

God Hears Her Podcast Episode 171 Escaping Abuse Eryn Adkins & Vivian Mabuni with Orsika Fejer Baas

[Music]

Orsika: Oftentimes you hear people say, Jesus left me. And you're like, He never leaves us, and I never felt like Jesus left me, ever. I knew Jesus was there. And now I'm able to more openly speak about that, because I have the confidence. And I allow the Holy Spirit to work through me because I have the confidence. And I allow the Holy Spirit to work through me, then there's a better opportunity to change people's lives, to help people not feel so alone in their journey, wherever they are.

Elisa: 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. God Hears Her. Seek and she will find.

Eryn: Before we start today's conversation, we wanted to let you know that this episode is specifically about domestic abuse in honor of Domestic Abuse Awareness Month. We want you to be aware that this episode will cover heavy topics like emotional abuse, financial abuse, and rape. If you or someone you know is in an abusive situation, we encourage you to contact the Domestic Violence Awareness Hotline by calling 1 800 799 7233. Or you can find their website in our show notes. Vivian, I am really grateful for our guest today. We already did a deep dive into a conversation before we hit record. And we actually had to disrupt it and go, wait, okay, let's pray. One of the reasons why I'm excited for this guest is because I can tell that she has a honesty and a vulnerability and a grit and a grace to her that is just really inspiring. And I know that it probably comes from a place of fight and survival. And so Orsika, welcome to the *God Hears Her* podcast.

Orsika: Hello. Hello. What a blessing and honor to be here. Thank you.

Vivian: Yeah, excited to have you. And I know that the topic we're going to be talking about is tender, and it is weighty. It's a weighty topic that unfortunately affects a lot of women. And in my experience, especially in Christian spaces, there can be often some damaging teaching that goes alongside talking about abuse, domestic violence, the content that we're covering. And so I'm grateful for your willingness to share your story. And I know that even just from a short amount of time and reading about your bio, that your heart is really to allow the Lord to use what you've walked through to benefit others. And so we're just grateful for you taking time to share your story.

godhearsher.org



Orsika: Thank you. That means a lot.

Eryn: So kind of take us through your story. What is the things that stick out that you're like, I want to share this part for sure. Anybody listening, let's begin at this point.

Orsika: Yeah, sure. That makes sense. So, I would say, let's begin when I was a young adult and innocent and naive and, you know, the rose-colored glasses and everything was so perfect. And then we realize life isn't perfect, but those are the times when we lean into God even more, right. And those are the times when we cry at His feet, and we ask for Him to help us through things. And I had a first marriage to my daughter's father that lasted about five years and got a divorce from him because we just, we were in different places, and he was not a Christian. And I knew that I wanted that in life and he wasn't ever going to be a Christian as far as I could see at that point in my life. And now knowing through my daughters, he's...he's not. And that's not judging him. That's not anything. Just, I knew that I wanted a strong Christian man in my life to live my life out with. So, then I met my son's father and he was the abuser. Learned a lot in that situation. And now I'm married to the absolute best, most wonderful, charming man ever, and he's a good, strong Christian. And it's nice to be able to...to live that life with him and to love Jesus with him and be able to show Jesus' love to not only our family, but those around us with him.

Vivian: How old were you when you were in your second marriage?

Orsika: Oh, let's go with mid to late thirties. It sounds about right.

Vivian: And how long were you married?

Orsika: Four years, technically, yes.

Vivian: Can you walk us through a little bit of just what happened, what you experienced to the degree that you're comfortable sharing?

Orsika: Absolutely. So, we met through mutual friends, and they said, oh, this is a great guy. And I was like, okay, I trust these friends, you know. Let's hang out. I got pregnant cause we know how that happens, and it happened. And I have my beautiful son from that. And so being raised Catholic, you know, when you get pregnant, you get married to the person, right? It's what was expected. So I got married to the person and at the beginning of our relationship, he was wonderful. He love-bombed me. He bought me things and was just so sweet. And then he found out that I was pregnant, and he was



