



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 141 – Rethinking Creativity with Rachel Marie Kang

### Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy-Adkins with Rachel Marie Kang

[Music]

**Rachel:** God is creating light, and He's creating this world for us to come... soon to come and inhabit. Right? But also He is creating light as a boundary, and so that light has a purpose. That light is pushing back the darkness, and I just couldn't shake the thought of like *Yeah, you know what? God created the world and made it beautiful and bright and aesthetically pleasing for us.* Right? But also that light is so functional and so purposeful, like He pushed back the darkness. And so what if our creativity, what if our art, what if our making, our producing, anything that we're cultivating has that same effect of pushing back the darkness in our own lives, in the lives of the people around us, in the world?

[Theme music]

**Intro:** 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 Adkins.

**Elisa:** And I'm Elisa Morgan. Back in the beginning, God created the earth and everything we see and know. And since then, we tend to consider creating as making beautiful art, things like painting and singing and dancing and writing. Those are considered true art, but what if we started to think about creating differently?

**Eryn:** Rachel Marie Kang is the founder of The Fallow House and author of *Let There Be Art*. She wants to encourage people to look at their gifts as art, because we were created by the true Artist. Let's start this conversation on *God Hears Her* with asking Rachel the question: When did words start mattering to you?

**Rachel:** When I look back in my life, I do see these little milestones where maybe I learned in a different way that words mattered. So I feel like I've got all these different stories that I could tell, but ...



**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** ...the first time...

**Eryn:** Yeah, let's go...

**Rachel:** ...yeah, let's go. Five hours later, right?

[Laughter]

**Elisa:** Pick ten. Yeah.

**Eryn:** Five parts of the podcast.

**Rachel:** But the first time I was also writing a poem, and the words that came out, I just remember thinking, *Oh, that was inside me? That's how I feel?* I mean the lines are in me to this day: "Beauty they say she has. Intelligence and gifts are what she holds. But little do they know, inside she cries." The lines still come to me. That was my first poem that really was embedded in me. And I later turned it into a song, and then, you know, of course I experienced the emotion of *This is really truly how I feel*. Not the first words that I've ever written, but the first time I remember thinking *Oh wow! There's something to seeing this coming out and wondering what's causing that. How do I attend to that?* You know and all the other things that words and poems and songs welcome.

**Eryn:** Gosh, that's so beautiful. What was that pain going on inside that people didn't know?

**Rachel:** Yeah. I know that just growing up, I grew up with a brother who endured a really profound injury, a brain injury, and so growing up as his younger sister but kind of his older sister, because I helped to take care of him. We all did. And so there was a lot of confusion and a lot of pain as to *Why does my brother have this life?* Right? And I know, as a young girl, I moved a lot; and so I know specifically in that season ... I think we had just moved — I don't if it was for the first time or the second time. I can't remember. But ...um... just losing friends. And that's... that's hard as a little... I mean it's hard in any season of life, to be honest, but...

**Elisa:** Totally. Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yes.



**Rachel:** ...as a little kid, you know, you're... you're trying to find your place in the world. It's lonely and devastating, and so those were, you know, a few of those things.

**Eryn:** How old were you during that time?

**Rachel:** Probably around middle school, yeah, around like sixth grade, seventh grade...

**Eryn:** Take us through ... That was in middle school, so then what were you like in high school?

**Rachel:** I didn't always use my words for good. Right? And so just using my words to talk ill of myself, to talk ill of the people in my life, to talk ill of my circumstances. And it wasn't until about ninth grade when I really had my first personal encounter with Jesus and recognizing His love for me and His forgiveness for me and His mercy for me and healing for me. That's when my prayers started to change, and therefore my words started to change. And so I very much remember this shift of using my words to like tear myself down and tear the world down — everything and everyone — to then using words, you know, praying in my prayer journals. When I talk about like what came first, the passion for writing or like the practice of writing, I always say "I don't know." Was it the chicken or the egg? I really don't know. Did one of my parents...

