



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 106 – Worth Following with Dr. Jen Bennett Eryn Eddy & Elisa Morgan with Dr. Jen Bennett

[Music]

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[Music]

Voice: You're listening to *God Hears Her*. A podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His. Find out how these realities free you today on *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Eryn Eddy.

Elisa: And I'm Elisa Morgan. Social media has become an important part of our daily life. You know, we can spend a lot of time scrolling through apps or making posts to share with loved ones, but how do we share Jesus on social media? How can we be someone worth following ourselves.

Eryn: Today we're talking with Dr. Jen Bennett, a social media expert. Dr. Jen is a strategic communication professor at Indiana Wesleyan University who equips college students to discover their voice, develop their expertise, and lead with influence to impact culture for Christ. She has coached various entrepreneurs, ministries, and college students in social media, personal branding, marketing, and public relations. She's also the author of the book *#BeWorthFollowing*.

Elisa: Okay, let's learn more from Dr. Jen on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: I'm so excited to introduce Dr. Jen Bennett on our show today and learn from her.

Elisa: Welcome, Dr. Jen. Yeah.



Eryn: Mmm.

Jen: I am so excited to be here.

Eryn: I have a personal agenda about talking on social media and communication and leadership and equipping this generation to talk about the Lord, but I guess before we get into all those things that's on your heart, I want to know about your story. Where ya from? Where do you live right now?

Jen: Yeah.

Eryn: And where did you come from? [Laughing].

Jen: Okay, yeah, so that's a great question. So I am originally from Miami, Florida, so I was born there and then I grew up in the Florida Keys. So...

Elisa: How cool is that?

Jen: ...I went to Key West High School. I started my college career in Key West at the community college...

Elisa: No way.

Jen: ...so I grew up as far south as you could imagine. It was great, I mean, I was surrounded by water, you know. Free time we'd go out on the boats...

Elisa: Oh my gosh! That's amazing.

Jen: ...in the ocean. Yeah. And now, I'm in Indiana. A state...

Elisa: Landlocked, yeah.

Jen: ...I never imagined being in, and I'll never forget when God opened up the position for me to come to Indiana Wesleyan University where I currently teach strategic communication courses. After we came and we saw the university and all that...at the time we were living in North Carolina. I was at another university. We're driving out of Indiana, my husband, my son and I, and I just start crying.



Elisa: Mmm.

Jen: Like just bawling my eyes out, and the reason being was because I knew that God was calling us here to Indiana, but I had to give up some of my fears, my ideas, all of that kind of stuff, and you know, God heard me, and God has been so faithful to me...

Elisa: Mmm.

Jen: ...and my family here in Indiana. We've had a great two years here, and now I just tell people I traded in the ocean and skyscrapers for cornfields. So here we are. [Laughing]

Elisa: That's beautiful. I can't remember. I think it might be *Sarah, Plain and Tall*, yeah, I think that's it. She moved to, I think it was, Iowa, and she was from Maine, the character in this novel/TV movie with Glenn Close, and she ended up mourning the ocean and one day she was walking out on the plains, and she saw the movement of the wind across the wheat and everything else, and she saw an ocean of wheat. And I love that.

Jen: Wow!

Elisa: How God...God just beautifully meets our needs, but I digress. Thanks for sharing that. [Laughing]

Eryn: Well I will say though to just add to that point, Elisa, I think sometimes we can feel like we're out of God's plan if it looks different than what we expected in our heart, right? Dr. Jen when you say that you have to mourn where you're coming from before you can fully find joy in the thing that you've been given next...

Jen: That's right.

Eryn: And that's hard...

Jen: It was hard.

Eryn: ...to come to grips with.

Jen: Oh yeah, it was hard. That first year here, you know, we moved during Covid, so yeah, here we are moving to a new state, a new atmosphere, a new culture. We know one couple in Indiana.



Elisa: Yeah.

Jen: That was it. And so even when we got here, we couldn't go to church in person. We were watching it online, and quite honestly, we were watching our old church in North Carolina, so that didn't help, because I was like *Oh, North Carolina!* and this and that, so yeah, so probably the first year here, we mourned that, and we had to...

