



# God Hears Her Podcast Transcript

## When We Feel Invisible

*Season One | Episode Eight*

- Eryn: Hey guys, this is God Hears Her with Elisa Morgan and I'm Eryn Eddie. I can't wait for you to hear today's show, especially when the discussion gets to the story of Hagar. Her life offers all of us an example of how God sees us even when we are invisible to the world. It's so good. I love it, and I think it's a pretty unique angle on her story.
- Eryn: Now, today's program will sound a little different than normal. Normally Elisa and I do interviews together, but she was spending some time with her pastor Robert on a day that I wasn't around and we didn't want to miss out on capturing Robert's amazing story and his wise perspective on what it means that God hears us and sees us and knows us. So that's what we will hear today. A conversation with Elisa Morgan and Robert Gelinas.
- Eryn: Before we get into the interview, let me introduce you to Robert. He's a pastor who deeply desires to see the body of Christ united across all divides, as well as empowered to serve the poor, the marginalized, and the disabled. He's married to Barbara and they have six kids.
- Eryn: Before we jump in, just a quick note that if you miss anything in today's show or want a reference point for this conversation, the show notes are filled with talking points as well as links to resources mentioned on today's show. We also have a link to a free resource from Our Daily Bread Publishing, but I'll tell you more about that at the end of this episode. For now, here's the conversation between Elisa Morgan and Robert Gelinas on God Hears Her.
- Elisa: I'm excited about this conversation. I don't know exactly where it's going to go. You and I serve together in several different capacities, Discover the Word, the radio program, the online and everyday Bible study that we do as a group out of Our Daily Bread, sometimes we serve together in the church, but we're both introverts. So do we talk that much Robert?
- Robert: We don't talk that much when there's not a microphone. When there's not a microphone we're-
- Elisa: That is awesome.
- Robert: We're rather quiet.
- Elisa: We're rather quiet. And I think for rather quiet people talking about hard stuff is an extra challenge, so thank you.



Robert: Yeah, I remember when, I think it was the second date with my wife, because she's an introvert, I'm an introvert, but we didn't know that on our second date, and we were driving in the car for the longest time and it was just silent. And I finally said to her, we haven't said anything, and she said, that's okay. And as soon as she said that's okay, I'm like, I need to marry this woman.

Elisa: I'm marrying her. She's mine. We are called to one another. That is so good. Well I know part of your story, but I really want our friends here with us today know more of your story. You came to feel seen and heard by God, I think, in some unusual ways and maybe even early in your life. Can you tell us how that came about?

Robert: When you are the only black child in a white family and no one in the family will recognize that, you don't feel seen and you don't feel heard? I felt loved by my grandmother, by my siblings, by my mom, and the man I call my dad. I definitely felt loved growing up, but there was this thing for reasons that I would only discover later and really not worth going into in this podcast, but it took a long time for me to not feel invisible in my own family. And even to this day, I think I still feel somewhat invisible, in my extended family.

Elisa: I don't think I can imagine that and that's powerful what you're saying right there. Was it like you needed to play a game and ignore some of the realities of who you were and who they were?

Robert: When somebody is not recognizing you, you wonder is there something wrong with you and as a child the answer is obviously yes. That's what you always go to is something must be wrong with me versus just something wrong with the world and everyone's playing into that.

Elisa: Who raised you? Describe your family that raised you?

Robert: Yeah, my grandmother raised me. She always would start a conversation by saying she was born in 1920, 3 minutes after 12, she was a new year's baby. And she had five children and then somewhere in her fifties when one of her daughters has a child and then at that moment wasn't able to care for her child, which namely being me, she takes me on.

Elisa: How old were you?

Robert: Oh, I must've been around two. And my grandmother just raised me. She always said, I think God put me on a planet for this. Talk about being seen, but at the same time not being seen, not talking about some obvious things about me.

Elisa: It's back to what you were saying about knowing you were loved but not necessarily seen. Were you the only kid raised in that family?