**Elisa:** That's fair. Yes.

**Rachel:** ...give me a journal for Christmas, and they... You know I have no idea.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** When I look back, I do see this progression of like *Oh, I really enjoy this! Oh, this is really healing and soothing, and I, you know, I need this. When I don't do this, I'm kind of a little bit ... I need it, you know?* I would take pictures that I had of people, because we didn't have Facebook and Instagram back then. And so I would actually cut out pictures, just your normal 4-by-6, you know, snapshots. And I would put them in my prayer journals, and I would pray for people that I knew and that I loved, family members, friends...

**Elisa:** I love that visual!

**Rachel:** Yeah, and I would sketch a lot, it would just sketch... um... And I was really inspired by Rachel Joy Scott. She is one of the victims that was shot in the Columbine shooting, you know, many years ago.



And I will never forget her book. That was probably one thing that inspired me in that season was just seeing her book that included entries from her journal and just how honest she was, and the sketches, and everything was raw and filled with questions, but also hope, you know, a clinging to God, even when she couldn't see Him or feel Him.

**Elisa:** So your creating has been about words, but even the way you're describing your journal, your prayer journal, there are other mediums coming into it, you know. You're talking about sketches, you're talking about photography. I'm hearing collage. I'm imagining just a whole bunch of things coming together. I want to pause on this. When you were talking about as you came to know God, you came to understand the power of words differently. And that takes me to the book of James where we're cautioned about the power of the tongue and how, you know, it's like a fire, and it can... it can cause great damage, or it can cause great good. And I'm struck by how God wooed you to Himself and began to layer that lesson in this gift that He was calling you into. And you might not have even totally realized it in that season. But then He takes you, and you begin other aspects of creating. How did you dip your toe into that? How did you take the risk to express yourself in other mediums, including words?

**Rachel:** I think sometimes ... words are powerful. Right? And yet sometimes they don't always get to the root of what you're feeling. Right? Like you can... sometimes you can hear a song, and I'm not a... I am not a dancer by any means. I will just say that. Like even at my wedding, we did not have a dance floor for very specific reasons. [Laughter] But there are times where I hear a song, and I just... I want to... It makes me want to move my body; you know? And so I think, thinking about that analogy — right — and applying that to my younger years, there was nothing to put to words. I couldn't put it to words. And so there were times where I, yeah, I remember drawing crosses and really try... you know trying to understand like *What is God's love to me?* You know, and I would have little teardrops that were also the rain and that would signify like Him cleansing me. And to see that, to see something like that, it tells you something that maybe words can't always, you know. And that's the power of all these different mediums. I will say, these days I actually don't journal as much as I used to in my youth. And...and for a while I felt really guilty about that. It was like *Oh my gosh! I'm not journaling. What's wrong with me?* But I am exploring so many different mediums these days. I mean you talk about the visual, you know, me dabbling in the visual. I love doing that. I love taking pictures, and there're photographs that I take with my husband's camera that never make it to the realm of social media. And yet I... I enjoy that, and so, yeah, I think that each different medium that we put our hands to, like it offers something different. You know and there's... there's fun to be had in that, and there's healing to be had in that. There's so much that creativity offers.



**Elisa:** But a lot of us get really intimidated by creativity, don't you think? And we look at maybe something you've done, or something Eryn's done — she's super creative — and go *Ugh! You know I ain't got anything there!* What do you say to those of us who are intimidated by creativity?

