

Bible Belles- Heros for Her Podcast Interview with Jess Delgado

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ERIN WEIDEMANN: Hi everybody and welcome to the very first episode of Heroes for Her. I'm your host Erin Weidemann, founder of Bible Belles and an author of *The Adventures of Rooney Cruz*, a five book series to help girls to discover what it means to be truly beautiful. We're coming to you from our office in North County San Diego; it's my newer home town of Encinitas, California. I could not be more excited to be here with you as we launch our new pod cast series, Heroes for Her.

Before we get started though, I thought I'd share a little bit about our 'why'. So why are we here? We're here for girls. That is: the crazy sad, lovely, emotional, messy and amazing struggle it is to be a girl. We are here for the parents out there who are just like us, who are sick and tired of what the world is telling our girls they need to be in order to be beautiful. We're here to help parents connect with their daughters and support them to discover their own unique value so that this generation of girls can grow in authentic confidence and peace about who they were created to be, to live from their values and for a mighty and meaningful purpose.

Every week we'll be talking with women who are up to big things in this world, women who are out there, leading from their values. So click to subscribe at Heroes for Her Radio and I'm so excited today to welcome our first guest. Her name is, Jess Delgado, she's our social media Manager for Bible Belles among many other things. Hi Jess!

JESS DELGADO: Hi Erin!

ERIN WEIDEMAN: So, I love you so much and I'm so excited to chat with you today. If you

would just introduce yourself to everybody and talk a little bit about your journey and how you made it to where you are today in working with us.

JESS DELGADO: Wow! Okay! That's a loaded question. Well, yes, I'm Jess–Jessica but Jess for short. I am a 23 year old girl, just kind of doing life and making it in the world... Oh, wow! Where do I start?

Okay! So I worked in retail and sales for a very, very long time and I was just really unhappy with that and I kind of got myself into a little shopping problem, (try not to judge). But definitely just really unhappy in my workplace environment and I kind of felt God tugging me in another direction—a very scary direction—and I started freelance copywriting for a little bit and then doors just kind of flew open.

I was really surprised at how easy it was to just kind of start freelancing and for small businesses that I really connected with, and really resonated with. And then I was introduced by a friend to his business and then to you fine people. Looking back and tracking on where God's taken me from being totally miserable in sales and retail to being where I am now and working with Bible Belles—and not only working with the Bible Belles, but working with Young Life...

It's just been a really epic, awesome journey. And just getting to see where God has kind of pulled me, it's just been really great. And so now I work mainly with the younger generation or for the younger generation but its been really rad just to see kind of the whole story unfold.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: I think—and, thank you for sharing that—I think what I love about you Jess, (so many things by the way) is that, growing up, I would have never described myself as a somebody who liked girls. I was always a tomboy, I thought girls were really annoying and catty and just, you know... like they were interested in things I did not care about. I was very driven and I loved sports and so one of the things I love about you is that you [do]. We always talk about this issue obviously, and how we're trying to support these girls...

JESS DELGADO: Right...

ERIN WEIDEMANN: But you always talked about how you enjoy so much with working with these girls, and with women. So I thought I'd ask you, because I always found that funny because I would never say that about myself. What draws you in and gets you excited about working with girls?

JESS DELGADO: That's a really great question. I really think growing up, I was kind of the same way— and it's almost like cool to think that way now, just to be like, “oh, I hate girls. Girls are so much drama”, blah blah blah, and that's not a very good “cool girl” attitude to have, but I never really resonated with that.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Well, I thought that was very cool. So, let me make that clear.

[laughs]

JESS DELGADO: I grew up with two sisters. So, my house was full of girls (my poor father). But, I really just love women. I love, like...if you look in the Bible, kind of what we were created to be—I read in this one book once called, *Captivating*—that women were kind of the finishing touch on creation. That God wasn't done creating the universe until woman was pulled from rib. I just think that is such a beautiful, amazing thing that we were the final product. We were done. And I really just love... I think women, we are so relational and I love—I'm a talker you know this—

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Clearly. [laughs] No, but please go.