- Robert: With my grandmother?
- Elisa: Uh-huh (affirmative).
- Robert: My other siblings were somewhere else in different households.
- Elisa: So you're raised with your grandmother. How did you begin to discover there was a God who sees and hears you?
- Robert: My grandmother always used to take me to church, but she wouldn't go to church herself. She would just make sure I went into Sunday school and she would wait for me on the way out-
- Elisa: Can I just pause there? I totally relate. I was raised by a single mom and she would drop my sister and I off at church and she'd come back and pick us up two and a half hours later. Free childcare. I mean, brilliant woman, right? Go ahead.
- Robert: Yeah, they'd go get some shopping done. Or my grandmother though sometimes I'd come out and there was a dry spot under the car. It'd be snowing, but there was a dry spot under the car because she didn't leave. She just stayed right there. It was almost like she was guarding the door to make sure I stayed.
- Robert: But there was a Sunday school teacher who realized I didn't understand what it meant to have a relationship with Jesus. And the Sunday school teacher kept me after class and just paused and walked me slowly through the Gospel and asked me if I wanted to give my life to Him. And I said yes. And then next week I'm in my first worship service ever and everybody's happy that I've given my life to Christ and I still don't know what this means.
- Robert: And then two weeks after that I'm in my second worship service ever and I'm standing in water wearing a white robe and I'm being baptized. And the pastor says, I baptize you in the name of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. And when I went underneath the water, it's like time stopped because I didn't know who my dad was, and this man said father. And there was something visceral that took place in the water that day and I come out of the water and I felt like I got a father.
- Elisa: Okay, so just to tease that a little bit, was your grandmother single?
- Robert: Yes, she was.
- Elisa: Okay. So you didn't know literally who your father was in that season, and as you're raised back up hearing this in the name of the Father, that's new, that's a new label. Wow, okay. Did you feel seen and heard by God then?



- Robert: Yeah. I mean that was, in the most profound way for me, the one greatest need I had and didn't even know to ask for. It was the exact place where He met me.
- Elisa: Is there something there in your story, you didn't even know you had this need to ask for it, is there some kind of a key and a lock there for this concept of being seen and heard by God?
- Robert: Think of Hagar. She's being mistreated by Abraham and Sarah and she just takes off running to get away and then God comes and meets her right where she is. She thinks she needs to get away. She doesn't know that she actually needs to go back and so God sends her back. And she gave a name to God right then. She said, you are the God who sees.
- Elisa: You are the God who sees.
- Robert: She felt seen because no one else was seeing her.
- Elisa: So I guess what I'm getting at is, I'm hearing you say is that sometimes we don't really know the great gap in our heart that longs to be noticed, that longs to be known, until suddenly we are. All of a sudden, father, you have a father word over you. Someone is your father. That's amazing. Did it change anything about the invisibility you experienced or did that come later?
- Robert: Not in my family. That stopped when I met Barbara who would eventually become my wife. I mean, she was one of the first people I felt saw me in my entirety and so.
- Elisa: Neat. That's neat. Let's segway into her. She's your wife. You've been married how many years?
- Robert: We're at 25.
- Elisa: Good job. I didn't want you to trip over that. What have you learned about this concept of being seen and heard by being married? I don't think our spouses are God to us, and nor am I trying to imply they should be. I mean, our heart's desire is really only going to be met by God, but the people that we interact with on this planet can mirror how He views us. So how has being married to her, uniquely, informed you about being seen and heard?
- Robert: Yeah. I'm even struggling with the question as you ask it because I'm on a podcast for women and you're asking a man about seeing and hearing women and there's almost like there's an elephant in the room there, yet it's not supposed to be this way.
- Elisa: What do you mean?



- Robert: I don't think the first woman wondered if she was seen and heard. I don't think Eve ever woke up before the fall and said, does God see me and does my husband see me? She was the crown jewel of creation and she even gets this title "helpmate", which we seem to have taken to be lesser than, but there's only one other person in the Bible who's called the helpmate, it's God. God is the help mate of Israel. That can't mean that God is lesser than Israel, then Eve gets the same title as God, that somehow Israel needed a helpmate, somebody who would bring Israel up and therefore God looks at Eve and says, Adam needs a helpmate, you're going to ... He needs some help.
- Elisa: Isn't the Hebrew word Azer, A-Z-E-R. And I think I've heard it translated "strong warrior", "protector", and that's what God is for Israel. That's what Eve is for Adam.
- Robert: Yeah. And so I don't think she wondered if she was seen and heard and mattered and then the fall happens and somehow all of this gets turned upside down and now women wonder often how they're going to be seen and how they're going to make their voice be known. Something went wrong.
- Elisa: Almost kind of want to cry right here because it's a sacred wound, isn't it, for both genders.
- Robert: After the fall I gained a power and it's a power over, and it's a power that I was born with, it's a power to see and not see, it's a power to choose, to recognize people's existence.
- Elisa: It is heartbreaking that you would have been given that kind of power. And I don't want to give you unfair power here, but maybe what you can do is speak into the redeemed power of a man in Christ, towards God's redemptive purpose in the life of a woman. Saying it that way. And I guess I want to ask you, in several of your roles as a husband, as a pastor, as a brother in Christ, as a father, what have you learned that is appropriate for you to reflect to the women around you and those various relationships about God seeing and hearing them?
- Robert: I think because I had the experience of feeling invisible, that does help me to realize that I have power and it's power that I didn't do anything to get, I just have it. But if there are people, especially my wife and my daughters, because we have six children, three are boys and three girls, I don't see the boys wondEryng if they're seen or heard, but I do see the girls.
- Elisa: Do you?
- Robert: I do. It's a very unique need, which means they could go through life feeling invisible. And so why not use the power to make sure they know they're not?