**Rachel:** Oh, it's... that's such a... talk about five more episodes. Right? [Laughter] I mean we could part ten for that. There's so many different things I could say. Before I answer that, though, I will say sometimes we do find ourselves in seasons where literally we can't do something that we used to do. And so it's almost like we're kind of forced into a moment where we do have to adapt, and maybe we do have to pick up some other form of creativity. And what I mean by that is, for so long ... I think shared, you know, I used to write poems. And then I would take those poems, and I would turn them into songs. And for so long, I thought that I was going to be a songwriter. I thought I was going to be on a stage, in a band, like that was my dream for my life. And I encountered problems with my voice, you know. In high school, later on, I got sick and just... I had a hard time. And I remember giving up that dream and picking up other things. And there've been other seasons in my life, too, where because of my health, I've realized *Oh, I really can't do this. And so how am I going to shift and adapt?* So I do want to recognize that sometimes it's ... it's not just like a fear to step into something. Sometimes there really is a moment in our lives where ... maybe it's not even your health. Maybe it's motherhood, like you become a mom, and now you're having to shift the way that you do things. So I just want to like acknowledge that there is so much nuance around why someone would want to try something new.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** But, yeah, I think to like... to speak into that, of how do you actually do that? I will share that from my own personal story, practicing in the private is a great first step. Everything is so public. With Instagram and social media — and I know all of us say this all the time, but it really is so true. Like you can do something and not share it with anyone else. You don't have to broadcast it. You don't have to tell that you're doing it. And you don't have to post it. You don't have to share the pictures, the sketches, the videos of you dancing in your room. There is a lot of pressure...

**Elisa:** Yeah, that's very freeing...

**Rachel:** ...to do that because, you know, if... if you don't ... What's the saying? Like if you don't take a picture, then did it really happen, or something?

**Eryn:** Yeah. Yeah.



**Rachel:** ...But I think like I'm constantly reminding people: You can do something in the private. You don't have to share that with everyone. And maybe that's my personality, too. I am such an introvert, and I love doing things in the secret and in the private. And so any chance I get, I like to just remind all of us, like you can still do that. It's still an option.

**Eryn:** There's something really sacred about creating in the private.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Rachel:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** I was thinking about that question you asked, Elisa. I think we also struggle with like an inner critic...

**Elisa:** Oh, oh yeah.

**Eryn:** ...um... that can sabotage...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** ...our creativity, cause we might compare. We might critique it. We might have a... this like high expectation that all of a sudden we need to be a wordsmith, or we need to be this most... like the most amazing singer, or artist, a painter, or a professional at sharing our feelings, which is very hard to do for some of us. It's scary to be vulnerable with our thoughts, let alone writing them down and facing them.

**Rachel:** Yeah. I'm an introvert. I'm going to just say it again so that we're all aware...

**Elisa:** You're not alone, honey.

**Rachel:** Yeah. Like... it's like what I'm about to say is like not my natural instinct. But there is something to creating in small pockets of community, with small groups of people that you trust and that are safe, you know. And they say the same about like when you're in therapy, right, and you're learning something new for the first time. Maybe you're learning how to put a boundary in place, and you're learning to speak up for yourself finally after, you know, so many decades. It's like you practice with the people that you feel safest with. Right? That's always what is recommended...

**Elisa:** Makes so much sense.



**Rachel:** ... Like you practice with those that you feel safe with. And you start there, which means you start small. You start close, and then maybe later, if you're feeling like you've grown in that area, then you can share with others. But I... I think that, too, like when it comes to our art and our creativity, sometimes we skip that part of like *Oh, I can join a peer critique group*. I'm about to do this right now, actually. I have to turn in 4500 words for a fiction novel. I have never written fiction in my life before, but I want to. And who we're turning in these words to is a small group of people that we're going to peer critique. And I have no idea if any of them have done this before, or if they know how to do dialogue, or you know, setting up scenes. I... I'm so new at this. But that's how you grow. You start small, and you, yeah, that voice is actually always going to be there, that inner critic. But we can silence it a little bit when we're in those safe spaces. And so I do think it is something... it's more of a practice than it is about someone being able to do something perfectly. I had a mentor in my life who mentored me, you know, spiritually, but also in my writing. And ...um... at the point in my life where my writing started to be shared a little bit more widely, and maybe more opportunities were coming my way, I'll never forget what he said. He said, "You do realize this? This is not because you're like super, super good at this, but that it's because you keep saying yes that you're having these opportunities come your way." And I was like, "You're right." There are so many other people that could do this better than me. It's not about me being some perfect, great writer, you know? Like I have just said, *Yes, I'm going to show up here. I'm going to practice. I'm going to practice. I'm going to practice even when it's hard.*

**Elisa:** That's so helpful. What role does the fact that God is a Creator... I mean He is *The Creator*; I mean everything we see, which is just mind blowing. What role does that play in our creativity?

