



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 68 - Hope

Eryn Eddy and Elisa Morgan with Joyce Dinkins

Joyce: My dad had this way of saying “you’re not seeing what you’re looking at.” Because people will look at us and, based on appearances, completely miss who we are...

Eryn: Right.

Joyce: ...whom God has intended us to become, what our gifts are, what our experiences are. And that’s true for all of us. So my parents emphasized the importance of our heritage, our legacy, and all the intricate details of that. And at the same time, they were always pointing to the possibilities.

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. What do you think of when you hear the word “hope”?

Eryn: Maybe you’re hopeful for something, or maybe you have a strong hope in who God says He is, or maybe you feel hopeless. Or maybe you’re starting to think to yourself, *what is hope?*

Elisa: Well today, we’re talking to a woman that comes from a generation of people hoping for better circumstances, a woman who exemplifies this godly attribute and talks about it with a wisdom that we know comes directly from the Spirit.

Eryn: That lovely woman is Joyce Dinkins. Joyce is an executive editor for Our Daily Bread Ministries Voices Collection. She has an incredible passion for inclusion and equity. Her career emphasis is amplifying the voices of diverse authors, African-American and others, in the literary world. She has invested several decades as an editor serving at several Christian publishers across the United States.

Elisa: We’re so excited to hear about Joyce’s experiences with being a hopeful woman on this episode of *God Hears Her*. Joyce, we are really honored to have you with us today. You know I...I love our



conversations on *God Hears Her*, but I'm especially excited about this one with you. Because we've known each other for a bit of time and never enough. So I'm excited to dive more into your story.

Joyce: I thank you so much, Elisa. I think that we have had these wonderful, spontaneous sister, saint touchpoints throughout the years. And I do appreciate you. And I...I...I greatly appreciate the opportunity to share a few stories about God's goodness and, even amidst all of the things that we experience in life, yeah.

Elisa: Yeah, He gives us great hope. Eryn, here's Joyce. I want you to meet teach other.

Eryn: I'm so excited to hang out with Joyce this [inaudible] because...well there's a few reasons. And one of them is that Joyce, just hearing your story and just some background information that I got to read about you, but then when I met your voice as we were getting prepared, I thought goodness. Your voice just...it just sh...you can...you can hear the soul and the grit that we were talking about earlier. We can...we can hear it. And there's a...there's a peacefulness in it. And I can't wait to hear how God has developed that in you, cause I think that that...your voice carries that.

Elisa: Yeah, and...and hope just threads through it. You know, can...can we just go straight in here, Joyce, and ask you, tell us about your upbringing and who Joyce is, what made you who you are? And then we want to get back to that voice piece, Eryn, very perceptive.

Joyce: Yeah, well before we get to my story, I just want to say that I did not realize that my voice mattered actually. I didn't realize how God would use and is using my voice. And I think that's probably true of a lot us...

Elisa: [inaudible] too.

Eryn: That's good.

Joyce: Let's see. How...I'll go way back...

Elisa: Ooh good.

Joyce: ...to being the youngest of my mom's four kids and born in the '50s.



Elisa: Okay.

Joyce: And I think that even as we think about as we're enlightened by our family order, our birth order as well as the decades in which we've experienced different things, it tells a lot about us. So what do you really want to know, Elisa?

Elisa: I want to know...I want to know where you grew up and along with your three siblings and your mom...

Joyce: Okay.

Elisa: ...you know, who did you grow up with? And how did it shape you? How did it...how did you come to the point where you weren't sure your voice mattered too? You know, help us...help us with that journey if you could.

Joyce: Wow, well I grew up in what we would term the neighborhood where black people were allowed to live in a very elite environment. And most of the people, my neighbors on my block, my immediate neighbors, were as we were called back then and as I was defined on my birth certificate, a negro. We...we were ne...negroes. That's how we were identified. And I have parents who migrated to that community along the north shore, what's called the north shore of Chicago.

Elisa: Okay.

Joyce: My parents migrated from essentially servitude to opportunity.

Elisa: Wow.

