



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 181 – Nothing is Wasted with Jennifer DiVita

Elisa Morgan, Eryn Adkins & Vivian Mabuni with Jennifer DiVita

[Music]

**Jennifer:** There is that wrestling. Right? So, it's not like it's super clean and easy where you're like, *okay, God, just use me however you want to*. Right? No, it's difficult because you do wrestle. I don't... I didn't want to give up being a stay-at-home mom. I didn't want to see my marriage end. I thought when I got married, that was it for life. Right? And so all of those things that we think... we make these great plans for ourselves. And then God laughs because he's like, *yeah, no, that's not the way it's going to go*. And so, we have to really surrender those plans and then be okay with it. And it is a wrestling match.

[Theme Music]

**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.

**Eryn:** Before we get into this episode, I wanted to let you know that this episode we'll be talking about alcohol addiction and domestic abuse. Please be mindful before listening to this conversation. If you or someone you know needs help, please call the Domestic-Abuse Hotline. That's 800-799-7233. Remember, you are so deeply loved.

**Vivian:** As Erin and I have been talking, it's always, always, always wonderful to be in person and to have a guest in person because we really get a sense of our guests when we get to see them. When my youngest daughter was in preschool, she used to use this term "in human" instead of "in person."  
[Laughter] And so I've borrowed it ever since. It's so fun to be "in human" with our guest, Jennifer DiVita. And, Jennifer, you already, just in the short amount of time that we've been in the studio together, you just exude warmth and kindness...

**Jennifer:** Aw, thank you.



**Vivian:** ...And so I'm really looking forward to our conversation. So thank you for being on *God Hears Her*. It's wonderful. And we usually love to have our guests just kind of start off just sharing just who you are, a little bit of your backstory, just to help our listeners get to know you a little bit.

**Jennifer:** There's a lot to the story. So, you know, we all have our messy stories, so it's just a matter of how far back you want me to go. The Cliffs Notes version of it, I studied broadcasting in college, and right out of school, my career took a completely different path because I became a mom and a wife. And I put my career skills aside and became a stay-at-home mom for 11 years and absolutely loved it. I call it the June Cleaver life, and I just absolutely loved that vocation that God led me down that path, because I had that idea that I was going to be that career woman. And immediately He was like, *Nope, you're going in a different direction*. So it took a minute to adjust and settle into that, but I absolutely loved it. And then about nine years into the marriage, my husband at the time was starting to decline into alcoholism. And it was just very traumatic and tragic, and it was a very toxic environment. And so I ended up moving out with my three kids. I had three kids at the time, and we moved out on the fly. It was a, you know, a very stressful situation, had to do it kind of on the fly because there was violence involved in the situation. And so we moved into my mom's house. And coming from this lifestyle of being a stay-at-home mom, I didn't have any career skills to speak of. So when I moved in with her, I did not have a job and started working in the field of gerontology. I had gotten my degree in broadcasting, and when I tried to get a job in that field, I was 31. And I was told that I was too seasoned to be on TV.

**Vivian:** Really? At 31?

**Jennifer:** At 31. I know.

**Vivian:** Oh my goodness!

**Jennifer:** Isn't that something? I know. It's... I think back on that, and I'm 50 now. Right? So it's been almost 20 years, and I just think, I was so young, right?

**Vivian:** Right!

**Jennifer:** ... at 31. So, I put that career aside and applied for a job in geriatrics, working in marketing. Now I had no experience in marketing, barely knew what the word "geriatrics" meant; but I was so desperate for a job because I was facing single parenting and had lost my home and...



