



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 150 – The Meaning of Moxie with Moriah Smallbone

Elisa Morgan & Eryn Adkins with Moriah Smallbone

[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*.

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

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Adkins. Today, we are so excited to talk with one of the hosts of *Unshakable Moxie*, a film series by Our Daily Bread Ministries.

Elisa: Moriah Smallbone is a woman of many talents. She's a singer, and a songwriter, an actress, and now a docuseries host. We can't wait for you to get to know her and how her understanding of moxie changed while *Unshakable Moxie* was still in the filming stage.

Eryn: Let's start this *God Hears Her* conversation by asking Moriah who were you as a little girl.

Moriah: When I think about a memory from my childhood with my mom, I think about just how gracious she was with my sister and I. I have an older sister, and her and I are both very similar. We're... we're both creative, we're both competitive, we're both athletes, performers, but also kind of introverted, but also kind of extroverted. Like, we're just this really weird dichotomy. I think it takes a very gracious woman to manage and to raise women like that. [Laughter.] So, my... my mom was always really, really kind with us. We didn't have a... a lot of money. My dad was a public defender that worked in the LA court system,



and so my mom would make... instead of buying clothes she would make us a lot of... a lot of clothes, and so she... she made us these, like, matching red-checkered dresses, and we had a birthday party at a park by our house.

Eryn: So, you said your dad worked for the LA court system...

Moriah: Mmhmm.

Eryn: ... So, you grew up in Los Angeles?

Moriah: Yeah, so just outside of LA there's, like, a suburb called Chino...

Eryn: Okay.

Moriah: ... For those who live in the LA area, Chino is the place that you go if you want to see, like, a hardcore, like, metal show, or if you want to join a bike gang, or there are some pretty big churches there with, like, cool youth groups, some cool dance factories, and a prison and a dairy.

Eryn: Oh.

Elisa: That's a lot. Everything you need.

Eryn: [Giggling] Everything you... [Laughter]

Elisa: One stop...

Moriah: It's a unique place...

Elisa: ... sounds great.

Moriah: ... The longer I've lived in Nashville, the more I have come to really, really appreciate where I grew up and how I grew up. You know, to grow up in such a diverse place, to grow up in a culture where I was exposed to so many different religions, and people groups, and political values, and maybe that's part of why I feel like I'm a walking contradiction with so many different opposing sides, because I grew up very comfortable with that. I grew up in a place where you date people that are, you know, very different from you. Or you're neighbors with people who are completely different religions. Religions that



would almost seemingly oppose each other, and yet you're hanging out at parties and having each other over for dinner, so, I like that about where I grew up.

Elisa: It sounds very eclectic... is one of the words that coming to mind, and therefore, very textured. And honestly, very much, eventually the way the body of Christ was intended to be in terms of everyone and everything belongs, you know? How did you find God? Or how did God find you, we could turn it around the other way, too, in such a... a diverse, wonderful kind of melting pot of life?

Moriah: I was one of those kinds that my parents didn't force me to go to church. Like, I... I desperately wanted to be there. And I think, you know, from a very, like, practical level, it was a place where I could feel affirmed in some of the decisions I wanted to make in order to feel safe. A lot of my friends, a lot of family, a lot of people that I grew up with had teen pregnancies, and had sex before they wanted to, and I think when you grow up in a very, like, heightened sexualized culture, you do certain things to try to either go with the flow or go against the flow...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... and for me, being able to have a stamp of approval, if you will, for being different was helpful. You know, I... I... I had a lot of those social moments where I liked a guy, or, you know, really hoped that he would like me, but he didn't love that I was so, like, *don't touch me!* You know? And, you know, it's unfortunate, because I think that intimacy is a beautiful thing, and flirting is beautiful, and kissing is beautiful, and all of those things that... that you get to do when you're dating, and you're forming different relationships, and you're learning more about yourself and your own sensuality, and the sensuality of those around you, but I just was not in a safe enough environment to explore or experiment in that way...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... it just would have gone too far too fast, so it was important for me, I think, to have that permission, if you will, to do it differently. I think you spend so much of your life, like, trying to prevent that and being afraid of that...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... because it's happening all around you, and you're seeing all of the stresses that come along with that, and girlfriends, and you know, friends who were... that I was on the basketball team with or cheered with, and they have to drop out of school, and it's, like, the stress that comes along with that. And



so, yeah, I think having those very strict boundaries was helpful for me to stay focused on school, to stay focused on sports, and achievement, and to help me get past, like, maybe a bit of the rejection and the heartbreak of, like, *if I'm not willing to offer that, I'm not going to be sought after by a bunch of guys*. And that's... that's not the only reason, I was also and still am five ten, and, like, awkward and not necessarily, you know, a hottie on a stick all the time. So... but now, I look back at that and I go it's funny how you have to do the work to let go of something that held you in such safekeeping then...

