



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 190 – Learning to Be Like Jesus

Elisa Morgan and Eryn Adkins with Whitney Lowe

[Music]

Whitney: I am a really big believer that we, as a society, are overthinking what it looks like to be sacrificial and servant hearted. And we start to think like, *what organization do I need to start? Or where am I supposed to put all of my money for the year? Like, who am I supposed to be giving to?* When, in actuality, I think so many of us live in places where if we just kind of like opened our eyes to our neighbors, we would see people who needed help and needed service.

Vivian Mabuni: You are 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.

Elisa: Hey Erin, I don't know what you do for your devo time, but I'm constantly looking for something a little different, you know, a little new. A little something, something. Right?

Eryn: Yeah, I get that.

Elisa: And we're gonna be talking to a friend who is actually a bit of a friend, which I love when we get to have guests on that we kind of know. So it's, it's Whitney Lowe, and Whitney is an author. She's a mom of toddlers. She and her husband are involved with a vibrant, large megachurch in the Denver area. And I got to meet her in person when I was speaking at that church. And I was so excited. And so now I'm super excited to have this conversation.

Eryn: And you know what's really cool is that I think when she met you, she direct-messaged me a picture of y'all together.

Elisa: Yes!

Eryn: And that's even more fun because we've been... we've been Instagram friends. [sing-song] And now here we are, Whitney Lowe!

Whitney: I love this. It's... I mean, it's really fun. And Viv's not here today, but I've met Viv in person too. She's in Denver a lot. So ...

Elisa: Yeah, so as we dive into this...

Whitney: ...it's a long time coming.



Elisa: ...you've got this devo, and I wanna hear about why in the world it shaped you, and how it can shape us. But I wanna start with, you know: Who is Whitney? How'd you come to know God? What did your earlier journey look like?

Whitney: Yeah, well I think it's one of those things you reflect on more and more as you especially like have kids, as I've gotten older. And definitely one of those people who is like, *my testimony is really boring. I grew up in a Christian home.* And I think realizing in the last few years how really extraordinary it is to have a family that like honestly loves the Lord has been really humbling.

Elisa: Hmm.

Whitney: Because it is hard to really live that as a mom. And my husband, I know he would say that as a father as well. So we've been really challenged with like, *this is not a boring testimony*, like someone's out here working hard so that you can have, you know, you can be set up for success in how you see and understand the love of God and then what Jesus did for you. So I'd say that is the shortest version of my story. And then I feel like the Lord has used different phases of my life to really teach me, I guess, the theology of that testimony. So I feel like I really learned about sin and what it can do to us in college when I went through an eating disorder. That really started with just kind of a hyper... a hyper fixation on myself, that then kind of, you know, took over. All of a sudden I'm no longer in the driver's seat, and now I'm being subjected to a lot of additional pain and suffering. The Lord taught me a ton during that season, and now I feel like, again, as a mom of two little kids, God's teaching me so much about just like His heart for us and His love for us, and the unconditional nature of who He is.

Eryn: Hmm. How old were you when you started learning a faith of your own?

Whitney: I think pretty early. Like I have this like... some may call it trauma where I remember my parents were like, "We're gonna watch The Passion of the Christ." And I couldn't have been more than like 12 or something.

Elisa: Oh well, yeah. Okay. Yeah.

Whitney: I see where our heads are at with that one. We wanna really conceptualize like the suffering, and it's not just a cute picture on a Sunday school classroom. Like I... I get it, but I'm a very sensitive person. So I just remember it like I'm crying, and I'm... I'm internalizing it, I'm getting it. But I have these notes in a journal from that time where I'm like, *dang, like the Holy Spirit has to be real*, because that is not stuff that a 12-year-old would just like get on their own. So I feel like I've had a very close relationship with the Holy Spirit just kind of revealing things to me since I was pretty young, which is why, you know, when I got to college I was like, *I'm gonna study religious studies*. Like, I just feel like this is the only thing that's ever clicked to my brain in that way. It wasn't until maybe a little bit later in life when I started to have to contend with like, *oh, and this is why I need it*. You know, not just understanding it, but like, *this is why it's so important that I learn how to live this in my body* and realizing that, yeah, you actually can't do it without the Lord like really doing all the heavy lifting and being okay with receiving. But you have to understand that.

