



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 221 with Ron & Nan Deal

### Vivian Mabuni, Eryn Adkins with Ron and Nan Deal

[Music]

**Ron:** When I let my mind be governed by who God is, what He tells me is right and good and faithful and what is... what justice is, like Nan was talking...

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Ron:** ... and when I start to choose to respond out of my own agency to align myself with what God has put in my mind...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** ...then I can rewire my brain. And my brain and my flesh become different, become more Christlike. That's when there is transformation of the total person.

[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.

**Vivian:** Hey friends, before we get started, feel free to download or print our new Bible study show notes to fill out while you listen. You can find those on our website.

**Vivian:** Eryn, we are in for a treat! I have waited a long, long time to have the opportunity for us to have Ron and Nan Deal on the *God Hears Her* podcast

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Vivian:** Eryn, you're gonna love them. You already love them. You're already a huge fan.



**Eryn:** Oh, listen...

**Vivian:** So...

**Eryn:** ... I am! I've listened to their voices many, many times, so it's so exciting for me just to have them here with us.

**Nan:** Thank you.

**Vivian:** Well, just a little bit of background of Ron and Nan. They are the real deal, like...

**Ron:** Hmm.

[Laughter]

**Vivian:** ... that's actually their last name, but they really live up to that. And I have such deep respect and appreciation for their lives, their ministry, their marriage...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** ...their authenticity. I had the unique privilege of being on one of their pre-book release groups where they were processing the content in real time, before the release of their book, *The Mindful Marriage*. And I just had such respect because they were sharing their real life, current in-the-moment situations with us as a group. And that is evidence of a level of courage and, I think, integrity that they bring to this topic of marriage and working through grief, pain, conflict, recognizing some of those things. So we're going to dig into all of that, but Ron and Nan have been married since 1986. Ron has authored several books, and he heads up the Blended-Family Division of Family Life. Nan has been a teacher for 25 years, is now working with a nonprofit organization. They come seasoned and experienced and grounded. And I just love and respect them so much. So, Ron and Nan, welcome to *God Hears Her*.

**Ron:** Hmm.

**Nan:** Thank you.

**Ron:** Yeah, thank you.



**Nan:** That was so kind.

**Vivian:** We would love to hear, even just your, both of you, your spiritual journey background. How did you come to faith? How did you even begin this relationship with the Lord?

**Ron:** So I was born into a... a missionary evangelism family. I don't know how far back the faith goes in terms of generations. Mom and Dad were married for almost 61 years when my mom passed away.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Nan:** It was like the Christian Cleavers. [Laughter] That's what I saw.

**Ron:** Yeah. Uh...

**Nan:** It was truly.

**Ron:** ...still not emotionally perfect in every way,

**Nan:** Right.

**Ron:** ... but, uh, had a lot of...

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Ron:** ...character and integrity to them and very much wanted to evangelize the world. Mom and Dad were... I grew up in Des Moines, Iowa, and my dad spent 35 years of his life planting churches across the state, growing churches, leadership in small struggling churches, doing campaign work. I started knocking doors inviting people to Bible studies when I was 12. You know, this was my life. I have three siblings...

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Ron:** ...We're all involved in either volunteer ministry or full-time ministry at different seasons of our lives. And ...um... after Mom and Dad left Iowa, they started going to Kenya and Uganda and planted churches.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.



**Ron:** My younger brother went with my parents one time... excuse me, with my dad. His last visit to Kenya after almost 20 years of back-and-forth work and missionary work. And on one day, my younger brother met three Lloyds, my dad's name, and two Barbaras, my mom's name. People that had named their children after my parents.

**Vivian:** Wow!

**Ron:** This is the family I grew up in.

**Vivian:** Okay.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Ron:** Loved the Lord. Wanted us to love the Lord. Threw us into the ministry opportunities whenever we could. I don't know life without faith.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** That's really my journey.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Ron:** So I meet Nan, and we become friends throughout high school.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And... uh... but we're not dating until our senior year of high school. And then we kind of went from just being friends to, *hey, maybe there's more to this thing.*

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And that opened the door to a spiritual conversation with her.



**Nan:** Right. I did not grow up going to church. Then I remember us going, when I was six or seven, Easter and Christmas.

**Vivian:** Hmm.

**Nan:** I had a babysitter who I loved who took me. She was Catholic... a Catholic woman, and she took me to Catholic mass with her. And I loved the stained glass. I loved the organ, and...

