



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 79 – Orphan Identity

Eryn Eddy & Elisa Morgan with Lorilee Craker

[Music]

Lorilee: You know we've been there at some point in our lives. You know, left on the curbs of life as someone or something drives off without us.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: But, you know, I just think that that any rejection, any abandonment is an opportunity to grow closer to the heart of the Father. You know, we know it in our minds, but those painful, painful situations are an opportunity to just tell Him everything.

[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: When was the last time you felt left out or rejected? Maybe a relationship ended unexpectedly, or that job you really wanted turned you down. Suddenly, you feel like you don't belong, or you've been left behind by someone or something that you truly cared about.

Elisa: Today, we're talking with a wise woman and my friend, Lorilee Craker, about her experiences with orphans both as herself, an adopted child, and as an adoptive mother. Lorilee grew up in Winnipeg, Manitoba, Canada, and with her loving, adoptive family, but that didn't stop her desire to find her biological parents later on in life, and we'll touch on more of that in our conversation.

Eryn: Lorilee is the author of many books, including *Anne of Green Gables: My Daughter and Me*, a book inspired by her adopted daughter's question about what an orphan is. Lorilee speaks to women who feel abandoned, cast off, and left behind. She believes there is an orphan in us all. She is a super fan of classic rock, literary heroine books, hockey, and racial justice. She currently lives in Grand Rapids with her husband and three children.



Elisa: Let's hear more from Lorilee Craker on this episode of *God Hears Her*. So, Eryn, we've got a friend of mine here today. I'm excited to introduce you to Lorilee Craker, and I just was talking with Lorilee, and we last saw each other...it's been like six years, so my heart's like (makes noises) to see her, you know, in person remotely here. [Laughing]

Eryn: Oh. [Laughing] I feel like any guest that we've brought on here, Elisa, that you've know, there's always been this like deep connection, this deep exchange, whether it's stories or it's an experience that you've shared, so I'm going to be just picking all these questions out for you Lorilee, because as much as Elisa knows you well, I don't. And I can't wait to learn about you!

Elisa: Watch out. Watch out, hey, welcome, Lorilee.

Lorilee: Thank you so much. I love being here. I love seeing you, Elisa, and meeting you, Eryn.

Elisa: And we want to know a little bit about you. I mean, when we were talking just before we started talking, if you will, you said you're originally from Winnipeg. I've just to completely confess, and please forgive me. I am so geographically impaired. [Laughing] Take me straight up north, where is Winnipeg in Canada?

Lorilee: Okay, let's say, so I'm in Michigan.

Elisa: Okay, right now, yeah.

Lorilee: So yep, so you drive west...

Elisa: Okay.

Lorilee: ...and then you keep driving north, and you get to Minnesota.

Elisa: Okay. Yep, yep.

Lorilee: And you keep...you keep driving north, and ah you get to North Dakota and then you keep driving...

Elisa: Oh wow.



Lorilee: ...and then you get to Manitoba, which is my home province, so...Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Wow. And you said it was the coldest place.

Lorilee: It's the coldest big city in the world.

Elisa: Oh!

Eryn: Wow, see...

Lorilee: It's the coldest like city above a population of 500,000.

Elisa: That's fascinating.

Lorilee: Yeah.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: So, so you grew up in...in Winnipeg, but you ended up landing in Grand Rapids for the last several decades, and, you know, we want to...we want to dig into your story. Tell us a little bit about growing up in Winnipeg. What your life was like growing up, and then your transition and...and who you are.

Lorilee: Sure, absolutely. Yeah, so I was adopted by a Mennonite couple, so ah that's a big part of my background is I grew up Mennonite.

Elisa: Okay, somebody may not understand what Mennonite is, so.

Eryn: Yeah, share...share...

Lorilee: Well there's...so for those of you who are picturing like the horse and buggy and the...the churning butter and the, you know, the Amish cap, and everything, that was not me.

Elisa: Okay.

Lorilee: My parents both sort of came via Ukraine.



Elisa: Oh.

Lorilee: It's a little bit complicated, but Catherine the Great invited the Mennonites who were German, Swiss-German ethnically, to farm her steps, right? So...so she invited them to...to come and sort of civilize the steps and be farmers. So my dad was actually born in Ukraine.

Elisa: Oh. And you're talking about your birth dad or your...