Eryn: Was there a memory or a moment that really brought you to that awareness? Or do you feel like it was a slow drip into entering into that?

Whitney: Hmm. I think probably a slow drip. But at the same time, I think, again, like just like you have it in your head a lot of the time growing up that, *I'm a really good Christian, you know, I'm doing all the things, and I'm not doing all the other things*. And so we're, we're chugging along. It's going great. And



then when I did sort of go through a season of really having to see... okay, I sort of gave myself over to darkness a little bit,

Eryn: And what'd that look like?

Whitney: Yeah. So I think in the context of what I talk about a good amount in the devo is my own journey with like an eating disorder in college. And it really did start with just like: I just wanna feel special. I just wanna feel meaningful. I just wanna feel seen. And the way I can take control of that is by kind of marking my identity as this girl who's really into like health and fitness. And it worked, like people wanted to talk about that. People would vocalize admiration of that. And then I started to like that, you know? Oh, and I have control over it too. I don't have to just trust that I'm loved and I'm worthy...

Elisa: It felt good? Yeah.

Whitney: ... I can like, you know, take hold of it and produce those results myself. So at first it was like, I'm choosing this. And obviously that came from pain and stuff that I know... it was ultimately rooted in lies. But it was me choosing it to an extent.

Eryn: Yeah.

Whitney: And then something flips earlier than you expect it to where you are no longer in control. And it really does become like, you know, there's some mental health stuff in there for sure that is not a choice.

Eryn: Yeah.

Whitney: And there are things that I no longer felt like I had control over anymore. And I think we just assume *no later*, you know, *later*. *Then the drinking will be a problem and I'll stop*. Or *then, my anger issues, like I'll know I need to get help*. But it's just that flip where you lose control of the script happens so much earlier than any of us expect it to.

Eryn: Yeah, it's so true.

Elisa: Thank you.

Whitney: And I think that's when I was just really humbled, like, *okay, I'm actually not the one driving the boat here of my good little Christian ship*.

Eryn: Yeah.

Whitney: ...*And if God does not intervene here, like it's all done*. And I'm really thankful for that lesson because I think it has informed kind of everything, even about like becoming a mom and being like, *oh yeah, no time to study the Bible for an hour today. I need the Lord to like make up all of these gaps even though I can't, I can't do that today*.

Elisa: How did God get you?



Whitney: Yeah, it was, I think, triggered by some pretty, like large mistakes, like just the kind of things you do in your life that you're like, *huh? Like I am not this person*. Like, and I, as much as that's like really full of regret and pain, it's also like: Okay, thank the Lord that there was like a wake up. This is not who I want to be. But then I actually went on a long immersive mission trip to Istanbul, Turkey. And there were all of these refugee populations, like it was, I think 2012, so the Syrian refugee crisis was full swing. And so many of those people were in Istanbul trying to figure out what was ahead, what was next. And it was really sad, but that's mainly the population we were working with. And I just remember... we're walking up these insane number of stairs to get to this room at the top that is always really, really hot. And I am like on the verge of fainting because I haven't eaten and because I won't let myself eat. And I'm still trying to get out of this pattern. Like at this point I know it's a problem, but I still feel very in its clutches.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Whitney: And then I remember like the irony hitting me in the face of like, *and I'm doing this so that I can give people food who need it. What is it that makes me like superior in some way?* That I can control this, and I can deny myself this because there's something good and noble about it in my backwards brain. And yet I'm doing all of this to serve people. And I'm saying that's good, right? Like, I think that really just brought me to my knees with like, *this is not how we were meant to live, and this is not what the Lord has for us. And if He's calling us into service of hungry people, then God wants us fully fed too*.