**Eryn:** You're grieving.

**Jennifer:** Yes!

**Eryn:** To create and to work while grieving a loss of a future is not for the faint of heart.

**Jennifer:** Right. Yep.

**Eryn:** How did you do that? Maybe pull back the curtain a little bit on that experience of working and grieving, and then you're juggling like the kids' emotions I'm sure. It was a lot.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, so, there was this one poignant moment, and I tell people this story because I was really struggling with trying to make the switch. Because I really... I had embraced my vocation as a stay-at-home mom. And I was in a meeting, and there was this conference room that we were in. It had a glass of windows that overlooked a children's garden, and it was a beautiful spring day, and it was sunny and warm. And I saw all these moms pushing their babies in their strollers in this children's garden, and everybody was smiling and laughing. And I now was the career woman on the other side of the window, and I just broke down and was crying because I'm like, *I want to be on that side of the window*. But in that moment, I knew that I would never be on that side of the window again as a stay-at-home mom. And so I had to really just take that moment of clarity and start going deep to reposition myself, you know, as a career woman and single mom. And I couldn't let my kids down. And that was that moment where I'm like, *Okay, you got to figure this out*. And so, honestly, it was by the grace of God. I had no idea what I was doing, but He just kept opening up doors and leading me down the right paths to meet the right people. And from that point... again, I knew nothing about gerontology, geriatrics; but from that point, six years later, I became Associate State Director for AARP Michigan.

**Vivian:** Wow!

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Jennifer:** And again, I'm like, *how does that happen?* Right? And even at the time when I got that job, that first job working in geriatrics, the fact that I knew nothing. Right? I didn't know marketing. I didn't know the field. I had a paper-thin resume because I had been a stay-at-home mom, but I just look at that, and I look at that as God's faithfulness that He opened up that door for me. And working in this field now of gerontology, I've been in my role as Associate State Director for AARP for 10 years.



**Vivian:** Wow! That's amazing!

**Jennifer:** And I tell people that I don't feel like I sought that field out. It found me.

**Eryn:** Yeah. Wow!

**Vivian:** Well, we'll definitely talk a little bit more about that, but I would love for you to step back a little bit. You mentioned your faith. Can you share with us a little bit of your spiritual journey?

**Jennifer:** Yeah. I grew up Catholic and went to Catholic schools all the way through 12th grade. And it was probably 10 years after graduating from high school, I was really struggling with my faith. And I was even writing for a Catholic magazine and just, you know, I was like the person who nobody ever thought I would leave the Catholic Church. But I was just really struggling. I wasn't getting fed and so started looking at just different churches and different denominations and ended up going to a non-denominational church. And I was so freaked out by it at first because it was so different. Right? The reverence of the Catholic Church is just so, you know, somber and, you know, reverent. And this was like a rock concert, and they had popcorn and flashing lights and a smoke machine! I thought, *Oh my gosh, what is this?* Right? Yeah, I really struggled with it.

**Eryn:** Yeah. Of course!

**Jennifer:** But when I walked out, I was like, *Wow!* Right? Like the Holy Spirit spoke to me because it was just a really powerful message. And I thought, *I don't know what everybody was doing here because God clearly just wanted that message for me.* So, you know, it was all for me.

**Vivian:** For Jennifer!

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Vivian:** Bring her in! Oh wow!

**Jennifer:** And so I started making that transition very slowly because everything that I knew was built on that foundation of the Catholic Church. And so I was slowly going back and forth between both, trying to wrestle that out because it was very difficult. And then I got to the point where every time I went to the non-denominational church, I was getting fed. And so made the... the split away from the Catholic Church



entirely. And that was gosh, probably 10 years ago now, 15 years ago. And I've never looked back since and just, I feel like I have that close personal relationship with God that I didn't have before, because there are no barriers now. Right? You can have that personal connection without having to go through the legalities and just some of the hindrances that I experienced.

**Vivian:** Yeah. So I have several friends who are single moms. And they've shared with me that at times it's hard to go to church, trying to figure out where to sit. A lot of families go together. And did you ever experience that? And...and if so, how did you deal with that?

**Jennifer:** I did. When I was at the Catholic Church, and I had gone through the divorce, I had such a community surrounding me because they knew of the circumstances that I was in. So I very much had like a community and a tribe of people that embraced me. When I then switched to the non-denominational church, I was... nobody knew me. Nobody knew me, and so I had like this blank slate. And it was very difficult because I would go in, and my kids would go into the children's areas and do their Sunday school stuff, and I would go in by myself. And it was very difficult, but then I started meeting people, and then they would say, "well, come sit with us on Sunday." And so that was my lifeline to keep me going.