Joyce: I mean they literally hitchhiked, caught a ride with other servants who were trying to get out. This is in the mid-forties. And my parents were born close to 1900. My dad was 45 when I was born. So the life that I had in this pocket that was connected to privilege but segregated from it at the same time, was part of my upbringing, this pocket where I interacted with, well immigrants, European immigrants, Jewish immigrants, Italian immigrants from Europe. And I interacted with Protestants and Catholics, European-American families, German, Irish. But at the same time, there was restriction. And then the emphasis that my parents' lives, their stories have on my own is immense, because they did not forget



where they came from. And they built a culture in our home within a pocket of culture in a community that was somewhat diverse but largely black within, as I said, an elite community of privilege.

Elisa: Can I interrupt and ask, where did your parents come from?

Joyce: Absolutely, love to tell their stories.

Elisa: Was it the South?

Joyce: They migrated from Georgia. You know they...they were living, growing up in northwest Georgia and working in Chattanooga.

Eryn: Oh wow.

Joyce: They worked as domestic workers on Lookout Mountain, Tennessee. So their stories are quite different from my own in terms of segregation that kept them from any opportunity other than servitude or abuse compared to, you know, my opportunities to attend school in some of the best schools in the nation. Their opportunities were...my father never went to school except for church schools, extremely bright, gifted individual who, if he had not left the South, might not...certainly might not have survived his twenties. And my mother, likewise, was working on Lookout Mountain, Tennessee, as a domestic. And really from childhood, she was in the kitchen. She was able to attend what was termed back then "the black high school." She attended Jones High School in Orlando, Florida. She had to actually leave home in order to continue in school and...and live with relatives. Because where she was from, Kissimmee, Florida...

Eryn: Oh yeah.

Joyce: ...yeah, that's where she went to...went through the eighth grade and graduated.

Elisa: So...so you have a long line of generations that I'm...your grandparents, were they indentured, were they slaves, and then your parents were in domesticity. Help me understand that. And then suddenly, you're in Chicago in this elite area.

Joyce: Yeah, yeah, it stretched. That's how I think of it as quite...



Eryn: That's a good way to put it, yeah.

Joyce: ...elongated. But it's a...it's a real stretch to be able to say that my paternal grandfather was born a slave and what it meant for him. I've written about this, and it's a story kind of like other stories that are so memorable you just keep retelling them because they're so...so valid, so profound. Yeah, so my dad's dad was born a slave, and that affected everything. And my maternal grandfather was a European-American tenant farmer who never claimed my mother as his own. And then the grandmothers, my paternal grandmother, was born during Reconstruction. Well we know how long Reconstruction lasted. Reconstruction lasted for a blip in terms of come after the Civil War and their freedom, my grandfather's freedom. My...my grandmother, my dad's mom, was born in Reconstruction when there were rights extended, but then they were withdrawn. With Abraham Lincoln's assassination and Andrew Johnson becoming president, there was the restoration of the confederacy. There was restoration of (quote/unquote) "states' rights." And there was implementation of the black codes. And those were the laws that again segregated people of color, black people, African-Americans, negroes, to either work above the ground sharecropping which was a...near slavery, cotton, corn, rice, or below the ground mining. The black codes restricted freedom. So I had access to freedom....

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: ...in my home. But I never forgot, and I still don't forget, where my parents came from, where my grandparents came from. I even have my maternal grandmother was raised on the Indian reservation...

Eryn: Oh wow.

Joyce: ...in Oklahoma, Creek Indian.

Elisa: Oh k...sure, yeah.

Joyce: So black and native and either enslaved by or working alongside Indians, native peoples. And that's a whole other chapter.

Elisa: Yeah.

Joyce: So it's a...it's an interesting history to be able to talk about and write about.



Elisa: Is it appropriate to...the image that's coming to my mind, Joyce, is a...a quilt of so many different textures and experiences and sufferings and giftings. I mean you...you have the African-American, you have the...you have the American Indian, you have immigrants from Europe. You have so many textures, and yet, as you said, your parents, your mom, made sure that you understood your unique thread, you know in the...in the quilt of...