Lorilee: No my adoptive dad, yeah.

Elisa: Okay.

Eryn: Okay.

Lorilee: So he was an immigrant as well. He fled Stalin by foot...

Elisa: Wow.

Lorilee: ...ah as a six-year-old child and it was like something out of like *Fiddler on the Roof*, you know.

Elisa: Hmm.

Eryn: Yeah. Yeah.

Lorilee: And then the...the Mennonites kind of repatriated to Germany because they're ethnically German, but, you know, that...it was from Stalin to Hitler, so that was like out of the frying pan into the fire and...

Elisa: Yeah. Hmm.

Lorilee: ...so that story, that Mennonite story really shaped my life and my upbringing and, you know, I am the daughter of a Holocaust survivor.

Elisa: Oh wow! Wow,...

Lorilee: Because...



Elisa: ...we could have a whole conversation just about that.

Lorilee: I know, I know. So um that Mennonite culture is really strong in Winnipeg, and there's probably one Mennonite in Grand Rapids, Michigan, and...and that would be me. [Laughing] There's just so few, but anyway, um so I miss that culture and...

Eryn: How old were you when you were adopted?

Lorilee: Oh straight from the hospital.

Eryn: Okay.

Lorilee: Yeah. Yeah. I was born in 1968, so in those days, there were many, many babies available for adoption.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And, in fact, the social worker called my dad and said, "You can come pick...pick your daughter out."

Elisa: Out.

Lorilee: Yeah, pick her out.

Elisa: Oh, wow.

Lorilee: Not pick her up.

Elisa: Oh.

Lorilee: Pick her out, and my dad got really mad, and he said, "You know, I'm not going to buy a cow.

Eryn: Wow.

Lorilee: You pick her out and that will be God's pick for us.



Elisa: Oh.

Eryn: Oh, it gives me chills. Oh...oh...oh.

Lorilee: So my parents came and picked me up and brought me home, and that was...that was that.

Elisa: Did they tell you from the get-go that you were adopted or was that a...a...a revelation that came to you when you were older?

Lorilee: Yeah, I just grew up knowing it, you know, and I have my own adopted daughter now, Phoebe, who is sixteen going on seventeen, and I can't even explain how you do it. You just...you just talk about it from day one and um make it a very normal, natural part of, you know, the child's upbringing and so...

Elisa: Yeah.

Lorilee: ...I always knew, and...and I think more and more, especially younger adoptive parents now, they're so conscious of all the pieces of the story and all that integrating that needs to be done, and I don't know, I think integrating is...is...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: ...the...the best word, and so when I was adopted, of course, it was just like totally closed adoption...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Were you the only child?

Lorilee: No ah so my brother was adopted then two and half years later.

Elisa: Hmm.

Eryn: Oh okay.

Lorilee: So it was just he and I. That's like your family, right, Elisa? A girl and a boy.



Elisa: Yes, and...and if I can just pop in here, I'm...

Lorilee: Sure.

Elisa: ...I'm wondering, I remember, we did the same thing. We told our kids they were adopted from the get-go, and we got them both as babies. Ah they were picked out for us. [Laughing] As you were saying, as babies, but I remember with each of them kind of a dawning, a...a...a coming into the realization that while it was a part of the fabric of their upbringing, there was a...a period when identifying themselves as adopted took on a different meaning for them. And I...I wonder if you had that happen at all to yourself? Did you have a moment of epiphany or a moment of *Whoa, what does this mean?*

Lorilee: Well, I do know that I thought a lot about my birth parents, especially my birth mother. I didn't think very much about my birth father until much later. Um he just didn't seem to be even on my radar that much.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: But I did think a lot about my birth mother, and I remember on my birthdays I would think about her because I knew she was thinking about me.

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: Oh.

Lorilee: And so that...I've always thought for adoptees, if you have any self-awareness at all, I think honestly, you're going to be kind of sad on your birthday, because you're going to be thinking about your...your birth mother and what...what she...what she gave up and what she...she lost and what you lost.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. That's...that's honest, that's raw, and that's probably really painful for some people listening. I know for me as a mom of adopted kids, I can touch that and feel that, and I'm in a dual role that you understand too, I think, that I also am the grandmother of a child who was relinquished, a grandchild who was relinquished. So I...I feel both sides of that. I do think of him on his birthday, and I...

Lorilee: Of course.