super sweet. And then I gave birth to our son, and it was not so sweet anymore. So, you know, it was just those...those small control things that at the moment I didn't realize that he was pushing me further and further into the quicksand. Things like, mind you, we were living in Southern Oklahoma, and it's July. So it's hot. It's super, super hot, right? And he would say, well, why aren't you wearing makeup when you're out gardening? Like, are you kidding me? I'm out gardening. But going to put makeup on was easier than having the argument. So, I would just go put makeup on cause it was just easier. And then, you know, I want you to wear this blouse when we go out dancing. And it was more risqué clothing than I have ever worn before. But I was like, well, I mean, my role as his wife is to please him. So I guess I'm putting on the blouse even though I'm not comfortable in it. And it was just those little, little shifts that were uncomfortable to me but I thought that the good little wife needed to do. Then my son was born, and things changed and just kind of went from bad to worse.

Eryn: And what did bad to worse look like for you?

Orsika: So emotional abuse and then financial abuse. And then my breaking point was when he raped me. If you're going to rape me, what else is next? I had two daughters at the time who were 11 and 9. If you're willing to do this to me, what are you going to do to them when they become older? And I said, that's just not an option. We're not going to live that life. So I packed up the kids and moved back to the Chicago area.

Eryn: Would you share more? Expand upon what does emotional abuse look like? What does financial abuse look like?

Orsika: Sure. So the emotional abuse is not validating your emotions, right? Just your noes are invalidated. You're just made to feel like your emotions just don't matter. You're made to question everything. You're made to just not feel worthy of existence in the presence of the...the abuser, right? It's a very subtle thing. It's something as simple as you're talking to somebody. and the abuser comes up beside you and just kind of flippantly is like, that's not important. You're not important, right? And then the financial abuse is when you're, I mean, this one's pretty basic and simple but very important to know. The financial abuse is when you are not allowed to spend your money the way you want to, right? So the person has total control over your bank account, or they take your money. Let's say you're a mom and you get child support. And they say to you, well, great, this is to support the child. So, it all should come to the joint account, and you can't spend the money on the child. This has happened to me. And I'm like, but it's their money, because it's to support them, not to support your car habit or your smoking habit or your drinking habit, right? It's like to support the kids. So financial abuse is not allowing you to spend the money that you receive, let it be through child support or let it be through working or whatever...not



allowing you to spend that money in the way that you feel is in the best interest of yourself and your family.

Vivian: So you mentioned having the courage just to pack up the kids and get to safety. Can you walk us through what that process was like and what things that you needed to do and how you got help?

Orsika: Absolutely. So first and foremost, I did involve the law because I wanted the law enforcement agencies to know that I wasn't kidnapping my children. So, I went to the sheriff's department and I said, hey, my husband raped me. We need to get to safety. I'm going here, and I gave them the address. And I said, we're planning on leaving tomorrow morning. What else do I need to do? And he said, get to safety. Then write your statement. And I said, okay, I can do that. So, it was kind of complicated, honestly, because my children were visiting, my girls were visiting their father and we...who was living in Texas. And we were in Oklahoma at the time. And basic summary of it was I picked the girls up with my son from their weekend with their dad on a Sunday, and I drove from Dallas-Fort Worth area with three kids, a dog, a cat, and a lizard, and an F 250 pulling a massive U Haul with everything put in there. And I drove from Dallas-Fort Worth to the north side of Chicago. So, I was up for about 36 hours just to get us to safety. And it was ...it was definitely challenging, but it allowed the kids to sleep at night. So I just drove through the night. And it was long, and it was arduous, but it was definitely what needed to be done. And I would do it again in a heartbeat for sure.

Eryn: How did you manage that with finances and a place to go?

Orsika: So my brother was the place we went. And he said, whatever you need. So he actually...he and his family rented the U Haul for...for us. And the abuser was at work when we loaded the...the truck and the trailer up with all of our belongings. And my daughters didn't even know that we were moving. They went and visited their father, and I picked them up. And I said, here's the situation. We're not going back to Oklahoma. We're going to Illinois. Sorry, but your life there is done. And I pretty much yanked them out of that life, and they didn't get a chance to say bye to everybody before they went to visit their father. There were a few people, I'm like, hey, why don't you give them an extra tight hug, you know, kind of that, but yeah, it was a journey for sure.

