



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 40 - Out of the Dust

Eryn Eddy and Elisa Morgan with Chris and Stephanie Teague

Teaser:

(music)

Stephanie: Had God not redeemed our marriage, the work that He did in our hearts, the work that happened just through Jesus, that would have been enough. That's something we always want to tell people, is that we do live in a broken world. Sin breaks things. We don't always get the redemption that we want. That grieves the Lord as much as it does us, but there is purpose in it all. There is always redemption, whether that's of the relationship being redeemed or just the redemption that take place in your heart. He doesn't waste any of it.

(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.

Eryn:

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

Elisa:

And I'm Elisa Morgan. And today we want to share a story of God's restoration. Chris and Stephanie Teague are here to talk to us about the destruction and then reconstruction of their marriage. It's a unique story with a surprising outcome.

Eryn:

But first, some backstory on Chris and Stephanie... this husband and wife comprise the musical duo Out of the Dust where their story of heartbreak, downfall, and miraculous redemption is woven deep into the fabric of their music. They had the 'quote on quote' fairy-tale start to their marriage. They met in youth group and married young, but then it took a turn. Secrets, alter-egos, drugs and pride until their three-year old marriage quickly collapsed into divorce.

Elisa:

Heartbreaking, yes, but God wasn't done with their story. He worked a miracle and eventually brought them back together when the timing was right. and today they're going to share that entire journey with us! This is *God Hears Her*.

(music)

Eryn:



Elisa, I am so excited to have this couple in front of us right now. Chris and Stephanie, thank you so much for joining us. One thing that I felt so inspired by as Elisa and I were talking about your story was how real, and honest, and raw you are. Would you take us back to how you guys met?

Stephanie:

Chris and I both were, gosh, in high school. We went to the same church. It was a very large here in Tennessee. Being in the youth group together, we still had never met because there were 200 teenagers in this youth group.

Eryn:

Oh wow.

Stephanie:

We had both signed up to go on a mission trip. It was supposed to be overseas, ended up being to Philadelphia. Good old Philadelphia.

That was how we met, was serving on this mission trip. From there, we started dating. We got married a couple years into college, which was crazy. It was a quick whirlwind of a little high-school-sweetheart romance.

Eryn:

Wait. How long did you all date before you got married?

Stephanie:

We had been dating-

Chris:

It was three years.

Stephanie:

Three years. Yes, about three years.

Eryn:

Oh my goodness. How old were both of you all at that time?

Chris:

19 and 20.

Stephanie:

Yes, when we got married.

Chris:

I was 20, and she was 19.



Elisa:

That's pretty young.

Chris:

We were youngins.

Elisa:

How'd that marriage go?

Eryn:

Yes, exactly. Good question.

Chris:

Well, we had no idea what we were doing. I think we made a lot of mistakes, but one of the biggest ones that we made was, I think, first, just not even being old enough to know ourselves. That's not to say that people can't get married when they're young.

Eryn:

Sure.

Elisa:

Sure.

Chris:

It became a strength because we grew up together. We found ourselves together. I think one of the biggest mistakes we made was, A, not having great and lengthy pre-marital counseling, and then, B, just not having a community of people who were asking us hard questions and people who we could be authentic with. We weren't our authentic selves.

Stephanie:

Yes, I just think you don't know what you don't know when you're young. For us-

Elisa:

Right.

Eryn:

It's so true.

Stephanie:

From the outside, we were doing all the right things. We were that young Christian married couple serving in the church. We were on several different ministry teams. It looked from the outside like we were doing everything right. For me, as the first year of marriage, really started struggling. And I just thought, "You



know what? It'll get better. We just got to push through it. We're in school. We're working. It's just a rough patch." Just ignorant to know, to even ask, to ask for help, or to know what was normal.

Elisa:

I think that's really insightful.

Eryn:

It's so true.

Elisa:

It's hard to understand when we're young what we don't know because we think we're supposed to know, especially when we're young. I mean, I'm old now. I'm like, I know I don't know anything. I mean, I'm really clear on that. When I was young, I thought I was supposed to know. It was very, very difficult to admit that I didn't know or to ask for help because I thought, "I should have this. I've got Jesus."

Eryn:

Now when you said you don't know what you don't know. We didn't know we weren't being authentic. I mean, what would you tell yourself now then, to be able to bridge that?