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Nan:** ...I loved the way the church smelled and the way the pews felt and that kneeling bench. So, and she was a precious woman.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** And I honestly wanted her to be my mom. She was so kind and so loving. So, I feel like that was an open door to seeing Jesus. And then, my dad and I started going to church regularly when I was 13. And I'll never forget, there was a girl that was in my youth group, and she was double dipping. She was... it was a Presbyterian church we were going to. And then she was going to the Assembly of God across town. Talk about polar opposites!

**Eryn:** So different. Yeah.

**Nan:** Hmm. And one night she said, "Hey!" And... cause I love music. I grew up on music, and I was a musician. And so I didn't... I knew music in church as the organ and those hymns. But I didn't know about Christian music. And so she said, "Hey, you wanna go to a Christian music concert with me?" And I was like, "Okay! Sure, I'll try this." And we walked in, and this young girl walked out on the stage with a guitar. And it was Amy Grant, before Amy Grant was Amy Grant!

**Eryn:** Ohhh!

[Laughter]

**Nan:** And let me tell you, she sang "Father's Eyes" for the first time...

**Vivian:** Oh!



**Nan:** And I was a mess!

**Vivian:** Oh wow!

**Nan:** That first line...

**Eryn:** Can you remind us what that line is?

**Nan:** Yes! "I... I may not be every mother's dream for her little girl."

**Eryn:** Aw.

**Nan:** And my mom and I did not have a good relationship. And so those words just penetrated my heart.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** And... um... And then I just kept going to church, but it was very sporadic. But then this... um... relationship with Ron. He shared his faith with me. He shared Jesus with me. And I... I gave my life to Jesus my senior year of high school. So, and then it was *boy!* When the doors were open, we were there. And then it went from there. And I have not known life without church and Jesus since. And his parents and his family and the little church that they were going to at the time, they just adopted me like I was one of their own. And so...

**Eryn:** Hmm

**Nan:** ...I never felt like Ron's girlfriend. I felt like I was a... a part of the family.

**Eryn:** Hmm. That's so special.

**Nan:** It was really beautiful and sweet.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** I love what y'all have discussed in your book, *The Mindful Marriage*, in regards to conflict. And my husband and I, he shuts down, and I run after.



[Laughter]

**Ron:** That's good to know what you do, isn't it?

**Eryn:** Right, right. Don't y'all have a quiz that people can take also?

**Ron:** We do. We do, and...

**Eryn:** Yeah. Would you share a little bit about that? What sparked that for you guys to... to want to share this type of resource? What happened in your marriage maybe...

**Ron:** Oh my goodness!

**Nan:** Hmm.

**Eryn:** ...that you could give us some... some wisdom on conflict?

**Ron:** Okay, so real quickly: [Rondeal.org/reactive](http://Rondeal.org/reactive) coping style. We'll put that in the show notes,

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Ron:** ...um... is what... We'll get everybody listening right now or watching the opportunity to go. And in about 15 minutes, you're going to learn how you react when you get dysregulated, and you don't even know what those words mean...

**Vivian:** Right.

**Ron:** ... And let me tell you, it's very humbling when you discover this and you go, *oh my gosh, that's me!* And it will be you until Jesus comes.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Unless... unless you begin to put on your new self more and more and more...

**Eryn:** That's it.



**Ron:** ... in self-control, and move into a different place. But once you see it, you can't not see it.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And it's so amazing. Now you know that about yourself, and you still do it. It's really humbling.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And so, it's... it's part of the journey of growing together.

**Nan:** Yeah. The book came out of the crisis in our marriage...

**Ron:** Right.

**Nan:** ... when we needed help. And so, the other couple that helped write the book is our therapist and his wife. So Ron's a therapist, Terry's a therapist, and Sharon's a therapist. And then there was me.

[Laughter]

**Nan:** ... And I'm just the regular chick that said, "okay, wait a minute. We gotta put these cookies on the bottom shelf for people like me."

**Eryn:** I love that.

**Nan:** ... Because I need those mamas and those women and those husbands and those people that don't have a PhD behind their name to go, "Here... here's the tools..."

