quite intellectually wrap my

mind around it. but it was an extremely dark time in my life. I would go to bed at night thinking, this is it. This there's no hope. Like, I don't even know if Jesus even walked the earth.

I just don't know what to make of this story. That went on for years. I was a news reporter in my twenties and, was at my lowest in in doubt at that point. And, as a news reporter, I was sent out on assignment across Iowa quite often which means I spent a lot of time in my Toyota Camry. And, while driving around, I would turn to AM radio just for something different. and I would come on to Christian stations where somebody would be kind of giving a come to Jesus message. Yeah. some kind of evangelism message, and my ears always perked up. And, I didn't know it at the time, but God was grabbing hold of my heart through AM radio a while on news assignments headed to homicides and tornadoes. I mean, it's wild to think about it.

And at the end of a lot of those radio programs, the man or woman would say, you know, if you've never given your heart to the lord, you can pray this prayer with me now. And I did that. And I did it again and again and again thinking if once was good, fifty times will be even better. But through all of that, seeking and searching and saying, lord, I want more of you along the way I came to a saving faith. And one of the biggest fittings that drew me into his embrace and into the hopefulness of Christ was my doubt. The thing that made it feel so dark and so my life feels so despairing was the thing that he used to bring me to him. I, I got a Bible, a new Bible, and the words just leaped off the page at me. And there was this story, like a biographical sketch of different characters in in my bible in the study notes. And there was one about Thomas And when I went when I was raised in the church, Thomas was always called doubting Thomas. Like, it was a shameful thing. I'm like, oh, I'm doubting Jennifer because I get exactly how Thomas feels. I like Thomas. I relate to Thomas.

And, in the biographical sketch of Thomas in the Bible, it said these words silent doubts rarely find answers. That was a moment for me that it was okay to, express my doubts to God. It was okay to express my doubt to people. And that led me on a journey, that, I mean, I was so addicted to the Bible that I would literally read it while I was blow drying my hair. It just it came alive in such a powerful new way, and I was like looking at prophecy, And my faith bloomed then at an intellectual level. And, you know, for years, I had cursed God for making me doubt. Why would you do that? Why would you make me feel that way? But in the end, that's the thing that turned me into like, an intellectual pursuit of God. Also, now I find it completely ironic. It's so very cool that the guy that I didn't know if I believed in, well, he's, like, the CEO of my work. Like, he's my best friend. So it's pretty wild that I to do this, that I get to have a conversation with you that I get to be in ministry, and he really repurposed doubt and made it into something that's a ministry.

Michelle Rayburn [00:10:40]:

Thank you for sharing that. And for the listener out there, if you have questions and if you have doubts, we are both here to say that that's okay. Same as you, Jennifer. I lived a long time. with, thinking it was a sin to ask questions or to show any kind of a doubt whatsoever. And now that I'm in my fifties, I'm asking more questions than ever. I also, as you were talking with thinking, wow, you have your next book there, something about blooming faith and, you know, was it in the big hair days? Oh, yeah. Can you can you tie it into blow drying?

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:11:19]:

That's a good point. You know, I still have big hair. I just haven't quite, you know, let that go. Beth Moore, if you're familiar with her or those listening, she said, very well known bible teacher, but she says the higher the hair, the closer to God. So this is my excuse to continue But, you know, Michelle, you and I get to see each other on this call. The others don't have this advantage, but my hair is a little bit more settled down than it is sometimes. but I still don't—

Michelle Rayburn:

I would not call yours big hair. It's beautiful, but you don't have the you don't have the Texas big hair.

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

No. I don't. No. I don't. And I also don't have the aqua net anymore. trying to help with the ozone.

Michelle Rayburn [00:11:53]:

I love how this actually moves us right into talking about your book because your book is related to questions. And so when it first came through my email from your publisher, it was just on a list of spring titles that were coming out. And I first, I'm drawn by *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*, but I was like, what is this? It's a guided journal. And I don't know that I've ever done a guided journal. In fact, I don't call myself a journaler at all. I don't have a diary. I try and then I quit doing it. So I would love to know First off, what do you say to people who are not into journaling? And then we're gonna get into, like, what your book does for people. Awesome. Well, I say to those who don't journal.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:12:36]:

I get it. I understand how hard it is. I understand, that there's a hesitation, like, is this even worth it? Because I've been right there. I am by profession, a writer. But when it came to opening up a

blank page journal, I just like, I don't know where to begin. Like, I bought this journal because it was really pretty and gonna try really hard

