



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 37 - Truth and Grit

Eryn Eddy and Elisa Morgan with Ellie Holcomb

Ellie Holcomb: That line *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when He's not safe, it doesn't mean that we're not safe with Him and that our stories and our brokenness isn't safe...

Elisa: That's good. Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...with Him...

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...It means that you can't be around Him and not be changed. Like your heart

Eryn: That's right.

Ellie Holcomb: ...is gonna be transformed because you can't help ... when you come completely through the door like a broken mess with nothing to offer, and you encounter love and generosity and empathy and kindness and mercy and grace that is available to us in the presence of God, you don't walk away the same.

Eryn: Yeah.

[music]

Other 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*.

[music]

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



Elisa: And I'm Elisa Morgan. How many times do we feel ragged and burned out, broken and basically just a hot mess? [Laughing] And yet we believe we need to suck it up and show up in front of God with a smile plastered on our faces? Or in front of our church too, like everything is just hunky dory. Well, our next guest, Ellie Holcomb, has a conversation with us today about taking on grit, grounding ourselves in God's truth, and showing up as we are – hot mess and all. It's a freeing conversation for all of us.

Eryn: Yes, I love that! But first a bit of a background about Ellie Holcomb. She's a Nashville native and grew up in the music industry. She began her musical career by touring the country with her husband, Drew Holcomb. But after the birth of their first child, Ellie stepped away from touring. From that space came her debut album, "As Sure as the Sun," and she was awarded Best New Artist at the 2014 Dove Awards. She has released multiples albums since then and also a bestselling book. And you should definitely check out her latest single, "Constellations." But let's get this true grit conversation going with Ellie. This is *God Hears Her*.

[Break]

Eryn: Oh man! Okay, Elisa, I am so excited about our guest. And there's many reasons why I'm excited about her. One of them is that I follow her on social media, and I just love watching her dance with her family... [Laughter]... And also...

Elisa: Are you a stalker, Eryn? Are you a stalker?

Eryn: Maybe just a little bit. [Laughter] ...

Elisa: I love it. I love it.

Eryn: ...oh, but I just love her...her joy and then her just real gritty ...uh... truth that she speaks through books and through her albums and her songs. Like her lyrics are just... I mean they pierce... they pierce parts of my heart that ... I mean she puts things in form that I'm like *Oh, that's how I felt! That's how I feel in my relationship with the Lord.* [Getting louder] Ellie's here with us! Ellie Holcomb!

Elisa: YAAAY!!

Eryn: YEESSS! Oh, air hug! Air hug! [Laughter]

Elisa: Welcome, Ellie, welcome. And I think that's a great introduction because I don't know you, and I've just been, well, stalking you too...too, you know, just to kinda get to know you. And the main thing I was



impressed about was that word “grit.” Your voice, your spirit, your heart in a beautiful, cool word: grit. And so welcome. It’s really neat to have you here.

Ellie Holcomb: I’m really, really glad to be here, yall. Thanks for having me. And I don’t feel like it’s stalking ever on social media. I just feel like it’s the way...

Elisa: [laughing loudly]

Ellie Holcomb: ...that we feel connected, especially right ...

Elisa: That’s ... yeah...

Ellie Holcomb: ... In these days, it just feels really sweet to be able to ...um... I don’t know – feel a sense of like community, even though we can’t maybe all be together always.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Thank you for permission . . . [laughing] . . .to...to draw really up close and personal. Thank you for that invitation. Yeah.

Eryn: Oh, well, Ellie, for those who of the listeners, which are probably just a few, that don’t know much about your story, would you catch them up a little bit and share maybe just the beginning of before you got married and before you got into music to taking us to being... like getting involved in music? And I know...I know that transition, that pivot in your life is just... It’s really interesting to me, but I want to hear: Who’s Ellie before Ellie had all these other pieces that people got to get to know?

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah ...um... Okay, so I would say I grew up here in Nashville, Tennessee. My dad is a producer. I thought that was the coolest job ever...uh... that he had. ...um... And I am the oldest of five kids. My mom and three brothers have ADD, so that was never boring. It was never boring at our house. [Laughter]... But we were very much a musical family, but also I... So I... I grew up in the studios in Nashville...um... saw...

Elisa: And can I just say, Ellie, I...I grew up with your dad. I’m more of his generation. And...

[A squeal here?]

Elisa: ...Yeah, yeah. Brown Bannister, if I can say his name. And...and so...



Ellie Holcomb: Yeah.

Elisa: ...you know, anybody who's of my generation, I didn't have to Google him. I knew him. So...

Ellie Holcomb: You knew him?

Elisa: Anyway, it's...it's neat...

Ellie Holcomb: ... I love that!

Elisa: ...context. Yeah...