Elisa: That's so good.

Moriah: ... and now it doesn't serve me. In fact, it... it would be harmful for me to behave in the super-safe culture that I live in now...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... I think... the county I live in is, like, in the, like, top one hundred safest counties in... in the country. And to be so, like, off-putting, and defensive, and scared, and, you know, that... that wouldn't even be healthy in my marriage, so it's just interesting that there are things that serve you as... as a kid, and then, or even teenager, and then maybe don't... don't serve you as well as an adult.

Elisa: I love the very personal reflective thread of this conversation, Moriah, and thank you for inviting us in. But what I'm hearing is, and I want to kind of normalize this for everybody who's listening, I think what you're expressing is a profound, necessary leaving of what incubated, of what was vital and important, womb-like if you will, to allow you to... to grow and form and develop. When we don't have that safety infrastructure, we're going to create our own, because it's either have it, or create it, or die. You know, it's one of those. So, you had it, you created it, but as we get older, there's great wisdom in what you're expressing, some of the richness that... that you have expressed there. I think our spiritual journeys often surprise us when they aren't linear, or they aren't... formulaic, fitting into this or that denomination.

Moriah: Yeah, I appreciate that. And I... I'll... I'll ask you a question. I think that this question should be asked more, and I think that it should be asked more amongst women, and I think there should be a level of pride in discussing it, but in Spanish, if I were to ask you this question, it's *cuantos anos tienes?* And that is not "how old are you," it's "how many years do you have?"

Elisa: So good.



Moriah: And when you say, you know, “I am thirty-one,” for example, “*Yo tengo treinta y un años*,” “I have thirty-one years,” and I think that frames it differently...

Eryn: I love that.

Moriah: ... I think there's a acceptance and, like, pride that comes with that. So, I want to ask you that, because I have a follow-up question to that. But *cuantos años tienes, Elisa?*

Elisa: *Yo tengo sesenta y ocho años.*

Moriah: *Sesenta y ocho años.*

Elisa: *Si, si.*

Moriah: Yeah, okay, someone's going to kill me for my pronunciations here...

Eryn: It's okay, go for it.

Moriah: ... but it's okay. I think it's really special to hear you, Elisa, with the sixty-eight years that you have, that you've earned, that you own, to speak to that particular concept of building a container and then either throwing the container away or finding what you put in it, because listening to you share that metaphor, that perspective, I think it helps. I think it helps people to... to go *it's okay. It's okay for me to process, it's okay for me to*, as my friend recently told me, cause I was telling her, I was like, *well, I have this bucket of, like, work, and I have this bucket of my life, and I have this bucket of, like, you know, beliefs, and then it*, and she was like *Moriah, there are*, and she's a little bit older than me, she's like, *there are no buckets. Kick the buckets, Moriah*. So, it's nice when people who have more years, you know...

Elisa: Yeah.

Moriah: ... encourage you to do so, thank you for that...

Eryn: What did you with that? What did you... did you kick the buckets? What did you do? I want to know.

Moriah: I sure did. In fact, I text her two emojis, like a boot and a bucket, and...



Elisa: Oh cute.

Moriah: ... it was, like, it's... it's done. We don't look at life through buckets anymore.

Eryn: Were you looking at your like... life through buckets within, like, career, family, relationship, were you kind of compartmentalizing them kind of thing?

Moriah: Yeah, I'm a real compartmentalizer, and it's, I'm an artist, I'm a producer, I'm an actress, and so as a creative, I think there comes with that the stereotype of, like, manic and chaotic...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... and like, I mean, I use whiteboards and dream boards, and, like, my house is, like, every wall is white and there's nothing on the surfaces. People are like, *do you live here?* I'm like *I swear I do*. So, I naturally, I'm an organizer, I... I'm a processor, and I really do like to see life in buckets. And sometimes that is helpful...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... you know, particularly when managing emotions or, you know, trying to practice good leadership with my employees, like, that... that's important to be able to compartmentalize at times...

Elisa: Yeah.