Michelle Rayburn

-- Exactly. --

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

to write down some stories in here, but I'd be like, I just don't even know where to start. And I'm a writer, and I would get writer's block in my journal. And I'm thinking, how about those who aren't. And so I began to compile thousands of prompts and questions the kind of questions that I might ask you if you came over for dinner. So some of them are rather silly and ridiculous, but there are some really deep, deep questions in there. deep questions that I've asked myself over the years, deep, hard questions that I've asked God, and the questions that have led me to, a lot of healing and wholeness. And it was it was a way to say, okay, non journaler here is a place for you to start. You don't have to, you know, come up with something out of a blank slate. and also for the journal or plenty of journalers are picking it up to because it's just helping them explore a different side of their brain or their heart.

And that's been really cool too. I think that most of us non journaler and journalers alike understand that there is value, there that there is a therapeutic nature to writing things down. even secular counselors and therapists give their clients homework that typically involves journaling So we know that there's inherent value in this. We know it too when we open up the Bible, right in the middle in the Psalms. We're basically reading, David's diary And it was everything that he was feeling. The good, the bad, the ugly, the questions, the doubting, the angst, the joy, the hopefulness is all right there, and it gives us permission to do the same. So that's my hope with this journal. Is it just is it is an embodiment of the whole human experience and being able to answer questions about yourself and about God and about the people in your life from the very, very deep to the very, very ridiculous.

Michelle Rayburn [00:14:55]:

Yeah. And it is really that blend. I laughed in some places, and then in others, opened up a page and went, oh, I don't know what I would put there. But, you know, I wanna be fully honest here. What scared me the most about having a conversation with you wasn't in all of your bios. You say that your friends are scared to sit in a room alone with you because they end up telling you stuff they never intended. So I was a little afraid because I didn't know exactly what we would get into, but I think that's also a little bit of how I feel about journaling. Like, if I put this on the page, what am I going to have to say? And what is, like you said, what is the point of it and

who's going to find it and read it? So I'd love to know a little bit about some of the way that journaling has helped you or people you know kind of find healing from things in the past and figure out a way forward.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:15:46]:

Just by way of an example, keeping in mind that at the time of recording this conversation, this journal has only been out for a couple months. And so I'm only getting to hear the fruit of people having gone through it. but one example was, a woman, picked up the journal and there's a prompt in there that says, This is the name of a person who I haven't talked to in a while. And she put that person's name down And the person was her high school best friend. And she and her high school best friend had a falling out in early adulthood. And it had been 1 or 2 decades since they had talked as a result of that fallout. But because she put that person's name down, she, reached out, in some way and within a matter of minutes, the woman had texted her on her phone.

And they've made a time to get together and reconcile. So that's the kind of that that's just an anecdotal example of the kind of healing that can come when we put pen to paper we don't even know how God's gonna work in that. God worked in in a name. She put down a name, and it the Holy Spirit stirred in her to reach out to the person and who owned that name, and that led to what we believe is a reconciliation in the friendship. another healing aspect of the journal, just to give another anecdote here, there's something in the journal called the genogram, and it's like a family tree where you go through your parents siblings, grandparents, aunts, and uncles, and you think about, their psychological traits habits, good, and bad. did any patterns that you see?

And so you might think about, like, anger or addiction or maybe affairs. maybe you would also see like a threat of kindness or somebody who is particularly prayerful, and then you have an opportunity in in the pages that follow to think about what cycles do I see in my genogram, in my family tree that I that stop with me. And what are the things that I want to carry forward? And it's never too late to do either of those things no matter how old we are,

So that's a really powerful therapeutic exercise that can make a whole lot of difference. I think for me, as I've gone through, the journal, it's helped me treat the previous versions of myself more empathetically. For instance, you know, there's the a whole section called Me and My Past. And it can feel very scary. I know because I answered all the questions myself in my own free time as I was writing it. And that really scared me to do because I've kind of been hypercritical of younger Jennifer. I've seen her for the faults and the insecurities and the dumb things that she did, the mistakes that she made, the sins that she held on to, all kinds of things. And I created this almost like villain or monster version of my past selves. But there was this exercise where you write a letter to your younger you, whether it's 10 years ago you or 20 years ago you. And when I

did that, I immediately broke out in tears because suddenly I no longer despise the earlier versions of me. I realized that that Jennifer made me that Jennifer that I am today. I am a result of all of the mistakes that she made. Yes. But all of the really risky, incredible, brave choices that she made all of the courage that she showed at a young age to say, "You know what? This job isn't for me. I'm gonna move out of this town and go somewhere else." Or, "You know what? That guy is not the guy for me, I'm gonna is this is gonna be a hard thing, but I am gonna break this off and move on." I mean, I looked back at younger me, and I was like, I don't hate you. I admire you. And I just want to thank you. I mean, it's just exercises like that that for me that have been so healing, and I feel like I've grown tremendously as a result of going through the exercises that I myself put down in the journal.