Ellie Holcomb: ...Brown Bannister or you... my friends in high school called him "Beige Handrail"...

Elisa: Oh... [laughing]...

Ellie Holcomb: ...instead of Brown Bannister. ...um... But he...uh... He was sort of a... at this wonderful church. He and my mom were at this church called Belmont and just kind of in the "Jesus Movement" days. And ...uh... really before like Christian Contemporary Music was a thing. And so, anyway, I just heard... I got to see so up close, from a very young age, the power of music to bring hope, ...uh... to bring people to an awareness of God's love for them ...um... and into, really, an experience of God's love for them. I remember being just so little. I got to go... I mean Amy Grant was in my dad's youth group. So he like made all of her first records ...um... And I got to go see her and walk into an arena full of people. You know I don't know how old I was – a little kid, six maybe seven. And an arena full of people is singing "Thy Word" with their hands raised, you know...

Eryn: Oh wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ...it's like *This is so cool!* So I am so grateful for that perspective on music and people, like Amy, who very much were not any way about themselves, just a...about others encountering love and beauty and truth. And so ...um... I saw that. And then in the same breath I saw, as a very young kid, I was like *I am never gonna be a musician because you have to leave home all the time. That sounds ...*

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...*terrible*...And I...



Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...was not enamored with fame, by any means ...uh... And so I actually swore that I would never do music, that I would never be a musician, and ...uh... that I would never marry a musician, for sure, which I just think God has a sense of humor because...

Eryn: Ahh!

Elisa: Oops! Yeah, oops!

Ellie Holcomb: ...fast forward...

Eryn: Oopies!

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah. Fast forward to now, and I'm... also swore I would never marry my best guy friend in college whose name is Drew Holcomb. And that is who I married!

Elisa: Mmm.

Ellie Holcomb: So...

Elisa: [strange laugh] Ee-eh-eh-eh!

Ellie Holcomb: ...I don't swear that I'm not gonna do things anymore...uh... because I'm like ... God's like *We'll see*. But I grew up in the church in a very vibrant community, and my mom and dad loved Jesus and...and prayed... I mean just prayer was... I was thinking about how I know to pray, and it's just cause my mom prayed all the time ... [laughing]...

Elisa: Wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ...growing up. I mean...

Elisa: Oh.

Ellie Holcomb: ...before we left, before our meals, for complete strangers at the gas station. I was like *Oh boy!* ...um... So I...uh... Somehow, though, even growing up in this like amazing vibrant community, I



gathered that the gospel was all about me being good enough and loving God and loving other people enough. And that's all good and well, but that's not really the gospel. And I'm so grateful that God, in His kindness, you know, showed me that, you know... In my college years, it really was...uh... that He was showing me that I ... the gospel is Him running hard and fast after us, when we're running hard and fast in the other direction, spitting in His face.

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And...and that it's not about ... The gospel's not about ...uh... making bad people good people. It's making dead people alive people. And that is what He's done in my life and in my story! And...and so I just ...um... landed myself in counseling three years into marriage. And...uh... I...I also landed myself in my husband's band three years before that, th... which is the job I never thought that I would have. I got my master's in education...

Elisa: S...s...so ju..just to pause there, did landing yourself in the band lead to landing yourself in counseling?

Ellie Holcomb: Honestly, I think ...

[laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: ...I...I...I really think that...

Eryn: That's a good question.

Ellie Holcomb: ...it's tied. It's totally tied because you cannot be in a Volvo station wagon with someone for like twelve hours a day... Like you just really can't hide very much there, you know, and so...

Eryn: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...um... It just...I think by three years, I like couldn't pretend that something was off with me. And I hated conflict. I hated conflict. And I think what happened – and...and I think this happens so often in the church, unfortunately – is I just was preten... I didn't know it was okay to not be okay. And...and I spent a lot of my life hiding. I didn't even realize I was doing it, but I was lying to myself, to God, therefore to everybody else. I'm like *I'm okay. I'm okay. I'm okay.* And inside I really wasn't. And so...

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: I don't want to interrupt you, but I want to clarify ...

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah.

Elisa: ...um... eh... Was th...was there a specific set of memories or circumstances that led you to go *Oh, I need help right now?* I mean, in addition to the...the Volvo going across the...the country, which is enough...

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah.

Elisa: ... to send anybody into therapy. But were there were there some specific issues?

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah, I think that ... I...I...I think mainly I had all of this pain...uh... from my childhood. And I...what's crazy is I didn't even really get into that until the past couple years really... [laughing]...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...um... But I...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I had a really ...um...a sort of an abusive relationship in college that was ... it was just...It was really hard, and I had a lot of things about that. I like knew better than to let my... uh... And I only realized it afterwards. I was...I would be talking to young girls, volunteering at Young Life Camp. And they would be telling me about their relationship. And I'm like *Sweet girl, you're...this is abuse*. You know like *You need to get out of this situation*. And it wasn't until I was counseling other girls that I was like *That...this was... I was you! I was you!* [Laughing]...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...like and...

