

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Sarah Petty: Most people don't think it's possible to be a single parent and a stay-at-home mom. But Elizabeth Covey is proof it's possible. Her boutique photography business is giving her everything she ever wanted and more. Today I'm talking to Elizabeth about how she schedules her sessions around her son so she can have no-work days while building her photography business.

So the real question is, how are portrait photographers like us able to run a profitable business and still put our families first, without selling digital files for cheap and working all the time? I'm Sarah Petty, your host of the Worth Every Penny Joycast, and I went from a stressed out overworked mama with three babies to being named one of America's most profitable photographers, without working my kids' lives away. Each week I'll show you how to find and serve boutique portrait photography clients in a world where we compete with free, thanks to everyone having a digital camera in their pocket. Take the first step to adding more joy and profit to your life by downloading your free photography business tools at [joyofmarketing.com/podcast](http://joyofmarketing.com/podcast).

Hi Elizabeth.

Elizabeth C: Hi everyone. Thanks for having me.

Sarah Petty: Oh my gosh. Yes, I'm so stoked to be here with you today, Elizabeth, to share your story so other people will believe in themselves, and believe in the possibility of their business. So thank you for being here.

Elizabeth C: Yes, thanks for having me.

Sarah Petty: So share your backstory. Where'd you come from in your business?

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Elizabeth C: Okay. So I was pretty new when I found you, Sarah. I had just left a job of nine years in February and decided to just jump with both feet in into my photography business. I'm a single mom, so it was pretty scary to do this. I started as the shoot and burn, because that's all I knew. So I just started creating stuff and throwing it out there. And I got some sessions, so that was good. So I was feeling really good, but then I wasn't charging much. So I was like, "How am I going to live off of this? I've got to make a change. I've got to do something." And then I came across the Pricing Challenge, and I said, "Let me give it a shot and just see what this is all about." And I knew then, I was like, "Okay, this is the change that I needed," because I wasn't going to live off of many sessions of \$75 and photo sessions of \$165. I was like, "This is not going to work. I might have to go back and work for somebody."

Sarah Petty: Well, that's the option. What was the conversation in your head? I'm a single mom now and I've got to either get a full-time job and leave my child, or I can do photography. So you'd left the job and you were going to make it full-time with photography. That was your goal?

Elizabeth C: That was my goal, yes. I was getting to a point at my job that it was better for me to leave. I was like, "It's either leave or go find another place or start my own business." And I am a family that has, I have a lot of support from my parents, and my mom's like, "Just go for it. Do your photography." And so I was lucky to have them to help me, and they helped me with my little boy all the time. And so, I did it. But it was scary. It felt thrilling at first to leave my job and think, "Okay, I'm my own boss." Then I thought, "Ooh, I'm my own boss."

Sarah Petty: It's so true.

Elizabeth C: Yeah. Who's going to pay me now?

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Sarah Petty: Yeah, and I have to yell at myself.

Elizabeth C: Yes, "Get to work." And now the problem is, my mom's like, "It's five, stop working." When I was doing the shoot and burn, I'm like, "No, I just did five sessions. I have to keep working so I can get five more sessions."

Sarah Petty: And how old is your child? Do you have a boy or girl?

Elizabeth C: A little boy. He's four.

Sarah Petty: Yeah. I mean four-year-olds need more time with their mama, right?

Elizabeth C: Oh yes. And now that I'm working from home, I mean, he loves it. He actually tells me, "Mommy, it's a no-work day today." Yeah, so we have a schedule going. So, Tuesday mornings is play dates and then I work Tuesday afternoons, and Friday is family day. So Friday is only him and then the other days, I mean, I can change it if I need to, that way, if we need to have a family day another day. But I like it because I don't have to ask off, it's just, I get to schedule my sessions around it. I can say, "Yes, we can do a consultation today." And he knows I'm an outdoor photographer. I don't have a studio. So my sessions are usually on the weekends, in the evenings, and I mean, 45 minutes is my max. Usually it doesn't take me long to do a family, kid, whatever my session is that day. So yeah, I love it. And then, it's just great. It's a little bit less stress. It's a different stress to work for yourself. It's a different stress.

Sarah Petty: It's a different stress, but also with a bigger payoff, right?

Elizabeth C: Yes.

Sarah Petty: When you're working at a job, you're stuck making what you're making with hours you're working, for someone else doing something maybe you love, maybe

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

you don't, thinking about your child and your life and everything that you want to build.

Elizabeth C: Yes.

Sarah Petty: So what was your vision when you were like, "Okay, I can be my own boss."? What is your long-term vision for your photography business?

Elizabeth C: My long-term is to hopefully one day actually have a studio, maybe. And I don't even care much to shoot in studio. I just want to have a place to meet my clients and eventually do head shots, because I'm getting into the headshot game too now.