**Rachel:** Honestly, my book *Let There Be Art*, there's kind of a dual premise there. Right? And so, yes, "let there be art," as in *Take all the permission that you need and want to be able to do the things that you want to do*. But I also did that on purpose, and I've really wanted people to hear that: "Let there be art," and for that to ring a bell. Right? What does that remind you of? When God is hovering over the whole world, and says, "Let there be light," He speaks this. Right? And I became so obsessed with this idea, this thought of: God is creating light, and He's creating this world for us to come... soon to come and inhabit. Right? But also He is creating light as a boundary, and so that light has a purpose. That light is pushing back the darkness, and I just couldn't shake the thought of like *Yeah, you know what? God created the world and made it beautiful and bright and aesthetically pleasing for us*. Right? But also that light is so functional and so purposeful, like He pushed back the darkness. And so what if our creativity, what if our art, what if our making, our producing, anything that we're cultivating has that same effect of pushing back the darkness in our own lives, in the lives of the people around us, in the world? I think that, and I feel that, and I believe that to be true. I've seen it in my own life when I create. I am pushing back the darkness in my own life, and so yeah, I... I think that there's... I mean there's so much more I could say

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about that, but when I view God creating — and not just in that moment, too. He's always creating. He's always moving...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** ...always working. And what it always seems to point to is that He is pushing back the darkness always. And I want anything that I do to also do that.

**Eryn:** That's so beautiful. That's such a beautiful picture.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. Powerful!

**Eryn:** What would you say to somebody that's listening that feels like creativity and art only stems from journaling, writing, singing, dancing, painting...

**Rachel:** I love to tell people that if ... if we're tripping over that word, "creative" and "artistic," like squash it. Just...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** ...forget that. Okay, number one, just drop the label. Okay? That's all I have for that part. Right?

**Eryn:** Yeah, I love it!

**Rachel:** But I... I also really love speaking into and leaning into these other forms of work that people do that (quote-unquote) are not as artistic. Right? We've... for so long, all of us have viewed some of these as not artistic, like you're a mathematician, and that's... that's math. That's science. So I actually wrote about this in my book. I devoted a whole chapter to small businesses, and I devoted a whole chapter to thinkers; cause I'm a thinker, and I think for so long I even just ... The things that I think in my head, I never saw them as creative. I always saw my thinking as a problem. I always saw my thinking as not being in the present, not being in the moment, and just the visions and the dreams and the ideas, that those are not worthwhile. And I've had a shift in my life where I've claimed that back. And I'm like *No, no, no, no!* Like some of the most creative people who have solved problems in our world, who have introduced cures to certain diseases, the lawyers who help solve problems, or mystery... Like all these things, they are creative because they're about discovery. They are about finding solutions to problems. And so, yeah, I saw to the scientists and the mathematicians and the thinkers and the theologians — right — the ones who are studying and bringing new words, that they are wildly creative. And, again, it's not [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)





just that we're making something beautiful. It's that we're coming up with a solution. We're entertaining a process that is wildly purpose-filled and brings change, good change, to our world.

**Elisa:** This is back, and I think it's in Genesis. I'm pretty sure it's Genesis 4, verse 1 or verse 4, right in there. And it's when Eve gave birth to the first child. And the language says, "And Eve brought forth a man." For women, maybe that's an illusion or an illustration that can help us own this. Anybody who has birthed a baby has "brought forth," has created, lit-er-ally — right — a new life. Now, for me, because I've never been pregnant, that was a stumbling block. I sat there and looked at that, and I thought, *Well, does that mean I'm out?* And God began to help me understand that there are a lot of ways to "bring forth."