Eryn: Yeah.



Ellie Holcomb: And...um...and so I think that was part of it, but, honestly, more than anything, I just think I didn't know how to be – and I've said this before – I didn't know it was okay to be broken. And...

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...It's crazy, cause that's like very clear in the gospel. Like He see...He know that we are. That's why He sent Jesus. And I don't know – it's like the church isn't a trophy room. It's supposed to be a hospital and...and a table that everybody is welcome to. And so Brene Brown says...says it like this, but it's...it's really hard to stand up and own the brokenness in our own stories. But she says it's a lot harder to spend your life running from that. And...

Elisa: That's so good.

Ellie Holcomb: ...and that...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: is what I did. And that was the main problem, cause I think if we aren't... And I...and I don't know why... I don't why the church makes it... I don't know why. I... No one ever said this to me. No one ever said "You have to be perfect." Na...not the preacher...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...not my parents. Like...but I just gathered, growing up in the church, that I needed to be okay. And I knew enough to be dangerous, yall, like I could confess things. Like I was like *Yeah, this is hard*. But I wouldn't really go all the way there. I just would ... I would like let some of it show and not really share all of it. And not that we need to share all of our brokenness with everyone all the time, but like I ... It does say in Scripture like "Confess your sins to one another, and you'll be healed." That's like not a popular verse that people like stitch, you know, on a little thing and put on a pillow...

[Laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: ...but like I have seen...

Eryn: You don't...you don't see that?



Ellie Holcomb: ...that in...in my life. Like there is freedom. It's not...that's not a... a shaming...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...like directive from God. It's *Don't let this stuff fester in the dark. Bring it out into the light, cause My grace is big enough to cover it...*

Elisa: That's good. Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...Like ... And, actually, when you bring it out into the light, that is your story. *That's how you're gonna know that I'm real.* And so I...I am so grateful that...that I haven't missed out on the opportunities of knowing the depth an...and the breadth...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ... of God's love. I think if I wasn't willing to go to the... visit those broken places and – in the context of counseling and safe relationships – like share that with others, I don't... I don't know that I would understand the gospel in the way that I do now. And I'm... and I'm really... and in love and empathy ...eh... for myself even. I...I...I am the meanest to myself. I can self-hate...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...um...And I am...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...just slowly learning, over the years, to be like ... to be kind to myself...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...cause God is kind with us, and to...and to just come broken, tripping, and stumbling...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...to the foot of the cross.

Eryn: Aw, so good.



Ellie Holcomb: Yeah, I really...uh... Really what my counselor did that first time... She was like “Think about salsa.” And I was like “I love salsa, and I love you...um...What do you want to talk about?” And she was like “Well, you actually need intensive counseling, and you can choose. You could do mild, which will be coming in here once a year, talking through the year. Medium will be like on a need-to-know basis, like if you just need help working through a circumstance.” She was like “Hot’s gonna be looking like laying your personality out across the gospel, exposing some pretty serious sin patterns that are in your life, that you have no idea are there. It’s gonna be hard. You’re not going to want to come back a lot. So you can choose mild or medium, but if you do that, in about 10 to 12 years your life is going to fall apart. Or you can choose hot.”

Eryn: Wow!

Ellie Holcomb: And I was like very timidly, “Hot...”

Elisa: Hot maybe?

Ellie Holcomb: “...I guess?” But I also remember just thinking, *Oh, thank God!* Like I... cause I knew that something was off. I didn’t even know how to put my finger on it, but I just had had all this pain, all these wounds...um... from...from the time I was a very young girl to current ...eh... that I had stuffed. And, as it turns out, God is a Healer. Like He comes to tend to our wounds and to bind up broken hearts. And I knew that in my head, but I was too scared to give Him my broken heart. So...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I...um... To move just quickly from that and the freedom that I started experiencing, because my counselor just repeated the invitation that Jesus gives to all of us, that where there’s truth, there is freedom. And...uh... I started being honest with my doubts, with my fear...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...with all of these things in my life that I had...mistakes that I had made, that I was so ashamed of and just hid from everyone. And I found out that I could be completely known. I had always been completely known and yet was still completely loved. And the freedom that I experienced ...eh... starting in my relationship with the Lord, trickling down to my relationship with my husband, and now every other relationship. It is ...um... it is a freedom like I’ve never known. And it is ...um...