JESS DELGADO: I just love relating to women, I love talking about...okay, this is going to sound so dumb, but I really love to talk about feelings, and great things, and things that get us excited. And you can do that with men for sure, but I think that there's something about

when women get in a room together and they're just going, going, going and talking about things that fire their souls, and are so exciting—things are really sad, *and* things are really, really exciting, and really great—I think that there's...like, the atmosphere shifts. And there's something so great about when women come together and they come alongside each other in life. I've always just really appreciated that about women, and I've always found that it's easier for me to connect with women than it is with men. I don't know. Some girls are like, oh, [it's easier] to connect with guys but I really love...I love women.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: I like, and I'm happy, that you mentioned that book, *Captivating*, but I also wanted to add and ask this question to you, too. So the approach, or the thought from that book is that God wasn't finished creating until he made this last creation which was woman, and we should—you know, ideally, we should be able to hold on to that truth and really feel about ourselves and our place in this world, in a really positive light. So I think that's the struggle and the pain point that here, we're trying to battle back against, is that thought that comes, you know, from inside, from inside all of us really inside us as women...

JESS DELGADO: Right...

ERIN WEIDEMANN: And specifically it starts really early with us as a girls, feelings of doubt and feelings of un-confidence and just feelings of unworthiness I think is a universal struggle that all girls face. So I want to talk today, a little bit about you know, as sort of a young adult (I'm an older adult, you know, I'm a mom), and as somebody who *is* a younger adult and not so many years removed from your childhood and teenage years...

JESS DELGADO: Right

ERIN WEIDEMANN: What would you say? Could you just speak a little bit about as a current narrative being fed to girls? You know, that sort of exacerbates the problems that innately we all feel within ourselves that we are not equipped, that we don't have value, that we aren't

confident in our abilities in all the negative ways that our inner monologue speaks to us and just talk a little bit about what the world is sort of setting us up for.

JESS DELGADO: I think that's really interesting that you say that. It is, it's kind of like a universal, woman problem, right? I've always seen that as kind of like...I really think the enemy has a really special kind of hatred for women and I don't—I mean, it's just beyond my understanding of why he uses this same tactic from generation to generation. But it really does seem that every woman from my grandma, to my little cousins, all have this question, this nagging question: Am I important? Do I matter? Does my life matter? Does it have any meaning? And, am I ever going to be enough to live up to whatever purpose I'm here for?

It's really interesting because I think that the world has kind of come to this realization, like, 'oh my gosh, this is really a problem that plagues women everywhere'. And it's funny. Because there are so many great campaigns, from so many good companies, that just want to help women build their self-confidence and they want to help them build a foundation where they can operate from, but it's all just kind of "good advice", you know what I mean? Like, tell yourself you're beautiful every day, words of affirmation, blah, blah, blah, and all these really great things, but it's not already grounded anywhere. It's kind of, you know, "oh you're beautiful, don't ever say that you're not beautiful." And it's like, some days I don't really feel beautiful. But if it's just... if it comes from nowhere; if it comes from other people who are on my same playing field: who's to say that me telling myself that "I'm not beautiful" means less than you telling me that I am? Does that make sense? Like it has to come from...it has to be rooted in truth and I think that the problem is that so many women struggle with this narrative—and so many young girls, too. Teenage girls? Oh, my gosh. That is like their heart song. "I'm not enough, and I will never be enough. And I am not as pretty as this girl. I'm not as talented as this girl." It's just this ongoing symphony in their brain that they cannot turn off. And I think that when they don't remind themselves of the truth and when they don't understand fully like, who God is, then that noise is only going to get louder.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: I definitely relate to that a lot. You know as a girl, I always felt really awkward and I think—maybe it's because I was heads taller and kind of oddly shaped? I was athletic and I played sports and stuff, but I never really considered myself to be beautiful. And there was just, even when I was really young, there was this just constant like, 'I'm going to look at all the other girls I see and measure myself against them; and am I as pretty as they are? Am I as cool as they are? And do people like me as much as they like those other girls?' And I think that starts really young, at least it did for me.