Sarah Petty: Got it.

Elizabeth C: But I just want a place to meet my clients so I don't have to always just go to a coffee shop. Because not all clients want you in their homes, for different reasons. And I do have equipment that I'd like to set up and just be able to leave and not always have to put up, take down. And then of course my kid's long-term is for us to build a house. He keeps asking if we're going to build a house yet. I'm like, "Not yet. We're getting there."

Sarah Petty: Yeah, for sure. For sure. I mean, I love that dream, because your photography business can afford you that opportunity, to do the things that you want to do. So you decided, I mean that had to be a scary point for you to say, "Okay, I'm going to convert to boutique, I'm going to do this. I'm going to start learning how to make more money," when you didn't have the security and the roof over your head and all the stability. So what made you make that decision? Because that is a scary place to be.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

Elizabeth C: It was. It was. After I did the challenge, I knew. Right after I did that, I think I signed up before our Zoom was even over. Something in my body told me, "Sign up for it." I just got the chills. I got everything. And I was so excited that it didn't bother me that I had no income coming in, but I was about to invest in myself that much money, because I knew something amazing was going to come out of it. I could just see it without having done it yet.

Sarah Petty: I'm so proud of you. That's hard to do.

Elizabeth C: Thank you. It was. It was very hard, because I'm thinking, "Okay, I have..." Because I had a little bit saved up, I'm like, "Okay, I have this much money saved up, what can I do?" It's like, "I can keep struggling and making \$165 in shoot and burn, or I can invest in myself." And after I told my mom about it, she was like, "This is what I keep telling you to do. Why are you giving away your pictures?" It's funny when they're talking to you what you don't hear. You're like, "Really? That's what you were telling me to do?"

Sarah Petty: Yeah. They say when the student is ready, the teacher will appear. So you must have been ready, and your mom knew it before you knew it.

Elizabeth C: Yeah, she did. I mean, she's been telling me to do my photography for years. I just never had the courage to do it. This is just all the right timing.

Sarah Petty: Yeah. The fact you have that support at home, that is amazing. Because not everybody does, right?

Elizabeth C: Yes. Yeah, I feel very fortunate in that. Very fortunate.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Sarah Petty: Which is amazing. So you went all in, you're taking Boutique Breakthrough, you're learning all the steps. What opened up or what was hard for you? What were your biggest ahas or challenges?

Elizabeth C: Even though people see me as a outgoing person, I think I'm very much introverted. So the point, the marketing and getting out and talking to people, that scared me the most. I'm like, "Oh, I have to do this." But having that community and knowing all the struggles that everybody was going through and their doubts and their worries, boy that helped. And we created our own little Texas group and I was in another little group. So I mean, it helped a lot. It really did. And even now, having done it for this long, I mean it's been a few months, I always, I still get those. But I still remember, "Okay, you can do this, don't worry about it." It's either do it or go back and work for somebody else. I'll do it.

Sarah Petty: Yeah. Your why is so important. For everybody listening, when times get hard, you have to go back to that why. Because it's so easy to just go, "Oh, I had something hard happen. I'm going to go get another job." And it's like, "Oh, you're going backwards." No, keep moving forward. Keep moving forward.

Elizabeth C: That scares me to think if I had to go back and work for somebody else. I'm not. I'm not.

Sarah Petty: Good for you. Good for you. You can raise your child in a way that you have all control over where you live and what you do all day, and being that hands-on parent. I'm so proud of you.

Elizabeth C: Yes. And that was always my dream. I always wanted to be a stay-at-home parent. But being a single mom, that's not really in the books for most people. You have to go to work, you have to take care of them. So when this happened, I

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>TM</sup>

was like, "Wow, I'm getting everything I ever wanted." Photography and a stay-at-home mom.

Sarah Petty: Yeah. And get paid for it. How amazing is this?

Elizabeth C: Yes, yes.

Sarah Petty: So, talk about your first Julie. So you get a client, you do the session and you're getting ready to go into the presentation. How are you feeling?

Elizabeth C: I was super excited. So this client, she made me even more excited. It was a couple, it was their fifth anniversary, their wedding anniversary. And when I had talked to her on the phone for the seven Bs, and I had talked to a lot of people, she was just super excited. I wish all my clients were like her. But she loves artwork and stuff like that. And her and her husband, I mean, they're just all tattooed. They're all over their body. And actually, one of their images is just their arms of their tattoos.

Sarah Petty: So cool.

Elizabeth C: And when they saw their images, they were just like, "Oh my, how are we going to choose? What are we going to do?" So we just went through the process and we dwindled them down. And they had to have their daughter come over and say, "Okay, help us." But we had to shoo her away because she was no to all the ones they wanted to say yes to.