Eryn: Wow.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I... So I sensed, in this season, I was touring with my husband's band...um... growing, and really sensed this desire. We took our little girl. We have three kids now, but at the time ...um... we had our little girl, our first baby, Emmylou, on the road with us at two weeks. By the time she was six months, she had been to 32 states and Canada! And we were like not on a tour bus, yall. We were like in a conversion van. You know like it was like she was in her car seat...

Eryn: I love it!

Ellie Holcomb: ...sweet girl for like...

Eryn: I love it.

Ellie Holcomb: ...you know, a very large portion of her ...uh... first year of life. And I just started sensing that I needed to go home and...and let her walk, not in a bar. I mean it's crazy. I have like ... anyway. She was just in a lot of bars and clubs and ... and theaters...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And that was a beautiful thing, cause it was our family. But I just sensed...

Eryn: Sure.

Ellie Holcomb: ...that maybe I needed...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...to be home with her. But we had built this whole career together, so it felt like a crazy thing. But I had started writing songs. I was memorizing Scripture with a friend of mine ...um... who battles depression. Sorry I'm getting choked up, yall, ...um... I'm just still doing life with her, and I'm really grateful for God's Word, because what we...what we realized is ...uh... that it wasn't enough. There are so many lies that we believe, and it wasn't enough for us to just acknowledge the lies. Like we needed to ground ourselves in what was true. So we started memorizing God's Word together. And what that did for us is that it gave us solid ground to stand on when the shame storms started rolling in. And we found out that God's not lying when He says that His Word is "alive and active and sharper than any double-edged sword" and just "like the rains that fall from the heavens and don't return to the heavens without first



nourishing the earth and causing it to bud and flourish,” that’s His Word that goes out of His mouth. It will accomplish the purposes for which He sent it. And as we started memorizing God’s Word, we’re not very good at it, but it started changing us. And it didn’t change our circumstances, but it... it changed us from the inside out. And...um... and has continued...it continues to do that...uh... And I’m so grateful for that. And so I started writing songs. I was trying to write for my husband’s band. He’s in the Americana like triple-A radio world, ...um... not really making like a... CCM music, for sure, but just writing about his life and...and faith. But we, you know ... anyway, so I just kept accidentally writing songs about Jesus. And I was like “I’m so sorry. I wrote another one about the Lord.” And...

[Laughter]

Eryn: That so _____...

Ellie Holcomb: ...um...It was amazing! And...and so this was when I had just found out that I was pregnant with Emmylou. I was...I was memorizing Scripture and then writing Scripture in a song to help me hang on to these truths that I don’t believe a lot of days, honestly, like that I have a hard time...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...believing. And I’m like *Maybe if I can sing this, it’ll help me believe it.* And so I just thought I was writing for myself and for my friend. And...um...and Drew, my husband, was so amazing. He was just like, “Hey, Ell, don’t feel like you need to write for our band, like just write what’s coming out of you...

Elisa: Hmm.

Ellie Holcomb: ...like just lean into that.” And for whatever reason – I don’t think I needed his permission to do that – but when he said that, it was like a fire lit under me. And by the end of that nine months, before Emmylou was born, I had a little girl to hold and then like about 47 new songs to sing...

Elisa: Wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ...and ...um...

Eryn: Wow!



Ellie Holcomb: ...So I ...eh... And, again, I just thought they were for me. And then about, you know, when she turned about a year old, I sensed God saying “*Stay home.*” And then about six months after I got off the road, which was a crazy financial decision for our family. It didn’t make any sense like...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I sensed God saying *Okay, would you be willing, basically, to go play these songs for people?* And I was like, *Nope...*

Elisa: Because...because...

Ellie Holcomb: ...*absolutely not!* ... [laughing] ...

Elisa: ...Ellie, you were never going to be a musician, so you’re on the road...

Eryn: Right.

Elisa: ...with your husband and his band. And you’re a new mom, and suddenly you start writing. And so this process... and...and you shared about all this pain that you’d been in and all this therapy ...

Ellie Holcomb: Yep.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...So ...eh... if I’m – and I’m way up here at the, you know, the big sa... thirty-thousand-foot looking at your life, you know, I’m seeing this thread weaving your pain from your childhood. Normal stuff, probably, but maybe you could go into...

[speaking simultaneously]

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah, it’s really normal stuff...

Elisa: ...that a little bit more, but stuff you...you had to make...

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah, we can...

Elisa: ...that weaves into a...a calling. It weaves into a...a sacred offering...



Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...that you never anticipated.

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah. It's really beautiful, and it was ... I was so scared when I sensed that call, cause I just... I think I saw music be hard on families and...

Eryn: Mmm.