You know, I think, what I'd like you to talk about a little bit is did you struggle with that at all? You know, just feeling that personally? And was there anybody in your life who you found support with, who you were able to connect to on that? Because that was a big piece missing for me. I bottled those feelings all up inside myself and just let them eat at me from the inside out. And then I struggled as a middle schooler, as a teenage girl, as a college student because I never dealt with those things. And since you like talking to girls so much, I'm wondering if that was a good outlet for you? Did you, share with your mom? Did you have somebody that you would come with these feelings to? Because I think that's a big piece about what we're trying to do—just create this support system for people to talk about these issues and not bottle them up inside themselves.

JESS DELGADO: Yeah. Well, I definitely, 100% struggled with that. I mean, I still struggle with that. It's a constant—like, sometimes it's a low buzz in the background, and sometimes it's just all out, "You are not as good as this girl." And I think—it's interesting 'cause, I struggled with that in high school a lot. And especially—not that there was sibling rivalry or anything like that—but I grew up... I mean my sisters and I are very close in age, and my cousins and I are very close in age, and we all grew up in the same community, so we went to the same schools. And it was a constant comparison of you know, 'which person in this family is prettier? Which one in this family is funnier?' And it was this really... I don't know if I made it up in my head, or if I actually got it from other students that we went to school with, but it was this really unhealthy way of comparing myself, and pitting myself against my cousins, and against my sisters, and always coming up short or seeming to come up short.

And it's really hard when you're in that place, where you're just like, "I don't measure up" and "I don't get it, like, I don't understand how to be better at this." But something that really helped me was that when I was in high school, I had a Young Life leader who really just loved me and was relentlessly pursuing me, and my heart, and just gave me a really good picture of what Jesus does for us, and what God did for us; he was after our hearts and he is constantly pursuing us, and pursuing us, and pursuing us. I think that my Young Life leader had a really big effect on my life. Because it's almost like...I didn't want to go to my mom with these feelings because there's something like, shameful in having them and it's this weird, like... you feel this way, and you feel horrible *about* feeling that way because you're supposed to have it all together, you know what I mean? Like, you're supposed to be pretty, you're supposed to be confident, you're supposed to be really talented, and really good, and you're not supposed to compare yourself with other women, you're supposed to be building other women up. And if you have those feelings and you feel down about yourself then you don't have it all together and you're not worthy. Do you know what I mean?

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Definitely. Will you just kind of get into what Young Life is? I know Young Life has impacted you in so many different, positive ways. So, just maybe share about how you came to be a part of Young Life? I know you are on staff there now. Just for the people that don't know give them a little background.

JESS DELGADO: Yeah. So Young Life is, well, Young Life's mission, I'll just start with that, is to introduce adolescents to Jesus Christ and to help them grow in their faith. We work with—generally, it's like middle school aged, and high school aged students. But there is definitely College Young Life, and we have different areas of Young Life, where we are reach other types of people, but I work with high school.

So we basically operate in what we call the "four pillars of Young Life", which is the four c's: Contact work, club, campaigners, and camp. And that's all Young Life jargon but, it's really great!

So contact work is...you basically are going to these kids. You're showing up on their turf, you are in their world, and you're going after them. You're not trying to bring them in to you, you are, you know, going to the cool coffee shop that all these kids hang out [in], you're going to their football games—you're showing up in their life. And we're very firm believers in doing this ministry like Jesus did his ministry, and that means going into the trenches and rubbing shoulders with people that, you know, society has brushed off. And I feel like that's very...like, the younger generation is very much like, "oh they're so corrupt, these teenagers, oh, they're so awful!" And when an adult person comes on campus—like yeah, it might be a little bit weird, but at the same time it's very much like...it makes you feel so special. And if we can give them a taste of how Jesus feels about them then, you know, it's just like the greatest thing in the world. But they get to see that when we come on their terms, and we come to them, and when we pursue them. They get to see God's love for them in the way that we love them.

And so that's basically Young Life's whole mission is just to kind of meet kids where they're at and love them. Love them, love them, love them.