Moriah: ... but when it comes to dreaming, when it comes to vision casting, when it comes to making, like, big decisions about the next few years of your life, or marriage...

Eryn: Yeah.

Moriah: ... you know, children, with any of that stuff, it's like I need to do a better job of trusting the Spirit and going *maybe on paper this doesn't all make sense, but...* I mean, like, yesterday I watched a video, my sister got a ton of VHS tapes that were at my grandparent's house...

Elisa: Oh fun.



Moriah: ... converted into digital, so she's been texting us a bunch of video clips, and there was some footage of my parent's wedding, and I know they've said this story a thousand times, there's something about seeing it. They got married in a courthouse on their lunchbreak, and then they had their ceremony at a Black Angus afterwards...

Eryn: That's awesome.

Moriah: ... with a bunch of friends and coworkers and family afterward. So, it's like, they didn't have a lot of things that I have now, which affords me the opportunity to make very calculated decisions, but for them, they didn't have anything. And my mom, she sat down with my dad, who was probably more like me, and likes to make lists, and he created a pro and con list of why it's a good idea for us to get married, why it's not a good idea for us to marry... get married. And that list of nots was very, very long. A lot... I mean, they had no money, they had nowhere to live, they had... like, she's living in a trailer, she's, like, it's like, what are they going to do? And my mom sat there and turned every single thing on the not list into a positive. And she kind of kicked the buckets, like, and I'm trying to do that more, I really am.

Elisa: You know, I think it's fascinating, I... I mean, I'm listening to your words, and I'm hearing again, this... it's this kind of echo of this thing... you know, you've been a part of Our Daily Bread's *Unshakable Moxie* series. And it's so interesting to me that the Lord has braided your life into this project in a season...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ... when you yourself are experiencing a different level of moxie, you know...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ... that's bubbled up from your own growth and formation, but it's... you know... another metaphor, you know, like crashing through the seed, and some new life is blooming in you that's more organic and free. How have you defined moxie, maybe before you started working on this topic, and... and then how did it shape your understanding of God's work of moxie in you, even, as you participated?

Moriah: Gosh, like, even from episode one to today, moxie means something different. We filmed the first episode at my birthday party last year, which was a very crucial turning point for me on so many levels. It was my... entering into the decade I had always dreamed of being in, and it was also a celebration of my grandmother's life, who had just received word that she had gone into remission for breast cancer, so it



was so celebratory, it was so beautiful. We made it really an ode to her, and her culture, and where she came from. She immigrated from Mexico, and so we brought... a mariachi band, we had a taco truck...

Eryn: That's cool.

Moriah: ... my friends and I did a traditional *folklorico* dance, which *folklorico*, for those who don't know, is like, picture the word folklore, and it's a traditional Mexican dance, and different regions of Mexico, you know, they have different style skirts, different dance moves, but you know, I got all my girlfriends who are, like, Filipino, Caucasian... Puerto Rican, black, like, I had, like, so many... like, not a single Mexican friend that are, like, so generously, like, *yes, we will do this dance...*

Eryn: I love that!

Moriah: ... and we... and we did a whole choreographed number, and it was so sweet because the *Unshakable Moxie* crew got to capture it, and they were here, we made salsa with my grandmother, and we talked about moxie. We talked about the beginning of the journey of, like, what does this mean, and what are we trying to understand, and what are we trying to learn, and what kind of questions are we going to be asking, and what do we think moxie means now. And I think then, I very much saw moxie as a strength that is maybe more aggressive, more assertive, more willing to sit in the conflict, comfortable with disagreement. I love questioning things, like, maybe it's just being the daughter of a lawyer, like, I... I love to not just think about what I believe and fight for that, but to completely throw off everything I believe and then jump into someone else's belief system and then argue that side, and understand that side, and to do it with my whole heart, not just by obligation. And I think that's certainly an element of what moxie can be. But in the last year, be it in conversations with the women that we interviewed, or conversations with my own friends, my own Witan, and when I reference Witan, this is a... a throwback to the early formation of England, and... and the kings of the time would select different people in their community and kind of put together, like, a... a room or a round table of thought leaders and people who disagreed on different things and came from different parts of the region in order to make decisions. And so, I have that in my life. I... I've put together my own Witan of women that I call on, and they come from all different backgrounds, and beliefs, and workspaces...

Elisa: So the word Witan is like a group of advisors...

Moriah: ... W-I-T-A-N, yes. Yeah. The Kings Witan.

Eryn: I like that.



Elisa: I love it. I love it. Okay.