Vivian: I think that's so brave of you to be able to recognize the signs and then to actually move in a direction. And my understanding with many women who are in abusive relationships, that is very difficult to leave, though they know that it's important to do the process of getting to that point. It's not just a light switch where you just decide one day, okay, I'm just going to go.



Eryn: Right.

Vivian: There's a lot going on. So, when you look back now with having some more space and actually being in a healthy environment, what helped you to be able to take such a bold move to pack up the kids and to leave? When you look back now, were there any things that were happening for you to kind of move in that direction? Did you want to leave sooner than that moment? What was going on for you?

Orsika: So I was really torn, to be totally honest and transparent. I was torn because I wanted to leave, but I didn't want another failed relationship. I wanted to be the good Christian wife and stay and, you know, for better or for worse, I took that seriously. And here I am on my second marriage. And, you know, I was just like, I don't...I don't want to fail again, right? Cause I felt like I was failing. And what really hit the nail on the head for me was it doesn't matter how I feel. What matters is keeping my kids safe. And so it was about my kids. It wasn't about me at all. If it was about me, I would have stayed. But it was about them. It was about getting them to safety. It was about giving them a chance at life away from abuse.

Eryn: What was your perspective of dating before this marriage? Just your second marriage?

Orsika: Yeah. So my perspective of dating was like, let's go have fun.

Eryn: Yeah.

Orsika: Let's just, let's go have fun. That's all it was about, honestly. And my self-esteem was low. That's why I was willing to have fun with whomever wherever, whyever, right? And I notice the commonality of, let they be male or female survivors, their self-esteem is low. And so the predator preys on that. And they see that, and they can pinpoint that. And so that's how we get ourselves into that situation. So my self-esteem was low. And I really, really worked hard since then to love me so that I don't ever get myself back in that situation. Because that's just not an option. That's a chapter, a whole book from the past, you know. And...and I just wasn't willing to do that again to myself. I was willing to be single and love myself enough and allow God to heal me. Through Him, I found myself. And I wasn't going to settle for anything but the best for me.

Eryn: What do you think attributed to your, you shared, having low self-esteem? And that's what, uh, predator, they prey on insecurity. When you look back, are there moments in your upbringing or in past



relationships? Or is it shame from previous marriage that kind of just chipped away at your self-worth and your self-esteem? Or was it one big circumstance?

Orsika: Well, it was a multitude of things, honestly. It wasn't like one big atomic bomb that happened in my life. It was...I have a funny name, right? Because back in the early eighties, anybody with a foreign name was ostracized, right? So that was me. And I was very petite in my frame and...and I matured far later than most females. And so it was a culmination of all of those things, you know. I had low self-esteem in high school, because I wasn't there physically where my female classmates were. And I, of course, compare ourselves to other people. We know we shouldn't, but we do it even in our more mature minds, we know we should and we still kind of do. And then we bring ourselves back and say that's kind of ridiculous, right? So, I mean, but in high school we don't have that capacity yet in our brain to do that. So, it was just kind of a culmination of all the thing, right. It was just funny name, small stature. My parents spoke with funny accents. We ate funny food. You know, it just wasn't like your normal American upbringing. And we lived in a very Caucasian protected bubble.

Vivian Mabuni: I appreciate you sharing all of that. And I'm wondering, you know, now that you are married to the most wonderful man, and it's so encouraging to hear how in the midst of your journey that God has shown himself faithful. How did you learn to trust a man again, having been hurt before and mistreated and controlled? How were you then able to receive and be able to put your weight into lean into another marriage and another man?

Orsika: The trust for the man wasn't as challenging for me as the trust for myself. Because I had some very solid male role models. My father is a solid male role model. My brother, my brother-in-law. I mean, I've...I've had solid male role models, good men in my life. It was more trusting me than it was men in general, trusting me to appreciate myself, trusting me to understand my self-worth, trusting me to not settle. So, really and truthfully, the trust was in me more than in a gender.

Eryn: I understand that completely. It's learning to have a relationship with yourself and trusting that what you say *yes* and what you say *no* to is going to lead you to a place of health versus pain. That makes total sense. I would love to hear some tips or advice that you can give somebody listening that may be able to see the early signs of abuse that you learned in relationship.