Elisa:

Oh good. That was a therapeutic question, Eryn.

Stephanie:

So many things.

Chris:

I would say, man, I don't even know where to start. To go back to the point, feeling like you didn't even know to ask and you felt like you had to have it all together, I think to know that there are older people and wiser people who would jump at the chance to speak into your life, at any stage of life, but especially at that young age, to just walk with humility, and understand that you don't know what you're doing, and to just have other people in your life who know the questions that you don't even know to ask.

Stephanie:

I think for me, when I think of my 21, 22-year-old self, I think I would want her to know that it's okay. It's okay to struggle. It's okay to fail because I very much am the... I don't like to fail, for one. I'm an achiever. All throughout school, I was always top of my class, all that. Failing just wasn't a thing. I shouldn't struggle. I should be able to, in my own strength, get through this, kind of thing. For me, I think that would have been freeing for somebody to tell me that, "You don't have to know it all. You don't have to have it all together. There are people who can help you through this. That's okay. That's not a failure."

Chris:

That's so good. I think I resonate with that too because I'm super curious; I like to ask lots of questions. I kind of push the boundaries. Growing up in Protestantism, there's a lot of pressure to have the right



answers. Here's the answers. To have someone give me the freedom to say, "No, push, and ask, and seek, and find," would have been really freeing for me.

Eryn:

You all were married, newly married, feeling like you had this pressure to make it happen, make it work. This is a season. There were some hardship in school, so you felt like this is just a season. Do you feel like what was a season was really turning into a lifestyle and the culture in your marriage?

Chris:

We were working. We were in college, like you said. When I was in college, I was going to the school for music. I'm a performer, so that was kind of my path. I was asking lots of questions about faith. I was doing the often young person's journey of making your faith your own and asking tough faith questions: Do I believe in God? Why do I believe in God? Is God real? Is God there? Does He care?

While those two happened at the same time, it probably wasn't the best recipe for a kid who grew up kind of staying in the lines, not pressing boundaries, not sowing wild oats, because I had all those questions. My father was an alcoholic and into drugs. I didn't know him in my life intimately, but I had that kind of buried deep within me.

I started seeking, and asking questions, and finding the wrong answers in the wrong places. I started getting into drugs and alcohol. A lot of that, just out of shame. I was living this life on stage of having it all together, but behind the scenes, I'm asking all these questions and didn't feel safe to ask that. The drugs and the alcohol offered me some sort of playcation or escape for that. I didn't tell anybody. I wasn't sharing that with Stephanie or-

Eryn:

Wow.

Chris:

Anybody in our life. Everybody just thought everything was fine. If you could imagine, duplicitousness, being two-faced can damage a relationship, especially a marriage, a young marriage at that. It just ripped me apart, and it created a lot of turmoil in our marriage too.

Elisa:

Man. What happened? What happened to your marriage?

Stephanie:

I knew. I knew that we were struggling. I felt the pulling-away, but again, I just thought, "It's okay." I was finishing up my graduate degree. It just was busy. It's fine. I just kept thinking, "Well, if I bring stuff up, our communication is not great right now." I just kept trying to assume the best, which is not... Obviously, hindsight is 20/20. I just didn't press in. I didn't press into the warning signs.

Stephanie:

One night... We always went to eat in my parents' house with my family on Thursday nights back then. Right before we were about to go, Chris sat me down. He said, "Hey, let's talk for a minute." The words



that came out of his mouth were, "I don't believe in God anymore, and I don't want to be married anymore."

Elisa:

Whoa. How long had you all been married then?

Stephanie:

Almost three.

Eryn:

Almost three years.

Elisa:

That's a crushing thing.

Eryn:

What was your immediate response to that? Your feelings? I mean, that's crushing.

Stephanie:

I couldn't even process it. I mean, not only was I never, ever expecting to hear either of those statements come out of my husband's mouth, I just... it's like my brain couldn't compute what was happening. It's such a blur, some of it. Chris says that there were 30 minutes where I just didn't say anything because I didn't know how to say anything. I just couldn't make sense.

Chris:

I feel like I didn't even know you back then because it all... That makes sense to me now.

Stephanie:

How I handled it.

Chris:

You say now, "When I get news, I think of a thousands things." I process things slowly.

Stephanie:

That's so true.