**Vivian:** Right.

**Nan:** ...that will help you."

**Ron:** Yeah.

**Mary Jo Clark:** Hey friends, I'm popping in real quick to tell you about a new book from Our Daily Bread Publishing. *Not Easily Broken* is a marriage memoir from Joyce and Steven Dinkins that gives wisdom for



dating and marriage with Christ at the center through their personal story. Check out our show notes for a link to this wonderful book. Now back to the show.

**Vivian:** Well, I found that language that everyone's understanding, common language...

**Ron:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** ...is so significant in conflict resolution even...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** ...so when we say something like "dysregulated," that means...

**Ron:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** ...you know, it's that... Ron, you can probably explain this. Actually, Nan, you can probably explain this, but it's like when we get flooded and triggered by things,

**Ron:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** ...we are no longer able to think rationally because we go into a place of fight, flight, freeze, fawn.

**Ron:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** And we operate out of that defensive posture...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Right,



**Vivian:** to protect ourselves. And so...

**Nan:** Right.

**Vivian:** ...then we just get into... onto the crazy train, which is...

**Ron:** Yep.

**Vivian:** ...eh... It's that predictable conflict that every couple has. And, true confessions, I was a little disappointed, but also relieved, when we were in the book study. And I asked you like, "Do you just like. graduate, like once you learn the thing?"

**Ron:** Yeah, yeah, yeah.

[Laughter]

**Vivian:** Like you learn your styles, and then you just kind of graduate. And I realized it's kind of like the 12 steps, like...

**Ron:** Yes!

**Nan:** Yeah, yeah.

**Vivian:** ... You never get the... I thought ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** ...If I could just go through the 12 steps one time, you know, memorize them...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** ...and then I'm done!

**Eryn:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.



**Vivian:** And it's like *Oh, actually, no*. I live out, and now I have language...

**Ron:** Yes.

**Vivian:** ...to understand where these pieces fall into place. And so, then you were like, "No, just today I was dysregulated, and we went into..."

**Ron:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** ...this little pattern, but we know how now to identify, speak what's true, and kind of redirect and recalibrate. And so I would love for you to maybe break down a little bit, like...

**Ron:** Sure.

**Vivian:** ...how that looks in your relationship and how you move out of it.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** How... how it looks for me is it's just my flesh. You've done something, or my adult kids have done so, or whomever...

**Ron:** Right.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ... And I want what I want. Or I'm mad that you've hurt me, or you've said something that's really ticked me off. I mean, I am flooded with my flesh and what my flesh wants. I want justice.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** ...I want you to not do that anymore. Stop! I want this to be okay.

**Eryn:** Mm

**Nan:** And really my spirit has to stop and say, *wait a minute*...



**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** ...*what is God telling you here and learning about yourself?*

**Ron:** You nailed it. The “flesh” is the biblical word for that part of us that just goes into automatic reaction mode.

**Eryn:** Right.

**Ron:** And we now know, neurologically, there's a whole lot of stuff going on inside the brain. The br... the body keeps the score, and the brain tells the body how to make sense of that score.

**Nan:** So true.

**Vivian:** That's right.

**Ron:** And so anytime you feel any sort of threat to not feeling loved or not feeling emotionally safe in a relationship, it taps... it triggers into some things that are hardwired into your brain and body by the time you're an adult. Probably hardwired by the age of two. I mean, it's been with us a long time. And we go into a reactivity to try to restore feeling loved or feeling safe.

**Vivian:** Hmm.

**Ron:** Right? And that action has — we call it coping — with the feeling that you're not loved or safe, essentially takes four expressions: blame, shame, control, or escape. It's predictable. Every person on the planet does this. The example I always use is: if you're walking along the path today, and a rattlesnake rolls out in front of you, you don't have to pause, form a committee, and have a discussion about what you should do about it in that moment. You know exactly what to do because your dysregulation has set off a fight-or-flight reaction in you. Blame, shame, control, or escape is what you're going to do. Probably escape is the one you're going to pick with a rattlesnake. But like we heard earlier, your husband escapes when you guys have a conflict, and you go after him. Right?

**Eryn:** Uh-huh. [Laughing]

**Ron:** So there's this little dynamic that takes place...



**Vivian:** Control. Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** Right?

**Nan:** Control. Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And... and we all do one of these four or all four. You're good at...

**Eryn:** So true.

**Ron:** ... I'm good at two. I'm exceedingly good. I am a professional. I have a master's degree in blame and control. Okay?