Orsika: Yeah. And it's so important to also understand that early signs of abuse can be seen as, oh, this person cares deeply for me. So there's a very fine line of, does this person care for me or is this person trying to control me? For example, my amazing, wonderful, super fabulous spouse, he and I talk to each other on our drives to and from work. And it's not out of control. It's out of because we genuinely want to



be in each other's lives, and we love each other. But if we don't talk, I don't get punished. If we don't talk, he doesn't get punished...doesn't get used on either one of us in a negative way. So that's where that fine line is, right? So if I don't text him, hey, I'm home, or hey, I'm going to Meijer, what would you like at the grocery store, right? Going to the grocery store. Do you need anything? If I don't text him that, there's no punishment. Well, why didn't you tell me you were going to the grocery store? Well, I just thought I'd stop by and didn't think it was a big deal. If you need something I can get you something tomorrow, you know. I'll stop by again tomorrow. But the controlling, the abuse starts when you get punished for living your best life. So my advice to the listeners is to watch to see what energy the questions are coming from, what energy the requests are coming from. Your spouse could be like hey, you know, you drive 30 minutes in the blizzard to, because we live in Michigan, to and from work; will you just let me know that you're there safely? Absolutely. Let's say I forgot, and then two hours later I say, Oh, I'm here safely, you know, work just got super busy, that's totally healthy. What is not healthy is, why didn't you tell me? I told you to tell me what's going on. Who are you talking to? Who is your coworker? I mean, just all these accusations and all these questions that are absolutely, not substantiated, like completely irrelevant. So, there is a difference right between your worried spouse and the abusive spouse. And so just make sure that you see the difference in the energy of the text messages and where it's coming from. So your loving spouse, your actual worried spouse will be like, hey, you didn't contact me right when you got there and that's okay. Whereas the abusive spouse will be like, why didn't you contact me? I told you to contact me. And the accusations...there's always accusations with the abusive spouse. always. And you can literally just be taking 45 minutes in the blizzard to get there, and you can't respond because you're driving in a blizzard. But the accusations are constant, nonstop, and it's exhausting.

Vivian: Yeah, that makes a lot of sense. I'm picturing when there's not a sense of self, it's not like psychobabble, but really an integrated person where our spiritual life, our emotional life, our physical life, all of those things are congruent. And that's what integrity means, like wholeness. When parts of us are not maturing, we can mistake attention to be love. And then that control piece can so easily infiltrate. And then there's not the internal structure to say, that's not okay. I think about even being a parent and helping our kids to validate their emotions that it's not to downplay them. It kind of like re-centers our moral compass when we recognize like, this is not okay to have my feelings be discredited or not validated where it's like, I should just be grateful or the messaging that we can send to our children or that we speak to ourselves. Like it's not that bad. We can start to rationalize or make exc...oh, he's just tired.

Eryn: Yeah.

Vivian: And I think it's really hard to...to parse that out, unless we have people in our lives that can help speak into that too or witness something and go, I don't think that's okay. Because it's easy for us to kind



of go into the mental spiral and try to weigh out the pros and cons. And I do remember in my own life, it's like I...I would be absolutely willing to spend as much money as needed for my kids to get counseling, but I didn't feel like I was worth getting counseling.

Orsika: Yes, yes.

Vivian: And so it's like this idea that we will do things for our kids' sake. And I think what ended up moving me into therapy was just, it'll be better for my kids if they have a mom...

Orsika: Yes.

Vivian: ...who's a little bit more. And I'm sad that I...I didn't have the wherewithal myself to say, no, this is an investment into me, and this is important. Did you go through therapy at all, or did you seek out counseling? And what was that like for you?