And the other three pillars I could get into: club is basically like a party with a purpose. So we throw them like a really cool [party] and we create a really great atmosphere around where they can, you know, just be a kid again and come play games, and come hang out, and do things safely and hear the gospel for the first time. And then campaigners, you just go a little bit deeper into who Jesus is and what he did for us.

And camp is one full week at a Young Life camp and it's organized chaos at its finest. It is just the craziest week of your entire life, but also the best week of your life. And when you as a kid, and as a Young Life leader, get to see God move that way, it is the most humbling experience you'll ever have in your whole life. And it's really just like... I have such a big heart for Young Life because I've seen God move in so many ways in high school kids' lives and it's just—it's the most amazing, epic thing I've ever been a part of.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Well, I—thanks for sharing that too—and it's nice for me to get to [hear] a little bit more specifically what you get to do at Young Life too because we talk so much Bible Belle stuff all the time. I like hearing, and I can hear the passion in your voice about the work that you do with Young Life, because it is impacting kids and it is working to change the current narrative that's out there that tells kids one thing when they shouldn't necessarily believe what the world's telling them.

So I love hearing in your voice that you're so excited about it, and I'm excited also just to talk to you a little bit more about the work that you see needed within our current society. So, I mean obviously, we're trying to come around kids and we're trying to build them up so that they can grow in this authentic confidence, right? And peace about who they are, and I think that's the struggle.

So, maybe just talk a little bit right now about ways that you've tried to do that yourself. You're such a committed person to learning, and somebody who really just values education and bettering themselves and I really enjoying seeing...not that you're so young and just like, 'wow that's so surprising that a young adult would want to do that', but you're really committed to just learning and changing for good in terms of your personality, your attitude; just the outlook you have and the things you plan to do in this world. So maybe just talk about books you've read, speakers you've gone to see, or something that impacted you in a way to just sort of encourage people to seek out that information themselves.

JESS DELGADO: Ooh. Okay! Um...well, I am a very—thank you for all those kind words.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Totally loaded question. You're welcome for the compliments. I think sometimes it's hard to know where to start—and especially, if you're a parent listening in and you're like “how am I supposed to point my daughter in the right direction so she can sort of be self motivated, and finds these things that are really going to inspire her?” I just want them to

hear from you. Sorry to talk over you, because I asked you a question and I'm like 'I'm going to share'. Does that help?

Jess Delgado: No, you're giving me time to think!

ERIN WEIDEMANN: I like to do that. I do that at school with my kids in middle school. I'm like, "Hey so and so, I'm gonna call on you in just a moment but I'm gonna share the question for 10 seconds so you can think of something to say."

JESS DELGADO: That's a good strategy.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: As I take a breath. Go ahead Jess and just answer that loaded question when you have a chance.

JESS DELGADO: Wow! I think I've always been a really curious person and I like to ask a lot of questions. And I think that that starts with—with just questions, you know? Really hard questions, and really tough questions and not necessarily backing away from those questions but, you know, finding out an answer to those questions.

I think a lot—my faith has been completely torn open and, I don't know, re-patched I guess by God, by asking questions. Questions that I was always really afraid to ask in church like, what if this isn't real? Is it okay to have doubts? Who is Jesus? Did he actually do all these things? How can we trust the Bible? And like those really tough questions and not backing away from them. Because if you think about it and if you really believe that the Bible is true, you know, then, the truth is going to be the truth no matter which way you turn it. And I think that God is a big, big God and he's not afraid of some questions from us.

So I think just being curious and having a curious spirit and not really downplaying that and just encouraging your children to keep asking questions and don't just take things as they come. Don't

just trust somebody because they seem trustworthy and their words seem [trustworthy]. And that's something that I really appreciate about Young life, especially. We end all of our clubs with, "don't take our word for it, come ask us questions. But also, we'll point you in the direction of research; of somebody who knows a lot more than we do." Because obviously we don't have all the answers. And curiosity is going to lead you down a really long trail. You're not gonna get all the answers right away, but, yeah—so...

I think being curious and asking really tough questions is a good way to start. But I think for me, I've been asking questions for a really long time and I'm a really big reader. So I read a lot of books, and I've read—and still do read a lot of self-help books—but all of it, I don't know... it's all really good advice, but it doesn't answer the question.

