



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 84 - Best Of: How to Live a Tech-Wise Life

Elisa Morgan and Eryn Eddy with Amy Crouch

Amy: To me, what was really special about our family and what made this, you know, tech-wise life stick to the point where I actually wanted to, you know, continue it in my life and write a book, is that my parents always gave us a *why*. My...it was so important in our family that my...my brother and I, even when we were little, understand why these things matter, why it was important to our family to not have screens when we were in a conversation, why we did all of this reading aloud and arts and crafts and finding non-techie ways to have fun.

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. Have you ever thought about how much time you spend on technology? You know, how often do you pick up your phone in the day? Are you on it during an awkward conversation? Or maybe there are moments where you feel kind of overwhelmed by everything you have to do in a day. Well today we're talking to Amy Crouch about being wise with how much time we spend on technology. And she has some great practical advice.

Eryn: She sure does. Amy was only 19 when she wrote a book called *My Tech-Wise Life*. Goodness, 19—that's just incredible, Elisa. She is currently a student at Cornell University studying English and linguistics. While she was growing up, she and her family had always been mindful about balancing their time on technology. To this day, they prioritize in person interactions. And they do their best to find other ways to spend their time off of devices. So let's get to it. This is Amy Crouch talking about her tech-wise life on *God Hears Her*. Amy, to get the conversation started, I would love for you to define for us, what does tech-wise mean?

Amy: Such a good way to start. Well I honestly would say that it has more...more to do with the second half of that...more to do with being wise than with tech. So I can't say that I came up with it. My dad initially came up with this word or compound phrase, I don't know...tech-wise, when he was writing his



book about our family kind of aimed at parents. And I think that as I was writing and trying to figure out what tech-wise means to me, to us, I think it really just...it's mainly about wisdom. I think wisdom can sound kind of like an...an unfashionable word kind of something boring, something old-fashioned even. But I really believe that we should be living our lives trying to attain wisdom, trying to attain the opportunity to be discerning, to...to ask the right questions and know how to seek answers and...and to have kind of an understanding of who we are in our place in the world. And so in one sense, it almost doesn't even have that much to do with technology. But...but I...I do think that technology and the rise of devices and screens in our world have created some unique challenges for us as we try to become people of wisdom. And so my hope is that being tech-wise can be about taking this very ancient idea of becoming wise and applying that to the new and kind of newly-complicated problems that our...our screens present us with.

Elisa: You know I'm thinking...

Eryn: So good.

Elisa: ...anyone who can write a book with their dad has...has a level of wisdom already, ta da bum, you know just mic drop.

Eryn: That is so true. That's a great point.

Elisa: Yeah, mic drop right there, so...

Eryn: Great point. Elisa.

Elisa: But you know I would love to hear, because I...I believe this whole...this whole concept has grown out of the way your family raised you to be wise with technology. Can you start off just telling us a little bit about you and what it was like growing up in a family that's tech-wise? What does that mean? What did it look like for y'all?

Amy: Well as long as I can remember, we have been having conversations as a family about how to use screens wisely and properly. We've had a sort of shared commitment to family disciplines around how we're going to use technology. And I guess I can kind of...kind of outline a few of those.

Eryn: Yeah.



Amy: They were kind of I would say small steps that really led to more radical changes than you might expect.

Eryn: Ooh I want to hear those.

Amy: So, yes, oh okay, yes, yes.

Eryn: Yes, tell us.