Joyce: Yes.

Elisa: ...your own specific heritage.

Joyce: Yes, I think one of the things I'd like to say is that my parents were excellent in helping their children, me included, to understand the complexity of an individual life and the appreciation for an individual life.

Elisa: Wow.

Joyce: And at the same time, as my mother wrote in one of her diaries that we...we gave to her and asked her to just tell her story so we could retain it, my mother said that she grew up; because she was surrounded by European-Americans working in the kitchen and there was a sweet woman, Mrs. Persons, who took a liking to her as a child and who would carry my mother with her on different trips that the family would take. And my mother said that she used to think that she was white. And then she found out as a young person that she would be black for the rest of her life.

Eryn: Wow.

Joyce: Because she was a person of color. And so my parents helped me to understand very early that others, and I...I just spoke this recently at the Evangelical Christian Publishing Association and in a letter to the leaders of publishing, that people seeing me or seeing them weren't necessarily seeing what they were looking at.

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: My dad had this way of saying, "you're not seeing what you're looking at." Because people will look at us and, based on appearances, completely miss who we are...



Eryn: Right.

Joyce: ...whom God has intended us to become, what our gifts are, what our experiences are. And that's true for all of us. So my parents emphasized the importance of our heritage, our legacy, and all the intricate details of that. And at the same time, they were always pointing to the possibilities that we could have hope, that we weren't simply somebody else's estimation of a black person, somebody else's estimation. Although that estimation could be grand, but it could also be negative.

Eryn: I was just about to ask you, Joyce, when you said there's hope in seeing the possibilities, how do you find hope in the possibilities when you've been surrounded by oppression and segregation and in justice and objectification and being dehumanized and not being seen but being seen. How do you find hope when...when you can feel hopeless?

Joyce: I think that hope is what comes to me right now. I have a lot of notes and a lot of writings about hope. But hope to me is the truth. Knowing the truth gives me hope.

Eryn: That's good.

Joyce: And as a believer, once I became a believer, once I read Scripture, I had a lens through which I could see life. Prior to reading Scripture, I had the stories of my parents who escaped lynching, rape, degradation, poverty. And those stories and the love, oh the love that they were capable of sharing, not only with me and my siblings, the love was potent for us. And it wasn't only the love for us, it was the love for people whom they didn't know but who represented in the communities in which I grew up, possible adversaries because of culture, because of history. My parents, however, taught me from an early age, not to take abuse from anyone, to make certain to tell an adult if I'm being abused or mistreated, to tell a leader in my school. But they also made sure that I didn't look at others and make assumptions.

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: So I always had a training to look at people, other people, as individuals too. You know they...they were simple. They were bottom line trying to apply the Golden Rule to treat other people the way you want to be treated.

Eryn: Yeah.



Joyce: Because they were capable, after all that they had been through, to love enemies. Well that'll inject some hope into you.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: They modeled that to you.

Eryn: That's right, they did...

Joyce: They modeled. You know the backdoor was open to any child from the school who wanted to come, and they got the same chocolate chip cookies that I got...might get...might get a bigger one than I got. You know they...these were people who they weren't perfect. No, they weren't perfect. But they did strive to love us and to love others and also at the same time to stand up for what's right.

[music]

Eryn: When we come back, Joyce will share more about the theme of hope through her life as she came to know God for herself on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

[music]

Elisa: Christmas is coming, and we have a great way to help you celebrate it joyfully. The *God Hears Her*: A Joyful Christmas Kit includes our new 31-day devotional with special readings for both morning and evening so you can start and end your day focused on Jesus. There's a joyful Christmas ornament to hang on your tree as well as a notepad and pen to write notes. You'll also get access to coloring sheets, a frameable print, prayer prompts, and the *God With Us* booklet so that you can download it. Go to godhearsher.org/joyfulchristmas to order your Christmas kit. And get ready for a joy-filled Christmas. Now back to the show. I find it so refreshing and powerful, Joyce, that you define hope as truth.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: I'm not sure I've ever heard it defined that way. And I think of Jesus saying, you know, I am the truth and the truth will set you free. And...and what an incredibly powerful weaving of concepts you've just expressed describing, you know, generations coming from slavery to freedom. And...and you...and we



h...hear the hope in your story and then you describing hope as truth that sets you free. I just...those layers are just so powerful, Joyce.