**Vivian:** Wow! That's amazing. Now for... kind of having walked through alcoholism with your husband, what were some of the resources you drew from in order to just kind of be okay for yourself and for your kids? Were there any resources or places that you found help to kind of navigate during that time?

**Jennifer:** So, the circumstances, alcoholism, and he had other addictions. He lost all rights to the kids. So I had full legal custody, physical custody, and visitation; so he didn't have any access to them. And it was very difficult being that solo parent, and I call it a solo parent because it's not the single parent. It's not every other weekend. It's not your Wednesday nights off. You don't have somebody to go to, to bounce ideas off of for discipline or school or anything.

**Eryn:** So you're doing it by yourself.

**Vivian:** You're not co parenting at that point. It's solo parenting. That's a really helpful distinction.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. And so people, again, knew my circumstances, and so they really helped me. And I ... I didn't really find any good resources that like could help solo parents. But I felt like my family and my friends were my tribe to keep me going and to keep my head above water during that.



**Eryn:** Do you have any advice for somebody that's searching for community? I think about some of my friends and what they've walked through, what they're going through right now. One thing that I've witnessed is when you've gone through something that's so traumatic, you almost become so self-sufficient that it's hard to let people help you. Whether it's because you've been protecting that person for a long time, and now you're free from them, but you're still operating in the space of guarding yourself that it's hard to let other people in. It's hard to let them help you. Was that your case at all, or were you kind of like, *please help me? Everybody help me!*

**Jennifer:** I was desperate. I was, and I lived in my mom's basement for seven months until I could get a home on my own, because I had had to walk away from pretty much everything. I had to have people provide daycare because I was at the poverty level. I had gone from living this very affluent lifestyle to being on food stamps, living in my mom's basement, you know, didn't have a house, had to buy a really inexpensive car just to get to work and back. And so it was just a very difficult time period. But I *had* to ask for help. It was... I was in a desperate place of life where I couldn't do it by myself; so I had people that... I even remember that first Christmas. We got Christmas presents dropped off to our home randomly. I don't know who it was. It was anonymous, but we got Christmas presents. And people would send money, and then I slowly started building my way out of that pit and then became self-sufficient. Of course, you know, God-sufficient, but you know, it wasn't... I didn't stay in that place. I didn't want to stay in that place. And I really wanted to teach my kids — right — that we will have setbacks in life. We will have hardship. But it's a matter of: what do you do with that and how do you dig yourself out? Because you can stay there, or you can find your way out. And to me, I had to for the sake of my kids and for myself.

**Eryn:** Yeah. That's beautiful.

**Vivian:** That is really powerful because I think that requires a certain level of humility to be able to call out and be desperate. But there's also the recognition that I can't do it on my own. And so that's a good thing to have in life, in our relationship with God, but also with others. I imagined that you have a sensitive spot to your heart, that you would recognize other women who would be in a place of need. And you'd be like, *of course, I... if I can help, I will absolutely help in that way.* So...

**Jennifer:** Yeah, God has used my story to help so many women that I would not change what I've gone through in life. And of course, you know, this is a short time period. I could write a whole book about it. Right? People have said, "Oh, you should write a book." And I'm like, "I don't know if I really want to, but...". But He's used my story for me to be able to help other women. I've helped other women get out of abusive marriages. I have helped other moms that are solo moms, just helped mentor them. I've sat on [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



boards of organizations where they deal with addiction issues. I sat on a board where they helped provide financial resources for single moms who needed to get their education to pull themselves out of poverty to a life of prosperity. So all along the way, I've seen where He has used me. I've been able to write small story... you know, my profile in books, and be able to come on podcasts to tell my story. So I just look at it and I go, you know, God is good because He did not leave me in that place. And I just look at the twists and turns of my life, and I just can't believe all that I've been through, but where I've come. And even now, you know, like I was sharing that story about being told that I was too seasoned at the age of 31 to be on TV. Well, working in the field of gerontology, it all came together because nine years ago... I started working at AARP 10 years ago. A year later, I was approached by a TV station locally that asked me if I would come on and start doing commercials to share resources about positive aging.