**Nan:** No, I'd say a PhD.

**Eryn:** Yes. Yeah.

[Laughter]

**Ron:** Maybe a PhD.

**Nan:** In the Blame.

**Ron:** I have a doctorate in blame and control. And occasion I use the other two.

**Nan:** And I do all four...

**Eryn:** I do too, Nan! I do too.

**Nan:** Come in. Welcome! The water's warm. [Laughter] ... um... It is a succession, though, for me. I can start with blaming...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Then I'm going to control the situation with lots of words.



**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Lots of fleshy words.

**Ron:** Lots of words. Lots!

[Laughter]

**Nan:** Lots. Fleshy...

**Ron:** ...of words that are...

**Nan:** ...words...

**Ron:** ...overwhelming to my... to me.

**Nan:** Those biblical words...

**Eryn:** Lots of tone...

**Nan:** ...that really...

**Eryn:** ... Lots of tone in those words, I'm sure.

**Nan:** Yes.

**Ron:** Yeah.

**Nan:** And then I can go into, *oh wait, those aren't working for me...*

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ... *Those aren't fixing the situation. And he's not... so, oh, it must be about me.*

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.



**Nan:** So shame.

**Ron:** That's shame.

**Nan:** Shame.

**Vivian:** Mmm.

**Nan:** And then the shame just takes on this blanket of depression, and then it can go into escape. Whatever escape, you know...

**Ron:** Whatever will get me out of here...

**Nan:** Yeah. Yeah. I don't want to feel the pain.

**Ron:** So here's the thing our listener needs to know cause, Vivian, you hit this. And this is really important. Just because you know what your active coping style is does not mean you can change it. And right now what I just said is sort of smacking in the face 50 years of marriage education in the church.

**Vivian:** Mm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Because we have excelled at teaching people, "This is your personality, this is..."

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Ron:** ... your style, this is how you do in conflict, this is what you..." And then we sort of left them with the impression that once you have that insight, you'll be different. And that's not the way the brain, body, mind works.

**Eryn:** Yep, that's right.

**Ron:** What does Scripture tell us? "Be transformed," how?

**Eryn:** "By the renewing of your mind."



**Ron:** By renewing your mind, because your mind is what tells your brain to be different.

**Vivian:** Hmm

**Ron:** Did you catch that?

**Vivian:** Mm.

**Ron:** Your mind and your brain are two different things. Your mind is the thing that rises above the physiology of your brain and your body and your neurological system. Your body may keep the score, but your mind gets to tell you how to respond to the score.

**Vivian:** That's right.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Ron:** And this is what God's wanting to try to shape us. If you want to talk spiritual formation, at the end of the day, *The Mindful Marriage*, this book is about spiritual formation, more than it is about marriage.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm

**Ron:** Because when I let my mind be governed by who God is, what He tells me is right and good and faithful and what is... what justice is, like Nan was talking...

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm. Yeah.

**Ron:** ... and when I start to choose to respond out of my own agency to align myself with what God has put in my mind...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** ...then I can rewire my brain. And my brain and my flesh become different, become more Christlike. That's when there is transformation of the total person.

**Eryn:** Mm.



**Ron:** And at the end of the day, here's what I'm trying to do. I'm trying to be a better "me" and bring my best self to our "us."

**Nan:** Same.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Ron:** In the past, we're like most couples; and at our worst moments, even today, we are like all couples. I try to change her.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** I'm not trying to change me. I'm trying to change her mind and her brain...

**Nan:** Same. I... I...

**Ron:** ...and her body and her...

**Nan:** ...I want him to stop.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

[Laughter]

**Nan:** Just stop.

**Ron:** This is what we do.

**Nan:** Stop.

**Ron:** This is what couples do. We... we are so good...

**Eryn:** It's so true.

**Ron:** ...at changing the other person. Why? Remember that you gotta track this back. Why am I trying to get her to be different? To talk different, act different, whatever it is. Because I'm trying to feel loved.



**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** ...And I'm trying to feel emotionally safe. See, it's... At the end of the day, that's what I'm chasing. And if I make her the agent that is going to fix that for me, it is a losing game.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** And all I do is dysregulate her when I try to change her.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And now we're both dysregulated. We're all headed in the wrong... We're bringing our worst selves to our marriage, not our best selves.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** Right.