Michelle Rayburn [00:19:54]:

I find that with writing too often we're working on something for ourselves as well. And isn't that like the only way we have something valuable to say to somebody else? is that we've been vulnerable and we've gone through it too. I mean, I can't write a Bible study without studying the Bible. You know, it has to trans for me first before I can write something for someone else. What are some of the reasons or maybe excuses that you've heard from people for why they don't want to do journaling?

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:20:22]:

Yeah. Well, the first is, like, I don't know what to say. and so I tried to, like, at least knock that out one out with a guided journal. Yeah. But the second is I just don't know. I just don't have the I don't have the time to do it. And I get it. We are time crunched people. The value in this though is that a few minutes, just a few minutes every day, can really start your day off, with a sense of purpose and meaning it has a way of, like, cluttering your mind in the same way that you would declutter like a pantry or a toy closet or something. You just feel at peace. And that's that same piece that can come over you from decluttering a space can happen to you on the inside as you put things down on paper and say, I'm just gonna leave this right here.

Michelle Rayburn [00:21:10]:

It's kinda like wiping off the counters and getting all the dishes in the dishwasher. It's a small task. but it feels so good to have it done. It does. And, I mean, lists, for instance, count as journaling.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:21:20]:

So, I before I go to bed, I will write down, like, this is all the stuff that I've got to do tomorrow, which is in its sense journaling. I mean, that'd be a good place to go. Right? and it also it has a way of decluttering my mind so that I don't have to carry that list with me to bed. It's here in the office. So we're just gonna let that be, and we can go and be restful. tonight. I think that, you know, there's just so many different ways to start journaling that are more specific that don't feel so overwhelming. And maybe, like, *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* isn't right for you, but maybe, a prayer journal is where you can write down the things that you where you wanna see God at work or where you seek God at work or where you wanna thank God, a gratitude journal is an easy place to start. where every day you just write a handful of things.

And when you look back on that, there will be there will be meaning in that kind of journaling too. there's something called a common placing journal that I keep. And the common placing journal is, really rooted in the renaissance area era. when people would write down, interesting quotes or poetry, things that they wanted to remember that you couldn't actually, like, take screenshot of. Right? Right. I do screenshots like that. Yeah. Right. So that you have a common placing journal. If you're screenshotting things or you're taking pictures of things, That is a form of a modern-day form of common placing of common placing book. Yeah. And so I actually have a common placing book that I use, and I put favorite quotes and poetry and just different little quips or lines that I'll see in a book or on somebody's social media, and that all kind of comes together in a full journaling experience. So maybe a good place to start would be just to pick one of those and get going on it and see how it feels.

Michelle Rayburn [00:23:06]:

Oh, that actually gives me some great ideas for I have a couple of really pretty journals on my shelf that are just kinda sitting there I do have the planner kind of a journal and keep track of tasks, but I think I'm ready for the next step. I need to do something a little more. Sometimes I avoid the emotional things. And I know that's a that's a thing that is important to also get into. And, I'm just wondering why is it so hard sometimes for us to get honest with God? Like, he knows everything about me, but why is it so hard to put that on paper?

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

I think we have an anti-gospel notion that we have to come before God cleaned up.

Michelle Rayburn:

Oh, that's it. That really is it. I didn't even think about that.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:23:44]:

Yeah. And I mean, it's like the Jesus came because of the mess that we were in and the mess that we are in. But, it feels really you know, like, if you've done something really horrible or if you're carrying around some thought or sin or burden, to put that down on paper and to look at it with your own eyes and to lay that before the lord is really hard I remember 20 years ago at a retreat, we were given pieces of paper to write down our sins and burdens and all these things. And I had a whole bunch of them going through my mind. but I could hardly write any of them down and still I only wrote with the initials. And it wasn't because anybody was going to see it. It's because I didn't wanna look at it. and I didn't want to say it out loud to God. In the same way, like, you know, you're a little kid and you knocked over a lamp and it broke And you know that mom and dad are gonna know that it was you because you were the only kid in the house, but you hide anyway. because you just don't like the idea of being found out. it's I think it's like that. I think that's why we don't. We just don't wanna we don't wanna deal with what we think is gonna be the fallout. We don't wanna be found out.