**Eryn:** That's amazing!

**Jennifer:** So I've been doing those commercials for nine years. During the pandemic, launched a TV show, so I cohost that and then do other freelance TV work. And so I'm now 50, almost 20 years older, and I'm doing more TV than ever! And I just go, *how does that happen?* Right? Like I just thought that career was washed up, and it was like, God was like, *Uh-uh! Just watch and wait.*

**Vivian:** I think in God's economy, nothing is wasted. And your story, Jennifer, is one of redemption. Even in something as... well for some women, they never do go back to whatever they studied before in college. But for you to have that desire and to find a sense of... What I'm hearing in your story is there is a sense of embracing of the moment so that when you were a stay-at-home mom, you wrestled with not having the career. But then there was an embracing of that, and then as circumstances changed, as much as you would want that, there was the embracing of that in each step of the way. And then to see God continue to kind of full circle each of those moments. It's really beautiful to see.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. There is that wrestling. Right? So, it's not like it's super clean and easy where you're like, *okay, God, just use me however you want to.* Right? No, it's difficult because you do wrestle. I don't ... I didn't want to give up being a stay-at-home mom. I didn't want to see my marriage end. I thought when I got married, that was it for life. Right? And so all of those things that we think... we make these great plans for ourselves. And then God laughs because he's like, *yeah, no, that's not the way it's going to go.* And so, we have to really surrender those plans and then be okay with it. And it is a wrestling match.

**Vivian:** Yeah. I think that getting out of an abusive marriage is a really challenging and difficult process. I have some people close to me that are in this situation this very moment. And it took a long time for the wife to finally come to terms with... that the relationship was abusive. There's some shame involved.  
[godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



There's secrecy. She was told not to say anything to anybody. What advice would you have to a listener who might find themselves in what they keep kind of pushing under the rug, but in their heart, they know this is not right? Do you have any advice for a woman that's walking in that right now?

**Jennifer:** Sure. Yeah. So I had divorced my first husband, and then I had a gap, got remarried a second time. And that husband was very emotionally abusive. And it was a very short marriage because I had friends that saw what was happening, and they called it out and kind of planted that seed for me to say, *this is what's happening*. Now, I couldn't see it because it was very manipulative. It was very insidious. I didn't know what was happening because it was also just...

**Eryn:** It's hard to prove that... those things...

**Jennifer:** it is

**Eryn:** because it's not... It doesn't necessarily leave a physical imprint, but it does, but it's a different type.

**Jennifer:** Yes. There were no bruises that you could see. Right? And it was all internal, right. And it wasn't until things got so bad that I was starting to lose myself. Right? Like I was... I felt like I was becoming a shell of myself. And that's when I realized, like something has to give here because I don't know... I don't want something to happen to me because I was in such a desperate place. So it really took time for me to hear those first words that somebody called it out, and then for me to process it and internalize it and then realize that that was truth that she was speaking.

**Vivian:** Yeah. Wow!

**Jennifer:** And it does take time because there is secrecy. There is shame. I mean, for me, it was like, *Oh my gosh, like this was a second marriage*. Right? Like, again, it was... I didn't think I would be divorced after a first marriage, and then a second marriage? Like that was just devastating to me. Right? And we know like God hates divorce, but God hates abuse even more.

**Vivian:** Yes, absolutely!

**Jennifer:** And so I don't ever want women to think that they have to stay in those abusive marriages because God wants them to stay in it. No, He does not. God wants...



**Eryn:** God doesn't limit His chances.

**Jennifer:** Absolutely. Yep. God has a redemption story for you, and He sees what's going on. And so do not stay in that abusive marriage because you think that God will be disappointed in you. He's already disappointed in the circumstances. And so now it's time to take care of yourself and get that good with God.

