



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 166– Ask, Seek, Knock with Deb Hopper

### Eryn Adkins & Vivian Mabuni with Deb Hopper

**Deb:** God has promised me good. He cares for me. He knows the innermost parts of me. Good doesn't always mean perfect and good doesn't always mean what we have in mind, but He has a good, good plan for me. And the part I love about that verse is that He has the plan. He knows what it is. So I can trust in that.

**Elisa Morgan:** You're listening to *God Hears Her*, a podcast for women, where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you. Join our community of encouraging one another and learning to lean on God through Scripture, story, and conversation at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). God Hears Her. Seek, and she will find.

**Vivian:** Well, welcome everyone to *God Hears Her*. We get the chance all the time to meet incredible women, but it's really extra special when there's actually a real in-life connection point to our guest. And so today I have actually met our guest in person. But before I kind of introduce her and we get to hear from this amazing woman, I'm friends with one of her daughters. And so I just kind of reached out and asked them to kind of share a little bit about their mom. So our guest's, oldest daughter, Katie said, describing her mom, She's a woman who knows who she is and Whose she is. She doesn't seek approval from others, but from God. She is strong and beautiful, gracious and self-controlled. Her strengths, I have been learning from all her life because they are places of weakness in me. She's our mother and guiding light. And then her middle daughter, Jess, who's my friend who I asked, Hey, can you ask your sisters? So Jess writes, Anyone who meets my mom will immediately notice and remark on her strength. She's always been strong, resilient, and an incredible leader. But she's also taught me volumes about how to be soft, about how to be vulnerable with God and with others. The most tender and powerful in my life have almost all happened in the circumference of my mom's beautiful, soft strength.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Vivian:** And then finally her youngest Caroline says, You would never know that my mom, Deb, is an introvert because she is so good at making others feel good with her words and actions. I love that even when her social battery runs out, she will continue to encourage and love others well to the best of her ability in any circumstance without thinking of herself. And I just thought. Wow, what an honor to actually have some time with the amazing Deb Hopper. And just for you to know, just some of her background as we get into this conversation, Deb spent the first 25 years of her professional career serving in the church and working in the corporate world. So she's corporate background. And then after 10 years as the



women's pastor at Seacoast Church, she now pursues family ministry and is the founder and CEO. of a nonprofit organization, SEEN., S. E. E. N., SEEN Moms, Serving, Single, Moms. Married for 30 years to Gibson. She has three daughters that we just heard from, two sons-in-loves and 11 grandchildren. So Deb, what an honor to have time with you. Thank you for being on *God Hears Her*.

**Deb:** Oh, thank you, Vivian. And thank you, Eryn.

**Eryn:** Deb, would you share a little bit with us? Where are you coming from? Where do you live right now?

**Deb:** I live in Charleston, South Carolina. And originally from Charlotte, North Carolina, I'd lived there 45 plus years. And then we moved here when my husband got a job in the Navy. So initially it was just us. Jess and Katie were in college, and Caroline was six. So it was just the three of us. But then pretty soon after that, as they were married and started with their families, Katie and Josh moved here and went into ministry here in Mount Pleasant near Charleston. And then about 10 years later, Jess and Nick moved here after living in several other parts of the States. So I was in, you heard the corporate world, but always had a heart for ministry and God put all the pieces together as only he can do for me to serve in the church here for 10 years as the women's pastor. And it was beautiful.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Deb:** But I knew when it was time, you know, to step away from that in my sixties to really spend more time with family and to pursue some other interests part time. So that's what I've been doing since then.

**Vivian:** Deb, we'd love to hear just some of your journey, especially what we'd love to talk about is prayer and your experience with prayer. So we'd just love for you to walk us through some of how prayer became such a central part of your life and what you've learned about prayer and some of your journey of getting to where you are.

