



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 233 Living with Anxiety with Blair Linne

### Elisa Morgan, Eryn Eddy Adkins with Blair Linne

[Music]

**Blair:** I think we're in such an anxious age in our world. We have all these pressures and stressors and all these things that we need to do, and sometimes we...sometimes we put it on ourselves. Sometimes our community puts it on us, so we don't deal with the heart of what is actually going on. Why? We never ask ourselves why the stress, why the angst, why the panic attacks?

**Vivian:** 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.

**Mary Jo:** Hey, friends. Unfortunately, the *God Hears Her* podcast has a sad update. Season 18 will be the final season of our show. Thank you so much for being a part of the *God Hears Her* community for all of these years and listening to all of these conversations. We have a special surprise for you with our big grand finale coming out this fall. Stay tuned for that. And now let's get into the conversation.

**Eryn:** Elisa, we're gonna dive in quick and fast, but I'm gonna make it fun.

**Elisa:** Okay. I like fun, you know that.

**Eryn:** Okay. Truth or dare?

**Elisa:** Truth.

**Eryn:** What is one way anxiety shows up in your life?

**Elisa:** Hmm. Oh, gosh. If anybody could see, I'm showing my nails and the picked polish. Yeah.

**Eryn:** That's a good one, picking nails. Whenever I set, like a boundary, like I check my phone, like 10 times, even though it's supposed to like vibrate. You know, like...I'm like, is it really vibrating?



**Elisa:** Do not disturb, but I'm really completely available. Yes.

**Eryn:** Exactly. So I think we need some professional help in our faith with anxiety.

**Elisa:** No, no kidding.

**Eryn:** So Blair, welcome to *God Hears Her*. We hope that you help us with how we can process our anxiety, not through over-checking our phone or chewing our fingernails, but maybe there are some other ways that we can do it.

**Blair:** That's right. Thanks for having me on. It's so good to be here with you guys.

**Eryn:** So tell us a little bit, give us a backstory maybe of who Blair was as a little girl and to where she found Jesus.

**Blair:** Yeah. Yeah. So, you know, born in Grand Rapids, Michigan. My mom moved our family. She was a single mom, moved us to Los Angeles, California, because she wanted to raise two movie stars.

**Elisa:** Oh, my goodness

**Blair:** My sister and I. Yes.

**Elisa:** No pressure.

**Elisa:** So she didn't know anyone. She literally had a one-way Greyhound bus ticket, and she moved us to a place she'd never been. And so we were raised there in Los Angeles. I started acting at nine years old. I started writing poetry at nine, and I also made a profession of faith when I was nine. I had a very sensitive conscience. So my sister, she tells me, she says, "You joined that church at nine, and then every church we visited after that, you also joined and...and got baptized." You know, like, I wanted to be sure. And maybe that was part of that anxiety, you know, of like I don't want to displease God. I don't want to go to hell, and I want to be sure that I'm saved. But I was a pretty moralistic child, very active in the church. And...and I looked at, you know, my surroundings of growing up. We were raised in South Central Los Angeles, so raised in an area where looking around, there was a lot that was going on. And I just said, "You know, I don't want to do that." But I think in that kind of taking that stance, it kind of made me where I felt like God accepted me based upon what I was doing or not doing, you know? Or how active I was in the church. And then there was just a lot of brokenness around me based upon where we



lived. So it was interesting because I was around that, and then we would go to Hollywood, do these auditions or acting classes, and there's brokenness there...

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Blair:** ...just in a different form. But actually, when I was 22, someone shared the gospel, which really set me free from feeling like I needed to perform for God. I needed to be good enough to be accepted by God. And that's when I understood, "Oh, wait. Like, I need a Savior. It's not about me being good. It's not about me comparing myself to other people around me. Like, Christ is the standard. I can't reach it, but He's done the work for me." And that grace of God, I mean, it just transformed my life. So everything changed at that point.

**Eryn:** When you say moralistic...I'm so curious. Maybe tear that apart a little bit or break it up.

**Blair:** Yeah. I think there are multiple ways to maybe run from God. Some people choose immorality, where they run kind of headfirst into sin. And then I think some of us can just choose morality. Like, I just want to be good. And so, you know, that looked like me being I was very judgmental towards the people that were around me. That meant, you know I...I stayed in church. I wanted...it was almost, I don't want to say like a drug, but it was almost like to soothe the pain that I had or maybe to not deal fully with the pains going on inwardly. I just gravitated towards the things of God. I wanted this emotional experience with God and to feel that comfort from the emotions of a Sunday, you know? And so, yeah, it...it just looked like self-righteousness, I think is another way to put it. Um, and so realizing, "Well, wait. I can't make myself righteous." And it was interesting because the...one of the churches that we were going to, they also looked at the work I was getting as an actor. Because as a child I was starting to work in Hollywood. And they would say, "Oh, God is giving you these jobs because you're good, because you're righteous or you're a virtuous young woman." And so it was confusing for me as a child, you know, to not conflate, "Oh, okay. These material blessings are because you know? Like, God accepts me." And it's like, no, He accepts me because of Christ, because of the goodness of my Savior. And my identity doesn't change. It's not about all the things I can do for God, it's what He's done for me and me resting in that. And...

