



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 142 – Out of the Cage with Amy Nordhues

### Elisa Morgan & Eryn Adkins with Amy Nordhues

**Amy:** If you are with an unethical therapist, you will notice your world will start to shrink. You'll stop sharing things with your friends and outside people, and your world will slowly grow smaller. And that's a huge warning sign, so I say: Keep that outside support.

[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*.

**Elisa:** Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Elisa Morgan.

**Eryn:** And I'm Eryn Adkins. Today we are having a very important conversation. Before we jump in, we want to warn you that we will be talking about suicide, sexual assault, and abuse. This is a heavy conversation.

**Elisa:** Our guest, Amy Nordhues, was seeking therapy through a licensed psychologist and clergyman at her church, when suddenly she found herself to be the victim of a felony. We're so thankful for Amy's courage and her vulnerability to be able to share her story with us.

**Eryn:** Amy will help us see the importance of an ethical therapist and the red flags that can happen in counseling. Her hope is to raise awareness for safe, ethical counseling.

**Elisa:** Join us as we ask Amy what her job and her passion are now during this conversation on *God Hears Her*.

**Amy:** I advocate for adult victims of therapist and clergy abuse. There are many of us. There's an organization called T.E.L.L. that only deals with adult victims of therapist and clergy abuse, and they tell me they get 40 to 50 thousand people to their website every year.

**Elisa:** Oh wow!



**Amy:** And these are adults who are being taken advantage of, and there's so much shame — even more shame for an adult. We're often blamed. It's often labeled an affair. People don't understand abuse of power, or they don't want to, so that's why I do what I do. And that is why I came forward, because not a lot of us come forward. I would say the suicide rate is high because this is not even often a crime in most states. Therapist abuse is considered a crime in only 32 states, but...

**Elisa:** Really?

**Amy:** ...not only do we not have that backing, we really don't have society's backing...

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Amy:** When we come out of this kind of crime, any kind of really sexual assault crime, it's like we're expected to explain and defend ourselves. We don't expect that of other victims. You know we have to *prove* that we were victimized and prove that we didn't want it...

**Elisa:** It's heartbreaking.

**Amy:** ...And I know so many people are suffering in silence. In fact, I've had victims reach out to me and say, "This happened to me." And they tell me their story, and they're not even going to tell their spouse. They're going to take it to the grave, and it's a huge burden to carry. Coming forward is hard, and holding the secret is hard. So I feel like ... you know when this happened to me, when I was taken advantage of at age 40 by my therapist, I thought I was the only one on the planet. And in the early days, I just needed to know that I wasn't alone, and then in time I needed to know it wasn't my fault. And I eventually got there, and I'm offering that lifeline to those women that are struggling, whatever stage they're in, so that they can hang on long enough to get the healing they need.

**Eryn:** Mm. Yeah.

**Amy:** I also feel like part of my ministry — and that I am excited I get to talk to you guys about — is that you can be taken advantage of, harmed in an egregious way, even by a religious leader, because my therapist was an elder at my church, and still maintain a faith in God.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And that's really hard for a lot of victims, especially victims of clergy abuse, cause mine crosses over into both. Most of us don't go back to church, and some of us lose our faith altogether. A lot of us are [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



just struggling in between. We love Jesus, but we don't trust church, so those are the kind of the two areas. And you said, "How did I end up there?" I just touched on it, but I just sought out counseling for regular reasons. I mean I always had a lingering depression. I had early abuse as a child. I wanted to work on parenting issues and my marriage and things like that. And this therapist came highly recommended. He was, like I said, an elder at the church. The pastor's wife was a close friend of mine, and she recommended him. And he was kind of a goofy grandfather type, and so I start seeing him, and I don't realize that I'm being groomed. I didn't even know adults could be groomed, to be quite honest.

**Elisa:** Yeah, and what does that term actually mean, Amy?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Yeah, being groomed.