**Deb:** I accepted the Lord at 16 and grew up in the church, but I took a little diversion during college as some people do. I was really a little bit angry with God. There's a long story. I think I might've told you Vivian, I wanted to go to seminary, and it wasn't...in the 70's was not...there were not the options for women to go into seminary. So I think when I got turned down several times, I just distanced myself from God for a few years during college and my first marriage, I was away from God. But when that marriage ended after 10 years, I was suddenly single, single mom of two little girls. They were three and six and I was a mess. I mean, I really had a lot of areas of my life. I was holding it together by a shoestring, really. I mean, I was barely making enough money for us to make ends meet. And I was driving...my car had



died. It was on the side of the road. I was driving my dad's pickup truck. We lived in this dilapidated lake house, and a good friend took me to lunch. And she's like, You've got to get your life together. I mean, it was just one of those good girlfriend conversations where she was honest with me and I ugly cried the whole time. And then she told me later, she said, now I didn't tell you how to do it, but this is what worked for me when I was a single mom. And she was a few years ahead of me in that journey. So I was paying attention and she said, My daughter and I used the principle from Matthew 7:7 of "Ask, Seek, and Knock." And we put the Scripture cards all over the house, and you pray about one thing for 30 days. You focus your prayers on that one thing that you need God to move in an area of your life, or place that you're stuck, place that you need answers. But you put that thing on the back of the note card and on the front side, you...you just focus on Matthew 7:7. The promise that Jesus gave us is ask and it will be given. Seek and you will find. Knock and the door will be opened. And so for 30 days, you really release worry, anxiety, care over that area and watch for God to move. So I walked that weekend by myself, and I was like, God, there's so many areas. I don't have one. So I put four areas on the card: house, job, body, car. Cause I had all these areas that needed help.

**Eryn:** When you say *body*, were you going through an illness or what was the body?

**Deb:** No, it was more just self-confidence during the time of separation and divorce. It'd been about two years. I gained about 30 or 40 pounds, a lot of emotional eating, and I just, I wasn't exercising. There were not gyms then, there were not online yoga classes, I was stuck in that area. I did not know how to get out of the stuck place that I was at.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Deb:** So the car was, was an obvious job. I was, I loved my job, but I...I didn't make enough money to support two children, and I didn't have benefits. I was working for a non-profit. Then house...I had that dilapidated lake house, and I just didn't know how to proceed. I was a business person, but it was overwhelming. And so I used that principle to reach up to God from my pit and to trust Him and believe that He could help me in the most complex areas of my life and the simplest things, like how to get a car when I didn't have a down payment. And month by month it, I mean, it didn't happen overnight. It's not like He dropped a car in my driveway, or He delivered...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Deb:** ...you know, a sweepstakes to buy a new house. But God opened doors for me, and He showed me how to seek answers. And then within six months, all four areas had forward movement. And so that was



the beginning for me of like, just a recommitment to God, kind of a spiritual rebirth where it was me and Him, there...there was nobody else. He's the last one I talked to, you know, when I laid my head on the pillow and the first one in the morning. And because I think of that initial simple, but supernatural prayer practice, He led me on a journey of prayer over the next 30 years that went deeper into ask, seek and knock. So that's how it started, and then how it's continuing. It's...it's a daily journey, you know, with God.

**Vivian:** That's so powerful and...and so practical. Like that's something that I can honestly put some hooks into because the acronym is something that I can recall quickly. So I appreciate that so much. Would you be willing to share like a...an answer to prayer that was just so evidently God?

**Deb:** Yeah. I've had so many that I write about in the book, and that's one reason why I felt compelled to write the book is I started discipling women years ago and found that many of them either didn't know how to pray. They thought it was too difficult. Or they didn't believe that God answered prayers. And I just don't think we talk about answered prayers enough. You know, sometimes we're afraid it sounds too uber spiritual or that we're taking A plus B and connecting C. But in reality, He does move, and He does answer prayers. And if we don't talk about them and make it natural in our everyday life, then why would people pray, you know? So during that time, the four areas, for example, the house...my previous husband and I had owned that house, but we leased the lot. So it was a little more complicated than just selling a house. There were so many repairs that needed. The floors were actually at a tilt. You know, there were so many things. It was going to be a fixer upper for us, but then suddenly I was the only one left to fix it up. And so I didn't know how to go about selling this complicated piece of property, but I listed it in a community newspaper. Because, again, this was in the early 80s, and there weren't a lot of networks and a lot of available realtors. So I listed it in a community newspaper, and also I was driving 40 miles to my work every day. And we were away from family and networks and church. So we were outside of the city of Charlotte on this lake. So the woman that responded to my ad lived five minutes from my parents in the school district that I wanted to be in for the girls. And she offered me a trade on her condominium for a portion off of her rent for a year as part of the trade on this house. Only God could have set that up.