Eryn: Yeah,

Whitney: And that was a pretty quick wakeup call. And during that whole span of about two months, the Lord drew me into the book of Hosea, which like if you wanna be knocked on your face by like, *here's what your rebellion has done to you, but here is like the bigger and more beautiful story that I want to invite you back into*.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Whitney: Oh my gosh! That's the one. And it hurts to read, but that really kind of changed the trajectory of that struggle.

Elisa: Thank you. That is so real. That's what we need, you know? Cause most of us, all of us, we get stuck in this fog of ignorance and ignoring. You know? And I really appreciate your honesty. Now, take us forward. You're married, you've got two toddlers, how does your time with God look now?

Whitney: My husband launched this satellite campus of this large church in our area in April of this past year. So that's just over like eight months or so, I guess, at this point.

Eryn: Oh wow.

Whitney: Yeah. So that's been another baby, you could say. But we have a little boy who just turned four. And we have a little girl who just turned two. And we're actually expecting a third in June.

Elisa: Congratulations!

Whitney: ...Because why stop now? [Laughter]... We're in the thick of it, but it just feels like the Lord has put us in a real season of like putting things out there and trying to learn faithfulness kinda on the go. So



to that point, I think for a long time, having two little kids and up until very recently I also had like a full-time day job. I got laid off, but that's okay.

Elisa: That's honest too.

Whitney: For the best. I think... there's this book, I don't know if you've heard of Ronald Rolheiser and *Domestic Monastery*?

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Whitney: That book was really freeing for me for a while, because it was like, *I just feel like a bad Christian and I feel like an unworthy daughter* — not to feel like I have any time to like really immerse myself in the Bible in the way that, again, is like good Christian girls. Like you gotta have your journal, you gotta have your worship music and your coffee, and you have to follow the SOAP method. And if that's not what you're doing for at least 30 minutes, forget it. Like you are lazy!

Elisa: Okay, I'm lazy. I'm sorry. [Laughter]

Whitney: You're telling me! And so that was really, really hard for a while. But this book, I mean really the message is like if you are a parent, if you are a mother, that is spiritual formation. Like that's doing the work...

Elisa: Totally

Whitney: ... of that quiet time and probably more so, cause it's real and it's happening in real time, that if you allow the Lord into that space, God is like doing that transformative work. It doesn't have to look so programmatic all the time. And I like that. So in the past few months I've been trying to kinda get back to that. Now that my kids are just ever so slightly more independent, I've been trying to just even like sit down and open my Bible, even if they're like crawling all over me to really process in a little bit more of that way that I'm used to. But I'd say that idea of just like, what if we just allowed God to spiritually form us in the struggles that are coming anyway?

Eryn: Yeah.

Whitney: And we invited Him into those spaces through prayer and through like, *Hey, we've been doing all this work, trying to get the Scripture into my brain. God, what do you want me to remember here? What are you trying to like bring to mind in these moments?* I think we really underestimate what God's doing in real life, in real time.

Elisa: You know, going to that moment when you're opening your Bible, and you've got a 4- and 2-year-old crawling all over you, how do you use even that as a time to not close the Bible and go, *okay*? What other options have you discovered in those moments that do form you and therefore form your kids?

Whitney: Well, it's kind of fun. I did this yesterday actually, as I opened up to the gospels. I feel like that's a pretty good place to start. And I think it was in Matthew, the Parable of the Sower. I was like, I'm just gonna read it out loud. You know, you see those words that maybe aren't gonna compute with a 4-year-old. And so I tried to kind, you know, he doesn't know what a sower is, so I'm saying "There was a farmer



who went out..." Like these ways of kind of re-contextualizing Scripture for like a little kid and then answering the questions that come up.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Whitney: It's actually really powerful. And then it also is a way for me to like really sit on it and ruminate with it, and then kind of move forward and be like, *okay, yeah*. Like I need to a) be the kind of parent where this story will make sense to my child when he understands fully what all these words mean. And I wanted him to be like, *okay, my parents were living out whatever that content was*. But also I've had to kind of approach it, again, like a little kid who's like, *yeah, sure. Obviously, you wanna throw the seeds where the seeds are gonna grow*.