**Amy:** Grooming is kind of a slow and insidious process, where a predator is luring their victim in. It's very slow, it's very subtle. They use lots of different kind of techniques, but you hear "love bombing." They just build you up where you need to be built up. They are very skilled, especially one who's a therapist, in seeking out your voids and then attempting to fill them. So maybe it's a father figure, you know, whatever. And then when those childhood needs that we maybe don't even recognize that we have, when those voids start to be filled, or maybe voids that God should be filling but He isn't cause we haven't reached out to Him in that way, it feels so amazing. And it feels like being given a taste of a drug. It's like hard to walk away from. You just... you don't really know, you just know you feel better. You know? So when I started therapy, I just thought *I don't know if it's just having someone to talk to, but I just, you know, I'm starting to feel happier.* That's the confusing part. With children, when we think of grooming, we think of, you know, making them feel special, giving them presents, you know, giving them candy, things like that. As an adult, sadly, it still happens in a similar way. For example, eventually we had our own "candy" that we shared, you know, that... that other clients didn't. He would cover me up with a blanket, like right from day one, to invade my personal space. But eventually I had my own blanket, kept in a special drawer in his desk. And as silly as it sounds, even as I'm saying it, that need to feel special and connected is strong...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...because it trips up so many of us. And this is intelligent women, successful women, it is all of us. And you would almost think you wouldn't fall for it...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.



**Amy:** ...you know, that's kinda how I felt, until you're in the moment. And you can imagine how vulnerable you are as a client in therapy, already sharing your deepest, darkest thoughts. And there's a process in therapy called "transference," and it's just where you place your kind of intense relationships from your past, especially like with your parents, you direct that to the therapist. They kind of become the dartboard, so to speak. That dynamic can cause really powerful attachment to the therapist, and an ethical therapist will help you see that your feelings are not about them, see that they aren't really your savior. They'll empower you, where an unethical therapist who's grooming you will encourage that attachment so that they can manipulate you later. So, you know, he swept in as a father figure that I'd never had. And I really truly thought... I was a new Christian. That was another part of my naivete, that God was blessing me in this way.

**Elisa:** Mm. Mm.

**Amy:** So it just ... fast forward, and I didn't even notice a red flag, really, until I'd been seeing him about eight months. I know now they started on day one.

**Eryn:** Yeah. You have these thoughts that are just kind of going like a hamster wheel, it sounds like, in your mind of rationalizing something...

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** ...that doesn't feel safe because he's in a position of power and influence in your life.

**Amy:** Right. And when we're in these scenarios, we're thinking, *Is it more likely that he's a sociopath, or is it more likely I'm overreacting?*

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

**Eryn:** Yes. So true.

**Amy:** If you're like me, I'm always going to take the hit, you know, for those kind of things.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...*You're seeing it wrong. It's not a big deal. He's joking, whatever.* And when you're ... also, when you're in this scenario being groomed, you don't link the red flags together because you don't... you're not  
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aware you're being manipulated. You're not aware that you're sitting across from a predator, so once you rationalize that red flag, and you get over it, and you forget about it, it's not connected when something else happens. It... the next one is an isolated event...

**Elisa:** Oh, I see.

**Amy:** ...You do the same thing. You rationalize it, minimize it...

**Eryn:** When you said, "I didn't realize he was harming me," do you mind sharing ... cause I think when we think of "harm," we think of like physical abuse or verbal assault or... And it can actually be something that we would rationalize and say...

**Elisa:** More subtle, mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ... *It's not that bad.* Yeah, was it subtle toward the end? Or was it blatant?

**Amy:** Oh no...

**Eryn:** ...What kind of harm was... if you mind sharing...

**Amy:** It got blatant. I started seeing him in April, and it was a year and a month later when he probably got tired of me not catching on what was happening and just flat out assaulted me. I just started sobbing and saying I, you know, "I can't believe you did this to me." And I just remember like my world falling apart, and it just going black, like *this is happening again*. My first abuser was my father, a priest, all kinds of people that I should've been able to trust. And now my therapist that's helping me get over the past hurts is also an abuser. It didn't feel survivable, but what predators will do ... And part of the grooming process is like I call it luring them into the abuse process. So they use things you share to manipulate you. For example, I never would've asked him to come near me in the office. Right? I would've never said, "Come over here and sit by me." But he weaseled his way eventually to the ottoman in front of me and pretended to like dab my tears with a tissue. This is months before the assault. Then he acted like he was uncomfortable sitting there, and I said, "Will you sit next to me?" It was like an oversized chair. So anything that happened after that I thought was my fault, because I'm such a loser that I asked him to sit next to me. But, see, I didn't, but that's what they do. I mentioned one time... cause all the weird therapy he did was about evil spirits and ...

