



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 63 - The Truth About Human Trafficking

Elisa Morgan and Eryn Eddy with Heather McGannon

**Heather:** They were interviewing the police officer. They had been doing, you know, all of the investigating and stuff for a while, and he said one of the more frustrating things was that once it was a bust...once they caught and recognized that it was a sex trafficking ring, all the neighbors were like *Oh we were wondering what...what happened.*

**Elisa:** Ah!

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Heather:** *We were wondering why there was all these cars coming to this house.* It was just kind of one of those like hits you in the gut. Yeah, like we're all a part of this.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** It's not just the police officers. It's not just...it's not just MAP...it's not just these wonderful service organizations who are there to help these survivors and be a space for them to...to get services from. It's...it's me, it's you...

**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Heather:** ...it's...it's recognizing what's going on in our neighborhoods.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

[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*.



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

**Elisa:** And I'm Elisa Morgan and today we're talking about a topic that most people don't want to believe exists, even if they know it does—human trafficking.

**Eryn:** While we don't want to believe that it's happening around us, we need to recognize that it is and do whatever we can to spread awareness and protect the most vulnerable. We're thankful to talk to Heather McGannon today who is the West Michigan program coordinator at the Michigan Abolitionist Project. This organization is passionate about working to prevent and end human trafficking in Michigan.

**Elisa:** We want to learn more about human trafficking and spread awareness to help people in dangerous situations and learn more to prevent human trafficking from happening in the first place.

**Eryn:** If you or someone you know suspects any human trafficking activity, please call the national human trafficking hotline at 1-888-373-7888 or text *help* to 233-733 or you can go to [michiganabolitionistproject.org](http://michiganabolitionistproject.org) to learn more. That's [michiganabolitionistproject.org](http://michiganabolitionistproject.org).

**Elisa:** Now let's get into our conversation with Heather McGannon to learn more on this episode of *God Hears Her*. We are so glad you're here, so Heather, yeah, I think you've got some stories to tell us, and we're really, really interested in what they're about, huh?

**Eryn:** So Heather, tell everybody who you are. Whoever...who's listening right now.

**Elisa:** A little bit of who's Heather? What's your story?

**Eryn:** Yeah. Yeah, who's Heather?

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** I am Heather McGannon. I am from Grand Rapids. Grew up here and stayed on the wonderful West side of Michigan. I am married to my husband Jeff. We've been married for 11 years. So, yeah, we met at Grand Valley and we're involved in Cru. It's used to be called Campus Crusade for Christ...

**Elisa:** Sure.



**Heather:** ...there. We got married and worked for a little bit and then we joined staff with Cru, which was kind of always...always the plan there and we have...and while we were on staff we had two little boys.

**Elisa:** Yeah, that's really precious. So Heather, I'm just really intrigued how did you get into the line of ministry...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...that God has placed you in? You come from this beautiful background and you're a vibrant, cheerful, really truly happy soul, and yet God has brought you into an area that is deep and...and twisted and difficult, and I know I'm just plunging straight in...into a whole 'nother level, but I...I'm intrigued by that.

**Heather:** Yeah. Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** How did that happen for you?

**Heather:** You know it was interesting just being asked to be on here made me start thinking about *How did God bring me like to this point?*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Jeff and I are no longer on staff with Cru. We stopped that last May, and I am on staff with the Michigan Abolitionist Project.

**Elisa:** Whoa!

**Heather:** Yeah, I know, it's a mouthful. We call it MAP for short.

**Elisa:** Okay. That's a good idea.

**Heather:** Um yes, and so it's an antihuman trafficking organization, and when I think about the journey of getting to this point, because actually really this job just literally fell out of the sky and plopped in my lap one day.



**Eryn:** Wow.

**Heather:** I literally applied for like seventy jobs. [Laughing]

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Heather:** During Covid. Um but...