Chris:

Her mind was just... all the thousand ways, all the details that had instantly changed about her life and what she was trying to do to control it, I think, would be-

Stephanie:

Just complete disbelief because that was never supposed to be a part of my story.



Elisa:

Chris, can I ask you? Is there anything that made you stop believing in God in that season? You said you were asking questions, kind of doing the normal young-adult stuff of making your faith your own. Why did you come to a, no, not for me?

Chris:

I think it was a lot of different things. I didn't know that there were Christians who asked the same questions that I did. I thought it was like, here's the answers that Christianity has to the questions that you have. I wasn't really satisfied with the typical answers.

I think at the same time, I also was kind of looking for a way out. I think I had done all the right things. I'd married a good girl. I had done the right things. I had gone to college. My family... You got to do that. I was still just so unhappy. I didn't really know what to do with those feelings, so I was probably looking for a way out.

On the same side of that coin, I was also into drugs, and parties, and living life the way I wanted to live it. If you remove God from that situation, the marriage covenant that I made, the promises that I made, well, I don't really have to follow that. I could do what I want to do, and be who I want to be, and not have to worry about it, and feel guilty.

Stephanie:

I mean, we spent about a month after that night still living together, trying to... I was just trying to understand. I mean, obviously, trying to change his mind, trying to understand how in the world he could have reached that point without me knowing. There was just nothing. There was nothing I could do. There was nothing I could say. There was nothing anybody could do or say.

We had some really great relationships in our church of some guys and our pastors that tried to reach out to him. Chris was very cordial through it all. He wasn't angry. He was willing to talk to people, but his mind was made up.

Eryn:

Chris, what caused you to stay in the house for a month after? Stephanie, what caused you to keep him? What was that month like for you?

Chris:

It was really hard. I knew that I was in for it, if that makes sense. I knew that everybody was going to come running to our defense. It was, "We love you, and we care about you. We don't want to see you go through with this." Sadly, I'd made up my mind. I guess maybe I felt in my life, sort of cornered. I'd made all these decisions, and it didn't turn out the way I thought it would or how I just assumed that it would. I felt like that was the only answer.

In a way, it was like, I don't know what else to do. I didn't really understand myself all that well.

Stephanie:

I think, too, you've said before, so I know I'm not speaking for you. You've said before that I think you still... You didn't want to hurt me.

Chris:



Mm-mm.

Stephanie:

That wasn't your intention. You knew what you wanted.

Chris:

Please speak for me.

Stephanie:

No. I mean, you were conscious about like, I don't want to come across as the bad guy more than I have to. I think that was part of it.

Elisa:

But you wanted to get a divorce.

Chris:

Yes.

Elisa:

Did you?

Chris:

Yes. I've described it as being an iron fist with a velvet glove, very decided, but very kind and cordial. I sought a divorce lawyer very quickly. Stephanie moved out. I pulled the trigger pretty quickly. Things were finalized after five months, six months.

Eryn:

Wow.

Elisa:

Is it okay, Eryn, if we go here? I think a lot of women listening have been in Stephanie's shoes. Maybe not the whole alter-ego thing, but the being-left thing. Eryn, you've been in that spot too. I wonder if you all can speak to the woman listening right now about how you just lived in those days.

Eryn:

Yes. I was just going to share with... I identify with both of you all's story because I see my story interlaced. I got married when I was 21. Dated my former husband when I was 17. I found myself going through a divorce at 29. I did all the good Christian things you're supposed to do, right, performance-based.

In my early 20s, I did music too, Chris. I knew how to perform well. I knew how to make people feel good and inspired. I desired that. Deep down, I did. Somewhere along the way, when I was seven, I believed a lie. It just was a slow-drip, that if I perform well, do things right, I'll be loved and live a fulfilling life.



When I found myself, 29, going through separation, divorce, and there is deception and betrayal on both sides of our stories, I decided I've done all the right things. God, it was a great run. I'm going to go and run my own way. I'm going to pursue my own way, my own quote on quote "truth". I'm going to live a lifestyle that fills voids. It was void filler.

Two things, though, when I went through, it was like I had longed for nine years in a marriage for honesty, and I never experienced that. I never saw hope. There was a lot of destruction and just a lot of darkness. Then when I was out, there was still that because I personally wasn't rooted in truth, but I had desired for... Maybe there could still be a recovery or redemption. Maybe we will reconcile.