Eryn: Oh!

Jen: ...go through the mourning process, but then God just continued to show us the way He was working here and what He's doing here, and you know, we all have a really wonderful peace about being here. And it just reminds me always that God not only hears us, but He truly knows what's best for us.

Elisa: That's gorgeous.

Eryn: I have a few strategic conversations I need to have [Laughing] with Dr. Jen, so. [Laughing] Take me to school. How did you get involved in that? I'm so curious about your story.

Jen: Yeah, you know, again it's interesting. You know, I was finishing up my degree at university, it was my undergrad degree, and it was in communication and PR, and when I was in college, I didn't know what God was going to do. I just had this strong calling to be in ministry, and at that point, I did not know what that looked like. And while I was at university, I felt like God was calling me to go to Bible school or seminary, so I went off to Texas. I went and got my master's degree from seminary and um it was during that time that I got involved in youth ministry. Something that I didn't think that I would do, but I did it, and I did it for a few years, and then before I knew it, I got into teaching. I was teaching middle school students in the public school. I was teaching high school students at a private school, and then I was a school administrator, and so I did that for a while, and then I had my son, and I was like *Well, I think I want to be home with my son.* So I resigned from my teaching position, came home, and that's when social media and online communication really started blowing up quite honestly. You know, there...it was gaining popularity, and what I soon realized was that I really enjoyed this whole new way of communicating and how people were communicating with each other through websites, through email, through social media specifically, and so I came home with my son, and I was like *I really like being home with my son, but I think I still want to do some work.* And so God opened up doors for me to dig back into my communication roots, but in a new way, because when I was in college there wasn't social media, and so here I was and here was God leading me in this new direction of communication. Something I thought that really...



Elisa: Ugh.

Jen: ...I would never do, and before I knew it, He started opening doors for me to help businesses, ministries, leaders, entrepreneurs, churches with their online profiles and communication. And so I did that. I started speaking at conferences. I wrote a book about it. God just took me in this new direction. He gave me the desire of my heart to be home with my son while doing this, and then when my son got older, I realized I wanted to go back into the workforce and knew that I loved teaching and felt like that's what God had for me, and so God opened up the door for me to get on college campuses, and so here I am now teaching about strategic communication based off of the experiences that God allowed me to experience, and now I get to help future students who want to do this and not only use their degree for communication, but also, because I teach at a Christian university, but also help them to use their gifts, skills, and talents to impact this world for Christ.

Eryn: That's awesome. You know what I love about this conversation, just even at the beginning of it, is that we've had conversations about social media before and just this tension and anxiety that can come with it, and the trials and parenting with it, and just the negative impact it can have on us, but then there is this world of beauty that you can find with it...

Elisa: Right, mmm.

Eryn: ...when you learn how to share your story and inspire and encourage other people...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...in that space. I just love that you are speaking to that.

Jen: Yes, absolutely, and I would say there is...there's like this balance. We tend to hear all the negative stuff, and there is a lot of negative stuff on social media, but there's also beautiful parts to us like I've been able to connect with people all over the world that I otherwise would not be able to connect with. People that I would have never had the opportunity to get to know, and that is one of the things that I absolutely love about it is the connections. The other things that I love about it is that as Christ followers, we have an incredible opportunity to impact the lives of others and to help lead them to the heart of God. And, you know, this is where people are going. They're going to social media, and so if we have the opportunity to share through our words, through our posts, through our pictures, through our videos, encouragement and even our stories of how God is working in our lives, we can see some incredible things done in the lives of others. It might just be the encouragement that somebody needs, and so that's one part of it from a personal stance, and then from a profession stance, and this is what I tell my



students also, is that you have the opportunity to begin sharing your thought leadership right now. Like, you don't have to wait until you're an expert or you think you're an expert, which I don't think any of us ever feel like we're an expert, because we're constantly learning...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Jen: ...every day, but it really gives you the opportunity to not only share your thought leadership, but then connect with people who may just one day open a door of opportunity for you as you're making these connections.