Ellie Holcomb: ...as a kid. And I was just like *Oh, not doing that!* But it... what I ... the...really it...the songs are definitely a part of what I sense God calling me to share. But I...what I really felt like He was asking me to do is ... [loud intake of breath] ... *Would you be...* We weren't playing for churches very often at all, but I've asked tha... I just felt like ...um... He was saying *The Church is full of a lot of hurting people too. And would you be willing to go be broken in front of...of people in the Church?* And I was like *No!* [Laughter]... *I don't want to do that at all!*

Elisa: It's one thing to choose...

Ellie Holcomb: I was one of those people!

[laughter]

Elisa: ...hot salsa with your therapist. It's another thing to choose hot salsa with the public. Yeah!
[Laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: Elise, I say it all the time in shows, cause I'm...I'll like tear up during a show. And I'm like *Cool! I'll just be in counseling in front of all you guys. This is great! Okay!* But it...

[Loud laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: ...That is exactly right. It is a super vulnerable ...um...

Eryn: Yeah.



Ellie Holcomb: ...thing, but...but just like you said, Elise, that's such a beautiful way of... of a broader view of... And...and...and then you look at the broader view of the gospel, and that is like... It is a God-Man who was broken, whose pain ...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...weaves into all of our pain...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...and redeems it, like offers ...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...a way through it. And ...um...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...and ...uh... And this next record that I've been working on is...is so much about that process of just ...um...of going into...I... So ...and if...if my dad was here, he would say this...uh... "Beige Handrail" would say it ...uh... [laughter]... but ...um... He was gone for so much of my childhood. He was so passionate about this work that God was calling him to. And...um... he would say, looking back, he was a workaholic. So he just missed a lot of my childhood. And when my daughter went to kindergarten, all of the sudden ...uh... But...but, also, when I went to college, God just changed his heart, y'all, called him home. Like he still was working, but he moved his studio home. He was like *I have missed it. I am so sorry. I love y'all so much, and I...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...*The two things that I have to offer you ... [getting choked up here] ... are repentance and Jesus, and to say "I'm here and I love you."* And ...uh... that has given me so much freedom as a mom, to know, like, I don't have to get...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...this thing totally right. I won't for sure, cause ash...as it turns out, like, I'm just a human... [Laughter] ...and so...um... But to know that we ...uh... because of who Jesus is and because



of how He loves and because of what He did on the cross and because He walked out of a grave, we can come and say *I didn't get that right, and...and I need...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...*forgiveness*. And there is forgiveness for the taking.

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And He came and said that. And there was so much healing and restoration. And he's made all my records with me, which is crazy full circle like...

Elisa: Your dad – wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ...wild moment. Feels like, you know, like God restoring the years that the locusts have eaten...

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I mean at... We were ... mentioned our friend Matt Ingle earlier, Eryn, and...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...and we went on this radio tour together. And we'd talk about like: Isn't it crazy that the thing that took my dad away from us we're doing together and...

Eryn: Aww!

Ellie Holcomb: ...partnering together on. It's so beautiful. But when my little girl went...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...to kindergarten, which wa...you know is several years ago now, it set off this whole thing in me...um... because Dad...So much has been healed and restored. I just realized there was a lot of stuff in my childhood that I...that I just never grieved. I was at all these things in kindergarten, and I was like *Oh my gosh! My dad wasn't at this. Oh my good...* And just this...



Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...you know this like sense of loss. And in the midst of all of that – God is so kind...um... And I ended up ...uh... just asking one day, on my face, like kind of grieving, letting myself grieve all that, in counseling again ...um... about it, and I ended up on my face asking God, you know, *Where were You during all of this?* Like...

Eryn: Aw.

Ellie Holcomb: And, man, yall, I ... The only way I can describe it is it... is just as if God ... It was like the Ghost of Christmas Past or something, taking me to all these memories – some of which I remember, some of which I don't. And in every single time, every single place where there was a wound – whether it was from my dad being gone or from a heart getting broken – I was in a really hard relationship, abuse...some abusive stuff ...uh... in college. And any mo...one of those moments, ...um... God just showed me this picture that He had been there the whole time. It's like the Ms. Doubtfire scene, you know. The whole time...the whole...the whole time...

Eryn: Yeah, yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...You know, you're like: *You were there the whole time?!!*

Eryn: Right.

Ellie Holcomb: ...It is... And so I think what I've seen as I get older and ...um... as I become more aware of...of the brokenness in me and the brokenness in my past, the brokenness in our world, ...um... there is this capacity to hold sorrow and to kinda lean into those broken places that just... It's like *Why would He...* I'm a 7 on the Enneagram – I hate pain. I'm like *Why would I go...why would I go near that...*

Eryn: Me too...

Ellie Holcomb: ...and like rest there...

Eryn: Me too, Ellie!