Michelle Rayburn [00:24:56]:

Goes all the way back to Adam And Eve.

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

That's right.

Michelle Rayburn:

Hiding in the garden

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

You nailed it right there. Yes.

Michelle Rayburn:

But, yeah, I didn't think about that. And I think what also holds me back sometimes is I look at this beautiful book and I don't wanna wreck it. by writing in it. Or, you know, like, when I write in pen and I don't like scribbling things out, there's a perfectionist side of me. Maybe you can tell. see. I'm telling you things I didn't plan on telling you. You're right. It happens. So I think that that is my personal challenge, just to go ahead and mess up the book. Go ahead and write in it.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:25:26]:

Yeah, Michelle. That is such a valid point. And I think the reason is because of its Instagram now, there's like people with germ hashtag journal info, hence hashtag, journal pages, and we see these in our feed, and they are beautiful. And people have gorgeous handwriting and maybe little doodles or even the way they've underlined a word is like, oh, I can't do that. So if that's the way it's gonna look, then count me out, but mine don't look like that.

Michelle Rayburn [00:26:00]:

No. Mine don't either. And I don't have terrible handwriting, but When that well, those thoughts are flowing, it just gets jumbled up. I can't write as fast as my brain goes. One of the things you said recently on an Instagram post was that you wrote half of a book and the other half is inside of the reader. And I think that's so cool. Like, you've given us a framework. And then the rest of it is inside of us. And the way that book, it's like the choose your own ending thing, it's gonna turn out different for each one of us that use *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:26:31]:

I love that, Michelle. I'm so glad you said that because it occurred to me as I was launching the book. Like, I am not launching my book. I'm watching yours. It is only half done, as you said, you know, there's a lot of different kinds of books. Like, you'll say, oh, I have just really lost myself. in that book. And there's other books that you find yourself in, and this is definitely the find yourself kind of book. It's literally all about you.

Michelle Rayburn [00:26:55]:

Yeah. So let's have a little bit of fun with that. I wanna know first what is one of your favorite questions from the book. And then Maybe I'll have you ask me some questions. Okay. Otherwise, I have some samples that are pulled out from there too, but I'll be a little vulnerable and let you me some.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:27:17]:

which is like picking a favorite child, but I'm going to try. Do you want a serious one or a goofy one? Oh, let's do a goofy. Okay. Well, one of the one of the questions that I love, like, even before ever before I did I'd only tell God was I always wanted to know what people's light motif is. Like, it's this short musical phrase or a song. that will accompany, the appearance of a figure or a person, like, in the movies, like operas, any kind of entertainment. So the shark in jaws has his own kind of music that he comes into. Oh, yeah. And so if, from now until the day you die, the same song came on every time you walked into a room, what song would you want it to be? And that one question It it will, like, yeah, at our house when I ask that, we'll end up having, like,

a 2 hour dance party. Like, I don't know, Alexa played song. I hope my Alexa doesn't go off now. Sorry. Yeah. No, Alexa. Don't play that song, but no, or to play the song next because then you you're just having so much fun with this. I mean, we have spent hours in our kitchen playing this game. It's so fun.

Michelle Rayburn [00:28:28]:

It would actually be fun to, to do that with My kids. I could, it would be interesting to see what I would pick for them. What they would pick. They're grown up. Actually, the grandkids would too because there would be some Mickey Mouse in there. I know there would. Great. That's great. You've tested out some of the questions with people who come over to your house. Do you go to conference and you test out questions on people? You know, I haven't.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:28:54]:

I mean, I well, I take that back. You know, for growing slow, my previous title I often will ask people to take some time to identify what season they're in, what growing season of their life, and it's too much time to try to unpack that on in our podcast episode today, but I have, that question has made its way into *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*. And I walk people through a process both in my speaking and in the journal on how to find the season that you're in and how to embrace whatever season you're in, whether it looked like the hopefulness of spring the growth and, you know, beauty of summer and, sometimes the heat. and, you know, the productivity of, a fall harvest or maybe even if you're in a winter season when it feels a hard and dark and dreary. So I walk people through that I, otherwise, I, you know, I haven't done any events, that are around, *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*, but I have one with a group of executives for a nonprofit in that's a national organization. And it's men and women, and we will be spending the day going through some of these questions. So it's gonna be a blast.