Elisa: So it's such a easy everyday onramp for us. When you're talking about using social media and this onramp of...of equal opportunity for everybody whether you're super trained or not to share what you called your thought leadership, and I want to hear more about that, it...it feels like so accessible and like everybody anywhere can be an influence in ministry. Can...can you dig into that a little bit and maybe your journey and thinking there.

Jen: Absolutely. I love sharing about this. So, yeah, when I was younger, my idea of ministry was church ministry, and what God has shown me through the years from being a middle school teacher, high school teacher, school administrator, conference speaker, book author, someone who's helping a variety of businesses and organizations with their online profiles and then teaching at a secular university...I don't even like to use the word *secular*, but you know, not a Christian university, and now a Christian university, God has shown me over the twenty plus years that ministry can and does happen anywhere. Ministry is not just confined to the church. That wherever God places us ministry can and does happen there. That's one of the things I'm very passionate about. That's why I started my own podcast is because I want women to hear the stories of other women who are in the marketplace and who are doing incredible things through their gifts, skills, talent, voice, influence, leadership and how they are impacting culture for Christ in ways that maybe they didn't even know that God would use them. And I want women to know that again they're not alone and God can and will use them wherever He has placed them.

Elisa: Fabulous. Thank you, that helps so much.

Eryn: You speak that so boldly and confidently.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: And I would imagine that you've had to fight off doubt and lies to come to that so boldly and confidently. Can you speak into that.



Jen: Oh yeah. I feel like this has been my whole life, you know, even when I felt called to go to seminary, I was like *Seminary? Women during my time don't go to seminary, and I'm going to be surrounded by all these biblical scholars, like no that's not me.* And even me going to college like that could be another whole episode. I was the girl who graduated high school and said, *I hate school. I don't want to go to college,* and then was convinced by my parents to go to the community college for at least two years. I was get like an administrative assistant certificate and then that's what I was going to do for the rest of my life, because that's all I knew. It was there that God changed everything around for me. And then I go off to seminary and I had to fight those thoughts of *Well you're not smart enough. You don't know enough about the Bible, and you're going away from everyone you know.* And so I pushed forward with that, and then my doctorate, wait, me the girl who hated school, who failed geometry in high school getting her doctorate, you know?

Elisa: I love it. I love it.

Jen: The first-generation girl in the family to get a college degree. *No Jen, you can't do that.* And low and behold it happened, and then a college professor? Wait a minute. *Like no, that's not you.* And so yeah, I have had to fight those thoughts, imposture syndrome, all of it my whole life.

Elisa: Oh yeah.

Eryn: Oh I'm so grateful for your honesty because it's just...it's real and we all struggle with it, and, you know, when you were sharing earlier about how we have an opportunity to influence and inspire people on a daily basis and practice thought leadership online, imposture syndrome, I believe, stops us from doing that. *Who are we to do that?* Well we don't have enough experience, or we aren't experts, or, I mean, I can be in a field for ten years and still think, *Nope, I can see somebody else that's been it for twenty, and they should be speaking not me.* And that silences my voice to use it through social media specifically. Um that's been...that honesty has been such a struggle of mine.

Jen: Yeah.

Eryn: And I love that you're empowering this generation to see that they have the opportunity to speak into that.

Jen: Yeah, and I really, you know, I think sometimes what keeps us back sharing things on social media is fear because there's so much just stuff on social media. Like people can be mean on social media, and sometimes it can be scary to share our thoughts about something, because gosh, what if somebody



disagrees with me? What if somebody doesn't like the way I worded something? What if somebody finds fault with what I said? What if, you know, all of, again, all of these fears and thoughts come up in our mind, but then keeps us from sharing maybe the message that God wants us to share. And so, that is my hope that as a college professor and that as I interact with people that I would just be that encouragement, that other voice that is speaking life into them and letting them know that God has given you a voice for a reason, and God has given you your specific experiences, your specific story, your specific message not to keep to yourself, but to encourage the lives of others and so will there be people that might come against you? Yeah, there might, but don't let that keep you from what God is doing in your life because there is somebody out there that needs to hear what you have to say.

Elisa: You know, I think a lot of people in addition to imposters syndrome which is do powerful and we really need to push against that, you know, I think a lot of times we have other lies that influence us like, you know, I have four friends. That's all I have on social media, so I don't have an audience...