**Eryn:** Oh wow!

**Heather:** ...oh yeah. I then was out for breakfast with some friends one morning and these were friends that like were wonderful during my like job application process and stuff too who were just for more in that, and we were sitting down for breakfast and one of my friends who just like *Wait a second! Are you still looking for a job?* And I was like *Well I'm not like actively looking for one, but if like the perfect thing came along, yes,* and um I have been for a very long time passionate about human trafficking and especially in the ethical and fair trade fashion kind of...well fair trade everything realm and so um she was like *Hey, I think that you should talk to...to this girl* who has the previous position as me and so I called her and um she was like *Hey, we have this position at the Michigan Abolitionist Project. It's an antihuman trafficking organization,* and I just was like *This can't be real life!* [Laughing]

**Elisa:** Sounded good, so I...I need to mine in there and help me understand how have you become passionate about human trafficking and...and, you know, honestly can you even define too what's fair trade? You know, so...

**Heather:** Yeah. Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** ...how did that passion, because you just referenced that,...

**Heather:** Yes.

**Elisa:** ...how was that born in you?

**Heather:** Yeah. Oh the heart behind it I think...I think I learned a lot about human trafficking when I was in college, um and so human trafficking is essentially modern-day slavery. So men, women, children who



are um either by force, fraud, or coercion, if they're adults, um sold into some sort of slavery. This can be...the two main forms are labor trafficking and sex trafficking.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm. So labor trafficking being used for labor.

**Heather:** Yes. Yep. Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** Okay.

**Heather:** So um we see it a lot of times overseas in garment work um...

**Elisa:** Uh huh. Okay.

**Heather:** ...if we're talking fashion and there's a whole slew of foods and...and that kind of thing—chocolate and...and coffee would be two really, really huge ones. Um the Department of Labor actually has like a whole section for labor trafficking and you can look up on their website um the different products and...and what countries are...are more at risk for labor trafficking and all that kind of stuff. So yeah, labor trafficking, sex trafficking, commercial sexual exploitation. Um a lot of times we...the way that it looks to us is prostitution.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** And there is so much education...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...um to be understood in that. At MAP we refer to these women and men as prostituted individuals, knowing that most of them are not there by choice.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** And that's kind where the...that modern-day slavery goes into it.

**Elisa:** So in...in college you said you became familiar with it. How did that happen? Was it a class that you took or did you see it in relationships or...



**Heather:** Human trafficking became more of a...an understood thing when I was in college. I want to say I think maybe that...that movie *Nefarious* came out um when I was in college and so I remember hearing about it and learning more about just...just understand...like anytime I see it, it's like *What? How is all of this happening?*

**Elisa:** Hmm.

**Eryn:** Sure. Their awareness of it.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Mm-hmm. Yep and then so I did not do much with it. I...maybe any at all in college, but knew of it. When we joined staff um the first year we were on staff was just really intense, but one of the roommates of some girls that I was walking with was raped downtown...

**Elisa:** Mmm. Oh gosh.

**Heather:** ...yeah, and so that lear...I had no idea how to walk with anyone through...any friends or persons through...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...um that type of trauma and so I just dug in and started learning more and throughout our years on staff, I mean, I read the statistics of, you know, one in four...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...women have been...have been abused...

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



**Heather:** ...and...and my experience with all the women that I...that I mentored when I was on staff with Cru was way higher than that, um but...

**Eryn:** Whoa.

**Heather:** ...I...I remember asking our director and some of the other women like *You know, when you have these girls come to you what do...how do you...*

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...mentor them? How do you disciple them. What does that look like?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** And they were like *We've never...we haven't had that*, and I was like *Oh, okay*, and so for whatever reason, the Lord brought these women—incredible, beautiful women—into my life to walk alongside and learn how to walk alongside them and what it looks like to interact with the Lord when these things have been done to you. I think that is where a lot of...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...the love and compassion for vulnerable women being exploited um especially started and just got the privilege to listen to their stories, hold them, um help them. I mean just listen...help them even start to share their stories and to walk alongside them. It was a great privilege, and so I think that's where a lot of...

**Elisa:** Yeah, that makes sense.

**Heather:** ...that started.

**Elisa:** How...I know, Eryn, we've both been in spots where we felt over our heads...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** ...in terms of the need presented to us and, you know, I have cried out to God, *Help me here!*



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** You know, what...how did you respond and...and how did you respond in a moment where you feel like *Gosh, I...I've not been here been before?* Um how did you...how did you know how to respond?