Joyce: Well let's...let's slather on another layer.

Eryn: I want to.

Elisa: Slather it.

Eryn: Let's do it.

Joyce: All right.

Eryn: I'm ready.

Joyce: You know what? You know what? Now God is love. So when we talk about hope, we talk about faith. Ultimately we're talking about the love of God. God is love. So He is our hope. He is our hope. His love is our hope. It doesn't...I've experienced in my decades, it does not matter what it is that opposes us. Love will allow us to overcome.

Elisa: I love how you say it "overcomes." It does.

Eryn: It does.

Elisa: And I hear this passion in you, and I've actually seen this passion at work in you. And that is, you come from a place where you said you didn't even know you had a voice to a place where you have a voice. And then to a further calling, where you served as a publisher. And in my mind and my experience, that means you help other people discover their voices.

Joyce: But you know, isn't that true of us that we can minister either what we've been delivered from or delivered into. I'll tell you when I was a...I was young, I think the first speech I gave was probably on one of those days, you know, the show and tell. That's powerful. Show and tell is a powerful day. It remains.

Eryn: It's a powerful day.



Joyce: You know especially when you are different and you know. And...and since either because you've been...it's been explained to you. And my parents didn't send us into that classroom without explaining some things. You know some people call it the talk. Some people call it the, you know, whatever you want to call it. They explained some things. Now this might happen to you. If this...if they call you a name, this is what you do.

Eryn: That's right.

Joyce: All right? And this is who you tell, you know. If this...so we had talks, you know. So standing up at show and tell with a teacher, thank God for good teachers. Ooh, thank you Lord.

Elisa: Yes, yes.

Joyce: With a teacher who celebrated that I had something to say, something, whatever it was. You know I could have been talking about a potato, show and tell a potato. She was listening, and she valued it, right?

Elisa: Oh, that's so important. Wow.

Joyce: Right. So I had these little lessons. And I think I remember when I was in eighth grade, I wrote a poem. My dad had made a little desk in my room, because they nurtured literacy in us, you know. Literacy is the right to vote. Literacy is fair housing. Literacy is, you know, a right to a full...however much education one wants to pursue. You know literacy is being able to read and explore and...and more, you know. So I wrote a little poem and was invited to deliver it. It was about Abraham Lincoln and his part...his participation as I understand it now in...in freedom for African-Americans.

Eryn: You know what's so beautiful, Joyce, is that you know earlier you said that you were brought up in finding hope in all of the possibilities and then in being gifted, somebody listening to your voice. And then now it's so cool the position that you're in, in gifting...seeing other people's voices but then also expanding possibilities.

Joyce: Yeah.

Eryn: I mean that's...that's such a beautiful thread from your...from your life.



Joyce: Well you know I'm thinking about "He who has sinned much loves much." Now the...the way I'm thinking about that is that he who has been through a lack of listeners, a lack of listening, loves to listen and loves to share. You know and I'll say for...for my life for both parts, you know I...I...I came to understand that I was free, that I could have spiritual freedom when I was 30 years old. So you know I had a lot of sin up to the age of 30. I took...that I...that I couldn't put anywhere. I...I couldn't stuff it in the corner. I couldn't you know. I had a...I describe as a monkey on my back just dogging me, you know.

Elisa: Wow.

Joyce: You know experiences, because I knew what the Ten Commandments were, but I didn't know about grace, all right?

Eryn: Tell me...will you tell me about that?

Joyce: Well you know, I think it's good for us to remember that we, you know, we're...we're still falling short, right?

Eryn: Right, yeah.

Joyce: We can't...we can't...we still falling short of how Jesus lived and who He is.