**Elisa:** Oh boy!



**Amy:** ...and inviting Jesus in, and all this, and the Holy Spirit was supposedly his boss. And so I told him one time... And I... I like sometimes thought it was a joke, and sometimes thought I was having legitimate spiritual experiences. I didn't really know...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** I thought that this was ... that God was blessing this. I wanted to tell my husband so bad, but then I thought that it was all going to come back on... *"So, wait, he was sitting next to you? ..."*

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ... *So who's idea was that?"* You know I did go to my pastor's wife with all of these red flags, because she knew him, and she knew me really well. My husband and I were pretty disconnected at this time, in our marriage, so he wasn't necessarily the first person I would go to. And when I went to her, she took the doctor's side...

**Elisa:** Oh!

**Amy:** So instead of reaching out again, just like in my childhood where I was blown off, I just kind of got crushed inside, and then thought *Well, okay, it's just me and God and the abuser, then. I'm going to have fix this by myself.* But here's the thing: Once a predator gets you that attached and that isolated, I personally could not get out without help. I could not break that tie without help, even when he was hurting me. And so when I say "hurting me," let's fast forward. So I told the pastor's wife that he assaulted me. I told her what he did, and she took his side. And I shut down, and I was in so much pain and distress. Who did I have to turn to?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** My therapist. So he produced probably one fake tear. My friend said he probably squirted it on with a water bottle or something. [Laughter]... And I caved and thought, *It's my fault because I was so needy that he slipped up in this way. And he won't do it again. He's clearly devastated by it.* So it's sad to say that I went back — let's see May, another month and a half before it just became where I ... I knew he was hinting at an... like an emotional affair at least. And then it was pretty much whatever he wanted to do physically, and I would just cry and cry and cry and ask him to stop, and he wouldn't. And then I'd come back for the next session, and I told him, you know, "I feel like a prostitute, and you didn't even talk to me."



**Elisa:** Oh, Amy, Amy...

**Amy:** ...And this is my therapist....

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...Can you... And I literally said — this is so pitiful. “Can you... you didn’t even like leave any time to talk to me. Like I just like picked up my things and left.” And he goes, “Yeah, we’ll make sure to save a few minutes at the end.” And so did I want to go back those times? No, but it was like I was now ... I felt like I was trapped in one of those snow globes, you know, that has glass around it. I was so entrenched in this like alter universe he’d created, and I didn’t have anybody on the outside. And if you tell, you feel like you have to tell on yourself. And I’m not going to tell anybody the worse thing I ever did in my entire life. Yes, I just allowed it, but I still allowed it; and I don’t know how to tell people why I didn’t leave, cause I don’t know why I couldn’t leave. So it puts you in a really tough position, you can imagine. And I hated myself, *hated* myself...

**Elisa:** Aw...

**Amy:** ...I though *You’re a loser that this happened. You’re a loser that you allowed it. You’re a loser that you didn’t leave. You’re a loser that you didn’t leave that very first time. Like what are you thinking?* But, you know, I’ve since been educated on trauma bonds and how hard it is to walk away. And they make sure that you are isolated before they make these big moves. But what’s so sad is that they... not only are you sexually assaulted, but you’re made to believe or at least feel that you are a participant.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm. And it’s such a vicious circle....

**Amy:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...with the ... you know it’s like the warning comes up of *I’m not safe*. But then you... you circle straight into *I’m a loser, and it’s my fault, and I’m a participant*, and etcetera. And then the *I’m not safe*, every time you feel it, you go back into the *No, it’s my fault, it’s my fault*. And you’re so trapped in it. And, you know, I think that’s something I really want to point out for all listening is that that’s what we do. I mean it just breaks my heart, but that’s the way we’re made, you know, that’s the way we conclude, is that it’s our fault. Can you help us see how you eventually got out, you know...