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Blair:** ...yeah, so I'm so grateful for the person who shared Christ with me at 22 years old.



**Eryn:** Yeah. I would imagine that living that lifestyle of this moralistic, self-righteous...it's such an easy way to fall into cause it does feel safe, like you were saying. I would imagine it would cause anxiety. Was there, like, a...a moment in which you realized that? Cause it does feel safe.

**Blair:** Yeah, absolutely. I think it did produce so much anxiety in me. I wouldn't, again, looking in the moment, I would've never said, like, "Oh, this is producing angst in me." However, it was absolutely, because I felt like I was the one who primarily had to keep my relationship with God stable or keep it alive. And so that meant, oh, you know, if I did sin, I need to get right with God. It was almost like not a resting in God of like, okay, God is forgiving and He loves me. And, you know, He wants this relationship with me. It was more the striving. And I know striving is a biblical term, and you know, it's a positive term that we can use. But I think that anxious striving of feeling so divided.

**Elisa:** Oh, yeah.

**Blair:** And feeling out of control spiritually because I wasn't settled in who my God was. And I wasn't settled in my identity as a believer in God. And so yeah, you feel, ah, I have to pray harder. I have to, you know? Like, it's a...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...difference between like, reading Scripture because I love God and I want to know Him versus I have to do this cause if I don't, then everything's gonna fall apart.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** It's two different ways of relating to God, and most of my relationship with God was that anxious striving. And it took time. Even as I understood God's grace, it wasn't like it all magically, like, fixed itself and I never struggled with it ever again. You know, I still had to remind myself of God's grace and character, and I still do, right? It's not like we have it all figured out, right? It is a process, uh, of sanctification and growth in God's grace.

**Elisa:** So how did...how did God help you with your own anxiety?

**Blair:** Yeah. I talked a bit about, like, spiritually, that anxiety as a child. But what ended up happening and kind of where I clearly met anxiety actually was in 2015. We moved from the DC, Virginia area to Philadelphia to help plant a church. And when we made that move, we had three children three and



under. So my youngest was four weeks old at the time. I couldn't even help pack anything, you know? Like, still recovering. We move...we had issues with our house. It was a new city. You know, new church community, new responsibilities, since this was the first time we planted a church. And a couple months after while driving to visit family, I was behind the wheel, and a deer came out of nowhere and totaled...

**Eryn:** Oh, my biggest fear

**Blair:** Yes. And, you know, I was raised in California, so we never saw deer. But totaled our car. We thought everyone was fine physically, but it just spiraled me into a season of panic attacks, of anxiety. Where it was just evident that, I mean, I felt anxious every day, all day. I had to learn, really. There was a moment where I was debating whether I would drive or not ever again.

**Elisa:** Wow.

**Blair:** Um, and...and by God's grace was able to push through. Because to drive five to 10 minutes meant I was hyperventilating.

**Eryn:** Oh.

**Blair:** In the dead of the winter, uh, in Philly, I would have my jacket off. I would have the...the heat off because I would get hot. I would feel faint.

**Eryn:** Oh, wow.

**Blair:** I was wondering, "Can I drive my kids to school because..."

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...I don't want to faint?" You know, so that's kind of what ended up happening, where it was like, "This is clearly anxiety." And in that process, I began to then look at my childhood and look at my life and see, you know, then you see all the dots connecting, like, oh, you know?

**Elisa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Blair:** And so, you know, it...it was difficult, you know, as a young family in ministry. And then my husband seeing, I mean, at one period of time, I was in bed for weeks. Because I was so dizzy. I would try to make dinner, and then I couldn't even sit and eat dinner because, yeah, I was just so dizzy.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** Fearful of panic attacks, and not even sure what it was initially. I just thought I was dying when I had my first panic attack in the car. And then went to the ER and they didn't tell me, "Oh, this is a panic attack."

**Eryn:** Right.

**Blair:** So they just said, "Oh, all the tests came back normal and you're fine."

**Elisa:** Frustrating.

**Blair:** And I was like, "I'm fine?"

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** You know? Like, I don't feel fine.

**Elisa:** That's not fine, yeah.

**Blair:** You know? Um, and so I had to, like, step by step, kind of brick by brick learn first what was going on with me. And then trying to figure out will this be my lot? You know, is this the way it's always going to be? And so it was very, very difficult. So it's given me more compassion, of course, because I remember...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...prior to that accident and my experience of experiencing panic and anxiety for years, if someone would've come to me and said, "I'm struggling with anxiety and panic attacks what do I do?" I would say, "Read more Scripture. Just trust God. Like, get over it," kind of. You know? Like, "Come on."