Jen: Yes.

Elisa: ...so why should I say anything. What would you say to that?

Jen: So one of the things in my college classroom we talk about influence, and we talk about how the world defines influence and how God defines influence. The world is all about being known, being a celebrity, having thousands of followers online, having a book, being on a stage, all of that kind of stuff, but yet if you look through the pages of the Bible, God used the very most unlikely people to influence this world. I think about the woman at the well, and we go through this story in my class.

Elisa: Hmm.

Jen: Here we have a Samaritan woman who has an encounter with Jesus. She comes to the well in the middle of the day because nobody wanted to be around her. She was an outcast and here we have Jesus talking to this woman, which as we know, that was not supposed to happen and when people were traveling, they avoided Samaria, but Jesus went to meet this woman. And she had an encounter with Him so much so that she went back and influenced her entire village.

Elisa: Entire...I love that.

Jen: And that's what I love. When we look in the Bible, God...that's who God uses. Moses who didn't think he could do anything, God used him. King David who had sin in his life and did some things that were not so great. God used him. Paul, like Esther, an orphan girl, so there's a big difference between



worldly influence and kingdom influence, and we don't have to have the big numbers. We don't to be known. We don't have to have the book. We don't have to speak perfectly for God to use us. God's just looking for a willing heart, and if your heart is open, He's going to use you.

[Music]

Eryn: Let's take a quick break from our conversation. When we come back, Dr. Jen will share two steps we can take if we feel like our voice isn't being heard or responded to.

[Music]

Elisa: Hey there! *God Hears Her* recently celebrated its 100th episode! If you missed it, you can find our conversation on our *God Hears Her* website or anywhere you listen to podcasts. For the 100th episode, we created a fun *God Hears Her* package just for you. Check out our website for a limited-edition *God Hears Her* tote bag filled with our three devotional books, a notebook, stickers, and a lot of other stuff. You can order this set on our website godhearsher.org/shop. That's godhearsher.org/shop. Let's get back to our conversation.

Eryn: What would you say to the person that does show up but then they continue to get discouraged by the lack of response. Almost it's like the response, the engagement,...

Jen: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...the need for their voice, you know, "need for their voice," feels like it's not needed.

Jen: Yeah.

Eryn: I think it's easy to be like *Hold on, Lord, do you want to use my voice...*

Jen: Right.

Eryn: ...*if nobody's responding to what I feel like is you using my voice and...*

Elisa: Mm-hmm. My influence.

Eryn: ...*my influence*. Yeah.



Jen: Yep, yep. I would say number 1, have a group of people or even just a couple of people around you that will speak life into you when you have those moments, and I'll tell you, I've gone through this myself, even with my own podcast. I'm like, *Lord, I'm putting all this money and time into this podcast, and I'm not getting the downloads that I want to get. Maybe I should just stop doing this.* And then I've got these people that look at me and they're like, *Jen, don't you dare stop doing this. Keep going after it. This is what God has called you to do.* So I think having those people around you that you can go to who are consistently speaking life into you because they see God working in you. That's the first thing I would do. And then number 2, I would say don't measure your success by what you see, because many times, specifically when it comes to online communication and social media, you are impacting the lives of people that you don't see, and many times...

Elisa: Oh.

Jen: ...God works in the unseen moments, and I can't tell you how many times people have said, *Yeah, I never comment or like any of your posts or anything like that, but I'm watching and reading, and when you said this, that...*

Elisa: Oh gosh.

Jen: ...day, that impacted me.

Elisa: Yeah.

Jen: So don't base your success on what you see. Base your success on being obedient to God and what He's called you to do because He's working behind the scenes on things you don't even know or see that are happening.

Eryn: Amen! [Laughter]

Elisa: That's good. You know what? And so maybe flesh this out for us. Your book is called *#BeWorthFollowing*. What does it mean to be worth following?

Eryn: Mmm. That's a good question.

Jen: That is a good question. So I wrote this book during a time when I felt like there was just so much nonsense going on on social media, and...and there's still nonsense going on on social media [Laughing], but as a Christ follower, my goal was to help women be women that other people would want to follow.