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: We're not God. We have Christ in us that hope again of glory, right? We have Him in us. Well I didn't have that hope, because my...this is the...some nitty gritty stuff here, okay. My dad, although his father and his uncles and their close friends were church planters in northwest Georgia and they used those churches again to educate, to liberate, and to...to everything; because the church in the lives of African-Americans was the central institution for everything, right? But even though he had this history he inherited, my dad hated the church.

Elisa: Wow, okay.

Joyce: Yeah, one reason that he disliked the church—hate is a strong word, but he did hate it. Was because the institution, many, most southern churches that my dad experienced, validated his father's



enslavement...validated nonsense like the curse of Canaan being the curse of Ham. And you know churches validated that.

Elisa: Sure, yeah.

Joyce: So between whatever hypocrisy he saw in the church, that was a stumbling block. But he hated the church that had enslaved his dad and deprived his dad of having more than the life of someone who was owned. And so he wasn't really for us go...attending church. My mother, on the other hand, she in light of my father's distaste for the church, she would send us over to the black church. And she'd send my brother and I, I think at times I was barefoot and that. But I had a dime wrapped up in a handkerchief. And I would hold my brother's hand. He was a year and a half older. And we'd go over to the African Methodist Episcopal Church, St. Paul. And on one Sunday or one Easter, because we didn't go regularly, we were those kids that we need to watch out for that we need to welcome in. I was one of them, the stragglers, right?

Elisa: Yep.

Joyce: So on one of those events may...I think it was Easter, we were given medallions that expressed the Ten Commandments. So from age about five until age 30, I never heard the gospel. I celebrated Christmas on the fringe. I celebrated, you know, Easter on the fringe. I knew to tell the truth. I knew to do as my parents displayed in front of me, to have a heart for those who are less fortunate. I knew these...some of these things. But I didn't know that Jesus died for my sins. The Holy Spirit was drawing me through my mother's prayers, through my exposures to this...you talk about quilts. This scrap of truth, this scrap of truth, but it all came together and warmed my soul one day when I heard this preacher. I was introduced to this church on the south side of Chicago, Grace Conservative Baptist Church, by a neighbor. I was going through dramatic life changes wondering why I wasn't satisfied with this lovely suburban home and the new car in the driveway and the furs on my back and my neck dripping with jewels. And I had my education, and I had achieved. And I wasn't poor. But there was...seemed like not only that something was missing, it was like life was missing, real life was missing. Well I...the Lord fixed that. I met someone. They took me to church, and I heard the gospel.

Elisa: Wow yeah.

Joyce: And this preacher within 30 minutes went from the Old Testament sacrifices where the blood was flowing through the temple so much sloshing around to the sprinkling of Jesus' blood on the mercy seat



and the veil of the temple being torn in two. And I had free access to come boldly to the throne of grace and be forgiven. Well if I could have jumped...I always say, if I could have jumped up and leapt over the pews, I would have. I was like, you know, this is the full story.

Elisa: I'm in, yeah.

Joyce: I'm in. And the Scripture that...the Scriptures that said it all right above the pulpit on a banner, Ephesians 2:8 and 9. "For it is by grace that you are saved through faith and that not of yourselves. It's the gift of God." Not anything I could work up. Nothing I can boast about. That got it for me. And in the realization, the Holy Spirit opened up my mind and heart. And I was well, I've been looking for this my whole life.

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: This is the space in between the commandments and the truth and the hope, the freedom.

Eryn: That's beautiful, Joyce.

Elisa: You use your life now, you use your voice now.

Joyce: Yeah.

Elisa: To really connect other voices to the hope of Jesus and to help other people express the hope of Jesus with their voice.

Joyce: Yes.

Elisa: Talk to us about how you do that.