- Eryn: Wow. Robert Gelinas reminds me so much of my dad. My dad took a lot of effort to make sure I felt seen by him and heard. And we all have those opportunities every day to make people feel seen and heard.
- Eryn: When we come back, Elisa and Robert will shift the conversation to his role as a pastor and what it means for him to see and hear the women on his staff and in his congregation. You are listening to God Hears Her.
- Elisa: Hey guys, if you're enjoying this show today, please take a moment to write a quick review and rate us on iTunes and on whatever podcast platform you listen. Reviews and ratings help us reach more people because iTunes and other podcast platforms push highly rated shows in front of more people. So if you could take a moment to write a quick review and rate us, that would be super helpful in helping us to reach more women with the message that God hears her.
- Eryn: Welcome back to God Hears Her. I'm Eryn Eddie and before we jump back into Elisa's conversation with her pastor Robert Gelinas, I want to let you know that if you miss anything and today's show, check out today's talking points included in the show notes. You will also find a link to order the God Sees Her devotional as well as a link to a free resource titled Real Love by Bill Crowder. In a world where love means different things to different people, this e-booklet examines how we can know when love is for real. So click on the link in the show notes or visit [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org) to get your free copy of Real Love by Bill Crowder. That's [Godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org).
- Eryn: All right, let's jump back into today's episode as Elisa and Robert discuss many women who come to church on any given Sunday and feel invisible, like really invisible, and how the story of Hagar offers all of us a way to recognize that God sees us and He hears us. Here's Elisa Morgan and Robert Gelinas on God Hears Her.
- Elisa: As you interact in your family or maybe move it into the church, maybe move it into the women who come every week and sit in pews and listen to pastor Robert and are struggling on a daily basis with feeling invisible, I mean really invisible, in their jobs, in their families, and in the church. What do you hope that they will notice? What is your goal in preaching to them that they would discover about who God is, using you as His conduit?
- Robert: The church where I get to spend my time is a very diverse congregation. We have almost 30 different nations. We have red, yellow, black, brown, white. We've spent a lot of time thinking about diversity in terms of race. And I hope that the congregation comes and see some intentionality when it comes to the staff is diverse, the stage when people walk in, whoever's up there leading in worship and the preaching, there's a diversity up there when it comes to race.
- Robert: I hope the women of our congregation also notice that same kind of intentionalities happening, that we have made here, again though, the very fact that I can say I've made



room, what does that mean, that I had the power to even do that. But yes, there is room that has been made at our church at every layer of leadership for women, from our board to our elders, to our deacons, to our staff, that women are expected and have plenty of room to serve in those positions.

Elisa: How do you reflect that without being patronizing? You're acknowledging that you've been given a certain power as a male and you willingly yield that power to invite and model the inclusivity of women in different areas in church. How do you carefully communicate that without being patronizing, like, I've got power and you don't?

Robert: I mean, my gut says if I'm constantly drawing attention to it, then there's something else going on, like I'm needing affirmation for it, that, look what I've done, versus it's the norm and always should have been the norm. I mean we pray on earth as it is in heaven, and I'm thinking that when we're praying for the kingdom to come, in large part we're praying for some of that pre-fall garden to return.

Robert: At some level there is a selfishness to it that if we're willing to remember what that must have been like when no one felt invisible, that must've felt good for Adam too, that somehow our destinies are caught up within one another and it's worth going after, that I need to have women in all layers of leadership for my health too, the men need that.

Elisa: You're really beckoning us to a new normal. You're beckoning us to the redemptive state that Jesus died to provide for all of us. I'll just share from my perspective. You've invited me to teach God's word and you don't have to be gone to do that and you don't have to be present to do that, you've just invited me. And I've done it many times and I always feel like it's such a privilege to quote "pinch hit for pastor Robert" because you're my pastor and I know how much you give and I'm just honored and blessed to be able to give back myself.

Elisa: And I have experienced at times in that invitation almost wanting to explain why I would accept it, or how it's okay that I could accept it, or why I might have something to say when I accept it. And every time all of that feels like wading through mud and marshlands and stuff that isn't necessary and, you've helped me with this, instead I walk out onto the platform and open the Bible, and that's a redeemed, I keep using that word, it's a reestablished place that we can live together unapologetically. And sometimes we don't have to explain all this stuff, sometimes God's just inviting us into being what He's already asked us to be, what He's already created us to be, and we just take Him at His word that He does see and He does hear us and so we speak and so we're visible, and we trust Him, and we enter into the new place. Do you know what I mean?