Ellie Holcomb: ...Yeah, it just is like *That sounds like THE last thing that I want to do.* But the beautiful thing in doing that ...



Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...in drawing near to that, ... [music starts and builds] ... those broken places that just feel so jacked up that you're like ...eh... the places that you still have questions. You're like *God, why did it go down like that? Like I'm going to ask You that when I get on the other side of Glory. Like why did this story turn out that way?* ...um... I wouldn't have written it that way. In those moments, I can go back to even those and ...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...uh... see the presence and the love of God, and the tears of God like this "Man of sorrows" meeting me in those places. And...um... and so my capacity for ... it's not in spite of the sorrow in my life that I can say that God is real. It's like I know He's real more because of it. Like because I've seen Him show up in these broken places. And, yall, the...the ... the way that He continues to ...um... heal the relationship with my dad and my mom. And I was able to share with them just through the journey that God had me on. I'm like *Yall...* I'm like "Dad, when you weren't there, guess Who was? God!!" [Laughter] ... And...and...and then, for that to just inform and bring even more healing to our whole family. It has just been... it has been so...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...so beautiful.

[Music transition]

Elisa: And when we come back, Ellie will share with us some of her personal experiences of God meeting her in the deepest, darkest, desert moments. And she'll also speak direct encouragement to the moments when you and I don't feel like God does hear us. This is *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Thank you for listening to this *God Hears Her* podcast. Elisa and I love sharing this space with you, and we want to invite you to become an even bigger part of our *God Hears Her* community by signing up for our weekly email newsletters. We'll keep you updated on new podcasts, encouraging blog posts, exciting new products, and so much more. Just go to godhearsheer.org and sign up today. That's godhearsheer.org. Now back to the show.

[Music transition]



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

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Eddy. And in just a moment, Ellie will talk to us about dark times of the soul and the common question we can find ourselves asking during those moments. But before we do, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but they also include a link to a free resource. It's a free eBooklet titled *Going the Distance: Practices to Strengthen Your Faith*. This digital download explores spiritual disciplines and how applying these practices to your life impacts your run towards the ultimate goal – living like Jesus. This download is yours for free. Just click on the link in the podcast description on our website godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org. Now back to our conversation with Ellie. What has inspired me the most about the first part of our conversation is that Ellie still shows up, even in the moments when she knows she's messy. And by doing that, she's able to write books and music that sit with another person, like me, to make them feel less alone and for them to feel God's grace and glory even in their darkest moments.

Elisa: And I think that's where we get that word "grit," Eryn, a...a commitment to doing the hard thing and allowing God use it. And that's where we pick up the conversation. Ellie provides more stories and examples of God showing up, sometimes even with a bright and beaming spotlight. But she also addresses the moments when we don't feel like God can hear us, and provides encouragement for those dark times. This is *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Ellie, when I was reading the lyrics, I love to la...eh... Whenever I listen to new songs, I pull up the lyrics so I can just kinda be one with the song...

Ellie Holcomb: I love that so much!

Eryn: ...like hear it and read it. And I have this line out that just stuck out to me. And I want to ask you about it, like where did this line come from? You say, "How many miles does my soul have to drive before Love can collide with the mess in my life?" And then I love...you say it later on, like, "Tell me that I'm not alone." And it just feels like there's a plea there. Like *Please tell me I'm not alone*. "Memories of darkness undone by the light, reminding me You are right here by my side." The...eh...I...there's... I mean I could read the whole song. Why don't I just do ... read the whole song?

[Laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: Okay. So...



Elisa: Or we could have her sing it. Yeah.

Eryn: But...

Ellie Holcomb: That's awesome!

Eryn: ...um... But the... “How many miles does my soul have to drive before Love can collide with the mess in my life?” Would you like... would you unpack that...

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah...

Eryn: ...lyric of what that meant to you? Where it came from?

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah, absolutely. So I had the privilege of writing that song with Jon Guerra and David Leonard. And we had never written together before, and we were just all... ended up talking about these different dark nights of the soul that we had been through. And, for me, that pertained to a ton of ... just a...about a season four years of ...um... just like seemingly senseless loss. Everything from a dear friend's ...uh... walking through ...or a family member's walking through infertility, walking through loss. I had two friends who lost children, and a friend checking into rehab, to cancer, and then my dad walked through a cancer journey. And so it just was one of those seasons where it just felt... Everything felt...uh... really hopeless and dry and dark – desert...desert land. And ... and these other ...uh... guys were sharing their own stories of that. And...um... one of the stories that one of them told was...uh... la... He literally was driving across the desert, trying to make sense of...after one of these dark nights of the soul. And he just was screaming in the desert, you know, just driving alone from California back home to...uh... the east side of the country. And said “*God, where are You? Where are You, God?*” And...uh...he said literally, like “*Can You even hear me?*” I think is what he said. And, literally, he turned around this bend, and he said the moon was rising – cause that happens in the desert, which is kinda crazy. We're not totally used to that in the hills of Tennessee...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...and in the East...