Sarah Petty: You'll learn not to do that. Yeah.

Elizabeth C: Yeah. I was like, "Maybe don't." But we kind of teased with them and we had a good time. We laughed. We were in a coffee shop and it was good.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Sarah Petty: So it ended up being a Julie, over \$1,000.

Elizabeth C: It was. It was almost \$2,000. The total was \$1,930.

Sarah Petty: Wow. And were they so happy with you?

Elizabeth C: They were stoked. They were just so, they wanted more and more, but they were like, "Okay, we have to stop." They gave themselves a limit. And I even told them, I was like, "This has to be comfortable for you. I don't want to put you in a bind. Just get what you want and just enjoy it." And they loved them. And actually, so they couldn't pay it all at once, and so we did a payment plan. So what I did was they got part of it at the front and then I said, "Okay, you can have part of it. And then you get the last piece." And I saved my favorite piece for the last. And so they actually just got it yesterday. So they paid off all their payments. And so they saw it yesterday. So I told them, I said, "Once you get them all hung on your wall, can you send me pictures of everything?" So they're going to send me pictures and everything. Because they were one of the clients that just didn't want me in their homes, which was okay.

Sarah Petty: What did your mom say when you got this first big order?

Elizabeth C: Every time I walk in the house, they're like, "How much did you make?" And I was like... And they're like, "Are you kidding me?" And I'm like, "Nope, that's what I made today."

Sarah Petty: And then they say, "We knew you could. We knew you could."

Elizabeth C: Yes. Oh, they're just stoked. They are just so excited for me and to know that this is happening, and they're just super proud.

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Sarah Petty: My favorite is when there's a skeptical spouse, which I totally understand, and my students come home and show the check or the credit card thing and they freak out, because they didn't believe in it. And then they start to become a believer. So it's so funny, your parents now are the cheerleaders of-

Elizabeth C: Yeah, they're the cheerleaders. They are. And my grandparents are very supportive. I actually took pictures for my Gigi, my grandma, and she paid my full price. Even my grandparent, my Gigi, she's 80 something years old. She's like, "Nope, nope. Don't get me any specials, Elizabeth. What is it?"

Sarah Petty: Oh, I love it, Elizabeth. I love it.

Elizabeth C: Yeah, I'm surrounded by all this support.

Sarah Petty: I love it. I love it. I love your dream. I love that you're doing it. And what do you say to the people who are saying when? I'll do it when. When I get married again, when I get another job again, when I win the lottery again.

Elizabeth C: Yeah, don't wait, just do it. I did that for, I am 42 and I did it for 20 years. So just don't wait, just do it. Because I've moved a lot in my life, so that might be a lot of it too. But I worked for a family studio in Maryland, Picture People, if anybody knows that. I worked for a wedding photographer in Maryland. I'm in Texas though. I did a lot, but I never had the confidence in myself, and I wish I had. So get that confidence. If you're doubting yourself but it's something that you really want, go for it. Don't let it hold you back.

Sarah Petty: You get confidence by doing, don't you? Where's your confidence meter with yourself right now?

# WORTH EVERY PENNY *joycast*<sup>™</sup>

Elizabeth C: Yes you do, because if you're not doing it... The confidence for me was when I would see people's faces when they see their images. Before that I was too scared to show them. So now that I know. And I don't know if this is bad or not. My gosh, that's beautiful. I don't know if they're going to know if that's beautiful or not. But I have so much confidence in myself now, that I don't worry. I have my style. Now I have my business model. Now I'm just going out and building it and finding my clients.

Sarah Petty: I love it, Elizabeth. Thanks for sharing your story. I know so many people are going to be inspired by hearing your story, so thank you.

Elizabeth C: Thank you for asking me to come on. And everybody, go for it. Good luck.

Sarah Petty: Thank you so much. That was amazing, Elizabeth.

Probably one of the most fragile phases of going boutique is that tender spot, where you're fired up about the possibilities but you don't have a ton of income coming in yet because you haven't gotten your first \$1,000 client, the person we call your Julie. Going boutique really turns your business upside down in a good way with new systems for selling, for marketing, and for pricing. And it really can be heart pounding and nerve-wracking. Well, one of the ways I've made the transition easier for photographers is my 60-day online workshop called Boutique Breakthrough, where we scrub through your prices, your photography, your brand, and your selling system, to make you boutique. We only open this course up a few times a year to a small group of photographers, because my team and I literally hold your hand through your transition. A new class is starting soon, so if you're interested in learning more, go to [boutiquebreakthrough.com](http://boutiquebreakthrough.com) for a free training to see if Boutique Breakthrough is right for you.