Michelle Rayburn [00:30:04]:

Wow. Yeah. That would be really fun. I'd love to be a fly on the wall there. And like you said, you have some serious ones and then you have some yes or no, just simple. Like, answer these questions quickly with a yes or no. I consider myself funny. I have a prank called someone. Public speaking scares me. I could change the oil in my car. I would survive a zombie apocalypse.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:30:29]:

What would you? No. Why not? I think you you've mentioned that you're a perfectionist. You're you're up in Northern Wisconsin. You've got lots land. You have a big house. You told me that.

Michelle Rayburn [00:30:41]:

That's true.

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

Tell me more.

Michelle Rayburn:

I don't know. You know, I would survive if I had my family with me, but, otherwise, I'm so fearful of those kinds of things. I don't like weird movies. Like, I like happy Hallmark movies and stuff like that. So I just cover my head and just ignore the other stuff. So I don't know that I'd be able to defend myself in a zombie

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

So maybe you could just be like, you know what? Jesus just come get me now. Let the earth be ravaged. Take me with until the second coming when we'll have a restored earth with no zombies, but for now, just come get me.

Michelle Rayburn:

So in a roundabout way, I would survive because I'd be with Jesus.

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

That's right. You would.

Michelle Rayburn:

So I'd be okay. It'd be okay.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:31:22]:

It's gonna be okay. Then it all works out in the end. I read the book. I can't change the oil in my car, but I could definitely YouTube it and figure it out. Yes. I think about that a lot. There's so many of those things, like, I'm gonna confess something to you. I literally don't know how to grill. I've never grilled a thing in my life. That's terrible.

Michelle Rayburn:

You can do it.

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

I can. And I can change the oil of my car but do I know I need to do these things?

Michelle Rayburn [00:31:50]:

Those are fun. Public speaking does not scare me, but it terrifies my husband.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:31:54]:

It's it used to terrify me. I used to really, like, get me out of here. I think I'm going to be sick. now it's just I get a little bit of that, but just realizing that the Lord, has managed to work despite my weirdness and my insecurities has given me just a tad bit more confidence than I used to have.

Michelle Rayburn [00:32:21]:

People love that. And, actually, I think TikTok has been a really great thing for people embracing our weirdness. It's so good. I used to speak for events where I had to be a lot more buttoned up because You know, I just you're coming in as the Bible speaker or whatever. And for some reason, I feel a lot more comfortable being a little bit irreverent. poking a little bit of fun at myself, laughing at my own flaws, and really not worrying about what people think about me. So that makes speaking a lot more fun, I think.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:32:54]:

I think so too. It was when I embraced, really who I am quirks and all Here's an example. I was I was speaking 2 weeks ago at She Speaks conference. And she speaks is put on by proverbs, 31 ministries, and Lysa TerKeurst, who is one of the more well-known Bible to teachers. So Lysa comes up on stage without a stitch of notes. She's got her Bible. She knows exactly where stand, and it wasn't just a performance. I mean, I don't mean to say that at all. I mean, it was brilliant message. It was so good. And I was like, you know what? I'm still gonna, I'm fine. I'm just gonna be me. I'm gonna be me. And then Hosanna Wong comes up next. Young on fire, all over the stage, like, spoken word poet. Incredible. And I'm like, you know what? I'm still gonna be okay. So then it comes time for Jennifer Dukes Lee, and I'm in the wings, by the curtain. And I've got

my kid you not. My 3-ring binder with the plastic sleeves where the talk is printed out and I come out there and lay it down. on the podium. And I would I just I had to own it. I'm like, you know, I I'm like, this is who I am. You're getting a farm wife in Iowa, who, is going to teach you today about what it is to be authentic on your social media. And I am being authentic to myself in the way that I And it was so like, all of a sudden, I was binder girl, but it was it was interesting to me that when I embraced it instead of trying to I mean, I can't do that. Like, Lysa TerKeurst does.

It's just not the way I made. And I admire her. I admire Hosanna. but I also am acknowledging the fact that life is too short for me to figure out a new way to speak and I love my little 3 ring binder. So there we go. That was a segue off of the conversation, ladies and gentlemen. No. I love that. But this is the way it goes when we talk about *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*.