Joyce: Well you...you mentioned it earlier, both of you dropped in the emphasis of my voice mattering and...and my using my voice so that others' voices will matter. And how I do that is the same way miraculous as God does things that are miraculous, gave me this position at Our Daily Bread Ministries as an executive editor. And I was well into my second year of executing the *Our Daily Bread* devotional. I received the opportunity to work with what we call "Voices" the Voices Collection. And our motto, I'll give



you the un...unfolding of that, an acronym voices—Valuing Others, Including Cultures, Expressing Stories (or expressing Scripture). But also our...our motto, so that it's clear is "See Us."

Eryn: Yeah, I love that.

Joyce: "Hear us, Experience Our Stories." And so about two years into my seven years now with *Our Daily Bread*, I was given the opportunity to acquire, develop, include more and more people of color, and in my case, particularly African-Americans. When I started with the ministry, I was given the...the task of bringing more diversity, more diverse voices into the devotional. And we did that. But we wanted to have an emphasis on working with African-American content creators, because they're of the...the lack of representation. And so yes, I go to conferences.

Eryn: That's wonderful.

Joyce: I connect with peers in the publishing industry who know that there's a place at *Our Daily Bread* to be heard. And that in fact, we are strategically, intentionally, as you and Elisa do and as others do at the ministry, bringing in those different stories.

Eryn: Yeah, what would you say to a woman that's struggling with seeing hope as the truth of who God is? And then my other question is, how do they know that God sees them when they can't feel Him?

Joyce: Well, it sounds generic. But I would say the first thing is to listen. That may include a stop and listen. Because I just believe God's Word. And He is...He doesn't play favorites. And I was 30 years old, and I looked around. I had not been reading the Bible. I did not have that hope. I did not have the truth. But I knew, and I think we all know, we sense things. You know we're missing something. What's missing? So I...I listened. I was s...seated in my home in my living room, newly-carpeted, newly-decorated. Like I said, everything that was supposed to be fulfilling, supposed to be successful in life, I had that in my view. So what I would say is, at that point, I asked the question of myself, you know. *Is this it? Is this all that...that there is?* And I listened. And what I heard, not audibly, was a prompting. And the prompting was this. Go open that book. I didn't know. We didn't read Scripture in the home where I grew up. But when I read the Scripture, it spoke to me. And I listened to what it was saying. And it was telling me the truth. It wasn't too long after that, that my life fell apart. You know the house that's built on the wrong foundation?

Elisa: Yeah.



Joyce: My...my life fell apart. And I cried out to God. I...so the second word is cry out to God. You can do that before or after you listen. [What] you know the order is. That's...but I just...I didn't...

Eryn: I love that.

Joyce: I didn't have some...some liturgical program to recount. I didn't even know any of these things, but I just said, I knew a little bit about prayer; and I prayed. I said, *O God, help me.*

Eryn: Yeah.

Joyce: The Word of God is alive and life-giving. And that's what I found as a...a fairly ignorant 30-year-old...really ignorant about the real depth of what life can be. And I would also want, if I were with the individual, I would sing to them, you know.

Elisa: Joyce, you're just amazing. I...I'm going to welcome that. And you know [inaudible] you asked for it. But I think we're going to invite you right now then. Would you just...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...sing over...just sing over...

Joyce: You know what?

Elisa: ...our listeners just for a minute, Joyce? Use your voice.

Joyce: So you know I'm thinking, I always like to...to ask the Lord what is it that I'm supposed to sing?

Elisa: Okay.

Joyce: What comes to mind is an older song. [singing] *There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No not one, no not one. None else can heal all my soul's diseases. No not one. No not one. O Jesus knows all about our struggles. Well He will guide till the day is done. There's not a friend like the lowly Jesus. No not one, no not one.*



Elisa: Wow, Joyce is such a symbol of hope for the people around her. You can feel her wisdom while speaking to her, can't you, Eryn?

Eryn: Yes, Elisa. She is incredible. I still can't get over her voice, so good. Well 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. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but they also have links to connect with Elisa and me on social and a link for the *God Hears Her* Christmas package. You can visit our website at godhearsher.org That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for joining us, and don't forget. God hears you. He sees you. And He loves you because you are His.

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. Today we also want to recognize Chricynethia and Toria for their help in creating the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thank you.

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