**Amy:** Yeah.



**Elisa:** ...because I can *feel* the vicious circle of it all, and the way it escalated at the... the last months, just oh so intense! How did you finally get out?

**Amy:** I shared this with my pastor and his wife on a Sunday. They said, "When's your next session?" I said, "Monday at 8 AM." I said, "Can you sit with me? Can I come to your house? Can you just sit with me so I don't go and I don't make any verbal contact with him?" The doctor, during that — from 8:00 to 11:00 was my session, and I just am a no-show. Right? And you know he's getting nervous because it was pretty bold of him to be abusing me, knowing that the pastor's wife is like my closest friend.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Amy:** But he clearly knew that he had her manipulated, because she did not take my side. She took his. So he was probably nervous, and so he called nine times over that three hours and like left voicemails. And towards the end he was saying — and nothing incriminating, just kind of mildly incriminating, because he probably sensed that I had maybe shared. At the end he said, "You know we have an hour left in our session if you just want to call." And I could feel myself like wanting to call...

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...but I didn't. And after that, the attachment to the abuser takes a long time to pass. I thought if I see him in public, I didn't know what I... Part of me wanted to punch him in the face, part of me wanted to hug him, like *Oh my gosh, I need your support for this terrible thing this person is doing to me.* [Laughs] And so that... that takes longer to heal.

**Elisa:** So what happened with him? Did he get in trouble? Did he get ...

**Amy:** The pastor said, "Absolutely, he will not remain an elder here." And I said, "Well, whatever." And so he told him he had to step down as elder...

**Eryn:** Did he get his license revoked?

**Amy:** Yeah, eventually. Right after the abuse, I did decide to share with an old therapist that I'd seen back in Dallas. And ...um... I just really needed the support. And she let me know afterwards that she was a mandated reporter and that she needed to report him to the medical board.





**Eryn:** Wow!

**Elisa:** Mercy.

**Amy:** So then I decided, you know, I want to report to the medical board too. I'd gained the courage, and I... I remember I opened up the website, and it said... a little box, and it said, "Explain what happened to you in 500 words or less..."

[Laughter]

**Amy:** ...And I was like *You know what? No.*

**Elisa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Amy:** ...I like turned it off. I was like...

**Elisa:** That's awful.

**Amy:** ... Oh, maybe I'll report, or maybe never...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Awful!

**Amy:** ... Luckily, the medical board was very respectful and treated me with kindness and dignity. And the medical board wanted to take his license, but they decided to do that, they would've had to have a full trial where I had to testify. And he would have to testify and there could even be TV cameras. And I told them I'd do it, if I had to, but they decided, "No, let's just allow him to surrender it and not put the victim through a trial." So he lost his medical license in the state of Oklahoma permanently. And it did feel good, you know. He was at retirement age already, so it kinda didn't feel like much. It did feel good that it was only the fifth permanent surrender of license they'd ever issued in twenty years, meaning most doctors can reapply after a year...

**Eryn:** Oh.

**Amy:** But his was a permanent surrender. That felt good.



**Eryn:** Oh, I see. Okay.

**Amy:** And then, after that, I still felt very angry and very not satisfied. He put out a sappy letter here in my town that God was leading him in another direction. And he and his wife moved. I looked into the idea of criminal charges, but I was told by several attorneys that are trained in this kind of abuse. They said, "It will be brutal for you and your family, and the abuser will likely walk. Do not do it!"

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Amy:** So luckily I found good legal counsel and decided I would pursue a civil malpractice suit. And that took three years. It was successful, but then again, at the end of it... I kind of describe it as like when a funeral ends, and all the people go home, and all the casseroles stop coming. You feel really hyped up while you're doing it, and then it's just a letdown, like *Okay*. So that was really just a financial transaction between his insurance company. You have to just then realize *Okay, I guess there's more healing that I cannot gain...* You're not going to gain it in these civil suits.

**Eryn:** Yeah. You would think that doing everything that you did, legally, would resolve a wrestling in your spirit and this anger and anxiety.