Women that would post things on social media that would help open the door to more conversations rather than close the door to conversations, and I think that's where we have to be strategic. Like what are we posting? What words are we using? What are we commenting on? You know, we all have our opinions about the hot topics of the day. If God's not calling you to share about that on social media, then don't share about it on social media.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jen: There are some things that are better left to talk about one on one, over the phone, over a Zoom rather than a social media post, so *#BeWorthFollowing* is about being a woman who places everything in the hands of God including her communication and what she's communicating online and being the kind of woman that communicates in such a way that there will be more doors that will open for further deeper conversations rather than me just spouting something off and it immediately shuts the door and I lose the opportunity to every impact or influence the life of someone.

Eryn: Mmm. What I would just say too in regards to, you know, being worth following, I think it's also communicating your value and your worth, and when you do that, it doesn't come from a arrogant, boastful prideful way of living. It comes from a accepting of God's love and how that's transformed you when you do that in different mediums.

Jen: Yeah.

Eryn: I think that sometimes we forget no, it's just sometimes just showing and reflecting back what God is doing in our life. That's what's worth following...

Jen: Yeah.

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: ...is just pointing it back to Him and the value that we have.

Jen: Absolutely and...

Eryn: Because of His love for us.

Jen: Yes, and when you're posting something, I think we always have to ask *Where in my heart is this coming from?*



Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jen: Is it to try to prove that I'm right? Is it to manipulate hoping that that person will see what I'm posting here because it's geared toward them? Like what...what is...

Eryn: Mm-hmm. The passive aggressive,

Jen: Yes, exactly. [Laughing] What is our heart going into the way that we are communicating or what we are communicating?

Elisa: It's ironic, and I'm sure you meant this as a double encounter, ha, ha, but you know to be worth following, that's pretty much to be like Jesus.

Jen: Yep.

Elisa: You know because He's the one we follow.

Jen: Exactly.

Elisa: You know.

Eryn: What would you speak or what would you want share to the woman that does struggle to decipher between *Does God hear me? Can I hear God?* in the midst of combatting the voices that they see on social media?

Jen: Mmm, that's so, so good, because goodness sometimes it's hard to hear the voice of God. Sometimes we wonder, *God, are you really hearing me? Do you really see me? Do you see what I'm going through? Do you see what I'm struggling with? The obstacles and challenges in my life?* And so the encouragement that I would share with them is to keep going, because I can promise you even in those moments, those wilderness moments where it feels like God is nowhere to be found, He is there. And when you get on the other side of this obstacle or challenge, you will be able to look back and see how God was guiding you every step of the way, even though it did not feel like He was there. You know, I go to the story of Job who went through tremendous loss and there were moments in his distress and grief and all of the stuff that was going on in his life where he wondered if God was even hearing him. And so, keep going, because I can promise you even though you may not feel like God hears you right now, down the road you're going to look back and you're going to be like *God, you did hear me. You did see me.* And



then also don't be afraid again to have that one person or two people in your life where you can be completely open and honest with and be like, *You know, I'm really struggling. I feel like God's not hearing me right now. Can you just keep me in your prayers?* And I think that's a big part of it. So many times we tend to hold everything up inside of us. We have this pressure culture pressure where we have to come off that we are always strong and everything in our life is perfect and social media doesn't help with this. Reaching out to somebody and asking for their prayer or for their help is a sign of weakness, and I think that's something we have to push to the side and know that life happens in community, so don't be afraid to reach out to those people that you trust, those people that love you that will have your back and that will pray for you as you navigate this season of life.

[Music]

Eryn: I loved all of Dr. Jen's advice and her helpful insights about being on social media. Well, before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. You can also find a link to learn more about Dr. Jen and buy her book *#BeWorthFollowing*. Plus, you can connect with Elisa and me on social. You can find these links when you visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for joining us, and don't forget, God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustafson, Mary Jo Clark, and Daniel Ryan Day. We also want to recognize Kathi and Peggy for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

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Elisa: *God Hears Her* is a production of Our Daily Bread Ministries.