And so I think for me the biggest thing, and, to take this back to Young Life, it's just like when you understand the gospel for the first time in your life. And Erin, I can't even tell you... when a girl who's struggling and asking questions, "Am I enough? Will I ever be enough? Am I important? What is my purpose here?" When she gets the gospel the first time, when you see that click, it could honestly bring you to tears. I could cry just thinking about it. It's just...to see God move in that way and just to like answer her question, like, "yeah, I love you and I'm after your heart and you do have a purpose, you are important and you're really important to me." Like when a girl, when a teenage girl gets that. That the Creator of the universe loves her so much? It changes your life! It changes the way you look at yourself, it changes the way you look at the world, it changes the way you relate to other women. And I think that, just like when you get the truth for the first time, and when you get an answer to your really tough questions, I think that is what changes things. So I think, I mean I think it's a lot of just being curious, I guess. Does that answer your question? I don't really know, I kind of went off on tangent.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: That's ok. Maybe that's why I didn't enjoy talking to girls so much growing up. No! I'm just kidding. I'm just kidding. I'm totally kidding and we can really just joke around right now because, I can listen to you and have fun with you. [laughs]

No, I really appreciate what you said at the end—and everything obviously, and not just the end. What you said about girls, figuring out, or coming to the realization that they are enough, and that they are loved, and cherished, and were uniquely designed and created for this purpose and there is—there's just a peace that comes with that.

It took me a really long time to get there and I don't live there all the time in just like that, 'oh my life is just so wonderful and I just have this great amazing purpose and everything's all figured out.' That's not what it is. But, just the peace that comes with, 'You know what? I was uniquely designed, I am loved, I'm loved no matter happens, and no matter what I could possibly do.' And it's hard to be accepting of that. I think as women, and girls specifically because as we grow up, we just see out in the world, people living for so many different reasons, and all of these things that you can see are just hard to take in sometimes. And I think they are hard to see as adults. But I think for kids who are growing up and experiencing things for the first time, for me at least—and I would like to hear what you think about this—it really just comes back to role models. Seeing people and having people, like your Young Life leader in your life who are there pouring into you and who you can look to as somebody for inspiration, who you can look to as somebody who can show you what to do. And what things maybe you can think about in a different way?

And it's hard too, because as I look out into the world, and I'm the mom of a young daughter, she's 20 months and it scares me to death to think about my childhood and the way I thought about myself and now how am I going to help her combat this world we live in that's going to tell her she needs to be this, this, and this to be beautiful; to be loved and respected? She's got to do all of these things.

So, I don't know just any last final thoughts about just speaking life into that struggle so this next generation of girls can feel—you know, can really understand what it means to be truly beautiful

JESS DELGADO: Yeah. I think, I mean, I hear you when you say, I think it does come down to having role models and learning from women who've walked this place before. And for some of us, that's our moms but for some of us it's not our moms.

I'm very, very, fortunate to have the most wonderful mother but I know that a lot of my friends don't have the most wonderful mother and they don't have a mom that they can come to. And I think that that's a very tough thing because I think role models and mentors are so important. Because it is scary! I mean, when you go out into the world, this world is very much against you and your faith and I think that's a really scary place to be.

And so I think, I think having someone there who, really lived this life, who walked the same path that you are walking is so important and just to see that, you know, they made it out on the other side, and you're going to do the same. But in what condition are you going to do that in? And so it's very important to me. I really resonated with what you said about how you don't live in that space where you're like, "I'm uniquely and I'm purposefully designed by God, this is great, I have a purpose." I don't always live there either. In fact, some of the best advice I ever got was to preach the gospel to myself every single day. Every minute of every day, you know? Because we're so prone to forget and this world is just full of noise.