Elisa: ...do think of the birth mothers of my children on their birthdays.

Lorilee: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: That's such an eye-opening perspective. I'm so grateful that you shared that, because I do have friends that have been adopted and ah it's just a reminder to me about giving space for grieving even if it's been twenty, thirty...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: ...years, forty years of being adopted. But thank you for sharing that.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: Yeah, I'm very preadoption. Sometimes at night I will scroll on the hashtag "adoption is beautiful," and just be all misty-eyed because there's these beautiful families forming and my heart is just swelling and, you know, my husband's like, you know, *It's time to go to bed*. [Laughing] So I'm very preadoption, but yet, I am clear that adoption is not all rainbows and sunshine and there's a lot of pain, there's a lot of things to be reckoned with, a loss to be reckoned with, and I'm just...I'm just going to go back to the word *integrate*.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And with my daughter, she's adopted from South Korea when she was six and a half months old, and I just try so hard to kind of help her, empower her to come to terms with her beginnings. You know, her...her broken beginnings, but also, you know, I'm a huge fan of anything Korean.

Elisa: So you really embrace her heritage.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: I think that is so important, especially with a transracial adoption. I found out...so I was raised in a Mennonite home, which is German speaking and, but I found out that I was actually Polish, Dutch, and Scottish, mostly Scottish, and that for me was super fascinating. I've always been very drawn to Scotland and the bagpipes and the...the whole thing, you know...



Eryn: That's so cool.

Lorilee: ...and I think there's some real, I don't know, there's things in our DNA that call us home...

Elisa: Hmm.

Lorilee: ...and um, you know, I know for my daughter, she's always...her Instagram bio is like "Proud Asian," you know with a Korean flag, and I love that.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Lorilee: You know, I don't want to make her white like me. She's not; she's Asian.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Can you take us back into your childhood and growing up years and...and did you come to know your birth parents and...and, you know, what was that journey like for you, and...and, you know, where were your adopted parents during the process and...

Lorilee: Mm-hmm. Yeah, well I think my...my parents were really kind of ahead of their time in some ways. They always said, *Whenever you're ready to look for your birth mother, we will support you.*

Eryn: Mmm.

Elisa: That is impressive.

Lorilee: Yeah, they were very much like *Your birth mother loved you* and she...she sacrificed, and she did the most loving thing for you in giving you up, and so I think there was lot of healthy things that went on there. But I did, you know, I didn't want to hurt their feelings, so I didn't talk about it much, but I would, you know, I was kind of dreamy, bookish, imaginative child, and, you know, I would just daydream about who this woman might be.



Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And ah in my mind I pictured sort of this feminist business woman. [Laughing] And it's so funny, because my mom, she was the opposite, right?

Elisa: No, okay, okay. [Laughing]

Lorilee: True. She was a nurse, but she was mostly like a homemaker and a mom, so it's very interesting to me that my fantasy, I guess, was that my birthmother be this woman with, you know, padded shoulders.

Elisa: Back in the day.

Lorilee: This is the eighties, yes. You know, running business meetings and stuff, and so I didn't actually find my birthmother until I was 27,..

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: ...and I'm really glad that I waited that long.

[Music]

Eryn: When we come back, Lorilee will share with us more about her expectations for her birth parents and why things didn't exactly work out the way she thought they would. That's coming up on *God Hears Her*.

[Music]

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

Lorilee: When I got married at the age of 23, I kind of wanted her to be there, and I mentioned it, and my parents, you know, I think they thought they would be okay with it, but when the rubber met the road, they



were like, *Nah*, you know, they didn't want...they didn't want the end. I see now actually that would have been too much, yeah.

Elisa: Okay.

Lorilee: Too much.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: So then I kind of parked it for...for a few years. I always knew I was going to try to find her and what was interesting my dad was a Christian bookseller and when I was still in college and home for a break or something, I was working in his store and, you know how sometimes people write things on...on dollar bills?

Elisa: Oh sure.

Lorilee: Yeah. Yeah. Anyway, but there was this bill—a dollar bill—and it had my birth mother's maiden name, which was one piece of information that my parents did know.

Eryn: What?

Lorilee: Yeah, I know. So I don't know why people write their names on bills, but um it's a thing, I guess. Or it used to be a thing. It just showed up in my dad's cash register at his bookstore. So that...that really stirred something in me, and um it felt like a message.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And it was a very obscure last name...