Robert: I do. And maybe the first couple of times when you preached it felt new, but it doesn't feel new anymore. I mean, people in our congregation just know it's Elisa, and she's getting up there and you're sharing God's word.



- Elisa: And in us doing that, they all move to a new place to, whether or not it's about women preaching or maybe it's about women serving in a capacity or maybe it's just about women sitting in your pew next to you and you're not so uncomfortable all the time, it's no big deal. Whatever.
- Robert: Going back to the patronizing question. Am I okay with women who disagree with my view of women in ministry, for example? So let's say I have a view that says women can just occupy all different positions in the church, but then there's a woman in the congregation who doesn't believe that. Do I feel the need to change her mind?
- Elisa: That's a great example.
- Robert: Or do I actually believe she has a mind and she has fully studied the scriptures and she has come to a different understanding of them than I have, and to say then I get that and to not have to feel like, well she just doesn't understand yet.
- Elisa: She's not mature in the Lord.
- Robert: Of course she does. She gets it and she disagrees with me, and so part of me seeing her is seeing that she studied the scriptures and disagrees. And I have women on staff, some of our pastors on staff, some of the things I think they could be doing, they don't because of their own study of scripture.
- Elisa: And you respect that?
- Robert: Yeah.
- Elisa: I have the same kind of respect for people who thought through their views. One of my very best friends has spent two years in her church body and they've come to the conclusion that they aren't comfortable biblically with a woman preaching. And I respect her so much for the work she's done. And I haven't always felt free to preach. So, I think we're all in this process of trying to understand what we believe scripture to say on this topic.
- Elisa: If you were going to continue to build your church of both genders and all ages and so many races, what is your desire for each of the people that are involved in your church, that are a part of the body of Christ that God has called you to shepherd and pastor? What is your desire in this regard?
- Robert: Here, when we greet one another, we say, how are you, and somebody says, I'm fine. And there are parts of South Africa where you don't say how are you but you say, I see you. And then the response is, I am here. And the idea is, are you really there if somebody doesn't see you. And it's one thing for me to make sure that my wife is seen. I try and make sure I understand what her fears are and even what her needs are before she knows them, or that my daughters see that I spend as much time at their games as I





do it their brother's games, and in the congregation I've received some good advice one day, when you're in the hallway walk slow because if you walk fast like you're going somewhere, then nobody really feels like they can stop.

Robert: So there's all these ways that you can make people feel seen. But my hope is that if there's a context where everybody feels seen and heard, then that spills over and that becomes what then the community begins to feel outside the walls of the church. So my hope is that as we remove people's invisibility, then they gain a desire to see that happen in their own families, in their workplaces, and beyond.

Elisa: Do you think vulnerability is necessary to truly be seen and heard or can we stay guarded and then be seen and heard and then be vulnerable? Does one come before the other?

Robert: I don't know. What do you think?

Elisa: Another way to ask the question is do we resist being seen and heard and why? And when we're resisting, can we ever really experience it, the lack of invisibility? Is there a role that we play as the ones who want to be seen and heard?

Robert: I think we, by the way, you dodged the question when I tried to go back at you, because I think everybody wants to hear what you think about this too. So I'm going to come back and ask you, but-

Elisa: You can just say that out loud. It's okay.

Robert: I just did say that. I think we fear being exposed so we'd rather be invisible than be exposed. Unless the context is safe, because if we're safe and even the ugly and the shame is okay. I mean, all that stuff can come out.

Elisa: Okay. You just said something so profound. We'd rather be invisible than be exposed. But for the last 15 minutes we've been talking about the pain of being invisible, but we'd rather be invisible than be exposed. So I'm not sure we can be really seen and heard unless we're vulnerable. So to answer your question, I'm not sure we really can. I'm afraid that our defenses to keep us from being exposed, to keep us from being seen and therefore rejected for what is seen, I think that defense gets in the way of us ever absorbing it, of us ever receiving the gift of being seen.

Elisa: And it's a really, it's a gnarly kind of catch 22. Who's going to go first? Did you ever have this is kind of a situation in your marriage, this kind of a discussion, one night, the TV's on in the background and maybe Barbara is [inaudible 00:25:11] in your lap and you're talking and there's this barrier between you, and you'd start, what's this about and you realize, she goes, I just want to be cherished. And you sit there and go on such a louse, I don't cherish my wife. Wait, I want to be cherished. And she goes, not cherishing you until you cherish me.