And the thing is, we're going to listen to the noise unconsciously; do you know what I mean? And—subconsciously—and it's hard to navigate and to hear the truth when there's so much noise around you. And I think it's so important to have role models who are speaking into your life. And whether that's somebody that you don't really know that's just being a really good example or somebody that's really close to you who is also a really good example. I think that it's important for women to reach down into the next generation and to make sure that those girls have role models. And they're not going to be perfect; God uses broken people for His purpose and for His glory. I think that that's really important to remember as you reach down into the next generation: that you will never be perfect. But I also think it is imperative that we do that, and especially as women. If we expect this next generation to rise at all we need to make sure that we're giving them solid ground to stand on and that starts with us just dipping into the next generation and just kind of walking with them and getting in the trenches with them.

And that's what I love about what we're doing at Bible Belles and what we're doing at Young Life. It's such an awesome place to be, just to kind of step into and speak into—I keep saying the next generation for a lack of a better word—but...these girls that are growing up. But, yeah, I think that role models are a huge, huge part of this whole big mess. I would just say as women I think...personally, I think it's our job to find a girl, and find—a.) find a mentor for ourselves and find somebody that we can walk through our life with; but also to make sure that we're passing on that wisdom and that information to the girls around us that are younger than us, that are struggling and yeah, just doing that.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Do it girl. So last question and then we'll wrap it up I just wanted to ask, everyone that we bring on the show is going to have a unique perspective because they have just a really unique walk, right? Nobody's walk is the same. So as you, as just yourself what advice would you give to a parent, a mom, or a dad, who's looking to come alongside and support their daughter in navigating or in dealing with, you know, the current state of society and the current life that we live in terms of what the world is going to tell her about herself? What advice do you have for that parent?

How much time do you have, by the way? [laughs] Just kidding. No, just a couple of last thoughts and hey, whatever you don't share right now we can just get together over coffee, or ranch and pizza and just like, have another...

JESS DELGADO: Bottomless ranch party... [laughter]

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Dish session...[laughter]

JESS DELGADO: I think, you know, in Young Life, we talk a lot about earning the right to be heard, and I think a lot of parents kind of assume they have the right to be heard. And I think in certain aspects obviously, they do. And as children we're supposed to honor our father and mother and there's no excuse not to.

But I also think if you're going to come alongside your kid and not just be an authoritative figure, you've got to just kind of get on their level and stop...I see a lot of parents just patronizing their kids. Or like, their daughter's heartbroken over this boy who's just awful—and you knew they were awful! And, I mean, obviously, yes teenage heartbreak is so easy for us to pooh-pooh, and to just, “oh you'll get over it.” But at the same time, your daughter's really hurting over this. And for certain things, I think parents would do well to just come alongside and really just earn the right to be heard because our parents are wells—I know my mom is just spring of wisdom—and to be able to have a friendship, and an open dialogue with your kids about life, about what they're going through you have to... you as a parent have to be vulnerable with them as well, and forthcoming about your mistakes, and your walk with the Lord. And I think when you see—especially as a teenager—when you see that your parents are human and when you finally understand that God is a God of restoration and he heals and he repairs everything, I think that's the best. The best advice that I could give to a parent is just to be vulnerable with your kids and to earn the right to be heard, I guess. Because I think that's so important. And, there's no one who looks out for your kids like you do and you've got to make sure that that relationship is intact and that your kids can come to you.

Like, I can love these high school students with all my heart but it still won't be enough, it won't be like a mother's love. So, yeah, I think that would be the best advice I would give a parent, just to be vulnerable.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Well, I really appreciate all of your words of wisdom today and every day.

JESS DELGADO: Oh, stop it!

ERIN WEIDEMANN: No, seriously I really appreciate you coming on, and being real, and sharing you know like we always do but it's just nice to do it in this formal setting so that other people can hear it besides ourselves. But I really just want to thank you for being on

today. I just love you as a human as a woman, as a person as all the things that you are. And if I could hug you through this microphone, I would hug you and tell you that in person—so I will the next time I see you.

JESS DELGADO: Well, thanks for having me Erin, this was a great time.

ERIN WEIDEMANN: Thanks so much everybody, too for listening! And if you've enjoyed what you heard today or have a question, be sure to email us at hello@biblebelles.com. Use a hash tag (#) on all of social media: #HeroesForHer and we're looking forward to chatting with you. Thanks so much.

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