**Ron:** What God is inviting us to do is to be self-controlled, to discipline me...

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** ... bring a better me to our "us." That has got to produce a whole lot better outcomes than me bringing the worst of myself...

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Ron:** ...and then blaming her for it and being all mad and expecting her to change so I'll feel better. That never works.

**Nan:** It's a daily posture. It's a daily surrender, and it's not within me. Now I know that. I mean, even knowing those four things about myself, that I'll go do this, this, this, and this. But with God's help...

**Ron:** Mm-hmm.



**Nan:** ... then I can live out of His Spirit.

**Eryn:** Yeah. Right.

**Nan:** But I've had to ask and pray and surrender the, *oh, I'm so angry!* And He is like, *yes, be angry, but sin not.*

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** Baby, I'm gonna celebrate you for a second.

**Nan:** [laughing] Are you?

**Eryn:** Aww!

**Ron:** I am. Because ...eh... everything you just said is exactly right.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Ron:** And what is also right is that, even in your dysregulated moments, I can see you.

**Nan:** Yeah.

**Ron:** You're looking at yourself in the mirror, so to speak, even in those hard moments. And you're going, *All right, here it is again. I know it's that thing.* And you begin to unwind it.

**Nan:** Yeah.

**Ron:** And it's... it's an amazing thing. Like we tell people all the time...

**Eryn:** That's good.

**Ron:** ...we still have conflict, we still have arguments. But what used to take us two weeks or two months to figure out...

**Vivian:** Right.



**Ron:** ...now takes minutes on some occasions...

**Nan:** Yeah, yeah.

**Ron:** Sometimes a day. But like the... the length of time that we are dysregulated and completely against each other is minimal.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm

**Vivian:** Mm.

**Ron:** ...compared to what it used to be.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Ron:** In other words, we are becoming more and more like Jesus. This is about spiritual formation. And, I mean, anybody listening right now wants that.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** Yeah.

**Ron:** ... because at the end of the day, what you, your “us-ness” is providing love and emotional safety for both of you.

**Nan:** But it truly is a work that He will do in you. And I tell you, five, six years ago, I was a slave to it.

**Ron:** Mm.

**Nan:** ... I was a slave to those four coping...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** I was a slave to my emotion, and my circumstances, and my circumstances since birth. And it just... I listened to the enemy and I believed the lies, and then the lies became truth. And so it's not an easy fix or an easy unraveling...



**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ...when your ruts are pretty deep in that...

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** And yet, it's a daily walk now. And there are times when he'll say something and I'll go, *oh...* I want to blame.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** I'll... I'll... I'll slow down here and not go into the four because they're so... It's like a nano... nanosecond. It can just...

**Ron:** The reactivity comes on fast.

**Nan:** The reactivity can come on fast, and it's like, *wait a minute, I can use some self-control here.*

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** And the Holy Spirit's like, *yes you can, with My help.*

**Vivian:** Yes. One of the phrases that we talked about in our book study, and I think it's in the book too, is like what I know about me. It's like verbalizing like...

**Ron:** Yes.

**Vivian:** ... "What I know about me." Like this is the road that I'm going down, and I am choosing to...

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Vivian:** ...to move in a different direction. But the speaking it out, kind of that mind over my brain and my body... Just that phrase, even the ownership, it softens the escalation of the conflict.

**Ron:** Yes.



**Vivian:** ... Because it's demonstrating humility. And...

**Ron:** Yes. That invites grace from your partner,

**Vivian:** Yes.

**Ron:** Right?

**Vivian:** Yes.

**Ron:** “God opposes the proud and gives grace to the humble.” And so do spouses. It's our little tagline. Like we're completely bought into this idea that... that when I soften me, it makes it far more likely — not... there's no guarantee — but far more likely that Nan's gonna soften her.

**Vivian:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** But I'm... if... but what we usually do is we're waiting on the other person to soften.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** So I don't want to go first, I gotta get you to go... Like, again, that... We completely unravel ourselves. But when I start with me putting on self-control, self-discipline, to say, *I've got to manage what I'm feeling and what I do with it*. See, at the end of the day, here's the shift. And this is really a big idea because I've been a part of the marriage ministry thing for an awful long time. And I think what we have inadvertently is sort of said to couples is: “When you just do the thing they need you to do...”