Moriah: So, be it in communicating with them, or my own family, you know, my sister, my mom, I think where I have seen moxie show up more recently is in the tender moments, is in empathizing with each other, is in sitting with one another in grief and in pain. Sitting in the questions and instead of arguing them, just being okay with not knowing. You know, it's... it's a gentleness, and that takes more work for me. It takes more work for me to experience moxie at that level, because naturally, maybe it's my super-high testosterone levels, I don't know, I'm just, like, a lot, and I'm very... I can be very combative, and so it... it... yeah, it takes... it takes work to sit in the more graceful, kind, gentle aspects of what moxie can look like, but I think it's in that perceived weakness that there's actually the deepest strength.

Eryn: I love that you said that, Moriah. When we hear the word moxie, and we think resiliency, and we think grit, and we think, you know, a tenaciousness, the natural tendency is to visualize, like, a toughness. You're bold, you're brave, you're [growling sound], you know, and the truth is, there's so much ten... it's hard to fight for tenderness, but it's so worth it when you do. It's harder, I think, for me, I completely resonate with that, because I do have a lot of opinions, but I have a lot more questions. And I've gone through some things that have, you know, I've had to pray that God would keep my heart soft so that it wouldn't be hardened from the pain, and the hurt, and just the depravity of life that...

Moriah: Yeah.

Eryn: ... we witness on a day... day-in and day-out basis, so I just love that you said what you have witnessed within moxie within your friend group and then within, or your Witan, and what you've witnessed with *Unshakable Moxie*, this docuseries that's coming out. I love that you said there's a tenderness, there's a softness. I think a woman that's listening right now can really take a deep breath to go okay, so softness and tenderness is not weakness. I think we can mistake that easily, don't you think?

Moriah: Yeah, and I... I... rightfully so, like, it's understandable, particularly we're living in a patriarchal society, and when that's the case, it's the character traits of our brothers that are put on display as *if you want to get this result, you have to do it this way*, and I'm not one to, like, take it scriptural, but if we're made in God's image, why would my brother be any closer a reflection of who God is than I am? And why would my dad be any more of a reflection than who God is than my mother is? I think that you see in Scripture, you know, all of these beautiful maternal aspects of who God is. Yes, the warrior. Yes, the protector. Yes, the *ezer kenegdo*, the shield, you know, the strength. All of that is... is made up in... in the protective nature of... of a woman, but also the hen analogy, you know, the... the mother hen hiding under the shadow of... of His wings, you know, all of these beautiful metaphors and poetry about the



maternal aspects of who God is. It is difficult, I will say, to reconcile that although it might be true in a culture and in a time where the people who are the gatekeepers, the CEOs, leaders of our free market, are... primarily men, and so, for those listening who might be entrepreneurs, who might be, you know, climbing a corporate ladder, what do you do with that? How do you look at your progress so far and go *I've gotten to where I am because I have been tough, I have been aggressive, I have been competitive. Am I supposed to throw all of that out and just be this, like, meek and mild person?* I don't think so. I don't think that it's wrong or bad to... to be any of those things. I do think that there is value in what we're talking about in... in tenderness. There is value in slowing down. There's value in silence, and I think both men and women in our history have led with those characteristics. Speak softly, carry a big stick, like, there are ways to... to show strength and moxie in a kind and loving way, you know. Look at how a mother speaks to her child. Sometimes my sister-in-law will look at her son and, like, with a loving tone correct him, and I feel like I want to fall on the floor into a million pieces because I'm so terrified [laughter], like... speak with such authority and such love at the same time. Whereas when someone's, like, yelling at me, I'm like, I want to yell back, you know?

Eryn: Yeah! Yes. So true.

Moriah: [Music] So, I think there's a lot of value in seeing the range of character traits that I think maybe are more innate to women and more innate to men, but when you see the balance of men going *I am leaning into this softness*, or women going *I'm leaning into my competitive nature*, like, it's all about integration. It's about that balance, and I just happen to be really hard on one side, and I need to, you know, try to take steps towards the middle.

[Music]

Elisa: I'm so interested to see how Moriah grapples with these realizations during the *Unshakable Moxie* episodes. You know, her understanding of moxie and herself has been morphed and changed in some really beautiful ways.

Eryn: Yes. Well, before we go, be sure to check out our website to find a link to for the *Moxie* website. The series comes out soon! So, be sure to save the link to watch the whole series. You can find that and more 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 Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Melissa and Luanne for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

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