Eryn: Yeah. Yeah.

Whitney: Okay. You don't need to overthink it. That's one thing I've found helpful, even just in the last week,

Elisa: How do you interact with your world? I mean, you're a pastor's wife too, by the way, in addition. And you have your own ministry of who *you* are. You know, how do you love God's people? How do you, beyond this, what you're trying to do with your kids, how do you engage in the world?

Whitney: Mm-hmm. I think that's really what I'm figuring out right now. I think the pastor's wife thing is one of those tricky callings that I didn't really ask for nor expect. At no point was I like, *you know what I'd be really good at? I'd be really good at being married to a pastor*. And like I did see this coming. I've been with him for quite a while, and I knew he was gonna be in ministry, but I think now that we're here, I'm like, it's more just that constant feeling of inadequacy all the time. It's just that cycle of like once you feel inadequate, you don't feel confident. And so you're not extending yourself out to other people, and you're not doing those risky things that often bear so much fruit. So pastor's wife category is what I'm really trying to figure out in this new capacity. And he used to be a college pastor, and that felt a little bit more natural to interact with those people.

Eryn: Do you feel like you put the pressure on yourself to have to know like the Bible like the back of your hand kind of pressure? What kind of pressure are you recognizing that you're putting on yourself?

Whitney: I think it's just like the cliché, like pastor's wife is bringing a hot dish to everyone who's sick all the time.

Eryn: Starting meal trains and like all that kind of stuff? Okay.

Whitney: Yeah. I do remember there was some church in our area where we lived before that needed a pastor. And they came to the door, literally came to the door...

Elisa: Came to the door? [Laughing]

Whitney: We lived really close to this church, and we knew the people. And they're like, "Do you wanna talk about maybe if this would work for your family?" And they look me in the eye, and they're like, "You can run the children's ministry." And I'm like, "what year is it? Like I cannot, I work a full-time job." Like



there's so much to it, even just from a cultural perspective. I'm like, yeah, when, when those expectations were established, many women were not also in a place where they had to make a substantial income.

Eryn: Mm-hmm. Yeah.

Whitney: ... And everything looked a little different. And so I feel like I do have a job and a ministry, and I try to figure out how to integrate it. But anyway, that's just like the very raw and real. I'm not totally sure what it looks like as a pastor's wife, other than like trying to be really prayerful and engaged. And we're still pretty early in the process of even just identifying needs. Now that I am unemployed, looking at that, I think as just a general like ministry question. I am a really big believer that we, as a society, are overthinking what it looks like to be sacrificial and servant hearted. And we start to think like, *what organization do I need to start? Or where am I supposed to put all of my money for the year? Like, who am I supposed to be giving to?* When, in actuality, I think so many of us live in places where if we just kind of like opened our eyes to our neighbors, we would see people who needed help and needed service. If you open your eyes to: *what parts of town are people sleeping in tents*, right? Like are there organizations in my city run by really incredible people who I can like ask, *what are you doing? What do you need help with in this community?* And if we just kind of keep our eyes open to the place that God has put us, He will kind of give us that little push into serving. Or even like, you know, I know there's controversial opinions about how to approach people who are asking for money on street corners. I'm just a firm believer that I'm like, God has asked me to do very little other than acknowledge that there's a human being here. I try really hard to even just like, "Hey, what's your name? How's your day going?" Whatever that conversation can look like in that split second. I think a lot of that time that even can kind of tune your discernment to like: Is this person in a place where I can offer something more tangible? Or is this person in a place where I can maybe offer resources for how to get help for wherever they're at with their story right now? I just think it's not as complicated. It's just harder. It's harder than like, *what am I gonna post on social media today for this greater systemic issue?* Like no, just get in there. See what happens. See what God brings into your path, and then I think you'll find that you're a lot more effective than you ever thought you could be.