Elisa: I've had this exact conversation with Evan and we realized we both wanted to be cherished and it was a matter of who's going to go first. And this thing had to happen between us of me going, begrudgingly I'll go first and cherish you, which really isn't very good cherishing, by the way. But as I do that, something slides down in him. Or as he does that towards me, something slides down, and it's not perfect, but that dance of who's going to let the guard down first in order for true intimacy to break through.

Robert: That's beautiful.

Elisa: And I think we do that with God. And I think we do that with each other.

Robert: It's one thing to be treated as invisible, but then also when you have the option of not being, do you make that choice? I'm thinking of Jesus with the woman at the well and He begins to talk to her and everything in culture said He shouldn't be. And then there's that one moment when He reveals that not only does He see her physically right there in front of Him, but He also knows her, that He understands her. And He revealed something to her about her life that she didn't even tell Him.

Robert: And she had a moment where she tried to deflect it and yet she didn't stay with that. She ultimately runs back to everybody and says, guess what, I just saw somebody who told me everything about me and there's something about Him who made her feel so safe that then she would run back to the whole community and say, this guy can come read your life to, let Him see you too.

Elisa: Which you would think would be something she would want to hide because looking at her life, wasn't that great. Isn't that amazing, when she was really seen and heard, she'd let the guard down and then she'd let everybody else see and hear her. And maybe that's what you as a pastor, me as in whatever positions I'm in, in our relationships with our spouses, in our parenting and our friendships, maybe that's kind of what it's about, is realizing God sees and hears us, and living into that redemptive new role in such a way that we're unafraid to let other people see and then they want that too a little bit?

Robert: Yeah.

Elisa: Talk to the woman who's sitting here going, I don't have a pastor like you, I don't have a church like yours, I don't have a spouse like yours, how do I deal with this need to be seen and heard? Is that a right I demand? Is it a privilege I surrender? Is it a need I cry out to God with?

Robert: Is it a right? It's more than a right. It's what you were created for. And so first of all, there's nothing wrong with desiring that because it's absolutely what you were created for. We're given the book of Lamentations for a reason, when things are not with the way they're supposed to be, we should lament that. So one, there should be some lamenting that takes place. There's godly sorrow that we have over it.



- Robert: I think when God sent Hagar back, I don't know if Abraham and Sarah saw her, but she went back knowing she was seen. She names Him the God who sees, but then He gave her a child named Ishmael, and Ishmael means God who hears. And so there is that, that we have to hold on to that, regardless of the culture in which we find ourselves in this side of the fall, there is a God who absolutely does see and hear.
- Elisa: It's a beautiful example, Robert, she saw and heard God see her. Okay and so she memorialized that.
- Robert: When you feel invisible, you think it's possibly your fault. But when you have that moment where God reveals to you that He sees you, then at least you know I'm not invisible. I am real. I exist. Therefore, it's no longer about if I put on enough makeup, if I exercise enough, if I become funnier, then people will recognize me. Because once you know that God sees and hears you, then it's not you where the problem lies. Now it's outside of you and it becomes more of a prayer. Can we pray that God would open people's eyes? Can we pray that God would allow them to recognize what's right in front of them? Not just you but other people around them.
- Eryn: Let that be our prayer today, that God would make us so aware of His love for us, that we then can be the ones to see and hear others in His Name. May God give us the eyes to see and the ears to hear His voice as He calls us to represent Him by being people who reach out to the Hagers, and let them know God loves them and we love them. And may that begin with God letting you and me and Elisa and Robert know that He sees us, He hears us, He loves us, because we are His. So beautiful.
- Eryn: You have been listening to an interview between Elisa Morgan and Robert Gelinias here on God Hears Her. I'm Eryn Eddie and for those of you who are in the middle of doing something else, or if you think that you might've missed anything during today's show, the show notes are available in the podcast description or at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). Again, that's [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org).
- Eryn: In the show notes, you will also find a link to order a copy of *God Sees Her*, a new 365 day devotional for women from Our Daily Bread Publishing, and a link to a free resource that I think fits pretty well with today's show. It's a discovery series e-booklet titled *Real Love* by Bill Crowder. This is a great 30 minute read on what real love is, what it looks like, and how to recognize it. So check out the show notes or visit [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org) to get your free copy of *Real Love* by Bill Crowder.
- Eryn: Thank you so much for joining us today. And remember, God sees you, He hears you, He loves you, because you are His.
- Eryn: There's a whole team of people behind the God Hears Her podcast, and before we go, just a quick shout out to Margie, Rick and Ryan.