Orsika: Oh, absolutely. And actually...so I went to group therapy for the first time in my life. I had gone to therapy before with the first divorce, cause I'm like, okay, what did I do wrong? How let's not do this again, right? And so I went through group therapy and it was in a domestic violence shelter. And I remember this one lady, who, this was in Illinois. So, she drove an hour and a half to be with her abuser, spent 14 hours with him, because he wasn't allowed out of the state of Wisconsin and then came back with a black eye. And I just looked at her and I was like, you got away. He's an hour and a half away, why would you go back? You know, just didn't make sense. Because at that point, I didn't understand trauma bond, that people are bonded through trauma because I didn't have that. So, I didn't understand it. And I didn't understand the severe seriousness of that concept, right? But then I learned the trauma bond, right? And so through the group therapy, not only did I learn how to heal the abuse, but I learned how to heal my stupid naivete about domestic violence and the ins and outs of it. So yes, I did go through counseling. And then there was an incident a few years back where I recognized that I had PTSD and there were certain triggers. And so I went to counseling for that as well and learned the tools and how to deal with the triggers. And so, if I'm triggered, which is very rare now, very, very rarely, but every once in a while, I still get triggered. And I just stop, and I breathe, and you know, I use my tools and I just lean on the Lord, yeah.

Eryn: One thing I was hearing both of y'all saying is that it's the little noes. It's what somebody does with the little noes that you have towards them that can signal emotional abuse. So, it's the, no, I don't want to wear that blouse or it's the, that's not how I feel. I feel this way. It's the...and what that person does to

your no and how they treat you afterwards. I wanted to just share that, that, that's what I was hearing you say. Would you say that that's, that's...that's pretty accurate?

Orsika: Very.

Eryn: Yeah.

Orsika: Absolutely, yeah. It's validating your no or disregarding your no. It's such a minor thing, and we don't think about it, right, until it happens. And you're like, that didn't make me feel too great.

Eryn: Yean.

Orsika: What's ... what's going on?

Eryn: Yeah, and so you said you go through therapy. Every now and then if there's like a, oh, okay, there's something here. I need to...I need to go and talk with somebody about this. And then you said you just cling to Jesus. And so I'm curious what your faith looks like now and what that journey was to trust Him in the process.

Orsika: Yeah, so funny thing, oftentimes you hear people say, Jesus left me. And you're like, He never leaves us. And I never felt like Jesus left me ever. Even in the midst of the rape, like I knew Jesus was there. And now I'm able to more openly speak about that because I have the confidence, and I allow the Holy Spirit to work through me because I have the confidence. And I know that when I allow the Holy Spirit to work through me, then there's a better opportunity to change people's lives, to help people not feel so alone in their journey, wherever they are, whether it's their mom or their sister or their best friend or their brother who's going through domestic violence. If...if me being open to the Holy Spirit to work through me helps one person, then it's all worth it. And I just want to keep being vulnerable and open to that so that we can heal and not just those who have been abused, but the abusers too. Because they need healing and people forget that. You know, people just want to throw the gamut at the, you know, at the abuser. And this is a horrible person, but God didn't make them to be abusers. Those were life circumstances that happened to them that brough them to that place in life. And so it's not just about healing those who have been abused, but those were as well.

Vivian: That's such great perspective. My husband and I...we speak at the Weekend to Remember Family Life, marriage conferences. And one of the things in the rebranding time, and the content now states very explicitly about abuse is never okay. And I think sometimes the church can teach that women



should just be nice and just seek your husband's happiness. And that's all that matters. And that's wrong teaching. And so I'm really grateful that there are resources for like...so even in the guidebook that we use, there's a whole section for if you consider yourself in an abusive relationship. You know, these are some signs to look for, a story to share, whatever. I would love to hear from you. Like if a woman was to come up to you and say, or she can, I think I'm in an abusive relationship. What would your advice be to her?

Orsika: This is such a complicated question. So, this is why I'm hesitating on the answer, because I want to make sure that it's heard in the way that I mean it. So, I would definitely sit down with her and ask her to explain the whole situation, right? I'm not just flippantly going to say, run, you know. That's easy, but like what's really going on. And it's also very important to try to get both sides of the story. So it's really easy for a woman to be empathetic to another woman and be like, oh, you're going through that. That's awful. But we don't know what happens behind closed doors, right? And so, we should do our best to be as fair as possible. And I'm not saying don't believe the victim who comes to you, right? By no means am I saying that. The most important thing is for the person who's coming to you or who's coming to me in this situation to feel safe with me and for that person to feel that they can confide in me. But in the back of my brain, I'm thinking, what else is going on? You know, what's the other side of the story? Where is that balance? Where is that disconnect in the marriage? But first and foremost, it's important for that person, if they find the...the courage and the bravery to come to me and talk to me, I want them to keep knowing that I am a safe place, that whomever you go to, because the worst thing you could do, the absolute worst thing you could do is if somebody comes to you and you're like, yeah, I don't believe you. I don't care if you're a guy or a girl. It doesn't matter. That is the absolute worst thing you could do to somebody who's a victim currently in an abusive situation because then they'll shut down. And then they'll be like, nobody believes me, and this is my reality and I'm stuck. So just giving that person the hope that you're like, yes, I'm listening to you. Yes, this is serious. But there are so many underlying things that go along with it as well.