**Eryn:** Or know what to, yeah, know what to say.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** 'Cause sometimes you don't know what to say when you are faced with...

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...something you've never experienced.

**Heather:** I cried a lot.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Um and I think it's...you know, when...it's one thing to hear about, you know, stories or watch movies or read books or whatever, but then when you're sitting across from someone sharing their story, um I think the most powerful thing and this continues to be just the truth in the work that I'm doing right now is listening.

**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Heather:** Because it's...it is for these women that I love so much to have even been able to share those pieces of them that they've kept hidden and...and voices...things that have been...been hushed um.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Yes. I know it's just...





**Heather:** You know, I mean that's...that's...we don't like to hear about that stuff.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** We don't want to believe that it's happening, and usually it happens from a family member...

**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Heather:** ...or someone that you're close to, and so that...that gets hushed even more, and I read. I just...I...I think too it was my biggest fear and this is even coming in here, I'm like *I don't want to say the wrong thing. I don't want to hurt, you know.*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Heather:** And I think that was my biggest fear was like *Oh I love these women. I don't want to hurt them more...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...*by what I'm saying.* I don't want to hurt them more by not...not doing or doing something that I shouldn't, and so I think that's where reading, learning, um helped so much...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...because there is a lot out there.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Heather:** There...there is a lot out there and what it...what it looks like to you to listen, to hold people's stories of trauma...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...um well and to learn how to respond well, and I think...I think one of the most powerful things that I read was just believe them.

**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Heather:** At least at...at that point the statistic was 98 percent of abuse survivors are telling the truth.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** So we have no reason to not believe them.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** And man when we get even...even deeper into it with trafficking, like there's just no reason not to believe them, but they are not believed.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** Yeah why...why don't people believe victims?

**Eryn:** Right.

**Elisa:** Do we not want to believe that that kind of evil can happen in our world? Is that part of it? Or we've not personally experienced it.

**Eryn:** Yeah oh I mean and what have you seen with people not believe...like why is...why don't they believe?



**Heather:** I mean, we see...

**Eryn:** Denial?

**Heather:** ...Denial. It's...it's *Well did you see what she was wearing?*

**Elisa:** Ah!

**Eryn:** Blame.

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

**Eryn:** So a lot of it's blame.

**Heather:** *She was at a party.*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** *She um...yeah, it is blame. Absolutely. You had it coming. Why didn't you just, you know, why didn't you do this? Why didn't you do that? Why did you let yourself get into a situation like that? How come you weren't aware of what was going on? Um...*

**Eryn:** It's the victim's behavior...

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** That causes it. Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...for the reason of somebody else to act evil.

**Elisa:** Thanks for saying those things.

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Elisa:** I don't think we realize what's going on in our subconscious um...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...when...when we encounter a victim and yeah, blaming and, you know, it's all their fault...

**Eryn:** Shaming.

**Elisa:** ...but I love what you just said about 98 percent of the time they're telling the truth.

**Heather:** Yeah, it's so powerful.

**Elisa:** So if we can just listen and believe, yeah, that this is actually true. And...and what else might we do? What else have you learned? Um I...I think one of the things that has blown me away is that I'm encountering people all the time...all the time who...

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...either may have been a victim or may currently be one.

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** And that's tough to realize too.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** What would you say to that reality? How can...how can you shape our thinking about our everyday interactions?

[Music]

**Heather:** It takes relationship. I mean, for any of these stories, you can't just come in and say *I hear your story. Now go fix it.*

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Heather:** And that's not the way it works anyway is um...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...yeah, I mean when we see sexual abuse, domestic violence, human trafficking, they play into each other, they overlap a ton, and it's...it's a cycle. They're blinded and it's all they've ever known.