Elisa: Okay.

Lorilee: ...which was actually Polish and changed at the immigration process or whatever...

Elisa: Oh.



Lorilee: ...coming to this country or coming to Canada, so it's very obscure. It wasn't like Nelson or something.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: So and later I found honestly it had to have been belonged to one of my relatives because...

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: Wow.

Lorilee: ...I mean, the entire population with this last name was this family.

Elisa: Wow.

Lorilee: So that was crazy, and then at that same bookstore um maybe a year or two later, still in college, and I saw a brochure for a Christian business woman's breakfast.

Eryn: Hmm.

Lorilee: It was a woman with that last name.

Elisa: Oh my goodness.

Lorilee: And I was just like *What in the world?* And this woman happened to be the executive assistant for the Lieutenant Governor of Manitoba, which is...so a Lieutenant Governor is like our Governor,...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: ...right, in the States, so she had this big fancy job, and I thought, *Oh this is it! This is the woman that I've been thinking about.* [Laughing]

Elisa: Your imagination come true. Yeah.

Lorilee: Yeah, it was crazy. And then when I was 27, I reached out to this woman. Another good thing was from that brochure, I knew she was a Christian, whoever she was.



Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: I wrote her a letter.

Elisa: Hmm. Hmm. Hmm.

Lorilee: So she wrote me back, and she said, *I'm not your birth mother, but I think I know who is.*

Elisa: Wow!

Eryn: Wow.

Lorilee: And so...so she helped me and then she also pulled some strings with um post adoption services in Manitoba where they help you...

Elisa: Mmm.

Lorilee: ...they...they reunite adoptees and their birth parents. She pulled some strings with them and ah they figured out who it was. They called my birth mother and said *Your...your daughter is looking for you.*

Elisa: Mmm.

Lorilee: And at first, she was...she was like *How did you get my number?*

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: She was very defensive, but eventually we connected, so.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: Now were you a mom by then?

Lorilee: No, so mmm, I was 29 when I...when I had Jonah, my first born, so we had a couple years to kind of get to know each other. It was all by letters.

Elisa: Hmm.



Eryn: Would you share what you remember about the very first letter and what you wrote? Was it like a couple pages? Was it a paragraph?

Elisa: Did you write your first book? [Laughing]

Lorilee: Well, Elisa, I think you know the...the answer to that question. It was not a paragraph. [Laughing] It was the world's longest Christmas letter, right?

Eryn: Yeah.

Lorilee: Encapsulating 27 Christmases.

Elisa: Hmm.

Lorilee: So we wrote back and forth, and, you know, what was really interesting was she's actually a writer...

Elisa: Ah!

Lorilee: ...and I always thought...and I do give most of the credit to my dad, the bookseller, who, I mean, he just brought books and books and books, and our whole life was books, so I really credit a lot of that to my dad mostly, but she is a writer. And it's so funny because she...she was a nature writer. [Laughing]

Eryn: Oh wow.

Lorilee: And she wrote like a guidebook to a national park and she...

Eryn: Oh wow.

Lorilee: ...was a nature columnist, and it's so funny because the only nature that I do is the beach, right? I love the beach. But I don't really do nature, and so here she's writing these elaborate columns about like fungi and stuff [Laughing], and [Laughing]...

Eryn: A little different than what you were expecting her to be. [Laughing]

Lorilee: Yeah, very different. Um, you know,...



Eryn: Awe I love that I.

Lorilee: ...she's very...she's a nice lady, but I don't know, in the end of the day, she's...she's not mom...

Elisa: Mmm.

Lorilee: ...and I just don't feel that way about her, you know.

Elisa: Mmm.

Lorilee: Which is interesting, yeah.

Elisa: Yeah, you're sharing the...the reality and I...I'm going to go back to your word of *integration*, you know, we dream up these images of what might be and then reality is there, and we bring forth ourself to it, and...and you're probably not exactly what she imagined and you're not exactly what you imagined,...

Lorilee: Yeah.

Elisa: ...and she can't possibly know how you really were raised, and you can't possibly know what she really went through, but...but thread through now if...if you could your journey into your own family. Um how did you come to the decision to adopt um and tell us that part of your story. You know, it's not every day that we meet someone who's had both ends of the spectrum as you have.