Eryn: What advice would you have for somebody that needs to get help, but they don't even know where to begin? Like, who do they call? Where do they go? Who do they let in?

Orsika: Well, usually our outside sources, so the people that aren't in the relationship, know way ahead of time this isn't healthy. And your abuser will more than likely take you away from that support group. So, the first thing to do is to go to that support group, let it be your best friend you haven't talked to in five years, doesn't matter. She will be on your side, and she will fight with you. And it's so important to just as much as possible, get rid of the shame, the blame, and the guilt. Your pride, leave it at the door. And you just go to that person. And if, again, if it's a best friend you haven't talked to in five years because your



abuser hasn't allowed you to do that, that's okay. Your best friend's not going to turn...turn you away, right? And there are resources out there, but I would say start small with people that you trusted before you were in the relationship. Because those are the people that are silently praying for you.

Vivian: That's really good. I've appreciated so much how you have been careful and balanced in your responses, um, even to consider the abuser and to recognize that there are two sides of the story and with that also validating. And domestic violence isn't just men as the abusers. Sometimes women are the abusers. And even recognizing...

Orsika: Absolutely.

Vivian: ...that, I think it's important for us in our understanding and the way that our minds are shaped to understand this topic. It's not just that men abuse women, but women also abuse men.

Orsika: And usually it's far worse. I mean, yes, men could break our bones more easily than women could break men's bones, but the women have the...I'll take your kids away. And that's a very heavy, heavy thing to do to another human being. And the men don't get the support. I've worked with a number of men who have been in abusive relationships, and they don't have the resources we do as women. That breaks my heart because it's very real for them too. It's not any less real. It's not any smaller of a thing in their life just because they don't have a broken bone.

Eryn: I would love to close in prayer. Would you pray over the women that are listening?

Orsika: Oh wow. Yes. I would be honored, and I would love to. Thank you. Heavenly Father, thank You for bringing us all together today, and thank You for opening the hearts of the women who are listening. Thank You for showing them clearly that they might be in an abusive situation. Thank You for showing the sisters, the mothers, the aunts, the best friends, the nieces, that their loved one might be in an abusive relationship. And I just ask Your wisdom on those...those outside of the relationship to be able to speak to those inside the relationship. And I ask Your wisdom and peace for those who are in the relationship to clearly hear that people on the outside are coming from a place of love and a place of wanting what's in the best interest of the person who's being abused. Lord God, we know that You are the one who heals all of us and can heal not just the abused, but the abuser as well. And we just love that You can do that, and we trust You in all of the ways of our lives. And we trust You for the peace and the knowledge on what to do if we have somebody who is being abused, or if we are the person who's being abused. Give them strength, Lord. Give them strength to be able to get out, get to safety, and to be able to heal and live



a beautiful life that You have ordained for them. We love You, Lord, and we thank You for all of the ways You bless us. In Your mighty and matchless name, we pray, amen.

[music]

Vivian: Orsika is such a brave woman. And I'm really thankful for how God has worked in her life and how He continues to work in having her share her story.

Eryn: Oh, I agree, Vivian. Well, be sure to check out our show notes for a link to Orsika's social media, where you can find more about her and a link for the domestic violence website. You can find that and more at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Vivian: And if you like 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 podcast. We'd love to hear from you.

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

Vivian: Today's episode was engineered by Ann Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Craig and the family for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

Eryn: Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor-supported, nonprofit ministry dedicated to making the lifechanging wisdom and stories of the Bible come alive for all people around the world.

[music]

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