**Vivian:** I just got goosebumps. Wow.

**Deb:** Only God. I didn't get any other offers. And it was exactly...

**Vivian:** Wow.



**Deb:** ...what I needed. We moved into a condominium five minutes from my parents. The girls were able to walk to their house after school. I was now only 20 minutes from work instead of 40 minutes. And it just solved a lot of problems. But again, I had to take the step, the first step of listing it in a paper. It's not like God just dropped her into my lap. But once I took that step, He provided the obvious answer for me.

**Vivian:** So would you say that that's part of the seeking is the putting the ad in?

**Deb:** Yeah. Seeking is a lot like either a jigsaw puzzle where you start with the outer edges. I love to work puzzles, so that's an easy analogy for me. So you start with the outer edges of the puzzle, and then you try to fit in the next pieces. But if you get stuck, you move on to another solution. You don't stay stuck in an area. And so with prayer and looking for an answer to prayer, I try to do that too. I try to put the outer edges of what seems logical, reasonable, is what God would want for me. And then I look for the next piece to fit. It doesn't fit there, I look and seek in another area. And then another analogy about puzzles is you can't do puzzles in the dark. A lot of times I try to do them at night, and it's not light enough. But I really need the light to shine on the...the various colors of the puzzle. And similarly, we need God's light to shine on our answers. We need to go to His Word. We need to ask, does this line up with what God says? Is this true? Even in the simplest things, like, is this a place God would want me to live? Is this going to be good for us? Are we going to be able to serve Him, love others well, and be good stewards of His money in this transition? So I've used that analogy to talk about seek, and it's like a puzzle sometimes. It's not always an immediate answer. But if we have our eyes opened and if we're continually going back to Him and asking, is this what You have? Is this the next step? Then He's shown me time and time again how He can direct my path.

**Eryn:** That's really powerful, Deb. You had gone through a lot, especially as a single mom and providing and I would imagine burnt out and betrayed and just sad. And then when the Lord starts answering your prayers, was there ever a moment that you wondered if the prayer that's been answered is also gonna fall apart or fall through at some point? Can you trust?

**Deb:** Oh a hundred percent I think a lot of us who have had pain or heartache have that problem with trust. And I try not to be the person with the glass half empty. I try to be half full. But it's natural. And the only way that we can defeat that is to, again, stay lined up in His Word and to know what He says about me. I mean, I...my devotion yesterday just reminded me that we have to stay aligned with His Word or we get diverted. We get easily off track. And being lined up with His Word reminds us who He says about us. But yeah, I had the very incident that you're talking about happen when Gibson and I got married. And it was actually before we were married, we were looking for a house. And the girls and I had driven by this house in the neighborhood. We were still in rental properties, and we had been in rentals for six or seven



years. But we had always loved this one house we saw in the neighborhood on the way to their school. And one day Katie came home and had been riding her bike and said, “Mom, the house you love is for sale.” And I said, “Well, we're not getting married until next summer. I can't even begin to look at this with one income.” She said, “Just go see it. My friend's father is a realtor.” So long story. God worked it out and gave Gibson...he was working in Richmond, Virginia, gave him a job back in Charlotte starting the next month in the same capacity he had been doing. We moved the wedding date up like six months, and we were able to close on the house right before the wedding. But when we closed and walked to the door and he handed me the key, I really couldn't believe it. He said, “You didn't think we were going to get your dream house, did you?” And I said, “No, I trusted that...that God was in this.” We had prayed. He had opened the doors. He had shown us every part of the path, but there's still naturally a part of you that doubts, that questions when something comes true. Is this really God? Is this really for me? So, yeah, it's natural, I think. But then we have to, again, line up. God has promised me good. He cares for me. He knows the innermost parts of me. Good doesn't always mean perfect, and good doesn't always mean what we have in mind. But He has a good, good plan for me. And the part I love about that verse is that He has the plan. He knows what it is so I can trust in that.

**Vivian:** I really appreciate you addressing that too, Deb. Because it could be easy to think that ask, seek, knock is kind of a prosperity gospel, you know, where it's like, I just do the vending machine. I kind of picture that one scene in *Bruce Almighty*, where God allows Bruce to have access to be God for a time. And all these prayer requests were coming in. And so then he just says a full on...