**Rachel:** Yes, yes!

**Elisa:** And I began to think *Oh* — exactly what you're saying, Rachel. You know, what might God use me or you or Eryn or you who are listening right now, to bring forth in our world? And it really is the concept of purpose, you know, of legacy, of contribution, of formation. Maybe we're going to change people's ideas. Maybe we're going to be an influence on our neighbor. You know maybe it's going to be a grandchild. Whatever, but it's... it's enlarged my thinking, and hearing you talk now about the gifts of... the intellectual gifts, or the medical gifts, or the legal gifts, or the theological gifts has really underlined this contribution that we all get to make, as we discover what God's uniquely put us here to bring forth.

**Rachel:** Yeah, I love what you share, too, about just kind of bringing it into the familial gifts. Right? Madeleine L'Engle, she wrote *The Irrational Season*. And she kind of talks about her writing life, and her life life, and her work life, and just shares a little bit about that. But she talks about marriage, too, and how you've got one person joining into the life of another, and you've... that you've got two becoming one, and how even that is... You're creating a new life...

**Elisa:** Oh! A "we"...

**Rachel:** Yeah, and it makes...

**Elisa:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Rachel:** ...yeah, it makes you realize, like, even these mundane things that, you know, you're not painting an oil painting that's going to go up in the next gallery down the street. But these mundane things, these mundane moments where you're building a life with your spouse, you're building relationships with your kids. Even for those moms that are tucked away at home, like me, and you're with your small littles, and your house doesn't look beautiful, and you don't have all the stunning, you know, design elements that  
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you wish you could have, but you're creating a hospitable space for your children and also for the ones that you invite into your space. Maybe there are different conversations that you're having with the youth that you know, or friends or family, and so creating a hospitable space is also so powerful and beautiful too.

**Eryn:** What is one of your most favorite moments in your book that, when you wrote it, you were like *Oh, that's not of me?*

**Rachel:** You know my book is *Let There Be Art*, and this chapter is "Let There Be Home." And so I really kind of dig into the mundane, right, and how we can find inspiration, and we can create in the mundane. And so one of my favorite parts of my book was, when I got the idea for it, I thought, *You know what? I don't want just my words to be in here*, because what I'm trying to say about creativity is that all of us can do it. Right? And that all of us are welcomed into it, and that whether it is a first step or you're writing a book or whatever it is, there is something to offer. And so one of my favorite parts about this book was I thought, *I'm going to just curate poems from people that I have known*, from friends, from members in my online creative community, The Fallow House. I'm just going to pull different poems, with their permission, and embed them into the different chapters that kind of, you know, go along with ... um... to prove that point, that it's not just my words just cause I'm a writer or something. Like your words matter too. So with that being said, I will share a portion, a little bit from "Let There Be Home." And it kind of blends into a poem by someone else, not by me. And this poem is actually my favorite poem in the whole book. It's actually one of my favorite pieces in the whole book, even out of everything that I've written, someone else's poem. And you're gonna cry, I bet.

[Laughter]

**Eryn:** Oh gosh, okay, let's go.

**Rachel:** Okay. So I'm talking about poetry here, and I say:

"Poetry will teach you to slow down and see the smiling faces on your fridge. It will teach you to buy more flowers, to buy more paintings, to breathe fresh air. You will begin to see your home, or whatever space that holds you, as holy. You will begin to be content with where you are. You will practice blessing the place of your belonging, giving thanks, living with love. Someday you will move into the house of your dreams. Someday you will travel to exotic cities and countries. Someday you will prepare exquisite meals in pristine places. Someday you will wake to clean kitchens and bathrooms. Someday. For now, though, let the Legos litter your living room. Let bills pile up and mail move from one dusty table to the next. Live for the moments because someday they will become memories. Someday when you move away from your place, it will become an ache. The kids will grow, the house will sell, and the state on the license plate will change. But if



you let it, a poem can preserve the details of your place. When landscapes change and memories dwindle, it will be poems like this one, by Elizabeth Mowers, that echo on with life and love.”