There was a lot of divide, and a lot of dysfunction, and a lot of just mess. And at one point I had to accept the reality and believe that, Lord, maybe this is not going to be the reality that my marriage will ever come back, but I do believe you restore in different ways. Maybe just not in the way that I want restoration.

I share that to ask, what would you share with a marriage that you don't know how God's going to restore? You know He loves to restore, and it's so beautiful how much He restored y'all's marriage because you all came back. What did that journey look like? Then to also speak into the woman that maybe feeling hopeless and wondering if being hopeful is starting to become destructive.

Stephanie:

Oh man, there's so much in that. Thank you for sharing that. As our band, Out of the Dust, we do get messages every single day from women, generally women, who are in the middle of it, who have very similar stories. I mean, obviously, the best thing we can do is just speak from our story, and what God did, and what we learned.

For me, once divorce was on the table, I had prayed. I had pleaded. I had done all the things, argued with the Lord, everything. Finally, got to a place where I felt God tell me that a paper doesn't determine what I'm going to do. Signing a paper.

I had watched one of my best friends walk through a pretty hard divorce just the year before, very similar. I had seen just a lot of the pain that was caused in that process. I felt released to sign the papers because I had sent Chris... We were just emailing at that time. I had emailed him and said, "This is not what I want. I'm still willing to fight for this, but if this is what you want, then I'm going to respect that. I'm going to sign it."

Fast forward, at that point, knowing everything I had tried, nothing worked, right? I'm so black and white, and problem solver. Nothing had worked. That left me in just the most desperate of places. For me, you read through the Psalms. That was my heart. It was just, God, where are you? Where are you in the middle of this? Why is this happening? I did the right things, right?

Eryn:

Yes, exactly right.



Elisa:

Gosh.

Stephanie:

I didn't get the pat on the back, "You're right. You did the right things." God so graciously showed me my own heart and my own sin that I brought into it because it was really easy for me to feel like I was the righteous one. I mean, everybody could see it, right? Chris was the one that left.

Eryn:

Right.

Stephanie:

I didn't want that. My sin was just... I was a lot better at hiding it. There was a lot of pride, a lot of self-righteousness, and just bitterness, judgment, all the heart stuff, right, the heart stuff that's really easy to hide. This was the summer of 2010. That was the summer of really learning to allow God to refine me in that process of that pain and just to let go of the control. Oh my goodness. It was the hardest thing because I felt security in being in control of my life. I had got thrown into something where I could not control anything around me.

Elisa:

Wow.

Stephanie:

As much as I had grown up in the church and I'd always said, "God, I'm yours. I'll go where you want me to go," I was just clinging with closed fists to everything that I could. That process... Obviously, it takes time. To fast forward, just that process of learning to let go... It really also just illuminated where I was finding my identity.

Eryn:

Wow.

Stephanie:

For me, my identity was in being that good Christian girl. It was in being a wife. That was where I was finding my worth. Going through that and really seeing, no, my worth is in being a daughter of the King. The day that I stopped wearing my wedding ring, I replaced it with a ring that said, "I am my Beloved's, and my Beloved is mine," which a lot of people use for relationships. For me, it was just, I needed that reminder that I was a daughter of the King.

Elisa:

You did your work. You did your work.

Stephanie:

I did.



Elisa:

The Lord just really directed you to you.

Stephanie:

It's hard.

Eryn:

It is.

Stephanie:

It's a hard work, but it was so necessary. We say it all the time from stage that had God not redeemed our marriage, the work that He did in our hearts, the work that happened just through Jesus, that would have been enough. That's something we always want to tell people, is that we do live in a broken world. Sin breaks things. We don't always get the redemption that we want. That grieves the Lord as much as it does us, but there is purpose in it all. There is always redemption, whether that's of the relationship being redeemed or just the redemption that take place in your heart. He doesn't waste any of it.

Eryn:

That's right.

(music)

Eryn: And when we come back, Chris and Stephanie will share about the unexpected restoration that they experienced... and they will also speak directly to those of us seeking God's restoration in our own relationships and how we can participate in our own transformation. This is *God Hears Her*.

(music)

Elisa: If you're a fan of this podcast, sign up for our *God Hears Her* email newsletter and find even more encouragement from women like you. These weekly emails are filled with stories you can relate to and other fun goodies that will brighten your walk with Jesus. Go to godhearsher.org and sign up today. That's godhearsher.ORG. Now back to the show.