**Eryn:** Yes to...

**Vivian:** ...yes to everything. And so everyone's winning the lottery, everyone, and it's just complete chaos. And what you're talking about is growing in intimacy with the Lord, knowing His heart aligning to His Word. And as fragile as our trust can be, to still present that to Him and, in that way, just grow in deepening of intimacy of actually knowing Him and not knowing about Him. Like that transfer of the head knowledge to the heart and how just God delights to, ah, I'm kind of getting welled up, but just He delights to provide this house that you and the girls love. That was the one you saw every day and to have you holding the keys is just such a beautiful assurance of God seeing us and caring and being in the little details.

**Eryn:** And in the details of redemption within marriage too. He was redeeming so much within that one big moment that it wasn't just a home, but it was safety, and it was blending, and it was creating a family and a home that maybe you grieved in your past that you didn't think you'd ever have again. I mean, He just redeemed so much in that. One moment. I'm just so grateful for your vulnerability of just saying, yes,



trust is really hard when you've gone through so much pain. How do you wrestle with those inner thoughts? And what are some practical ways of aligning your head and your heart?

**Deb:** That really is the essence of knock in the last part of it. We think knock and the door will be opened immediately. But there's many times that we knock on a door and no one's home. Or we knock, knock, knock. No one hears the knock. The door doesn't always get opened immediately. And I feel like that was Jesus's personal message to us in prayer is it's going to be a waiting process. It's not always going to happen within a month or within a year or the way that we think it's supposed to happen. And my ministry journey is probably the best example of that. Because like I said, I felt called to ministry at 16, went to my pastor, talked to him about it, got turned down, mailed some seminaries, you know, an application got turned down. And my gifts were not in music or children, and that was the only function they could offer me at the time. So I really put the dream aside...was a little bit angry. But I just put it aside, went into the corporate world, used my gifts there. Then when my corporate job in Charlotte ended about the same time that Gibson's job was ending with the insurance world, I was paid a year severance because I moved like three offices. And during that year, I took corporate chaplaincy courses because I thought I can use my corporate work and my desire to do God's work. So I took a year of that and a year of seminary online, and at the end of that time was when Gibson was offered the job in Charleston, and we moved. So I called the chaplaincy company and I said, I'm ready to work. I'm in Charleston. And they said, Oh, we don't have any positions in that area in the whole low country. And I was like, *God, what was that about? I know You confirmed it.* Someone actually paid for my coursework. I had taken like four online seminary courses. And so I put it aside. And I knew I had to be employed. We had three girls, two were getting married, a lot of college costs. So I just found another job. And then after that, I went back into real heavy corporate work as a CFO. And for about five years, I did that, but I...I kept serving at this local church at Seacoast. I was a women's leader, and then I was a coach. And then I was assisting the pastor until one day when I was considering doing consulting work, the women's pastor called and said, I know you've managed several companies, but I really feel like you're supposed to apply for my assistant position. And so we prayed about it, felt like it was the right thing. It was a third of my salary, but we said, yes. A year later, she retired, and I was able to complete the ministry track at church using my corporate chaplaincy work and my online seminary. I only had to do several more courses to become a pastor at the age of 48. Now, that was from 18 to 48.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Deb:** And it just reminds me of that poem I love called "The Weaver" where God is like weaving a tapestry and we don't see the upper side. All we see is the knotted threads. And it says, but not till the loom is silent and the shuttles cease to fly, will God unroll the canvas and reveal the reasons why. Sometimes. We see it and sometimes we don't. Sometimes it's 30 years, sometimes it's in a minute. But I just want to  
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encourage you, Eryn, and anybody else who's in a waiting season that He has the plan. And if you're faithful to do the next thing, do the next right thing, He doesn't waste a minute of it. He used all my corporate experience to help me manage and lead 3,000 women in a mega church. It was incredible in the way He used all of it. He's a master. He's a master designer, you know. And sometimes we see it and sometimes we don't. But we will one day.

**Vivian:** Yeah, we will one day. There's so much richness in these hard-won lessons that really do shape our understanding of how God works and, I mean, the mystery of who God is. I would love for you to talk about this idea of Ebenezer and what all that is about. Just expand on that for us.