[Music]

**Eryn:** When we come back, Heather will share with us how to listen to a survivor and walk with them through whatever they are facing. We will also learn the signs and warnings of a human trafficking situation. This and more is up next on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

**Elisa:** Do you struggle with loneliness? Well if so, you're not alone. Whether you're part of an increasing percentage of people who actually live alone or whether your complex emotions rise from other causes, feelings of isolation can affect every area of life. Most importantly, loneliness can cause us to forget core truths from God's Word. Truths like God loves you, God gives life meaning and purpose, and God will never leave you. In my new book *You Are Not Alone*, I share six affirming reminders of our loving God's person, plan, presence, provision, promise, and purpose to encourage you. Go to [store.ourdailybread.org](http://store.ourdailybread.org) to get your copy. That's [store.ourdailybread.org](http://store.ourdailybread.org).

**Eryn:** Now back to *God Hears Her*.

**Elisa:** Can you tell us a story there maybe, you don't have to reveal any identities, but, you know, maybe a story about how...how do we get blinded, you know, as a victim? How do we grow "up into trafficking?"

**Heather:** I would just encourage anyone to even just google survivor stories. There are so many out there and...and they are...they're beautiful and um listen to their voices. Listen to their stories and in it you can...you can see a lot of patterns too of what they grew up in and many survivors have had childhoods where...where they...they are different vulnerabilities that have brought them into this, and...and many of them, there's a high number of women, men, children who have been trafficked who were sexually abused when they were younger.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.



**Heather:** The highest risk for trafficking are vulnerable youth, kids who...who are a part of the foster care system, runaway youth, and why are they running away? You know, there are so many stories of...of women and men who...who say *Well the trafficking was bad, but it was not as bad as what was at home. At least I had a trafficker who told me he loved me.* Or um...or whatever.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Heather:** And trafficking happens through force, fraud, or coercion, so it...it is, and especially in the US it's very manipulative.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Very manipulative. That's not...not necessarily the way it is in other...in other countries, but it's very psychological here in the US and so...

**Eryn:** That's so interesting.

**Heather:** And...and traffickers are...they're expert profilers.

**Elisa:** Hmm.

**Heather:** And so they might follow the person that they are looking for for a while and learn all about them.

**Elisa:** Hmm.

**Heather:** Um it's their job, and they make a lot of money off of it, so it's worth it.

**Elisa:** Hmm. Hmm.

**Heather:** Um but they will find where, you know, where are people running away to or um, you know, learn so these experience, these vulnerabilities for these men, women, and children make them more susceptible to trafficking. If you're home life is hard,...



**Elisa:** Sure.

**Heather:** ...you want to run away.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Or you want to find...you want to find a safe place and...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...and if you're looking for love and someone comes along and says *Hey, you're beautiful! Can I buy you dinner?* and then for months becomes your boyfriend and...

**Elisa:** And it's appropriate and uh huh.

**Heather:** ...tells you he loves you and that he wants to start a family with you and you're going to have this great life, and you believe it...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...and in the desire for...for real relationship, for love, for something different, it becomes so easy to fall into that.

**Elisa:** Sure.

**Heather:** And then...

**Elisa:** And then you're stuck.

**Heather:** ...yeah. And then...then...then the switch flips and that's kind of where I think it...it can differ depending on the trafficker. It can be, you know, *Okay well, I want to have this great life with you, but we can't pay rent this month, so how about you go dance. How about you go um, you know, have sex with a few of these guys and you can make this much money and then we'll be good and it's only for a few times and then after that you're fine.* And...and what we see and what we, what many in the US believe, we see



these women out on the streets. Women whose...whose pictures are up on...on websites selling themselves.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** We...we see it as they're selling themselves...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...and many times it is...it's that they...they've been...we just had our...our annual conference the other day and one of the survivors just said, *You know, we call it a trick for a reason.*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Um...

**Elisa:** That's a great line.

**Heather:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Yes, we call it a trick for a reason and...and um and I think it is...many of them will say *I thought I was out there by my own choice. I was choosing to be out there because...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Not realizing that they were being force, and you know, they were...

**Eryn:** Groomed.

**Heather:** ...or well, yeah, they were groomed...

**Eryn:** Being groomed.





**Heather:** ...to be...to be in this. Um so yeah, and they...many of them come to love their traff...traffickers. That Stockholm Syndrome of...of loving the one who's...who's hurting you.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** Um and...and there are quite a few really, really well done, very hard to watch, sobering documentaries. *Very Young Girls* is one that I watched that I...I think did a really...just seeing that love of a trafficker. Um it's hard to watch, but it's...that's reality. I think it...yeah, I think listening to the stories helps you understand,...