**Vivian:** Right.

**Ron:** ...then they will start acting right. In other words, their needs is your job.

**Vivian:** Right.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.



**Ron:** Oh man! You know, that's what parents do for infants who can't feed themselves or take care of themselves. That's dependency. That is parenting.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Who wants to prescribe parenting? I don't want to parent her. She shouldn't try to parent me cause I ain't gonna let her. You know what I'm talking about?

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** But when I parent "me" ...

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Ron:** Listen to that, cause we've sort of taught it wrong. When I parent me, then — watch this — I get to be a partner to her.

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Ron:** That's the shift here.

**Eryn:** I'm so glad you touched on that. You said earlier, "bringing a better version of me to us." And I think a lot of us, we want to change the pers... We're like, if we can change even together, as long as he gets on the same page or she gets on the same page with me that we both want to change this...

**Ron:** Yes.

**Eryn:** ...then we can. But what you're saying is: it starts with just us and not with trying to get in the mindset of, *well, only if he will, then I will*. Or we will.

**Ron:** Exactly. See, there's the thing. *If he does, then I will*. Right? Then it's dependent on the other person. And where does that leave you? That leaves you powerless...

**Eryn:** Right.



**Ron:** ... helpless, a victim.

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Ron:** Right? Take agency over yourself. Now, we also want to say here very loud and clear... um... That doesn't guarantee that the other person is going to grow up and start being a nicer person. And we certainly hope it ... it invites them to do that and they respond. But maybe not immediately and maybe not ever. There are some people... You can become the more... most mature person you can possibly be, and the other person will still mistreat you. And if anybody's listening right now, and you're in an abusive situation...

**Nan:** Yes.

**Ron:** ... Do not stay there thinking *Oh, I've just got to be a ... a more perfect me and then he'll stop hitting me.*

**Eryn:** Yeah. Right.

**Nan:** Right.

**Ron:** Nope. You know that one needs attention. Right, today you find safety.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Ron:** Then and only then will you be in a position where the agency you take may have an effect because he's feeling the heat of any misconduct that he's undertaken.

**Vivian:** That is so good. I'm curious with walking through the loss of Connor, having already a background in marriage-family therapy, doing ministry, both of you being surrounded by Christian community and all of that. What did you need to do individually and together to be able to heal?



**Ron:** Mm. Wow! Great question. So well into our marriage, as you guys know, we lost one of our children. We have three boys, and our middle son, Connor, died when he was 12. It's been 16 years, which is super hard to imagine.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Ron:** What does a 29-year-old look like?

**Ery:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** So that's the great tragedy of our life. That journey has taught me a lot about loss. And, you know, our spiritual journey has been, you know, God was good all the time, all the time God was good — until He wasn't.

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Vivian:** Right.

**Ron:** And 16 years ago, we had to come face to face with a God we...we didn't understand...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vivian:** Mm.

**Ron:** ...and circumstances we hated.

**Vivian:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And that'll do a number on your faith, and you have to figure out who is this God? And how do I serve Him when I... when I hate my circumstances?

**Eryn:** Yeah. Very much so.

**Ron:** And that has been a tremendous difficult road for us.

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Ron:** Grief is one of those things where you have your individual grief journeys.

**Nan:** Mm-hmm.

**Ron:** And then you sort of have your couple grief journey. We have our other two boys, our family grief journey, our extended family that are... some are connected into that far more than others. And then there's finding other people who are like you, walking a similar road. And you can just lean on each other and learn from each other and that sort of thing. I... I think it is multilayered in terms of where that sadness takes its expressions and how it gets played out. And all of it is heavy and hard and...

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Ron:** ... and challenging.

**Nan:** At the beginning, though, for us in our story, we clung to each other. And we were saying the same things and articulating the same things and really grieving together for like the first four years. And I stayed in a ruminating, stuck position. And Ron was... I... I can see now he was coming out of that and still wrestling and journeying with God and his faith. But he had kind of resolved to... I think you had come to a surrender of...

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Ron:** Hm.

**Nan:** ...um...

**Ron:** I'll never understand this.

**Nan:** "I'll never understand this." So...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ... And I had dug in my heels, and I was just so angry at God. I started numbing at the beginning with alcohol. And I had already been on some prescription medication for depression. My depression kind



of came out in full vengeance, with more anxiety, and then this unhinged insomnia. Plus, I was going... I'm realizing it now. I was going through menopause,

**Vivian:** Oh!

**Nan:** But you know what? I didn't care to take care of my menopause health or my own health.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Nan:** I really just wanted to die.