**Deb:** Had this idea from reading in f...in 1 Samuel about the Ebenezers where it's actually many times in the Old Testament. It's not just...just one. But the first time that they had finished a battle that God had obviously one. At Mizpah and they took a stone...Samuel took a stone and set it up and said, "This will be an Ebenezer saying, Thus far, God has helped us. And so for several years after we moved here, I talked about wanting to have an Ebenezer wall. And my husband, Gibson, would kind of nod his head, but it was like an Ebenezer wall. Like, so I had to like, wait to flesh it out. But finally in 2018, we had a 25th wedding anniversary, and we did a vow renewal in our backyard. Cause we wanted the...the grandkids to like be a part of it. We wanted them to understand. And so we used that opportunity to also start an Ebenezer wall around our little man-made pond that we have with some plants and a little waterscape. And so we just got stones from Home Depot and wrote on them with Sharpie. And we had one for all the big events and all the God events, you know, little things of jobs and promotions, but also when each of the grandchildren were born. And when some serious illnesses were defeated and God healed, like one of our granddaughters, Glory, from seizures. And so we had an Ebenezer for some hard things, but also some fun things and had everybody lay their stone on the pond. And then we've continued to add to that since 2018. Usually at Thanksgiving, we'll...we'll lay some Ebenezers. But we also just did an Ebenezer ceremony in March with the book, because we wanted to celebrate what got it done with all four of our family books that had just been published. And so we use that chance to...to lay even Ebenezer stones. But it's just a visual reminder for us. And the kids love to go out there and flip over the stones and find the one that has their name on it. But you can do Ebenezers in a lot of different ways. You can do a picture board wall in your...or a prayer wall or photo books. People do like photo books now with markers of where God has helped you thus far. It's just anything that you can visually show, because if we don't tell this generation, those stories can be lost in one generation.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Deb:** And I think the Israelites were so good about that because they told the stories over and over again of what God had done. You know, God led us through the Red Sea. God did this. God helped us win this

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battle. God made this happen. He saved us from this trouble. We don't tell the stories enough. So whatever ways we can find to lay Ebenezers I think will be for the next generation's benefit.

**Eryn:** It's so good. Thank you, Deb. Would you share anybody that's listening, maybe if they don't know fully what an Ebenezer means?

**Deb:** I define it as a memorial or a marker. And again, my early understanding was it was after a victory or when God had finished something. But recently I've been reading more about Ebenezers in the Bible. And they're really a midpoint too. Like they put an Ebenezer stone in the middle of the Jordan when they crossed over. They did another one at the end. But I think sometimes we wait for the finished product or the...the big event in our life and we don't mark. So it's just a simple marker of saying, not I did this, but God did this. God helped me thus far. God has helped me. And I think just acknowledging God in the promotion, in a child being born, in a marriage. We acknowledge that we didn't do it on our own. That it was God that was there with us, guiding us, showing us.

**Eryn:** I would love to end with maybe you praying over the woman that is asking and seeking and knocking so hard right now.

**Deb:** Oh, I would love to do that. *Father, I just thank You for every person who listens to this and feels just nudged in some way to look up to You and to ask about something that's heavy on their hearts that's a burden in their lives or a place where they're stuck. And Father, I know that You do hear every prayer. And I know from my years of walking with You, that You not only hear us, but You see us. And I love the vision of Hagar in the desert when You called her by name, and she felt seen. And I think we all just need to feel seen, God. So will You please reach out through these podcast airwaves and touch the woman who is leaning on You right now, who might have a tear running down her face, who doesn't feel seen or heard or known by You. And just remind her in some small, tangible way, God, whether it's a verse that she reads that feels like it's for her or whether it's a devotion or whether it's a song on the radio, something in the next 24 hours. Will You give her that so that she knows that she knows that You see her, and You hear her and You love her. And we will give You all the credit for that, God. We will build Ebenezers as high as we can to say You've helped us. This is You and we trust You and we give You our lives and we depend on You. We love You, Father. I thank You for the women that are listening. And I thank You for how You're going to move in their prayer life. In Jesus name. Amen.*

[music]



**Eryn:** The Lord answers our prayers in His way and in His timing. But it's so good to know that we can surrender our needs fully to Him in everything.

**Vivian:** Ask, seek, knock. What a beautiful way to give our prayers to God. Well, before we go, be sure to check out Deb's book, *Simply Pray*. You can find that and more at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org).

**Eryn:** And if you liked this episode or you've been listening to the show for a bit, please leave us a rating and review wherever you listen to your podcasts. We'd love to hear from you.

**Vivian:** Thank you 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 Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Linda and Emily for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

**Vivian:** Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor-supported, nonprofit ministry dedicated to making the life-changing wisdom and stories of the Bible come alive for all people around the world. God Hears Her is a production of our Daily Bread Ministries.