**Amy:** Yeah, you don't think that's what you're hoping for, but when it's over, and it's all done, then you're just left with all the same emotion. And you're like *Well, crap, I still feel like I'm sitting in all this, and I don't feel that much better.*

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** After all of that, the legal stuff started settling, the debris started settling, take us through the healing process for you, after that point, after you recognized *Okay...* How did you gain trust with a therapist again? How did you gain trust with a church? How did this affect your marriage?

**Amy:** Because I'm very conscientious, I told my husband everything. Every single detail. And I just want... in case any survivor is listening, I just want to say that after I did that, a very wise psychologist that testifies in these kind of cases asked me if I'd told my spouse. And I said, "yes," and he said, "Well, that's a shame because the first thing I do in these cases is sit down with the couple and inform the husband that 'Your wife was a victim of a felony.'" And do victims of crimes owe explanations as to what happened to them? No. But with sexual assault, society expects an explanation. But anyway, he took it like an affair at first, and it was just devastating.



**Elisa:** Oh!

**Amy:** My husband eventually, you know, saw that it was abuse. But that took a long time, and eventually that trickled into my children, but we eventually, you know, gained the healing that we needed. And now we have a much stronger, more connected marriage. God used it to really obliterate our marriage down to the rafters and then rebuild it into something stronger, cause we'd never been emotionally close. I realized *Okay, the amount of trauma I am feeling is too much for friends to handle. They don't even understand it, and I need help.* So I had to make the decision to trust another therapist...

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Amy:** I refer to these traumas as like an earthquake. There's the initial quake, and then there's smaller mini-quakes that happen for years...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...So maybe three years out was when my family was really struggling. And I had to seek out a therapist, and I did see a male. And I did tell him, "I have to talk to you on the phone before I come there. I need to clarify a few things with you." And he passed that test, and so I worked with him. And he was ethical, and it was so nice just to go in, pay, do my work, and leave. I love that I didn't even know if I liked him. I didn't know if he liked me. I didn't care. There was no relationship. I had no burden. I did not have to be, you know... An ethical therapist will not burden the client.

**Eryn:** That's right.

**Amy:** ...They... they will be a blank slate that you never worry about that is there for you when you walk in. And then you leave, and you know they can take care of themselves.

**Eryn:** Amy, what are some words of encouragement, or thoughts or advice or insight on how you would encourage somebody that might be scared to go back to therapy, but they really need it? How would you help them.

**Amy:** First, we have to decide to trust again, and there are many ethical therapists out there. But if you are with an unethical therapist, you will notice your world will start to shrink. You'll stop sharing things with your friends and outside people, and your world will slowly grow smaller. And that's a huge warning sign, so I say: Keep that outside support big. Let them know what's going on. I know it's weird to share what you're sharing in therapy with someone else, but I would probably do that if I had to do it over again, for [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



the accountability. And when you do feel those gut feelings, our self-esteem is going to tell us we don't have the worth to act on them. But we do, and so I would always go to someone and have those checked out, even if you think it's mild. But here's the thing: If it gets blown off, and they're, *Oh, he's great. He's a wonderful guy. Yeah, he would never...*, but you still have that uncomfortable feeling inside, you go to someone else. Because I had a friend say, "Amy, if you had told me even half those things, you would've not gone back. I would have not allowed it." So you've got to keep that outside support to be able to bounce these things off of. The spiritual piece was the most healing piece. I knew that I needed to forgive my abuser, but I did not want to. So I started there, and I just said, "*God, I know You want me to forgive, but I don't know how, and I don't want to.*" So I was out, and I heard a woman speaking about how she had been abused by her brother, and that God told her that He wanted her to pray for her brother's salvation. And I'm in audience, and I'm like *Oh, God, I know You're talking to me, and I'll pray for my abuser's salvation. But I don't want him to go to heaven, and You know I'm going to be lying, so now what do You want me to do?*