Michelle Rayburn [00:34:52]:

Yeah. You might find yourself actually switching. I don't know. I had to switch when I started wearing cheater glasses. And I couldn't find any that wouldn't let me see my 3 ring binder. So recently, I've switched to my iPad where I can zoom in and make the text ginormous. and let it roll like a teleprompter. It just -- Wow. -- keeps moving. And so I only have those notes for backup in case the iPad doesn't have a charger.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:35:13]:

Yeah. I have a feeling I'm going to eventually have to make an adjustment due to the aging eyeballs.

Michelle Rayburn [00:35:23]:

I had eyeglasses on, eyeglasses off. Alright. I love tangents, and I think my listeners are gonna be just fine with that. They love to get in on the inside scoop of what's going on in our brains and sometimes that's why I said I just like to let it roll. So, Jennifer, I'd love to hear some more questions. And then, I'll see if I can answer them so you can pick one.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:35:46]:

There is a section. There's several sections in *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* called Lost in Translation.

Michelle Rayburn [00:35:52]:

And -- Oh, yes. Those are really cool.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:35:55]:

The English, language is a robust language with a lot of words to describe a lot of different things, but some words have, like, no English translation. And so I found some of my favorite ones, and I sprinkled them throughout the journal. So I'm going to ask you one of those. Okay. There's a word, it's pronounced "itsuarpok". It's an Inuit word. and it's the feeling you get when you are so eager for someone to arrive that you keep looking outside or going outside to see if they've made it home yet. Have you ever experienced itsuarpok?

Michelle Rayburn [00:36:36]:

I have. I'm a grandma now. So I actually feel that sometimes when I'm waiting for the grandkids to come over because they come running up the sidewalk. And they're the only people in my life who are that eager to see me. You know, like, my kids are grown up. My husband and I have been married 34 years, and we still love each other very much, but when he comes home at the end of the day. We don't have that kind of reaction. But when they get out of the van and they come running up the sidewalk, Grandma, and their faces light up. So I'm watching out the window to see when they're going to get there because I don't wanna miss the moment. when they come up the sidewalk.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:37:19]:

Oh, I love that. That is so beautiful in a perfect illustration of itsuarpok. You knew exactly what it... You know exactly the feeling that even though you've maybe never heard of the word before, and I think that's -- I had not heard of the word before. -- words, that from, very unique language is very, you know, from German and in Spanish and Inuit and Danish. And there's just it's just a really fun exercise. I think people enjoy that. So I've got another one for you. And this one is, about heaven, you know, the toward the end of the book, I ask people to think about heaven And, I there's a section where it says I hope that heaven includes fields overflowing with—What would you want the fields overflowing with?

Michelle Rayburn [00:37:59]:

Ugh. It would have to be flowers. I love flowers. And it doesn't matter what kind any flowers. They could be weeds as long as they're in bloom.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:38:13]:

Alright. A 24-hour buffet with the following food.

Michelle Rayburn:

Chocolate

Jennifer Dukes Lee:

There we go. Awesome. Anything else on that buffet in heaven?

Michelle Rayburn [00:38:19]:

It would have to be all things chocolate. It would have to be chocolate cheesecake, dark chocolate, something.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:38:27]:

This is nice. I I'm I hope that I can go to your buffet. This is nice. I'm gonna put in a request. Of course, you know, chocolate covered strawberries are fine too. Another one from that section is, who's somebody that I'd like to live next to? In heaven. Oh, wow. Oh, in heaven. Yeah. Maybe somebody who's already there, or maybe somebody that you're just that is just so dear to you this side of heaven that you just hope that you get to continue that in in heaven.

Michelle Rayburn [00:38:58]:

Wow. Well, I would hope I could live next to my husband. Yes. because he's been my best friend. Like, since I was fifteen, he's been in my life. So it would be really weird to not live with anybody. I've, you know.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:39:13]:

So but who do you want on your cul de sac then?

Michelle Rayburn [00:39:18]:

Oh, wow. somebody asked me a question recently similar to this. They were interviewing me on a podcast. And it was about who I'd wanna hug in. I'd say it would be my grandmothers who have both passed away because, they didn't finish telling their stories. And so I there are pieces of their lives that I'm constantly researching on ancestry.com and trying to go on Google Earth to see if the house they grew up in is still standing. And so they're I would love to have those conversations and hear more of the stories.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:39:40]:

Oh, you've got me thinking now too. That say I am the same way. I'm always googling things, trying to figure out You know, and there's just like these little snippets of our past, right, of our of our ancestors. Like, they're my great, great, No. But, yeah, my great great grandma was in her sixties when she tripped on the hem of her dress and hit her head on a tree and was in a coma for 3 weeks and passed away. Wow. And that's all I know about her. I know her name and how she died, but I don't know what she cared about. I don't know if she was a woman of faith. I don't know what burdened her. I don't know what made her laugh. Wouldn't that be fun to have a family reunion with these people, like, what, you know, you know, and I guess, you know, I hope that they're there, you know, and it also makes me think about who I wanna make sure is there. who I want to make who I want to -- Yes. -- to know will be in heaven with me.