**Elisa:** It does.

**Heather:** ...um grows your compassion and your heart for understanding like, I feel like shame that I ever thought *Well how could she ever...how could she have done that?* Um when I listen to all these stories and realize *Oh, well that's exactly how she could have done it.*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah. You know, I love when I was reading about you guys how it says "human trafficking is slavery. It's when one person controls an exploits another person for financial gain."

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** And I know that you guys share like signs to look for.

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Would you share some of those signs to look for?

**Heather:** Yeah, absolutely. And...

**Elisa:** That's good.



**Heather:** ...and this is again I...there's so much information out there...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...if you...if you search there's so much information out there. There are tons of organizations that are committed to this, and I was just telling Jeff earlier, I was like *I just can't believe how much information is out there and yet it still is something that is so....*" When people hear about it, they can't believe it. That it's in their city. That it's um...and I think that it's so evil. It is so evil. I think that this is...it is one of the most horrific faces of evil in...in our world right now, um and so of course it's hidden and it thrives in the shadows, in the darkness, and so one of the biggest things that we can do as human beings to be a part of this is to become aware.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** That's good.

**Heather:** Because as we become aware, as we know what to look for...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...then the darkness is brought to light.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** And so there are...are a whole host of things to look for I would say especially in the area of sex trafficking. Um if there is an older boyfriend or an older father figure that you see or someone that you're...you're in relationship with starts a relationship with someone who is...who is much older than them, that is a...that's a very big sign. Branding. If someone has a tattoo of a barcode, um or...

**Eryn:** Mmm. Wow.

**Heather:** ...um that is very common in trafficking.

**Elisa:** And where on their body? Anywhere?



**Heather:** Anywhere. Yeah. Yeah, really. Anywhere.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Yeah if you see evidence of someone being controlled, if they are distancing themselves like...

**Elisa:** Distancing themselves?

**Heather:** ...yeah, like pulling back from relationship.

**Eryn:** With...withdrawing?

**Heather:** Isolating.

**Eryn:** Withdrawing...withdrawing or isolating?

**Heather:** Yeah, yeah, yup. If you...you're in a friendship with someone and they...they start withdrawing, they start isolating, um if you're a teacher or...or something, you know, and...and there are a lot of absences. If your kid is gone for the weekends, I mean, the places we see it can be in strip clubs, massage parlors, pornography...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...and, you know, many times people will say *Well I had no idea*. There's quite a big scandal going on...going on in...in the pornography world right now where...where there's lawsuits being brought forth that say *Well I was...I was exploited on this website*, and the watchers are saying *Well I had no idea*.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** So online as well.

**Heather:** Yeah.



**Elisa:** And...and I've been taught, and I'm not sure if this is what your experience is, but I've been taught that even door-to-door sales kids can be a part of sex trafficking that, you know, vans will drop off a group of kids in the neighborhood and they'll go through the neighborhood, but it's actually their perpetrators who are asking them to do that. Um people who are at the street corners sometimes with the "I'm hungry" signs. I mean, what...what happens for me, Heather, and I love that you're going through all these specific indicators...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** ...is that it opens up my eyes and instead of going *Well that person...*

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** ...*you know is...is just running away from their parents or whatever.* Suddenly I stop and I...I go *Lord, is this a human who needs to be rescued?*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** I mean we all need to be rescued, but is this a true need for physical rescue?

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** And I pray for them and etcetera, but, you know, and you can hand out that...that number...

**Heather:** Yes.

**Elisa:** ...that's really powerful, but that opens our eyes to understand that, you know, it's right in front of us.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Mm-hmm. Yeah, it is and I think you can...just even asking the question *Are you okay?*

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Heather:** *Are you okay?*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** There was a um a sex trafficking bust just a couple months ago in a town half hour away from here.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Just like rural town that, you know, you read it and you're like *What? There was a sex trafficking ring there?* Um and I was reading the article and um they were interviewing the police officer. They had been...been doing the, you know, all of the investigating and stuff for a while, and he said one of the more frustrating things was that once it was a bust, like once they caught and...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** ...recognized that it...that it was a sex trafficking ring, all the neighbors were like *Oh we were wondering what...what happened.*

**Elisa:** Ah!

**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Heather:** *We were wondering why there was all these cars coming to this house.* And I just, yeah, I read that and I was like well it was just kind of like of those like hits you in the gut. Like yeah, we're all a part of this.