Eryn: Yeah.



Ellie Holcomb: ...But...uh... he said the moon ... It was almost like that scene in “The Truman Show.” It was just like this spotlight. And it was this moment where he was like *God sees me!* Like *Do You even hear me?*” and it was just like ...

Elisa: Kaboom!

[Laughter]

Eryn: ... “Yes, I do!”

Elisa: Wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ... [loud intake of breath] ... *Oh my gosh! You do hear me!* And ...um...

Eryn: Mmm.

Ellie Holcomb: ...I just... I love ... I love that story because that is like a physical story of what I have seen God do over and over and over again, is see me and show up and weep with me when I am weeping. I love that...that God’s a “Man of sorrows, well acquainted with grief.” And...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And ...um... I have known His nearness ...um... in...in times when I have grieved. And so ... and because of that ...um... I can move forward in a different way through grief. But I have to remind myself ...um... And so that’s why I write songs like “Constellations,” cause I forget, you know? I get scared. I get...we get scared...

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And...um...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...as it turns out, “there’s no fear in love.” And so ...um... I think the beautiful thing of that is ...um... I have a friend who...who has a little boy who was getting a cast off. And he was wiggling out. They turn that ... [makes a high-pitched drill noise] ...



Elisa: [laughing] Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...saw on, you know...

Elisa: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...to saw the cast off. And he was just ... [laughter] ... losing his mind!

[speaking simultaneously]

Elisa: You'd think you'd take the arm off...

Ellie Holcomb: ...And...uh...crawling up on top of...

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...her. Right. Yeah. He's like *What are you ga... What are they gonna do to me?*
...uh...like *My arm is already broken. It doesn't need to...*

Elisa: ...be sawed off!

Ellie Holcomb: ...*No, don't take it off!* And his amazing mom, my friend Sarah looked at him. An...and she said, "Are you afraid right now?" And he's kinda looking at her like...

Elisa: Ya!

Ellie Holcomb: ... Yeah...do... "Yeah, I'm afraid." And she goes, "Okay, I can see that. What if you're allowed to be afraid right now? I...I...I can see that you're afraid...eh...but I want you to look in my face right now. Am I... Do I look afraid to you?" And he's like, "No." And she's like "Do you see this nurse over here? Look at her face. Does she look afraid to you?" And the nurse was like ... [makes a strange noise] ... like *What are we doing here?* But ...uh...

[Laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: ...but...eh...he looked at the nurse and he's like, "No, she doesn't look afraid." She's like "What if you're allowed to be afraid, but you can sit here on my lap and look..." ...eh...Sorry ... [getting choked up] ... "and look at my face? Do you think that you could do this then?" And he said, "Yeah." And



...uh...I just ... I love that story. And she said that a couple nights later she was, you know, trying to go to sleep like we all do some nights, and the worries start circulating in the...in...

Eryn: Ugh!

Ellie Holcomb: ...all the things and sh...

Eryn: They're so good at that at night, aren't they?

Ellie Holcomb: Oh, it's crazy! You're like *No, no, no, no! I wanna go to sleep, not worry about everything in my life.* And...and...and yet that is a lot of time, for me, when the panic attacks have come...eh...you know...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...in my own experience. And she's describing this. I'm like *I know exactly how that feels.* And she said, "I just sensed God say that same thing to me: *Are you afraid right now?*"

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Ellie Holcomb: ... *I can see that you're afraid. Okay. What if you're allowed to be afraid? Will you just sit with Me and look at My face?* ... [laughing?] ... and that just like...

Elisa: That's beautiful!

Ellie Holcomb: ...Oh man!

Elisa: That's beautiful.

Ellie Holcomb: ...If I can do that, I...I'd feel like I can do about ev...anything...

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...cause I know...I know the One who made me, who loves me, who's... who's been through this and...and walked...and made it through is...is right here.

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: To the...the women right now who are listening to our ... precious people, men and women, who are listening right now, and who really do feel too messed up, too in pain, ...um... terrified of the hot salsa counseling meetings, you know. To...to those people...

Ellie Holcomb: Yeah.

Elisa: ...what would you say right now in terms of how God hears them? You know wha...what kind of encouragement would you give them from this...this journey that you've been on?

Eryn: Mm.