Lorilee: Mm-hmm. Well, I always knew I wanted to adopt, just because I was so pro adoption and I thought it was a great thing. So I knew when I married my husband that, even before I married him, I'm like *We are not advancing any further until I...I really understand that you are open to this.* And not only open, but enthusiastic, you know.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: Because I had heard so many guys especially say, *Well I couldn't...that's great for you, but I couldn't adopt someone who was not my own flesh and blood.*

Elisa: Yeah.



Lorilee: But for Doyle, he was totally on board, and he was 100 percent open and so then we had ah two biological sons—Jonah and Ezra—and when Ezra was born, they had told us it was a girl, you know, on the ultrasound. [Laughing] But something didn't sit right with me. I was like *Mmm, you know I'm just gonna...I'm just gonna wait and see.* And then I had a C-section and there's this tarp over you, right, as they're pulling the baby out of you. The doctor says, "It's a boy!" [Laughing] And we were...I was just this electric shock current went through me, because I was...I was shocked, but yet not shocked, and I thought, *Oh yeah, I get to use the name Ezra!* And...[Laughing] and then my very next thought was *We're going to adopt a girl.*

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: Mmm.

Lorilee: So it was almost like a birthday for her too.

Elisa: Oh.

Eryn: Oh.

Lorilee: Her name means *bright shining star.*

Elisa: Phoebe.

Lorilee: Phoebe. Phoebe means *bright shining star*, so as I put it in my book, *Anne of Green Gables: My Daughter and Me*, I knew a bright shining star was coming to us all, because we were going to name the baby Phoebe if it was a girl, and instead we got our Ezra and ah and then we four years later to the month, Phoebe was born.

Eryn: So share with us ah when you started wrestling, getting a stirring in you to write a book and how did that transpire in the title, *Anne of Green Gables*...

Lorilee: Mm-hmm. Well I had written a bunch of books, mostly for young moms.

Eryn: Okay.



Lorilee: I also wrote a book with Britney Spears' mom, and of course, that's been very much in the news these days, and somehow I'm very much pulled back into it and so, I've always loved *Anne of Green Gables*, and it was probably because, you know, she was an orphan, and she was adopted, even though the word *adoption* I don't think appears anywhere in the book, it was more of a, you know, a common transaction in 18...whatever it was, before the turn of the century that farm people would...would take in orphans to sort of yeah kind of be part of their family but also help out with the chores and whatever. So that was the situation for Anne, and I think my spirit really responded to Anne and how she...she was always looking for belonging. She was always looking for her people.

Elisa: Her bosom friend. Yeah.

Lorilee: Her bosom friend, her kindred spirit.

Elisa: Yes, yes.

Lorilee: And so then I was just really honored to be able to write my story, my adoption story, and Phoebe's adoption story and...and weave it with Anne's adoption story basically.

Elisa: So *Anne of Green Gables* was important to you in your own growing up years, and the concept of her orphanhood, and then as your daughter began to read, did she resonate as well?

Lorilee: Well you have to be so careful, right, with kids? Like you have to sort of pretend that it doesn't mean the sun...the sun, the moon, the star to you, right?

Elisa: Yes. Yes.

Eryn: I don't really like that book, yeah.

Lorilee: Yeah.

Eryn: Especially that age.

Lorilee: Whatever, whatever. And she says she's just not a big reader period, but um she did...she watched the miniseries, the 1986 miniseries...

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: ...with Megan Follows and ah Jonathan Crombie, and ah she watched *Anne with an E* as she got a little older, and so um that's been her way of connecting with it...

Elisa: Okay.

Lorilee: ...and as a family we've been to Prince Edward Island to Green Gables and all of that, so...so yeah, I think she has...she has some interest too, and...and especially with *Anne with an E*, she really responded to the adoption theme in there.

Elisa: Yeah, but the whole concept, the word *orphan*, is kind of weird word. You know, we think about Annie, you know, and we...we think about Oliver, if you want to go back in time a little further. What does that word *orphan* mean to you? What have you learned about it?

Lorilee: Well I don't think it's a bad word. I think it's a statement, and it's...some adoptive parents are very anxious to sort of get away from that word, and ah yeah, it's not like I...I call Phoebe an orphan or whatever, but the truth is is that we can all feel orphaned, and one of the dictionary definitions that I found for orphan was "bereft, left behind, and left."