Amy: Well so we didn't have a TV until I think I was around 10 or 12. But the kind of magical thing is it did not change our life very much when we finally got one. We never really had video games in the house. We always...al...practically every day of my kind of early childhood and even as my brother and I (I have one brother) grew up. We had family dinners with no screens, no phones. We took a Sabbath every single week which was both a day of rest from work and you know the various commitments we all had but also from screens, not kind of completely absolutely screen-free; but I would say avoiding technological distraction and really focusing on in-person interactions. No phones in the bedroom. So we...we charge our...all of our devices downstairs at night. And you know I could go on, but it was those kinds of small steps that we...that really made I think a real difference. And I think in particular though, if you talk to people my age, it's not unlikely that you'll find people who had somewhat similar experiences, especially like whose parents you know said oh you can only have an hour on the computer teach day...that...that kind of thing. But what I found is not...that didn't stick for everyone. And to me what was really special about our family and what made this, you know, tech-wise life stick to the point where I actually wanted to you know, continue it in my life and write a book is that my parents always gave us a *why*. My...it was so important in our family that my...my brother and I, even when we were little, understand why these things matter. Why it was important to our family to not have screens when we were in a conversation, why we did all of this reading aloud and arts and crafts and finding non-techie ways to have fun. And so I feel like what was really special about living in what...what my dad ended up calling the tech-wise family was not that we sort of did everything perfectly or lived a completely screen-free existence but that my parents were really intentional about saying to me, this is why our...why wisdom and technology matter. This is why we've made these shared family commitments, and you are an integral part of...of that family dedication to living tech-wise.

Eryn: Oh, that is so good. And I have a question. What...what is the "why"?



Amy: Ooh, well we talked a lot about how really what technology tries to do is make things easier. We often said that technology and...and money, they're like bubble wrap. They're really good at insulating us from the, you know, the kind of little inconveniences of life. They're really good at making...just making everything a little bit smoother. And that is not inherently bad, right? It's...it's not sort of inherently evil to make things easier or kind of, you know, more convenient for us. But what was so central to what my parents were always, always telling us is that real life has to be difficult. If it's not difficult, it's not real life. And so if our devices are...are trying to kind of smooth over or even like paper over...maybe put a band aid on the real difficult work of living in community, of...of spending time with yourself, of spending time with the Lord, then our devices are really going to hurt us. And so I think the number one message was we need more than just an easy life.

Elisa: I love how you've...

Eryn: So good.

Elisa: ...hit that so clearly. And I...I totally believe what you're saying. I'm...I maybe represent at this conversation, the woman who has survived, not sure how...how well, but survived the...the years of mothering. And you know and our...our era, I'm a little bit older, you know, wasn't deeply tech-wise. But I try to imagine how I would have gotten my work done and my mothering done without the, and you said, smoother which is a great way to characterize technology, without the smoothness that...that's offered by...by technology. For a minute can you speak, and I know you're not quite there yet, but you know c...can you speak to the reality of how we survive everything that's thrown at us without becoming unhealthily dependent on technology.

Amy: Yes.

Eryn: Ooh, that's good.

Amy: Oh such a good question. You know I don't think that everything needs to be difficult, right? And so I think that...I think that maybe we need to be approaching...need to be approaching life and our sort of enormous slate of...of tasks and things to do with the question of, what will I lose if this becomes easier? And for some activities, it's probably not too much. I mean I think the sort of classic example is like laundry. I mean I maybe I'm missing some kind of mystical connection with the elements if I were to like take all my clothes out to a river.



Eryn: Yeah, I don't know.

Elisa: I don't think so.

Amy: But...but I don't actually think so, right?

Elisa: No.

Amy: Like it feels like yes, this has become easier; but I...I think that the...I am not losing something deeply important. But when we apply that to something like, especially relationships, our...our...our friendships, our families, all...all of that; I think that often the question of would making this easier end up in loss? The answer is yes. I think that sometimes, say turning a meeting for coffee into a few quick texts about, oh how are you doing? I think you really can lose something there. Turning a family dinner into a kind of everyone...everyone grab your own stuff, maybe sit in front of the TV if you want; I think you lose something.

Elisa: So really relationship is key here.

Amy: Yes, yes.

Elisa: In terms of relationships are not easy if they're techie or not, period.

Amy: Yes, yes.

Elisa: I mean they...they just aren't. But...but especially with technology, what we think might make relationships smoother can actually make them bumpier because there's so much room for misunderstanding or miscommunication or just plain old laziness. Yeah, okay, okay. That helps me, thank you, Amy. Yeah.

Eryn: And I could also see you know we can use technology to escape intimacy is what I'm hearing you say.

Amy: Oh yeah.