**Ron:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** Yeah,

**Nan:** So I'm not taking care of my health.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** I'm not doing anything. I'm just going to escape because the pain was so intense I didn't know what to do. And I was so angry. I was so angry with God because I... I just felt like A-plus-B equals... I mean, I married a minister, and we... we were raising these children in church. I... I prayed for them so much and, you know, on and on it goes. And...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** then He says no. And I'd already had years of abandonment.

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** So this was really the ultimate ...

**Ron:** Abandonment...

**Nan:** ...straw that broke the camel's back for me.



**Vivian:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Nan:** We had a caring bridge. There were tons of people on there praying for our son, and God said, “No, I think I’ll take him home.”

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Nan:** And I just didn’t know how to live without him.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** And I didn’t know how to do this massive weight of heaviness and pain. I mean, it’s still the hardest thing I do.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** I miss my son!

**Vivian:** Yes.

**Ron:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** I missed him at the beach this summer. I missed him celebrating his birthday. I miss him every day.

**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** I asked my other two boys who have goatees, and Dad has one. I said, “do you think he’d have one?” And they’re like, “no, Mom, I don’t think so.” And I’m like, “I just wanna know.”

**Eryn:** Yes!

**Nan:** ... I just want to pick up the phone and know. But what I know is God has been there every second, even when I turned my back on Him and I said, “You’re untrustworthy. I don’t love You anymore. I’m doubting in You. Where were You? Why didn’t You show up the way I wanted?” And even in all of that, when I hit bottom and I said, “okay, I surrender.” He said, “I’ve never left you”



**Vivian:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ... *And I love you. Please let Me show you that...*

**Vivian:** Hmm.

**Nan:** ... *And we're going to go now on a journey of you learning to trust in Me...*

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** ... *holding My hand even when life doesn't look the way you want it to look.*

**Eryn:** Yeah,

**Nan:** And that's my God.

**Ron:** Mm.

**Eryn:** That's right.

**Nan:** So I just love the book of Psalms. I... I love that it's so full of all of these laments and then these joys. And I think that's the journey, is finding them in those circumstances, whether it's in your marriage, in the abandonment, all of the pains of your life...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Nan:** ... truly is the journey I'm on and continue to be on.

**Eryn:** I'm so grateful, for your vulnerability and sharing and being so honest. It's evident that we've just been able to be on the other side of hard work. And we're just really thankful that you're letting us in on a smidge of the grief and hardship and arguments and just hopelessness that you have felt. I would love it if you could maybe, as we close, pray for the woman that was in that state of desperation that you were in, where you may feel like God is not hearing you. I would imagine you have had some just raw, honest pleas and prayers, and maybe even negotiations at times. Would you close us in prayer?

**Nan:** I would be honored.



**Ron:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Nan:** *God, we just thank you for this time, and I'm just so grateful for who You are. You don't leave us. You don't forsake us. You wait on us. You're patient and loving and kind. And, God, for that woman that is so angry and frustrated and hurt and sad, and she is face down not knowing where You are, oh, just touch her spirit today. Show her that You are the truth and the life and the way, that You are all that she needs, and that You desperately love her, and that You are trustworthy and will walk her out of this darkness and this deep, deep sadness and this pit of despair. Help her to just cling to You with everything that she has. And show up, show up in friends, and in Your Word, and in ways that are just miraculous in her life. And cover her under Your wing. Help her to know how desperately You love her...*

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Nan:** *...and that You would never leave her. We thank You for this time. I thank you for just allowing us to share who You are and how mighty You are and how wonderful You are. Amen.*

**Eryn:** Amen.

**Vivian:** Amen.

[Theme music]

**Eryn:** Well friends, be sure to check out our website to subscribe to our email list, read the newest blog article, or check out the *God Hears Her* books and devotionals. Find that and more at [GodHearsHer.org](http://GodHearsHer.org). That's God Hears Her dot o.r.g.

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

[Music]

**Eryn:** Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark.



**Jade Gustman:** We also want to give a special shout out to Rebecca and Mia for their help and support. Thank you.

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

[ODBM Theme]

**Vivian:** *God Hears Her* is a production of our Daily Bread Ministries.