**Eryn:** Yeah. I love that.

**Vivian:** That's great.

**Eryn:** It's so evident that God... like He's so faithful in the ways that He's shown up for you. And one thing that I was gonna chime in earlier when we were talking about your career, how sweet is it that while somebody said those words to you, that "you're too seasoned, you can't... you can't do this career anymore." And then God is like, *Oh no. I have the final say of this, and I'm going to make it very clear.* And it's in a... I think it's just so sweet with the tragedy that, and the heartbreak that you experienced, that God just... It's, it's just so sweet. He like shows up, and He's like, *I'm going to redeem this too. Like I'm not going to just redeem other parts of you. I'm going to redeem the other things that you long... you long to do, which is be in television.* How have you navigated going from, you know, stay-at-home mom, going into your career, having children, healing? What advice do you have for a solo mom that's balancing the experience that not everybody can understand of the career and of being a mom?

**Jennifer:** I would say to compartmentalize. That was key for me because not only was I shifting from being that stay-at-home mom to becoming a working woman, but I was going into a field that I didn't know anything about, in a job that I had never done before. And when I showed up to work every day, I had to take off my grieving mom, stay-at-home mom, you know, that hat. I had to take that hat off and leave it at the door and put on my new hat every single day that I walked into the office. And so that was the compartmentalizing. And I had to show up, and I had to do good, and I had to learn the job, and I couldn't wallow in that place of self-pity. I just had to keep moving forward. So, yeah, so compartmentalize, like just, you know that the stuff will still be there when you get home, right? It doesn't leave your head, right? It still lives there. But during those periods of like transition, focus on the important things in that moment, and set aside the grief, the trauma, the chaos, the fear. There's so much fear, you know, navigating that; so leave all of the emotions behind and just do the one thing that you need to do for the day, that priority. And then when that is done, then you can go back to living in that chaotic space for a little while. But then you got to leave that aside then too.



**Eryn:** I love that. That's so practical and just so freeing, because I would imagine there is this guilt of: you don't care if you don't obsess over it. That can happen. And I just love that you're like *take this hat off. Put this other hat on.* And then you can go back and forth. There's freedom in that.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, I wouldn't have been able to succeed if I didn't do that. I would have been fired probably in ten minutes because they would have seen me falling apart. But I couldn't fall apart on this brand-new job that I was trying to navigate to be able to put food on the table for my kids. So, once I left for the day at 5:01, I could fall apart.

**Eryn:** Yes. So good.

**Vivian:** I've seen and heard when moms are called to protect their kids and to provide for their kids. I mean, they're unstoppable, this fierce love. Any advice for a solo parent of how to help their kids in the midst of working and their different activities? Like do you have any advice for the parenting side, uh, things that you're glad that you did with your kids?

**Jennifer:** One thing is I just looked at what each of them needed individually. And so got my oldest son into counseling because he was much older than the other two. And so he had a different experience than what the younger two had, because there's an eight- and ten-year gap between my first and my second and third, so their needs were different. That was the first thing is just looking at them individually. The second thing is because I couldn't give them the time that I once had when I was the stay-at-home mom, because my daughter was 1 when I divorced their dad. And so my oldest son was 11, so my oldest son had me as a stay-at-home mom for 11 years. My daughter only had me for a year. Again, very different experiences that they had. And my little ones weren't going to get that same time and attention that my oldest one got. So what I did is on a weekly basis, every Wednesday night, I took one of them out for date night. And so every week it was... each kid got their rotation. So yeah, so every three weeks, then it would be the start of the new rotation. And we would do, again, something that was catered to them because, again, the age difference. I had a difficult time trying to figure out: what do you do? Because you can't go to the same types of movies, you know, a one-year-old and an 11-year-old. You know, the one-year-old, she was a baby when I got divorced; so I really made it very intentional to spend one-on-one time with them, even if it was just that once a week where they had me all to themselves.

**Vivian:** Oh, that is a great idea and so practical too. And I'm sure that they have then stored in their memory, just time just with mom where they didn't have to compete with their siblings. And that's such a brilliant idea. Now I'm curious about your work with AARP. I was just reading in one of my classes about the whole future of the United States with the aging population and people living longer. It just seems like [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



you're in the perfect field in a market that's poised for a lot of growth. What are the things that you do and... and what do you kind of see in the future?