Elisa: I think we're hesitant, Whitney, to toot our own horns, if you will; but can you give some examples of stuff God's nudged you to do, and what happened?

Whitney: Yeah, you know, I think really just the conversation about like neighbors...

Eryn: Mm.

Whitney: ... has been really convicting. I mean, I think the other thing, too, is we have to acknowledge we don't always know what God's doing or what God is going to bring about by you just making that little bit of effort. But like when we moved into our house, it was just like, *we're gonna just meet all of our neighbors. We're gonna go awkwardly like, "Ding-dong, hello. Like, he's a pastor, he's at this church. If you ever wanna come, we're here."*

Eryn: Aw!

Whitney: Like, and it... is is... it feels vulnerable in ways that you're like, *why does introducing myself feel vulnerable?* But like sharing even just that little thing in the world we live in feels very like, intimidating. And then I think over time, like relationships have been built and conversations have been had that you're like, *I don't know what God's knitting together here. But I do think there's something.* But I remember, like, we were driving a couple weeks ago, and my little boy is in the car. And I do think you have to be wise. But ...um... just had a little conversation with a woman at a street corner. I tend... I mean, I'm kind of like,



if it's a woman, we're talking. You know what I mean? I'm like, what do... "What's your name? Like, how do you get through your days right now?" You know that kind of thing. And the thing that was really powerful here wasn't so much like, here's what happened with this woman; but it was the fact that my little boy, I swear, like every two days he says, "Why was that lady outside in the dark? What was she doing? Did she not have anywhere to go?" And just like those conversations. And then every time he goes, "we should pray for her."

Elisa: Awesome. Yeah.

Whitney: And it's like, again, I don't know that me talking to this woman changed her life or story. And I think that humility of acknowledging, yeah, you might not get to feel like the hero every single time. I think we want to. We don't wanna toot our own horns...

Eryn: Yeah.

Whitney: ... But at the same time, we want to feel like, *oh, I did something so noble and special today*. I think just kind of putting yourself in a situation of like, yeah, I might not see the end result of that little act of faithfulness, but I know that God called me to care about people and care about these people. And then to see how that kind of planted seeds in my son's heart. I was like: This is why you just have to be okay with being faithful and letting God do what He's gonna do.

Elisa: Yes.

Eryn: Whitney, we met on Instagram, and I think I found your account where you started doing just graphics. And then like, it was like little devotionals here and there in the captions. It was on a smaller scale than the... what you can experience now from the content that you create. Where did that desire come from? Because as you're talking about service and you're talking about being a neighbor and like just seeing people in their humanity in physical form, I feel like you do that through social media as a medium as well. And so I'm just curious like where did that start? Where you're like, *you know what? I think I'm gonna start sharing perspective and seeing people where they're at through social?*

Whitney: Really, it's just such a good example again of like did not have any *here's how I'm gonna set myself up to one day write a book*. You know? None of that. But, again, this is when Tanner, my husband, was a college pastor, and I was doing a lot of work with high school girls. And I just remember how many of them were like, "I don't have time to read the Bible." And I believe them. You know what I mean? Like that's how it feels for sure. It's so hard to just open the Bible if you don't have a family that's been giving you context for this your whole life.

Elisa: There you go, yeah.

Whitney: So yeah, I like get it, like I have a lot of compassion for that. But at the same time, "how can I help you, high schooler with no time, who's also on social media 24/7? How can I help you start to kind of even just get that little taste of what might be in the Bible for you? Or the kinds of things you will see if you open it up? Or the ways it might speak to your heart in ways that you need if you let it?" Like trying to kind of just model that. And it was almost like, *okay, here's what the Lord is revealing to me in that quiet time*, cause I did not have children at that time, so I was really journaling, you know, I was...

Eryn: yeah.