Michelle Rayburn [00:40:43]:

I love that because this this journal us thinking about things that maybe our lives get so busy and we're not really, you know, maybe my mind doesn't go to thinking about the past or maybe some people think the past is the past. don't think about it. But just last week, I was researching to see I had the address on an old envelope from my grandma's World War 2 letters with my grandpa. So I knew where she lived. So I Googled it and found out it's in East Detroit, and it's in an area where all the houses have been torn down or run down. And so it's gone. It's just it's a and it made me think about story. It made me think about history. Then I looked up the church where they went because I knew that they were very loyal to having grown up, her parents came from the Netherlands and So I looked and sure enough, a few blocks away, the church is still standing that she attended. And so all of these pieces make you like, it's amazing how our family history faith history. All those things tie together. And they're not all perfect. It's not all. But when you start thinking about that, it really does it teaches you something about yourself. And then in in learning something about myself, I also relate to other people better.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:41:54]:

That's so wise and I don't know. You're just really speaking to me. I'm really glad that we're having this conversation. I'm learning so much. I actually am enjoying this conversation because we're talking back and forth. And oftentimes I just ask a questions. This is good. Okay. Can I have a can I ask you one more? And then I can -- Oh, I can share too. I mean, you can throw it back at me. I was a news reporter. I asked nosy questions all the time. I figure I deserve it. I'm just so curious. the one of one of them in on page 134 is the last thing I did for fun was this. Oh, and that can sometimes tell us a lot. Like, have we been doing fun things? Are we allowing ourselves to do fun things. Are we making space for fun things?

Michelle Rayburn [00:42:37]:

I do things for fun. Sometimes other people might think they're boring. but sometimes it's just watching a TV show. That's great. And so, I actually on Sunday afternoon is my unplugged time, and I watched a it's a comedy with Jane Fonda and, anyway, I think it's called club or something. And I'm not gonna the disclaimer, there's language in there. People might not wanna listen to. But anyway, I laughed really hard because it was, like, just the kind of thing that you do for nothing but entertainment.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:43:10]:

TV, Netflix, those totally count for fun. I think that we get the idea that fun has to be like a trip to Disney when sometimes a fun yeah. You know, it can be it can be those little things, that give life meaning. I really believe that. Yeah.

Michelle Rayburn [00:43:26]:

I'm an introvert. So things at home are probably even more fun. Actually, I was planning out, and this is making me think. Jennifer, you're really making me think. because Next week is a writing week for me. My husband's gone for his job for a week, and so I'm scheduling that as a writing on my next bible study, but in my planning for each day, I put fun. I wanted something focused, something fun, and something, fulfilling, like spiritually fulfilling. And I haven't figured out what those fun things are gonna be, so I was gonna ask on social media for some ideas of what's one little thing you would do at home for fun. So he'll ask that question. Oh, I can't wait to see the answers. Yeah. I'll ask people that. So one of your questions I'm gonna ask you is what is the weirdest thing in your purse wallet or go bag?

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:44:11]:

Well, right now in my first is, a coin. I'm trying to think of it. It's a coin And this is actually kinda sentimental. It's not really weird. It's weird that I carry it around in there, but it's sentimental. it was given to me after my dad passed away in September. and it has a fish on one side, his dad loved fishing, and it has his name on the other side. And when I reach my hand down into my purse and look for, like, my lip gloss or a pen, it'll brush against that's, Bitcoin and it brings back just a tenderness in my heart for my dad who I miss very, very much.