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

**Heather:** It's not just the police officers. It's not just...it's not just MAP. It's not just these wonderful service organizations who are there to...to...to help these survivors and be a space for them to...to get services from. It's...it's me, it's you, it's...it's recognizing what's going on in our neighborhoods.



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** It's recognizing um when, you know, it's uncomfortable like how weird would that be to just like walk over to your neighbor's house and be like *Hey, I'm noticing all these cars* or, you know, whatever. Or if you notice all of this stuff to call the police and say, *Hey, there's something weird going on at this house.*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** And if you see a person, you know, drive up to a house and...and a group of women follow him into the house all together...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...you know, that...that could be and it also couldn't.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Heather:** Ah, but yeah, it is everywhere. It thrives in the darkness, and so the more that we can bring it to the light, the more that we can educate ourselves and know what the signs are of it. On our website we have a...it's called the Abolitionist Program, but it's basically just this weekly email that you get. It's a 10-week series and it just gives you the basics of human trafficking, and so you learn about sex trafficking, you learn about labor trafficking, you learn to see the signs, how you can be a part of it. It gives you challenges and um...

**Eryn:** That's awesome.

**Heather:** ...we're not the only ones with that too, there are multiple organizations that have those, but those are, I think, the little things that we can even just be doing to know...to know the signs, know what's going on...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Heather:** ...and recognize it.



**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Eryn:** What I keep hearing is that, I mean, it's so easy to assume a narrative without asking any questions, without extending any compassion, or not wanting to learn, and I just love how throughout this whole conversation, the encouragement is show compassion, ask questions, want to learn, don't assume, lean in, bring awareness, and um it's just so...it's so beautiful. And it's convicting, 'cause I know that it's so easy for me to assume a situation by just driving by it every day...

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...or, you know, like you said earlier, like judging that...that woman's outfit or...

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...you know whatever it may be, but...

**Heather:** Right.

**Eryn:** ...the truth is it's we're called to just extend compassion, ask questions, and learn.

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

**Heather:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Elisa:** As...as we close I want to ask you to pray for that woman who is stuck. Would you pray for her? You've been stuck before. Maybe in different ways, Heather. You shared some of your story. But would you pray for her?

**Heather:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** Thank you.



[Music]

**Heather:** Father, thank you for who you are. Thank you for being a God who is with us in all of life, for being a Savior who suffered. Thank you that you always love us no matter what, and you will never stop. I pray for...for my sister who is stuck, Lord. Thank you that you are with her in that. Thank you for being with me in the mud when...when I was there. Thank you that you are with her. Remind her of your love and your care. Bring people to her. Give her courage and bravery to see what's going on and show her how deeply your heart aches at seeing your daughter hurt. You are a God who sees and who hears. Thank you for being that. I pray for redemption. I thank you that you're a God who does bring beauty from ashes. That you are a God who experienced deep pain and recognizes what it is like, and you...you hate it. You don't sit there watching what happens to these women, but you are right next to them aching and crying with them. Show them who you are as the true Father, as one who will do anything to get to them. Amen.

**Elisa:** Thank you, Heather. We are so thankful for Heather's insight and the work that she does with the Michigan Abolitionist Project. You know, as unbelievable as this is, we need to shed light on human trafficking and learn more. Heather taught us so much about how this can happen even if we don't fully realize what's going on.

**Eryn:** We want you to know that you are not alone through whatever you may be facing. If you or someone you know needs help, please call 1-888-373-7888 or you can text *help* to 233-733. You are not alone.

**Elisa:** Before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. These show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but also links to connect with Eryn and me on social and a link for the Michigan Abolitionist Project where you can learn more about human trafficking. You can visit our website at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). Thanks for joining us, and don't forget God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]

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