Whitney: It was a lot more straightforward. *If I can even kind of just show you what this looks like for me, maybe that will be an entry point.* It was intended to be devotionals but paired with a graphic that was really compelling, or that would at least interrupt that scrolling. That was kind of the whole heart behind it. And then from there, it just seemed like that that resonated. And we were pretty close to heading into Covid at that point too. So I think the screens were just everywhere. And people were not maybe quite so aware of like how badly they need to *not* be looking at a screen at that time. So that was the heart behind it. It was just: Can we disrupt all this other distraction with just a little taste of maybe what God will be saying. And if it's the graphic that you take away, you know, I hope you'll read the caption and see the Bible. And then I hope next time you'll read the caption and you'll think *Oh, that resonates. I wanna open up the Bible for myself!* And then, little by little, hopefully just acquainting people with Scripture so that they can maybe find it more accessible or just like take the necessary steps to go deeper for themselves.

Eryn: Which I just love, cause that's the common thread that I keep hearing you share is that: Just take the next step. Like don't think about: how can I monetize this? Or how can I make this big? But just: how can I listen to the Lord and what He's prompting me to do and walk into that invitation?

Elisa: This conversation has been a little bit like a... a tennis match, you know, of we've gone to the very practical, within the four walls. How do I have a relationship with Jesus while I'm a mom of itty bitties and expecting another? To, how do I share the light of the world at this enormous platform of social media? And what I'm struck by, Whitney, is your consistency, which is the number-one greatest challenge, I think, to be the same person at home with littles as you are making a cute graphic and leading people into the Bible. I'd love for you to speak to the various parts of us, all of us who are listening today. All of us who are in this conversation. We have this private person with what really matters within our hearts. And some of us are single, and we just have ourselves. Some of us have a huge tribe, you know, that we care for, and some of us are in between. What really matters? And then what about the external things God has called us or put in our path? Whether it's somebody on the street corner or somebody reading social media. What's important about those worlds and their intersection?

Whitney: You know, what comes to mind though, I think is ... is honesty and knowing that vulnerability is really powerful. Because if you are putting on an act, when you get out into like your community and your world, then you really are robbing yourself from the other believers who maybe are like further ahead in this category, being able to like speak to whatever weakness might be in you. Yes, you can know in your brain: this is what it's supposed to look like to be a good follower of Jesus. And if you try to like pretend that into existence, instead of like allow God to form that into you, you do miss out on I think those relationships that God uses as part of the process. I also think then when you come up to those opportunities to serve, rather than like, *okay, I tried, didn't go great, notes for next time.* Or *God, what should I have maybe done or said differently next time?* then really you just feel like a failure. And instead of getting back out there with the Lord at your side, you say, *Not for me. I'm not gifted at service, so I'm gonna focus somewhere else.* So I think it's really just that honesty that connects the two worlds. And again, just being okay with like, *this is so hard for me.* I am... I am not preaching from a place of like, *and I figured it out,* but from a place of like we have to be okay as believers with people knowing that we are deeply flawed.

Eryn: Mm.

Whitney: And that doesn't mean just like only a really close circle of people who you trust to know. I mean you don't have to tell everyone everything, but like you have to be okay with people knowing you are flawed. And you have to be okay within like the reconciliation that that's gonna have to come after that sometimes. And the fact that that means you don't have to be strong everywhere 'cause God will put other people in your life that can be.



[Theme Music]

Eryn: Whitney was such a joy to talk to. She really guided us through what spiritual formation can look like through different stages of life. There are so many ways we can grow our relationship with God.

Elisa: I've really enjoyed the conversation. If you enjoyed the episode, please be sure to leave us a comment or a review wherever you listen to your podcasts. We'd love to hear from you.

Eryn: Before we go, we are so excited to let you know that we now have a *God Hears Her* YouTube channel! Be sure to subscribe to watch the video version of the podcast. You can find the link in our show notes where there will also be a link for Whitney's devotional, *Set Your Eyes Higher*. You can find that and more at Godhearsher.org. That's God hears her dot o.r.g.

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

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We want to also thank Kathi and Krista for all their help and support. Thanks everyone!

Elisa: Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor supported, non-profit 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.