

## ***Episode 18: "Loving the Little Years" with guest Rachel Jankovic***

Audra Haney: Thanks for tuning in to the Newborn Promise Podcast, a production of Graham Blanchard Incorporated. You are listening to an interview with Rachel Jankovic called Loving the Little Years. For today's show notes, transcript, and more information about our recently released book, Your Newborn Promise Project, please visit [GrahamBlanchard.com](http://GrahamBlanchard.com).

Welcome back to the Newborn Promise Podcast. I'm Audra Haney, and when you welcome a new soul into your family, and you're intentional about loving and nourishing that little soul, you have one of the most rewarding and challenging jobs on earth. But in the throws of constantly meeting needs, changing diapers, blinding exhaustion, messes, and tantrums, can you truly love the little years?

Our guest today, Rachel Jankovic, mother of seven and author of the book *Loving the Little Years*, takes a break from her own busy life, peaks out from the trenches, and shouts, "Yes! You can find love, joy, and great purpose in these little years." All it takes is a little perspective, obedience, and a whole lot of Jesus. We loved this talk with Rachel, and it felt like chatting with our most honest and wise friends over coffee. We even enjoyed the little cameo from her youngest, Moses, because that is real mom life, and we know you'll love her too.

Rachel, before we dive into your book, which is called *Loving the Little Years*, would you mind telling me a little bit about your family today, and what that looks like?

Rachel Jankovic: Sure. My family right now, I have seven children from 1 and 1/2, or coming in on 2 this fall, to 12 coming in on 13 this fall, so we're almost to the teenage years, and still in the toddlers. Yeah, so we have a 12 year old, and then an 11 year old, and twins who are 9, and then a 7 year old, and a five year old, and the almost 2 year old.

Audra Haney: So you're not busy at all, are you?

Rachel Jankovic: No, not at all busy.

Audra Haney: Well, Rachel, you wrote a lovely and encouraging book a few years ago called *Loving the Little Years*. Do you mind sharing what inspired you to write that book, and what did that process look like for you with so much on your plate as a busy mom?

Rachel Jankovic: Yeah, it's probably not the most typical, I guess, beginning of a book story. So I do have, I occasionally blog. I haven't been doing that

recently, but with my mom and twin sister, we have a blog, and I had, let's see ... the twins and Blair. So we were down to, we had five kids. My first four children are very close together because it was 18 months between the first two, and then 18 months later we had the twins, so we had four kids three and under. Right, and it was barely three and under, and I almost wish we could have had the twins a couple weeks earlier so we could say we had four kids two and under. It wouldn't have made a difference, but that's a shocking number. That was kind of our, I would say a boot camp of parenting time for us.

So shortly after when we had five, then when I blogged something about how we work with our little girls on their attitude, so it was just a blog post about how we work with them on controlling their emotions. There's a chapter in the book that's about that, I think it's called Spirited Riders. We just talk about how your emotions are like a horse, that God gave them to you, but he also told you to stay on this path. You know what I mean? This is the path that you're supposed to be on, and you're supposed to be ... your emotions are something good. That's something you're supposed to be with, but you have to control them, you know?

So I wrote a blog post about that that got a lot of response, and then I was asked to write a book because of that. I think at that time I was still not super comfortable with my voice, writing to mothers. Anyways, I was still a fairly young mother. I had really been through some mothering at that point, but it did feel a little bit like I'd been drug through it. It was not me sitting around saying, "Man, I have so many intentional thoughts that I just want to share with everyone." It was different. It was a different approach than that.

Audra Haney:

And you know, I think that is one of those things that makes it such a fun and great read, because the chapters are short and conversational, and so real. It's sort of like a mom vitamin, you know?

Rachel Jankovic:

Yes, and really the thing that I most would like to communicate to moms is it seemed to me at the time, and I have not, it kind of continues this way, I guess, but when you're talking about mothering, there seems to be kind of like two camps. There is a camp that is very idealistic and romantic about it. "Oh, it's this tender little soul that you're shaping. It's all very hazy, and rosy, and beautiful." You know? And then the other side is like, "No, it's not. Let me tell you the truth. It's all about diapers, and snot." You know what I mean?

I think the thing that I cared about is that you can have both realities, the actual reality of the challenges of parenting, and joy. We don't need to pretend there's no trials, or no troubles, to still have joy in the task that God has put before us.