Elisa: Mmm.

Eryn: Mmm.

Lorilee: So that kicked off a whole new avenue of thought for my book, and a whole new kind of vision for who could be book and who could be responding...

Eryn: Yeah.

Lorilee: ...to the message that, you know, in Christ we are orphans no more, and we've all felt like bereft, left behind, and left. And so to me it's not a bad word or it's not a word to avoid, because I think once you're adopted, that doesn't mean the orphan feelings go away.

Eryn: Right.



Lorilee: And I think you'll always...I'm 53 now, and I think for the rest of my life I will sort of trying to be integrating that. My broken beginnings with my life, and with the person that I've become, my family that I grew up with, I'm just going to try to put all those puzzle pieces together with God's help, and, I mean, for me, it's been the healthiest way to look at it is yeah, still missing some puzzle pieces, but I know that, you know, in God's grace and timing that they'll probably click in there, so.

Elisa: You know, it's very real to say that we can feel orphaned, but we might not be able to put our hands around that concept. You know, I...I know what it feels like to be abandoned or to be bereft, those words. I didn't use the word *orphaned* until both of my parents died. And when both of my parents died, I realized *Bam! I am now an orphan*. I may have looked at my children as having been relinquished, and I understood it from possibly...began to understand it from their perspective, but then I experienced it, and...and being in the condition of not having parents myself, brought a deeper understanding to the reality. I think what you're referencing that...that Paul talks about in Scripture that we are orphaned. You know, from a spiritual sense, how do you understand that concept? That, you know, you just referenced it, but what do you think that means? How has God taught you about that condition.

Lorilee: Hmm. Well one thing I learned from my pastor who was an adoptive father of three bi-racial children, and he did that in the eighties, so that was...that was way before his time, and he always said, "God is not an adoptive Father, He's an adopting Father." It's ongoing, it's part of His character to adopt children. So you and I, Elisa, are adoptive mothers, right?

Elisa: Right.

Lorilee: We did not continue to adopt children, millions and millions of children, but this is in God's character,...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: ...so I love that. I love that concept of just God just looking around to see who He can adopt and embrace and love and care for.

Elisa: Hmm.



Lorilee: So for me, I don't know. I don't know how people get through these adoption puzzle pieces without the Lord and without the Holy Spirit, you know, just gently whispering, *I have found you. I am keeping you.*

Eryn: Hmm.

Elisa: Hmm.

Lorilee: I did find my birth father as well, and he was a totally different story. I mean, he...he wrote me a big fat letter, which I thought boded well, but it didn't bode well. It was like a...a 10-page like business letter almost with basic information just to kind of get rid of me.

Eryn: Wow.

Lorilee: And, you know, one thing I thought was...I mean I was heartbroken at the time. I was 45 when this happened.

Elisa: Hmm. Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And I was heartbroken, and it just led me to the Father who will never turn His back on me. Who will never try to say *Well, I'm not sure if I'm really the guy*, 'cause that's what my birth father tried to put out there until Ancestry DNA put that quite to rest, so...[Laughing]

Elisa: You...you know, I love your spirit, Lorilee. You...you're so resilient and um you are able to laugh at the brokenness and yet embrace the brokenness, and, you know, if I could just ask you a little bit more here, I know as an adoptive mom, and thank you for that distinction, I came into the process of thinking I could make up for any losses that my kids had, and I've learned that I can't. That they will have losses. That that's part of the process of being relinquished by a birth parent and being adopted by adoptive parents. You know, as...as an adopted mom, you know with Phoebe, and she's still young, do you think she'll find her birth mom, what to find her birth parents? Um how do you integrate, I'm going to go back to your word, the inevitable losses that your daughter will experience and has experienced?

Lorilee: Hmm. Well, you know, it's been so interesting because...well, she's internationally adopted, so in a way her birth mother just seems so far away, but, you know, she's as close as Phoebe in some ways. I mean, she...she is present in Phoebe. She is bundled in her bones. So, I mean, it is different with an international adoption, cross-cultural, different language, all of that, and I've always told her *I will be there*



with you and for you. And, you know, what? She's going to need a ton of support, because I was 27 ah and it was totally mind-blowing, and it...it can really do a number on you when you thought about this person your whole life and then you meet them. They don't live up to your expectations because nobody can.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: In my case, I didn't even have a very strong connection at all. Definitely not, you know, kindred spirits, let's put it that way, and so it can really do a number on you, and you have to be so strong in your own identity. So she's going to need a lot of support, and that's the way I...I'm trying to look at it is support.