Eryn: Who started the conversation as you guys were going to get back together?

Chris:

That was me.

Eryn:

It was you?!

Chris:



That was me. Our story is a lot of places and a lot of different ways. If you're interested, we've gone in-depth about what happened with me. Suffice it to say, all the checks that I was signing to the empty bank account of sin, of selfishness, they all bounced at the same time. I just-

Eryn:

It's a good way to put it.

Chris:

I went down fast and hard. God found me in the bottom of that pit at the end of myself. When I'd driven the car off the road and into the ditch of my own sin and selfishness, that was where God stepped in and said, "Okay. I can work with this. You've had your eyes closed for so long. You've been living in darkness willfully for so long, but now all that's been stripped away. I can work with this."

Thank God. I think we do play a part in our transformation and that we're sinfully willing to be transformed. I thank God that I said yes to His open hand. I started reading the Word, and asking hard questions, being vulnerable, like Stephanie said, in the Psalms, bringing my doubts, my fear, my pain, my anger to God.

He just started showing up and answering my prayers. I started hearing this still, small whisper, "Maybe there's still hope for you and Stephanie." I think maybe in the back of my mind, I always wanted to believe it was true, but I certainly didn't believe that voice right away. It took several weeks, maybe even a month or so, before I got up the bravado to call Stephanie's parents first to say-

Eryn:

Oh wow.

Elisa:

Good move.

Chris:

I think they were just so grieved for... I think in some ways, Stephanie said this before, that it hurt them more than it hurt Stephanie in some ways to see their daughter just so ravaged.

Stephanie:

Well, and they saw you as a son.

Chris:

We talked. Stephanie's mom called her and say, "Hey. Some stuff is going on. Chris wants to talk." I came over to her house, and she wouldn't let me in. Can you imagine that?

Elisa:

Good move, Stephanie.

Stephanie:



That sounds so much worse than it is. Well, for me, I had bought a house. Me, and my family, and friends... We wrote scripture all over the floor. It was just my sanctuary. We ended up walking the neighborhood for two hours, just swapping stories of what God had done, of what we had learned that year. He was so transparent about everything, even the things he hadn't told me that had happened before the divorce. By the end of the conversation, he shares, "Well, God's told me that we should be together again." My answer was not, "Yes, sure. Let's go for it," at that point.

Elisa:

What was your answer?

Eryn:

Yes, what was your answer at that point?

Chris:

Three years of lies solved by two hours of-

Stephanie:

There you go.

Chris:

Of the walk.

Elisa:

There you go.

Stephanie:

Honestly, I don't know what words came out of my mouth first, but I know it wasn't what he wanted to hear. I think that just walking through that whole process of healing and forgiveness, I knew that I didn't want to trust myself first.

Chris:

I was perfectly willing to trust myself.

Stephanie:

And your emotions.

Chris:

And my emotions.

Stephanie:

I did not trust mine. We've been told, and we always share how as much as I had forgiven him, that was a process. We're all called to forgive just as we've been forgiven, but trust takes time. It should. You should



take the time to rebuild it. If somebody's not willing to take the time to rebuild it, then it's not time for that relationship.

Elisa:

That's right.

Eryn:

That's so good.

Stephanie:

We agreed to take a few months separately to do some counseling. He was already in some counseling, so to continue that, to involve our community, which we didn't do the first time around, having our family, and pastors, and people praying for us, and all just coming to the throne to ask the Lord what His will was for us.

Elisa:

Can I just for a second... I want to grab some of these principles. What I'm hearing you say is do your own work, get to know who you are, and let God work on you. Participate in your own transformation.

God can do anything, but when we participate, and yield, and relinquish control... There you go, Stephanie. I heard that. He is able in a different way to provide a different level of redemption, I think. A third one is respecting boundaries. You didn't just say, "Yes, yes, yes." You had your house, and you had your boundaries. Chris, you knew the relationship with your in-laws, and you respected that. You bowed to that.

Another one is, trust takes time. Take the time it takes. It's awesome. You can't rush it. Exactly, you can't redeem three years in two hours. Involve your community. You don't have to do it alone. If I can top it off with the one we kind of started the conversation with, which is, confess that you don't know what you don't know. It's okay. It's okay. Nobody does. We're all gooey in the middle if you put a toothpick in us and pull it out. It's gook, where none of us are done.