Ellie Holcomb: I would just say that God is with you. He is with you, and He can handle your anger, and He can handle your hurt. He can hold it all. He can take it into Himself. And He has been...He has been there. He has been there with you, and it...and He's also walked out of a grave. And because of that your suffering – whatever sorrow you are experiencing – it does not have the final word! It's doesn't have the final word. And I would just encourage you ...I...I...I ...I don't ...It is...it is a paradox – and I think a lot of the gospel is – but I would encourage you to find a safe person that you can walk with. [Laughing] ... um...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...But also know that He is ... He can handle... you can come to Him. He's a safe space...eh... And then I'm thinking of C.S. Lewis, and it's like "He's not safe, and He's good." And I think that line from *The Lion, the Witch, and the Wardrobe*, when He's not safe, it doesn't mean that we're not safe with Him and that our stories and our brokenness isn't safe...

Elisa: That's good. Yeah. Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...with Him...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...It means that you can't be around Him and not be changed.

Elisa: Mmm.



Ellie Holcomb: ... Like your heart ...

Eryn: That's right.

Ellie Holcomb: ...is gonna be transformed because you can't help ... when you come completely through the door like a broken mess with nothing to offer, and you encounter love and generosity and empathy and kindness and mercy and grace that is available to us in the presence of God, you don't walk away the same.

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...And it's not safe, and it's not easy visiting our deepest pain. It...it just isn't...um...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...But I...I was...I just had the opportunity to ... to go to the Grand Canyon. And...uh... it was a dream of a trip, and...and we went down... We were down into the canyon, yall. It is in a river that is freezing cold...um... And lu...when we went, we camped down there. ...um... And when we were going to bed, they ...it... They were...the guides were telling us, they were like "Hey, don't go to sleep too soon, because there's something that happens when you're in such a deep canyon like this." ...uh... that... It's called like "the rim effect." I don't know if that's the scientific term, but basically because there is no ambient light ... Because of how dark ...

Elisa: Oh wow! Wow...

Ellie Holcomb: ...it is down here...

Elisa: ...Scary!

Ellie Holcomb: ...the stars seem like they are right in front of your face. And they are brighter...

Eryn: Wow!

Ellie Holcomb: ...They appear brighter and closer than you could... eh... than is scientifically possible. Like I...it just...

Eryn: Wow!



Ellie Holcomb: ...So I wa...woke up that night many times, mainly cause it was 110 degrees...

[Laughter]

Elisa: That'll do it! Yeah, yeah!

[Laughter]

Ellie Holcomb: ...But I have never ... I have never... And then I literally went and jumped in a fifty-degree cold river with all my sheets and blankets. That's what they told us to do, and I was like *Cool! I'm NOT doing that!* And that I woke up in the middle of the night, and I was like *Cool! I'm gonna go jump in the river.* ... um... But I...but it was one of the most beautiful ... [music starts and builds] ...experiences of my life, because I felt like I had this physical experience of what I've seen in my own story, that the darkest, most messed up, most broken places in my life have been where I've seen the light of Christ show up in the most...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...bright and stunning and...and powerful way. Those are the stories that I tell. It's about Jesus. It's not *I did this all right. And this is how you should do it all right too.* [Laughing] ...

Eryn: Yeah.

Ellie Holcomb: ...It's like *I have nothing for you in that _____ [lane?].* But I've...I guess I would just say: Christ – He's the light of the world, and He is brighter than your darkness. And He is with you, even if you can't see Him. You know, even if you're in the middle of a storm, and you can't see the stars, they're still shining. And...um...and I would say I'm sorry for whatever you're going through. And you're not alone. And I can't wait to hear the stories you'll tell of...of being in a...in a canyon place and finding light and then a river running through.

[Music transition]

Eryn: That imagery of sitting at the bottom of the Grand Canyon. Whoa! Isn't that just a perfect metaphor for when we are in the deepest, darkest places? And God continues to show up. This is *God Hears Her.*



Elisa: And before we close out today's episode, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but also include a link to a free resource. It's a free digital download titled *Going the Distance: Practices to Strengthen Your Faith*. This digital download explores spiritual disciplines and how applying these practices to our lives can impact our run toward the ultimate goal – living like Jesus. This download is yours for free. Just click on the link in the podcast description on our website, godhearsher.org.

Eryn: Not only will you find a link to this free digital download, but the show notes also contain a link to sign up for the *God Hears Her* newsletter, featuring helpful articles and stories from women just like you who are discovering what it means to be seen and heard by God. And you can also find links to connect with Elisa and me on social. We'd love to hear how this show has impacted you and even answer any questions you might have after listening. So, again, you can find these links in the show notes or by visiting our website at godhearsher.org. That's [godhearsher.o-r-g](http://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 transition]

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark and Daniel Ryan Day. And we also want to thank a moment to thank Melissa and Rochelle for their help in creating and promoting the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thank you, friends.

[Music]

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