Eryn: Those intimate moments of sitting across from each other instead of sitting in front of the TV or the intimate moments of resisting picking up your phone during an awkward conversation instead of sitting in the awkwardness. Those are little mini moments that build intimacy with another person and within yourself. And maybe the other question that we should ask ourselves is like, what am I escaping and why?

[music]

Elisa: And when we come back, we're going to learn more about how we use our phones as a way to escape real life. And we'll find some freedom from the envy that can come from spending too much time on social media. That's coming up on *God Hears Her*.

[music]

Elisa: *God Loves Her* is the newest book in our *God Hears Her* series. Ya know we all just want to be reminded that we are loved. And in this devotional women writers share personal stories about God's love that is unconditional. Not only can you receive love from Him, but you'll want to share it with others. *God Loves Her* is perfect to take on the go or to curl up with in your favorite spot at home. Get one for yourself and another to share with a friend who could use a special reminder of God's love. Go to godlovesher.org to order. That's *God Loves Her* dot org. Now back to the show.

Eryn: Amy, oh man, technology it can be like an escape space, and you can almost when you escape to it...you can almost like frame what you wish your life would look like versus the reality of it. But then also it can I think rob...[inaudible] the beautifulness of singleness. I've experienced such beauty in being single and being detached from my phone. I'm curious what you've learned and what you've seen your friends that maybe are detached from their phone and how that's impacted their character and how they see the world and not using it as a space to escape.

Amy: Yes, well I'm so glad you asked this, because I'm not a parent. I am a college student. I am not...that is not what my life looks like. And so I'm so glad you bring it up. I think one big thing I would say is technology, and especially social media, can often be really a source of envy for us and to discontent.

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.



Amy: I think especially of...of Instagram and the ways that...it is just so, so good at presenting us with the lives that we wish we had. And so I...I would really encourage everyone, not only the single women, honestly every...every woman I think experiences envy.

Elisa: Yeah, because it doesn't stop. Yeah.

Amy: But especially...

Elisa: Yeah.

Amy: ...but especially I think it is something that is challenging as a single woman is this idea of envy. Notice the ways that, is technology making it harder for you to be content? Is scrolling through a social media feed making you feel worse about yourself and your life and what the Lord has done for you? And feel free to cull your social media, to spend less time on it, or to perhaps unfollow any accounts which you feel are not...not helping you become more content I guess.

Eryn: To just ask the question, and this...this...I'm taking a turn a little bit in this. I'm curious for you. Growing up, like have you ever been in an environment...I've been in...I've been in these environments so much, where I'm in a room, I'm at a table. And everybody is talking about something that I have no idea what they are talking about. And I feel completely left out, and I feel like I'm like I should know all of this; and I do not. Did you, growing up, ever feel with your friends, being around your friends, those that may have technology at their fingertips always and you not having technology at your fingertips. Did you ever feel left out? Did you have fomo, you know, fear of missing out? I'm curious how that impacted you and your self-talk in your upbringing?

Amy: Yeah.

Elisa: Great question.

Amy: Oh well I totally, totally relate to that experience of...

Eryn: Yeah.

Amy: ...sitting in a room and feeling like oh, I have no idea what's going on. And I absolutely had those experiences, especially...especially with sort of TV shows that got really popular, kind of...kind of the way



that shows can do that. I just...I really very often had never seen it, had no idea what was going on. And I would just sit in all of these conversations not...not having much to say. But I...I don't think that was necessarily some kind of like death knell to my social abilities. I think...I think first of all I...I learned to listen. Like I really did learn that it was okay for me not to be the star of every conversation and to just be present and listening that I was still like valuable as...as just a friend who was there listening. And so I think that was...was helpful. And I would also say that I think part of friendship really is about noticing those kinds of moments and redirecting them. And so I think I learned a lot about being able to notice when somebody else was, you know, clearly not feeling like they were part of the conversation, feeling left out. And I think that I'm a lot more attentive to where...where people are because of that. So yeah, I...I totally had those moments of oh my goodness. What are people talking about? But I do think that I learned some valuable things from them and that also, you know, I was able to find people who occasionally talked about things that I liked as well.