Audra Haney: And, Rachel, in the book one of the things I loved is that you talk a lot about changing our attitudes and perspectives, and what a difference that can make in our homes. Talk to me about why you feel keeping this right perspective is so important.

Rachel Jankovic: Yes, well I would say I don't, that was not my innovation. I was raised in a Christian home, and my grandmother, she was a missionary, and she was actually the headmistress of a Japanese girls' Bible school before she married my grandfather. Anyways, when my mom was converted in college, and at some point when the three of us were little, mom was having one of those intense days where she's like, "This is so hard!"

She called my grandmother, who was local, so she was calling her local help, and my grandma said, she just ... My mom still tells this story, it's such a funny but good thing. She called her to tell her all about it. My grandma just listened, and then she immediately responded by telling her about a missionary somewhere who was captured and hung by his toes in a cave, and his wife had to come ... I'm sorry, that's Moses in the background.

Audra Haney: Hi, Moses.

Rachel Jankovic: He came to find me!

So anyways, she told her about a missionary who was captured, hung by his toes in a cave, and his wife had to come feed him every day while he was hanging upside down. It's just the reality of get some perspective, you know what I mean? Like what is it that we think is such a trial? It's like really we're just not paying attention to the big picture of blessings, and God's kindness to us, and what we're not having to worry about or deal with. You know, like we can just get very selfish, and very small scale thinking, like this is so hard for me because someone had an accident, or something happened. It's like, well, yes, but we have shelter, and we have food, and we have ...

There's so much that is not being a trial for us. It was not life changing for me as a mother to learn that. What if felt like to me was things that I've known my whole life, you know, like things that I have been taught, that I believe, are now actually being tested. Essentially, Rachel, this is your statement of faith. Let's watch you in action.

Audra Haney: I love that, and you know, even with that great perspective, you do share that we can have challenges. One thing you share is that a particular challenge for you is closing your home décor and floral business when you went from two children to four with the birth of your twins. Why was this a particular challenge for you?

Rachel Jankovic: Probably the biggest thing for me was that the things that I knew were gifts that God had given me, things that I knew were from Him, and that I knew I was honoring him with them. Do you know what I mean? Things that you felt like God wanted you to do, and you were confident in that. I think the biggest thing for me was learning to recognize that sometimes God calls you to one thing that is obedience, and that later He may call you to lay that down. And then later He may call you to pick it back up. Obedience to Him is not a set of things that you have to do. It is constantly responding faithfully to how He is leading.

We closed the shop, and I was super thankful for it. That was not hard for me, but what was shocking was we closed it when they were pretty, when the twins were just a couple of months old, probably. What was shocking for me was the transition from being someone who was, yes I was a mother. Yes, I loved doing that, but I was also still seeing lots of people. Still out in ... you know, I was still out in public, and doing things that I loved, and to this transition of being like no ... I mean, it's like an all day event if I needed to go to the grocery store.

Audra Haney: Yes.

Rachel Jankovic: You know, like we will start at dawn trying to prepare to go to the grocery store, and when we get there, there won't be any room in the cart. You know, like I'll have children tied onto me. It was a major transition for me, I guess I would say in how I perceived myself or in identity issues, knowing that God wants this for me now. What does faithfulness now look like?

Audra Haney: Yeah, that's powerful, and I feel like so much of that comes down to being flexible and embracing that. Okay, this is just a short season, and this is what obedience looks like in this particular season.

Rachel Jankovic: Yeah, and the reality is that you don't necessarily know it's going to be a short season. I think that that is when it's happening. Now I can look back and be like, since that time I've been through a whole bunch of seasons. You know, since then it's changed in all kinds of ways. That kind of change now does not throw me off, but it's like an old friend now.

Audra Haney: And, Rachel, our audience is mainly expecting and new parents. There are a lot of people about to transition into those new roles. What would be some of your biggest advice for them?

Rachel Jankovic: I think that the biggest thing I would say is that sometimes we get really overwhelmed with the big picture. You're like, "I don't know how this will work out," and the reality is that whenever you're overwhelmed with that kind of thing, you almost always know what the next step is,

what the next obedient step would be, because you can sit in the middle of your house being like, "I don't know what my life will be like. This is such a problem," but you do know that this baby needs the diaper changed. You do know that they need loved right now. That they need your obedience, right now, and it's amazing how beginning to take steps of obedience and developing that habit brings so much clarity to the big picture. And any of those moments of overwhelming, it's not really about the big picture; it's about you not wanting to do something little right now.