Eryn:

We're all not done. That's right.

Elisa:

I'm always saying, if we're done, we'd be dead. Respect that we don't know what we don't know. Become friends with that. There, I'm just trying to create a synopsis here for all of us who are listening and going, "Such wisdom. I want to keep that." Now you got to take us forward. What else? What else?

Stephanie:

Sure.

Elisa:



What else?

Stephanie:

After that period of a few months of doing some counseling, and prayer, and all of that, we came together. We were seeing the same counselor, so we came together and met with him. Along with everybody, not in the same counseling session... Everybody was in agreement that if we wanted to pursue marriage again, that we should go for it.

Elisa:

Wow. Wow.

Eryn:

Wow.

Stephanie:

We believe in a God that's a God of relationship and redemption. We started over. We went on our second first date.

Eryn:

Aw.

Elisa:

That's cute.

Stephanie:

I mean, we really did, started over, picked me up and everything. Obviously, with the intent of marriage, we weren't just going to, well, let's see how this goes. Within three months from that first date, we got remarried in a tiny little ceremony-

Eryn:

Wow.

Stephanie:

With just our family.

Eryn:

That was, how many years ago?

Stephanie:

That was 2011, February of 2011.

Elisa:



What would you say to the couple where it doesn't round back to healing in the way of remarriage? What would you say to them?

Chris:

Well, we get a chance to talk with a lot of them. Well, usually, not both of them, but one of them. I would say that you're not alone. There's so many hurting people out there pretending like they're okay. You don't have to be one of them. It's okay to not be okay. I think the work that can be done in you will far outweigh the tragedy if you are willing to participate in that transformation.

It's almost impossible to see it in the middle of that season because there's nothing you can say to convince someone who's in that season what the beauty will be because you don't know what you don't know. But God is good. He is faithful. He will do what He says He will do. He promises to make beauty out of tragedy, and He will.

Eryn:

I love 'Participate in your transformation' because I think sometimes it's easy to want to participate in someone else's transformation more than being present in your own.

Elisa:

Oh, it's so good, Eryn. Yes, so good.

Eryn:

I think that that's so amazing that both of you recognized that in your own personal stories. That's what recovery and reconciliation looks like within yourself with the Lord, to then for both of you all to come together. I just think that's so beautiful. I think that is incredibly hard.

Stephanie:

I will have to add, it's an ongoing process, right? Yes, our marriage is redeemed, and it is a new creation. I mean, just our band name, Out of the Dust... It comes from what God did, and how He breathed life into our marriage that was reduced to dust, and brought out something more beautiful than we could have ever imagined.

Even with that, we have to remember to lay down our lives for each other every day because that is not our natural bent, right? It's not.

Eryn:

It's so good. I wanted to ask. In the beginning, were there ever moments that you were like, could this happen again? We're sharing this story of God's faithfulness, but could this happen again and I be blindsided or any of those doubts? Did any of those thoughts pop up in your head at all? If so, how did you combat them?

Stephanie:



Because I think we had been so purposeful about how to move forward in our second marriage, as we call it, I don't know that I ever fully thought, "Well, this could happen again." For sure, especially that first year... We knew we had worked through with our counselor. Him talking about, there are going to be things that trigger you. There are going to be things that happen that pull you right back to that place of betrayal, or you name it, whatever it is. What was it that he told us?

He said, "For the first..." What did he say? For the first however many months, basically, nothing is off the table. If something comes up and I need to talk about it with him because I feel a certain way, you need to address it then, but after a certain period of time, you need to put it to bed and move forward because at that point, it's just going to keep festering instead of healing.

Elisa:

Great advice.

Stephanie:

Chris... I mean, it really is just a testament to what the Lord did in his life. He didn't give me reasons to doubt those first couple years of rebuilding. Even just something as simple as... He had one job where he was in a situation where he was around some drug use. He came home and told me. He said, "Hey. This is happening, and it made me want it." Just him telling me that that was a temptation was huge. That was huge for me because before, it would have just been hidden. Then that would have festered in him and come out in some other way.

Elisa:

That's good.

Eryn:

That's great. Thank you for sharing that.

Elisa:

You guys, are children a part of your lives?

Stephanie:

They are. They are our two little images of redemption every day. We have a son who is seven and a daughter who's five who came after our marriage was redeemed.