Eryn: Yeah, provide that safe space for her to do that at her own pace. That's beautiful.

Lorilee: Yeah, but overall, I think it's been a good thing that ah we could talk about, you know, these stories very openly and nothing is a secret, and it's all...everything is an open book.

Eryn: That's awesome. What would you tell the woman that's listening right now that feels left, feels like she doesn't belong? It's like *I know that the Lord is present in this and that He hasn't left me and there's nothing I can do to separate, but I feel this abandonment and this pain.* What would you with her from maybe a tactical standpoint, but then also what would you share from a heart standpoint of just empowering her and how she feels?

Lorilee: Well that's a great question, and I think that, you know, we've all been there at some point in our lives. You know, left on the curbs of life as someone or something drives off without us.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Lorilee: And ah, you know, I'm a writer, I'm an author, and it's 90 percent rejection. I mean, you know, there's just so much rejection that it's, you know,...unfortunately my only skill, but [Laughing], but ah, you know, I just think that any rejection, any abandonment is an opportunity to grow closer to the heart of the Father. You know, we know it in our minds, but those painful, painful situations are an opportunity to just tell Him everything. Tell Him how crappy we feel, how sad, how abandoned. I'm a big fan of *Name it to Tame It.*

Eryn: Mmm.



Lorilee: So every emotion that I feel, I mean, you know when I...when I think of it to *Name it to Tame It* is I just put it out there, and I say *Lord, I'm feeling anxious, aggravated, sad, rejected, lonely*, and then something in me feels better after listing all of it, and it's almost like we try to put a spiritual bow on things and we try to say, *Oh we're fine. We're just going to trust the Lord.* We're not fine, and He gets it and, in those cases, I try to just invite Him to be with me in my pain, and that's the only way to go through it is just with Him, with His arm around your shoulders, just moving through that pain, and He wants to be there with us. He doesn't want us to dress up like we're going to church before talking to Him. He wants us when we're like lying on the floor with our face in the carpet, so sad, so bereft, so left behind. That's when He wants to come to us and dry our tears and move through the pain with us.

Eryn: Mmm.

Elisa: Can I ask you to...to pray for that woman right now? Lorilee, you...you get it. You get it, you get it, you get it.

Lorilee: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: So if you could, put this into a...a prayer for whoever's listening and needs to reach out to God right now.

Lorilee: All right. *Dear Lord, I just pray for your precious, precious daughter right now. Lord, your heart breaks as you see her feeling so alone and so abandoned and so rejected, Lord. I just pray that she will feel your arms around her. I pray that she will remember through your Holy Spirit, Lord, that you are so close to her right now. That even though it feels like the whole world has abandoned her, shut her out, found no use at all for her, that you have purpose for her, that you have a beautiful plan for her, that you have good works to do that you have ordained since the beginning of time, Lord, for her, and I just pray that you are the God of all comfort, you are Jehovah Rapha, the God who heals, and I believe it is your design and your desire, Lord, to heal us. And I pray that that woman would...would know that and cling to that, Lord, despite her feelings, Lord, that you are healing her, and you are with her, and she will make it. In your name I pray, amen.*

[Music]

Eryn: The word *orphan* can seem harsh or cruel, but when we feel like we are orphaned, we can remember that the Lord had adopted us as His own. I love Lorilee's honesty about giving the Lord every feeling and letting Him comfort us through whatever we're facing.



Elisa: Lorilee has so much to teach us when it comes to feelings of abandonment and rejection. She knows what that's like, and she continues to hand every feeling over to Christ.

Eryn: Yes, Elisa, I absolutely loved this conversation with Lorilee Craker. 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 include a link to learn more about Lorilee and to buy her book, *Anne of Green Gables: My Daughter and Me*. There's also a link to a free resource. It's a digital E-booklet on adoption that Lorilee wrote for *Our Daily Bread*. There are also links to connect with Elisa and me on social, so check out the show notes or 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.

[Music]

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Dan, and Jade Gustafson. We also want to recognize Pat and Londa for their support and help in creating the *God Hears Her* podcast. We appreciate your all. Thank you.

[Music]

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