We don't need all the answers. We need to know that we're still following Christ, that we're still doing what we should be doing right now, and he will make it clear.

Audra Haney: That's so great, and you know, that brings up a great point about how sometimes our spiritual walk changes when we become busy moms. I'm sure being the mom of seven, you can really relate to that. Talk to me about how your life has changed spiritually after becoming a mom.

Rachel Jankovic: It did change from what I believe in the abstract to show me how you believe that. You know? I'd be like, so you believe in the abstract that children are a blessing. Show me in your behavior today that you believe that, that you're honoring what God said. You know what I mean? That to me was, it was more ... that's why I say it was like a boot camp. It was like so many opportunities to confront things in yourself that you didn't even think you had. I don't think before I had a bunch of little kids, like I can't remember having to deal with my temper, and I remember thinking honestly that it was a surprise to me when you see people kind of coming unglued at their kids. You know, if you're at the grocery store or something, you're like, "Whoa. What is happening here?"

It actually took me being in a different situation for me to understand how that happens. It's like, oh yeah, well, take your college-aged girl life and then give it really sporadic sleep for a long time, and then have your maternity pants falling down, and this child ... you can see there's all these little things add up, and suddenly you see how, okay, so now I need to actually practice something because it isn't just my default mode. This isn't natural. Now this is a spiritual discipline.

Audra Haney: And for parents in this new season, it is very easy to get overwhelmed, and for those listening that are about to have a newborn or they are already in the fog of becoming a new parent, do you have any additional advice to help them really persevere and love the little years?

Rachel Jankovic: Well, I guess I would go back to what we already sort of talked about. It's that being overwhelmed is very common, but not knowing what you could do obediently next is not. You almost always, I can't think of a

time that someone has been in such a pickle that they don't know what the next obedient thing to do would be, and I think that that really is the heart of it, is that you don't need the big picture. That will always be overwhelming. What you need is just right now, obedience to Christ, and that that clarifies everything.

And the other thing is that it really is true what people say, that it goes by really fast. Like that you're in this moment, but it really will be very soon that you're looking back on how did that go so fast? I guess it's in the time when you have, it just seems like impossibly long days, just impossibly long, but the years are so fast. So fast, and I laugh that it used to be that I would be looking at the clock like when will my husband be home? You know, like he's got to come home, and when I would text him and he would say, "I'll be home in 15 minutes," and I can remember an honest emotion of I cannot survive that long. Like, I don't think I can make it 15 minutes, you know? I mean the level of intensity is such that I may be dead before you get home. This is not going to ... This is crazy.

And now, it's far more likely that he shows up, and I'm like, "Whoa! You're home already? What time is it?" It does change, and when older parents tell you that, like "Enjoy this, it's going by so fast," don't take that as people often do, as an insult. It's not enjoy it like you got invited to, you know, you're a little kid and you're at a bouncy castle kind of a thing. It's not that kind of joy, but do look for the joy that is always with us, that is Christ, that is the joy of obedience and loving him. There's so much deep joy, even in the middle of the really, really wild years.

My husband and I affectionately refer to it as the sweaty eyeball phase of our life, like it was just blindingly funny. Just impossible amounts of little people holding on to you and needing things, but we look back on that, and I would never undo it because coming out of those years, in spite of the fact that it was incredibly hard, I also look back on it as such a ... It is something that I would never exchange because of how much we learned about God and His love for us, and His kindness to us, and His blessings. It was such a spiritually rich stage, in part because it was so spiritually challenging. Really, the testimony that we have now is the testimony to Christ. We know how much He carried us through all of that, and I'm very thankful for it. I never say I ... I really am so thankful that it was that wild. It was really good for us.

Audra Haney:

Well, that wraps up our time for today, but we so look forward to hearing more from Rachel next week as she talks about how moms can seek out intentional times for God, even when our time is limited, and what true spiritual self-care is all about. And remember, you can get today's show notes, transcript, and 20% off our new book, Your Newborn Promise Project, for couples and groups with Code NPPodcast at [GrahamBlanchard.com](http://GrahamBlanchard.com)