Michelle Rayburn [00:44:59]:

Oh, that's so beautiful. So some of the ones that could be silly questions might have a serious take for us when we fill them out. That's true. And some of them are ones that are going to teach

us everyday conversations we need to have. You have one about asking if you were cremated, where would you want your ashes spread? And I happened to be with my parents last week road tripping. I had to ride 3 hours one way and 3 hours back with my mom and dad. And we had gone to a funeral of a family member. And so on the way home, we were talking about our own plans. And my parents have theirs all written out, but I don't. And I said, well, I know where my husband wants his ashes to be spread, but I really haven't thought about what would I want my kids to do with mine.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:45:52]:

So That was an appropriate question that you had there. Yeah. because it's not an answer. Right? And so, you know, for me, my little brother is in the funeral industry and he sells vaults. So he says there's absolutely no way I'm being cremated. I will be involved, and he's going to have the best casket ever, and I'm going in the ground. So but and we have a little country church out here, which is a mile from our house, and that's where I wanna be buried. But if, you know, my husband, if you listen to this someday and it's after the fact and you put me somewhere else, no hard feelings. But, if I were if it were an ash situation, which John will not allow, I would want my ashes spread over a little lake in Minnesota, called Mule Lake. However, is it weird to want to have your ashes split up. Is that, like, is that weird? Cause I think part of me on the farm maybe. Right?

Michelle Rayburn [00:46:32]:

Yeah. We my husband works at a camp where people plant trees in memory of family members, and sometimes they bring some of the ashes to plant in the ground with the tree. That's pretty cool. So they yeah. And actually, he goes to Minnesota Boundary Waters every year to unwind after his busy season. So that's what he wants. but I don't have that kind of a thing. Or it's illegal to take mine to some of the places that I'm, like, like, Starbucks really doesn't want my ashes there.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:47:10]:

I need to find a better plan. Oh, yeah. Well, maybe you can just have yourself put into, like, a Starbucks cup, you know and then bury that cup.

Michelle Rayburn [00:47:16]:

So, actually, that was one of the themes in that movie I watched for fun on the weekend. Everything comes back around. Alright. Well, I would like my listeners to know where they can connect with you online, Jennifer, where they can find *Stuff I'd Only Tell God*.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:47:38]:

I'm Jennifer Dukes Lee everywhere online, whether that's Instagram Facebook, TikTok, my website, all Jennifer Dukes Lee. I also have a Stuff I'd Only Tell God Instagram page, which is really fun. and a great place to get occasional prompts that you can think about. And, finally, where you can get the book is really wherever you like to get your books. Of course, a lot of us love Amazon, but it is always 30% off at bakerbookhouse.com.

Michelle Rayburn [00:48:03]:

And you can see sample chapters by going there as well. Or at least one, they can see a sample of it there. Correct. As we wrap up today, I'd love to have you speak directly to the listener here, encouraging her in her journaling or non journaling yet and just giving her a word of encouragement.

Jennifer Dukes Lee [00:48:23]:

Well, I truly believe that taking the time to explore your past, your present, your people, your hopes for the future, and to allow yourself space and time to dream and to connect with God every day will produce nothing but good things and healing in your life. And I would encourage you to give it a try. maybe *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* is not right for you. but just taking the time to jot down a few things every day that give your life meaning, that help you heal from whatever is hurting you today and just to take that next brave step and put pen to paper.

Michelle Rayburn [00:49:11]:

Jennifer, thank you so much for making it fun and also just letting us see a little glimpse of your life here. So I know my Listeners are going to enjoy you because I really enjoyed our conversation. I did too. Thanks for having me. One of the really fun parts about *Stuff I'd Only Tell God* is that it's not only a journal. It really is put together in a creative way from a design standpoint. So when you go into the book, there are some pages where there are boxes or blanks to fill in. Some of them with places to circle And even a page where there are blank book spines or there's one for movies where you can write on the spine the title of some books you want to read, or if you were sent off, one of them, if you were sent off to a desert island for a year, what movies, books, and music albums would you take with you? And they're designed in a way to write on a graphic. So it's kind of fun that way. so I think you'll find it really fun and not just like your typical journal. So podcast listener, I encourage you to pick up a copy of *Stuff I'd Only Tell God: A Guided Journal of Courageous Honesty, Obsessive Truth-Telling, and Beautifully*

Ruthless Self-Discovery by Jennifer Dukes Lee. I will link to that in the show notes. That will be at michellerayburn.com/162

Michelle Rayburn [00:50:37]:

You'll have that, and any other resources that I'm sharing related to this episode will be there. There will be a discussion guide going out to my email list related to this episode as well. Thank you for joining me. It was a fun conversation, and I hope you enjoyed it too. Take care, and I'll see you next week. You've been listening to *Life Repurposed*. If you'd like bonus resources sent to your inbox each week, be sure to sign up at michellerayburn.com.