Eryn: Oh, you know, I...I love that, because you can tell it has developed a...this like humble confidence in you.

Elisa: That's a good word.

Eryn: Your upbringing has this...this...you have this humility met with a...a boldness and a...it's just really beautiful.

Amy: Thank you, Eryn.

Eryn: And I know that that's a testament to your upbringing. And you know I think what we were talking about earlier too, the...even if it's imperfect, giving yourself that grace does build confidence. It does teach you how to...how to listen and how to be more attentive to people. It...

Elisa: Oh and life is not easy, you're right. It...it stretches us.

Eryn: Builds endurance.

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.

Eryn: You know and the one thing that has just impacted my quiet time is I actually turn off my phone and I put it in another room. Even just the act of me turning it off and placing it somewhere else, it allows me



to shut down what is happening on it so I can be fully present in just my quiet time with the Lord and journaling. And what...what are some ways that you've learned in your conversations with God? Have you been able to tell a difference in your own personal life when you...when you've been more in tune with your phone and when you've not?

Amy: You know I will say something embarrassing which is every single time I take silence, which I try to do every day...definitely do not manage to do every single day. But every time I take a period of silence, for the first five minutes I am so...I'm like a squirrel. My brain is going everywhere. I also often will put my phone out of room, and I'm absolutely thinking about like oh, I got that text this morning and I didn't answer it. Oh, I think I need to get to that email. And it happens every time. I have not gotten to the point where, you know, I put my phone away and then I'm immediately transported into like perfect, perfect meditative state.

Eryn: That's so true. It's real.

Amy: So...but I think that I have learned something so essential from that, which is that if you push beyond I guess those five minutes of distraction; you find that you have the power to overcome it or rather that, in His grace, the Lord kind of grants us the power to overcome it. And I think every time I survive distraction, I am reminded that it doesn't need to have power over me and that just that there is something so much better on the other side of boredom.

Elisa: I'm actually connecting with you at a different place. There are so many things in life that distract in addition to devices.

Amy: Oh yes, oh yeah.

Elisa: You know. And so what you're...you're saying I mean it was maybe I don't know, a decade or so that I began to experiment with this quietness before the Lord...probably two decades ago. You know and it, again cell phones were hardly invented, so you know it didn't take much to distract me then. And I'm thinking about you know the...the complex duality that you're really referencing here you know between technology and God. The same thing can happen between a relationship with someone else and a relationship with God, between our drive to fill up our calendars to be important and a relationship with God, between our desire to make money just because we want money and our relationship with God. And I'm not trying to diminish what you're talking about. But I think especially in our...in our era where



technology is the soil in which life grows, you know it's become the...the real bandit, you know that...that vies for our attention.

Amy: Yes.

Elisa: So I...I relate to this in so many ways. Because bottom line, my point is before technology was invented, if I tried to spend five minutes in quiet with God; I had millions of thoughts.

Amy: Oh absolutely.

Elisa: So it's not a new...it's not a new struggle. It's just that we've given it a new place to...

Amy: Yes.

Elisa: ...draw our attention. And I think in that way, it normalizes our struggle with technology. And it also gives it a...a rightful place. You know it can serve us as we stay in charge of it. Because you really...everything really boils down to who's in charge of us, you know, who's really in control of us, our thinking, our time, our loyalty, you know, our...our love.

Amy: Yeah.

Eryn: Yeah.

Amy: Well absolutely not anything new. I think it was oh...oh probably 1600s-1700s that Pascal said, "The fundamental problem with humanity is that we can't sit alone for five minutes by ourselves." Totally...totally paraphrasing that quote and maybe...

Elisa: It works, yeah.

Amy: ...forgetting when Pascal lived. But...but truly like none of these are new problems, right?

Elisa: Yeah.