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So I was just really honest with Him, and I think maybe a lot of people don't realize you can be that honest with God. But you can. He wants us to just talk to Him like a person. And He eventually helped me with it, and I didn't start praying that, knowing it was a total lie.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...But this is how God... I feel like I was just open to God doing the forgiving work in me, and I feel like *He* did it, instead of me. But I said, "*I want You to do it in me,*" because suddenly I found myself thinking, *God doesn't make abusers, and He doesn't make evil.* And He says what He makes is perfect, and so what if God restored my abuser to the person that *He* made? Would I be okay with *that* person going to heaven? And I thought, *Well, who am I to say someone God made does not belong in heaven?* And, in time, it just... I don't know, this was months and months. In time I softened to that idea, and I thought, *Yeah, probably. I mean I'm not gonna tell God that He made a mistake.* So I started praying, "*God, restore my abuser to the person You made, and then if You see it fit, let that person go to heaven.* And I eventually felt all of the energy around, you know, surrounding him go. And that's what I wanted. You know forgiveness is not that you like your abuser now, or that you're okay with what happened; but I feel like it's telling God, "*This burden is too heavy for me. I need You to take it.*" And He did. But what's interesting is I forgave my abuser before I forgave myself.

**Elisa:** Hm.



**Amy:** That was a lot harder, because I was so full of shame and self-hatred. In fact, it brings me to tears now just ... like I just was like *I don't understand why you went back. And I don't forgive you until you ...* My brain, maybe I'm analytical, but I was like *until I understand it, I do not forgive you. Like you need to explain it to me.* And part of why I wrote my story was because I wanted to understand what happened. I just needed to like write it out to see it so I could say, *Okay, I am kind of seeing how, you know, a web was being woven and how I was slowly ensnared...*

**Elisa:** Can you speak to people listening now, in terms of ... I mean I... I think we could probably iterate even in the show notes some "Here are warning signs. Let's pay attention to those." And maybe we can link to some of your book things. But can you share: Where does a victim take the first steps? Where do they find hope?

**Amy:** If you're in the situation, you're not going to be able to get out on your own. You have to get that support first, because if not, you may leave for a little while, but you go back because you don't have anywhere to go. You don't have anyone to go to.

**Elisa:** Okay.

**Amy:** Also, I like to tell people that you have to tell, and continue to tell, until you are heard...

**Elisa:** Okay.

**Amy:** ...because I shut down after the first rejection and gave up...

**Elisa:** Yep.

**Amy:** ...and thought, *Well, nobody's going to believe me.* Well, yes, they would have believed me, but I just needed to keep going...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Amy:** ...You know after that you've got to have the support, even if it's with another therapist to process that level of betrayal. And I also want people to understand that it's okay. You can be angry with God. You can be angry with the church. You can take as long as you need. You don't have to rush your healing. It takes forever. It takes years. Your journey is your own. You get to heal at your own rate. And my faith is what I clung to. When this happened to me, I trusted no one, except God. He was all I had. He was the only thing that I had, and I wanted Him just to take me to heaven. I was like *I can't... I can't deal*  
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*with this. I cannot go through with... you know, I cannot tell. I can't tell my husband. I can't report. I just want... You know, but so, I ... I clung to Him, and I had to realize in the early days of this kind of healing, you feel like you have to defend yourself to every single person you see. You walk in a room, you feel like everyone knows, and you have to start explaining. Well, I just found Scriptures, you know, such as, you know, "I will fight for you if you are only remain... if you only remain still." And "Vengeance is Mine, said the Lord." And I will... I have one I love. I wrote it down. "He will make your innocence radiate like the dawn, and the justice of your cause will shine like the noonday sun." I had to realize, *You know what? God can defend me.* He knows, and I know, and my spouse knows the truth.*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** It doesn't matter what anybody else thinks.

**Elisa:** Right.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And so you just have to let more and more of that go.

**Elisa:** You know the reality is that when we think about transformation, you know in America's Christianity, if you will, America's evangelicalism, we see the gospel as the good news of Jesus dying on the cross for our sins and hope of a life everlasting. You know we see that. We get that. But we miss the point, the overarching story of Scripture, which is about our redemption. It is, it is. But it's about the redemption of all that is unjust, all that is broken, all that is horrific, all that's just terrible in our universe. And God is just, and you're absolutely right, Amy. You know you may not have hands on what happens to your abuser, but God will triumph even in that, at the end of time....