**Jennifer:** Yeah. I have job security. That's what I always say. Yeah. And it's funny because when I started working at AARP ten years ago, I was just shy of 40 at the time. And you know what I heard then? I'm too young to work at AARP. So I was too old to work in TV, too young to work at AARP...

**Eryn:** Yeah, right, which one is it?

**Jennifer:** ...So I had about one good year of work, you know, in my life. And then, oh, I was ready for retirement, I guess. I don't know. So I just laugh because that's ageism at its finest. So one of the things I do at AARP is I do a lot of education around ageism and push back against it. I go into high schools and teach about ageism in sociology classes. I also do a lot of education around fraud because older adults are the most impacted and victimized when it comes to fraud. I do a lot of advocacy, so at the local level, and then advocating for the rights of older adults. I do a lot of fun things, so I get to be like that person who hands out awards at galas. I get to put on a baseball cap and go, you know, throw the baseball for a first pitch at a baseball game. We do movie events, and so we will rent out movie theaters. And so I just, every day is so different for me, and I need that variety because I'd grow bored pretty quickly. So every day is like a different job for me. And I absolutely love it. And again, this is where I say: I didn't seek this field out. It found me. And God knew exactly what I needed, and He put me where I needed to be.

**Eryn:** Jennifer, what does life look like now? Have you been able to be vulnerable again to love? Where are you today?

**Jennifer:** So again, the story of redemption. I am engaged, and God has led me...

**Eryn:** Oh, right now?

**Jennifer:** Yes. Yes.

**Eryn:** Oh! Congratulations!

**Vivian:** Congratulations!

**Jennifer:** And so I have just an amazing man. Three times a charm, right?



**Eryn:** That's right. Yeah.

**Jennifer:** And he's just... he is so kind and so warm and is such a protector and just has such like the spirit of God. Right? Like he is just so caring and loving and generous and just perfect, you know. I mean, perfect without being perfect because nobody's perfect. Right?

**Vivian:** Sure.

**Jennifer:** But, you know, perfect for me in the sense that like he's just such... He's so different than what I experienced before. And he's a safe person for me. And I just am so grateful that I have like... that there's still... like my story is still not done being written yet, right? After two divorces where there was such shame with that, and there was such agony and just not knowing if you'd ever find true love and real love and safe love. And I found it.

**Eryn:** I am so inspired and... and just grateful that you did not give in to listening to the whispers of shame and believing that you aren't deserving and worthy of a love a third time. I have a few girlfriends that are in that same space of their second marriage not working out. And I'm watching them wrestle with the shame of it. And it breaks my heart that the enemy would want to twist what God wants to do and can do and sometimes doesn't always do. Everybody has their own story, but I'm just grateful for your story and that you were resilient to push past any whisper or shame.

**Jennifer:** Yeah, thank you. Yeah. And it was resilience. I've had to build a backbone of steel along the way because there's just been a lot of tragedy that I've experienced in my life. I lost five pregnancies. I lost two marriages. I lost my home. Right? Like just I've lost my vocations, my best friend. So...

**Vivian:** Yeah. There's been a lot of loss.

**Jennifer:** Yeah. And, um, I'm not bitter. Right? Like I'm not bitter. That's the biggest thing that people take away from me and my story is that I just feel like God uses it for the good. My life mantra is "beauty from ashes," because time and again, He has rebuilt my story from ashes into something beautiful. And if you allow Him to, there is such a beautiful story that will be written.

[Theme music]



**Vivian:** This conversation was profound. Jennifer is truly living out the beauty from ashes by trusting the Lord.

**Eryn:** This conversation means a lot to me. If it encouraged you, please leave us a review and share it on your socials.

**Vivian:** And before we go, be sure to check out our show notes for links to learn more about Jennifer and her book, *Not Your Shoe Size*. You can find that and more at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's God Hears Her (dot) o.r.g.

**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 Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank Patty and Alyssa for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

**Eryn:** 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.

[ODB theme]

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