Amy: There is just this new kind of mediating layer over them. And so I...I think that when we approach technology, I...I really liked what you said, Elisa, about it's not a bandit. It's not the one-size- fits-all reason



for all of our problems. But I think that in how it really does mediate almost everything in our lives, I think it is always...always helpful to be paying attention to how our devices are affecting all of the other...other concerns and problems and even solutions that we are finding. So we don't need to make technology a scapegoat, but we...we can examine the ways in which it is kind of infiltrating everything in our lives.

Elisa: Can...can I...can I ask you to just comment on this in our few minutes here? How can technology, or can it, actually serve our relationship with God? How can it even grow our relationship with God? What would you say to that? How does it help us hear God?

Amy: Yeah, well a few things. I think first of all...so technology is really good at shaping our habits. And often that is not for good. I think that honestly, the sort of default settings of our devices can shape our...our habits in ways that are not great. But we can also take incredible steps towards habit, toward good habit with the help of our phones. I mean I think of even as simple as pretty much every phone has something like a little reminders app that can tell you every single day whether it might be pray or remember, you know, this friend who needed to be prayed for. Here is a Bible verse of the day. Like we can use the power of technology to shape our habits in really helpful ways.

Eryn: That's great.

Amy: So that would definitely be one thing. I also think that the powers of...of connection are so totally unparalleled. And as long as we don't treat technological communication as replacing face-to-face communication but rather as a different...a different mode, it can be so powerful. I mean here we are. We're in three different states, right? And we are all speaking about like the goodness of the Lord together.

Elisa: Stunning yes.

Amy: Which is amazing.

Elisa: Yes.

Amy: And so I think we can really embrace the power to communicate across all kinds of...all kinds of borderlines really. So communication and I think...I think also circling back to our googling things, I really do think that we should be making the most of the power of technology to expose us to knowledge, to things that are beautiful. And so every one of us has this incredible amount of access to literature, to art,



to all kinds of absolutely beautiful, wonderful really kind of witnesses of God's glory. And I think that if we, you know, using the Internet to access whatever, a sermon, I...

Eryn: Yeah, sure.

Amy: ...I don't think that that somehow is spoiled by the fact that we're using the Internet.

Elisa: Oh, and aren't we all grateful for how our churches...

Amy: Yes.

Elisa: ...turned to technology during the pandemic.

Amy: Yeah.

Elisa: And we were able to continue and create new ways to...to connect. That's...those are good words, Amy.

Eryn: Those...

Amy: Thanks.

Eryn: ...those really are. I, you know, I remember...I'm just so grateful for your...for your perspective, especially because you were born into a time where it was already there. And Elisa, you were born into a time where you saw it...you've seen it evolve to what it is now. We all have such beautiful and different perspectives of how it's impacting lives. And one thing I...I love and appreciate that I got to see with my business was people's stories from all over the world connecting and being able to see that they're not alone in their wrestling.

Amy: Yes.

Eryn: ...with being human and...and sharing their testimony of how God has worked in their life. And no other way could somebody read a story from New Zealand or...

Amy: Yeah.



Eryn: ...Washington state if it wasn't for...

Amy: Yeah.

Eryn: ...technology and I know...

Elisa: To...to be honest, we're right here using...

Eryn: I know.

Elisa: ...using technology to create...

Amy: Yes.

Elisa: ...this word for everybody through a podcast, yeah, yeah.

Eryn: It's everything...

Elisa: So.

Eryn: ...in moderation, right?

Elisa: Yeah.

Amy: Yeah.

Eryn: And it's...it's allowing it to reveal...like let it be a teacher to reveal to us the things that we are discontent in and maybe how it's impacting our ability to see beauty in the world and...and what God has designed if we're constantly replacing it with a screen. So I just love your challenge and also your encouragement, how you also just express like give yourself grace when you recognize that you are imperfect at creating habits and disciplining yourself from being released from technology. Maybe could you share as we kind of close just, you know, what are some steps, baby steps, if somebody's listening that's like I know I...I actually may struggle with just being addicted to my phone, being addicted to always being on...



Amy: Yeah.

Eryn: ...feeling like I need to p...I have the pressure to document my life on Instagram. What are some baby steps?