**Amy:** Yes.

**Elisa:** He will. And, you know, there is true transformative hope in that, because we're not ever really healed without the assurance that justice will be accomplished...

**Amy:** Yes.

**Elisa:** ...whatever the abuse is we've survived.



**Amy:** And, you know, when you've been hurt in any way, and you know this, we have to make a decision to trust again. I had spent most of my life in darkness and in anger and bitterness. I wasn't going back there. And I like to tell victims, you know, don't let your abuser take that from you. Don't let them have your faith. Don't let them put you back in that cage of anger and bitterness. Because here I was, free from the abuser, full of self-hatred; so I was in my own cage.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** And, you know, that's where the real work is, is on your self-worth and on your identity in Christ. And then you are truly free. And otherwise, you know, another abuser can come along. And the way that I did that, because I told God, *"I read these words, but they don't mean anything to me. I just hear blah, blah, blah — blah, blah blah. I need to feel it. I need to feel You.* And just because, I guess, because I like to write, I started writing love letters to myself from Jesus or from God. And I spoke to myself how I trusted that He would, based on Scripture, but not how I felt. And so I would just come at Him, like, *Well, look what I did.* Or, you know, and then I would speak for Him. And I did this over and over and over, and I did it in the form of poetry. And I did it until I felt a shift.

**Elisa:** Hm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Amy:** So I kind of spoke...

**Elisa:** That's very concrete...

**Amy:** ...or wrote His words into me, until they could finally penetrate that like wall of — I don't know — self-hatred or whatever and really get in there. And then that's where the true healing came.

**Eryn:** I love how practical that is, and I love that you've communicated these words over and over and over to yourself until you believed them...

**Amy:** Yes.

**Eryn:** ... with it ... you believing them while you spoke them. Would you share maybe a love letter, or some words, or a Scripture?



**Amy:** This is one of the love letters that I wrote to myself when I was battling with *God*, *why should I be forgiven?* And it's called "The Very Best."

Father, why did You make me? I'm not like all the rest.  
You knew I'd never be good enough, even at my best.  
I deserve to die. Did You see what he made me do?  
Even though, Father, I ... I didn't want to.  
But that doesn't matter, failing as I am.  
Speak to me, Father, and answer, I demand.

My child, My child, I hear you. You think you're a disgrace.  
But give Me just a minute, let Me see that tear-stained face.  
These people who are telling you who you ought to be,  
Let me ask you: Do these people, do they know you as intimately as Me?  
Did they form you in the womb, every intricate part?  
Child, these people who are defining you, can they see your heart?  
If you can answer yes to that, well perhaps this talk is done.  
But if the answer is actually no, then I think it's just begun.  
What I make is beautiful, without fault and strong,  
So these messages you're getting, child, they could not be more wrong.  
I'm angered at what they've done to such an innocent one as you.  
For their sins they will pay. My child, I am not through.  
For I intend to show you who you really are.  
You cannot take a blanket and cover up a star.  
Your light, it is still burning, although you cannot see.  
But, child, oh how I wish you knew just how you appear to Me.  
You are magnificent, for you radiate shimmering light.  
And for you, my precious one, I will put up quite a fight.  
And I won't give up until the day that you can look up to the skies,  
And see yourself as I see you, and know the rest were lies.  
And, child, you are correct when you say you are not like all the rest.  
For you, my special daughter, I have saved the very best.

**Amy:** That one gets me every time, that when you can really feel that and know that's true, it's life changing.

[Music]

[godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)





**Eryn:** What a beautiful poem! Amy is such a strong woman, and we are just so thankful for her.

**Elisa:** Yeah, we really are. But before we go, be sure to check out our website and find a link for Amy's memoir, *Prayed Upon*, and to read our newest *God Hears Her* blogpost. You can find that and more on our website at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.o.r.g](http://godhearsher.o.r.g).

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

[Music]

**Elisa:** Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank our listeners and Diana for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[ODB theme]

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