Elisa:

That's so beautiful. I love the way you said that. They're your images of redemption. I guess I'm wondering too, how will you share your story with them? How will you weave the reality of your story into the formation of your ongoing growing family?

Chris:

They've already heard it. They've come on tour with us.

Stephanie:



That's true.

Chris:

And heard it from me. They're heard it from the other room many, many, many a time. We even wrote a song about them. It's called Redemption Skies because essentially, they're-

Eryn:

I love that.

Chris:

They are our kind of trophies of God's redemption.

Stephanie:

I think, too, because they did kind of passively-

Eryn:

Wow.

Stephanie:

Because they're young, and they've been on the road with us. Obviously, not 2020 because that's a whole thing. The other years, they were so young. They may hear part of the concert, but they don't really pay attention. Just the last year that we toured, our son... We could notice. He's starting to really think about it. We actually just sat them down one day and really talked through it with them.

Elisa:

Wow.

Stephanie:

Part of that was... Obviously, we just want them to understand our story when they do hear it or hear other people talking to us about it. Also, we want them to see what God has done. We want them to see what it looks like to be vulnerable, to confess your sin, and to see what God can do because-

Elisa:

Wow.

Stephanie:

We want to set that example for our children. We don't want them to walk through what we walked through as we all feel as parents. They know our story. They'll bring up things like, "Oh, that's like what happened with Daddy." They know.

Chris:

They also love digging into the bad stuff.



Stephanie:

That's true.

Chris:

I didn't grow up necessarily seeing the humanity of adults. They love reminding me, "Oh, Daddy. That's when you left," or, "Daddy, how many jobs did you lose?" because I had a pretty rough stretch there.

Elisa:

They're little mirrors, yes.

Chris:

The love, love... Yes.

Stephanie:

Absolutely.

Chris:

They love seeing our humanity.

Eryn:

Oh, that's so good. Well, I have a question for you guys. What would you tell the woman right now where she's in the midst of wondering if God sees her circumstance, feeling like she is doing the work, and she still feels hopeless? What would you guys say to her?

Chris:

I would say I feel like we already know you because we have met and talked with so many. Before we even knew about the *God Hears Her* book, we would end so many of our messages with, "God sees you. God hears you. He knows you. He loves you." I can say that because I know that for my side of the story, God had every reason. I gave God a million reasons to give up on me. I gave Him a million reasons to not love me, and it was at my worst, at my lowest point, when he said, "You're ready. I'm going to work with this. I take you. I love you right where you are. I'm going to help you and change this." For the people on the other side, I don't know. Maybe you have-

Stephanie:

Well, yes. It is such a hard thing because that is what you want to know, right? Does He care? Does He hear me? Does He see this struggle and this pain that I'm going through? It's so much easier to say it on this side of it. Like I mentioned, He doesn't waste anything. He's an intentional God. He doesn't waste it. He will turn anything. He will turn ashes into beauty. You may not see it. You may not know what that looks like. You have no idea how God is going to use how you walk through that struggle in the lives of somebody else in the future. It's going to be worth it someday. The way that you walk through it is going to be worth it. You may not see the redemption that you want here on this side of heaven, but there is still redemption through Jesus for all of us.

Chris:



Speaking of Jesus, one of the most unique things about Christianity is that we serve a God who came to serve us, who was known in His humanity, who is not far from us out somewhere in some dimension who looks down. He came down and does know the pain and the hurt that we have. He does see you, and He does know you because He knows that pain Himself intimately.

Stephanie:

Yes. I think one phrase that we use all the time in doing ministry... I think it applies to so much, is that our church always says, "God will give you what you need to do what He's called you to do." Whether that is He's called you to stand for your marriage and you don't know how you're going to get through the day, He's going to give you what you need to get through that day, that one day. If it's going to be months, He's going to give you the strength to get through those months. If it's to let go of something, He's going to help you, and be with you, and give you what you need to make it through.

(music)

Elisa: Let's sit with that phrase for another moment. "God will give you what you need to do what He's called you to do." Wow. He sure will! This is *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: 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 you will also find a link to connect with Elisa and me on social. So check out the show notes on our website godhearsher.org.

Elisa: 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.

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 Mary Jo Clark and Daniel Ryan Day...and today we also want to recognize Mary and Diana for their help in creating and promoting this episode of the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thanks, friends!

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