Amy: Well I think the good news is that small steps can make such a big difference. I think the first thing I would say that we've kind of danced around is how incredibly fraught with guilt this issue can feel. There can totally be this feeling of like of guilt of I'm doing something wrong. I'm not good enough when...when we find that technology is sort of taking over our lives. And I would first just really emphatically want to say you do not need to beat yourself up for this. You do not need to feel, you know, you don't need to wallow in guilt. Because the reality is you know there's a reason that these devices have gained so much...so much power over us. It's because they can do incredible things. And it's absolutely not surprising to me or, and I don't think it reflects some kind of lack of will power or self-control or anything, for our devices to entrance us. Because that's what they're designed to do.

Eryn: Yeah, that's great.

Amy: And so I would first say just if you see this in your family, just take a moment to say I do not need to feel extraordinarily guilty for this. This is you know...these are very powerful devices that have been designed to completely entrance my family and make us very dependent on them. So that's the first thing I would want to say. And then...

Eryn: That's good.

Amy: ...I mentioned habit. And we are creatures of habit. And the little things that you do every day, they really do shape you. And so I don't...I think that many of us do not need to undertake let's say a radically screen-free life in order to find a lot more peace and joy and healing. I think the sort of number one step that I really recommend to everybody is start and end your days without screens. And for me, the best way of doing this is leave your phone out of your bedroom. Just going to sleep knowing that my phone is out of reach, knowing that like I do not need to be accountable to anyone while I am just sort of drifting off to dreamland is really powerful and also just kind of physiologically really good for your sleep. And then also waking up and even if it's just five minutes that you spend right after you've rolled out of bed without looking at any of your screens, there's just this amazing way in which it kind of orients you to the world that you're in without all of the demands of technology and reminds you of...of where you stand in the



world as both an incredibly small but also incredibly beloved child of God. And like the whole point...I think that the point of living tech-wise is that there is so much more in the world that we can appreciate. And so I would say start thinking about positives. What are things that you could add to your life, tech-wise, you know, physical in-person embodied activities that you can add and that will really bring real joy and refreshment to your family? So don't make it just about kind of like you know let's...let's get rid of these devices, but find something to take their place.

Elisa: Like you mean things like board games or nature hikes or arts and crafts or okay. Okay, all those require a little energy.

Amy: Oh they do. They totally do.

Elisa: Just keeping it real.

Amy: And what I would say though is that the point of...the...part of the reason that these devices are so attractive is because they don't require much energy. And so I do think that you need to be prepared. I mean as I said, there...there's a little more difficulty in...in a life that is less dependent on devices. And so I do think that you need to be prepared. And so that's honestly why I would almost say, as impossible as this may sound, what if in part of your...part of your sort of tech-wise journey could involve rest? Oh my goodness, I want to make this recommendation with like the utmost grace and understanding of how difficult it is. But taking a Sabbath has been probably...it's probably the most transformational spiritual practice that I...that I...it is so incredible. And I'm just a college student. There are so many people for whom understandably the thought of a taking a day away from work and away from sort of say let's say technological distraction sounds so...so impossible. But I will just say personally that I look forward to my day of rest every single day of the week. I emerge on Monday feeling...I take Sundays off...feeling so refreshed and so grateful and ready to start the week. And I think again I...it is just so special to spend a day kind of being reminded of my right place in the universe of my smallness and my belovedness. So I would say maybe...maybe start praying about what a Sabbath could look like for you and how the Lord might be...be offering you the gift of rest. One of my favorite psalm verses ever is that "The Lord gives to His beloved sleep." And I think that I would really encourage anyone listening to think about the ways in which the Lord might be offering you that gift.

[music]



Eryn: Technology is a valuable part of our society today. Like Amy said, this conversation isn't meant to make anyone feel guilty. Instead, we all need to be reminded that there is a world off of our screens and there are so many things that we can do that don't involve our devices. We can all start living a tech-wise life today.

Elisa: Of course, Eryn. I know I feel inspired to keep my phone away in the other room at least part of the time. But 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 also a link to purchase Amy's book *My Tech-Wise Life*. Or you can visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

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

[music]

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

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