And here she writes:

“There is scarcely a memory of yours separate from mine. The shape of your days, for better or worse, formed by my words, my choices, my thoughts. Though they always reach to enfold, your learning, your discovery, served to you with my hands. But now there is that first flutter of separate lives. There, just below my ribcage, I press my hand searching for the shift, sometimes sharp and sometimes just a slight hollow feeling. You have whole hours and days now that stretch without my face in your view. Experiences, conversations, and new pieces of information obtained without my ever knowing. I rejoice in your expanding universe, bask in the radiance of the world at your grasping, still chubby hands. I delight to watch you go, marching up mountains of all sizes, made of whimsy and imagination. It’s just this small ache at my side, just here, below my ribcage, where I’ll rest my hand as I watch you climb.”

**Rachel:** That one gets me every time. Just beautiful!

**Eryn:** What about those words hit you every time?

**Rachel:** You know I think this season of life, where I am watching my littles — you know my oldest is 5, and my youngest is 2, and we’re just now releasing him into the world. Right? And that ache of, *But you were here. You were so close. You were so little. I hand served you everything, and now I’m releasing you.* Right?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Rachel:** And to think like someone else’s words could reach in deeply to a place that I couldn’t even put to words yet. And that’s the power of words. That’s the power of God’s Word. I remember as a teen, Lamentations 3 saved my life! I remember thinking, “Your mercies are new every morning?” I just remember reading that for the first time, and all these... the imagery of all of these tensions and hard things and oppressions, and then you get to the line, “but then my soul, you know, will hope in You.” Or “You are my hope,” and just remember thinking like, *Oh, that means the worst of what I’m in right now, that it can better from here on out because of You, God.*

**Eryn:** What was it? The moments will become memories...

**Rachel:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** You can hear lamenting. Will you share how lamenting connects to art?



**Rachel:** A lot of times, you know, similar to what I said earlier, sometimes you can't find words. Or maybe you can't the space, a safe space to say the words. Maybe you do have the words, and you just don't have the safe space. And in different ways I do believe that art can offer that. You can write in a journal, and you can rage in a journal and write the most horrible things that you feel and think. And that journal won't turn around and walk away. It doesn't have legs. It doesn't have a mouth. It's not going to talk back at you. And that was what paper was for me so many years ago, those journals, was to get out all of the confusion and to make sense of, *Why am I feeling this way? And why am I hurting?* But there is hope on the other end of lament. There is a God on the other end of our laments, and I think the first faithful step is admitting the pain and feeling it, and then just allowing the God who meets you in that pain to be there and to be present. And so whether you are writing in a journal, or you're dancing in an empty studio, or in your kitchen while the kids are at school, there are options available to us in spite of our circumstances. So if you're a mom, and you've got kids crawling all over you, watercolor is there for you. It will dry in just a few seconds. It's okay to release your pain in a private place too. So many of us want to be heard, I think, and there's a time and a place for being heard. And there's also a time and a place for our words maybe bringing justice or bringing change to like our circumstance or the world. But there's also something to just lamenting your own pain, right, and pouring out your own heart. And that's important. That can happen in the private place.

[Theme music]

**Elisa:** I'm so grateful we had that conversation with Rachel. She just has this incredible grasp of creativity and art.

**Eryn:** Yes, well, before we go, be sure to check out our website to find a link for Rachel's book, *Let There Be Art*. You can find that and a link to join our email list on our website at [godhearsheer.org](http://godhearsheer.org). That's [godhearsheer.dot.o.r.g](http://godhearsheer.dot.o.r.g).

**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 Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank JR and Kelly for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[ODB theme]



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