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Blair:** Get yourself together. Like, why, you know, what's the issue?" Um, and maybe even would've handled my children that way. But I think the Lord in His mercy has comforted me. And now even as my children deal, I'm able to comfort them with the tools that I've received, uh, in my lowest moments and...and comfort others, you know. I experienced so much shame. You know, shame... and...and even condemnation, you know, because I just thought Christians don't really deal with anxiety. Should, you know, do they?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** You know? Or if they do, it's just an issue with their faith, and they need to ask God to help, uh, them to, like, have more faith, and that's it.

[music]

**Mary Jo:** Hey, friends. Whether you're struggling with anxiety or not, we all need community to support us in the good and bad times. Subscribe to the *God Hears Her* email list on our website to receive encouragement and updates on new books and resources from *God Hears Her*, an online community made to remind you that you are seen, heard, and loved by God. Now back to the show.

**Eryn:** Blair, I'd love for you to speak directly maybe to the person that's listening that might be the grab your Bible, squeeze your eyes closed like tighter and pray harder of encouragement and compassion, but also just maybe a challenge of rethinking, um, those things that can actually maybe be even hurtful to friends or family that are around them, and shed light on why it is that that may not be the only tools that we should be holding onto.

**Blair:** Yeah. There's a Puritan named John Flavel, and he has a book on fear where he gives three categories for fear. And that has been extremely helpful for me. So he talks about natural fear, sinful fear, and religious fear. And I think often as Christians, we don't have that category for natural fear or even, like, the physiological things that might be happening in the body for someone who's experienced a traumatic, you know, event, um, or trauma. And I think it is helpful. That natural fear, it's...it's...it's the fight or flight, right? It's when you see approaching evil or impending danger, it's not always sinful, but it's the consequence of sin, right? We know it originated, right, in Eden, but that doesn't mean that it is always sinful. Mm. And so I think having that category, and then also, yes, there is that sinful fear the Scripture calls being divided, right, that anxiousness. But I think what we do is we read into the text kind of our current definition of anxiousness or even panic attacks which was not what the original author had in mind. And so it causes sometimes more harm than good in the moment. And what I realized in the



midst of my anxiety was There were moments, many moments where I wasn't just sitting there thinking, "I don't want to trust God. I want to...I'm gonna sit here and worry, uh, or ruminate." Uh, what it was, was it was there were physical things happening. I'm trying to drive my kids to school and I'm hyperventilating. My heart is pounding. It feels like it's gonna pound out of my chest. And then I have the thought, "Well, what's wrong with my body?" Isn't that a natural thought? What's going on with my body?

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** Am I going to survive this? Am I dying? You know, like, and so what we often do is we pit religious fear against sinful fear, and I'm just saying let's open up the categories.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** And to know it doesn't mean that encouraging someone towards Scripture or more prayer, right, or dependence upon God, that's not a bad thing. I think what it is, is it's just important for us to see it's just not the only way. It's not the only tool that we should have kind of in our tool belt. Because for some people, it's not the worry that you've experienced. You may have experienced worry, a moment where it's like, "Oh, I had this thought and this worry, and I read a Scripture that said, 'Do not worry,' and it just went away, and praise God." But not everyone has the same story or the same body...

**Elisa:** Right.

**Blair:** ...or the same mind.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** Right? We're in a fallen world with fallen bodies. And...and God in His mercy, He gives us, I would say, like spiritual helps. Um, but He also gives us natural helps. You know, special grace, but also common grace. And so if someone, you know, needs a low dose of medication and that's gonna help them get over so that they can have this...the clear thought and trust God, I don't think that that Christian needs to be shamed for that. Just like they wouldn't be shamed if you were on heart medication because you had an issue with your heart. You wouldn't say, "Well, the Bible speaks about the heart." "And so you just need to, like, trust God more." It's like...

**Elisa:** Right.



**Blair:** Well, there's a physical ailment here.

**Elisa:** Right.

**Blair:** You know, there's a physical...

**Elisa:** So good, yeah.

**Blair:** ... and the same with the brain. They're physic...we're...we're not just a soul.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Blair:** We also have a body, right? We're here as a complete person made in the image of God. And so if a person needs medication to help them, praise God that it exists. And now they can take that extra step to have a clear thought to trust God, to cling to that Scripture, that promise.

**Elisa:** I love what you're saying, Blair, in terms of we're not just a soul, we're whole beings. I'm curious when...when you, you know, had this moment with the deer in the road, and then you had panic attacks, and then you had to learn to get back into life; did you go to therapy? Did someone else identify it for you?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Uh, what kinds of tools did God use to help you get help?

**Blair:** Yeah, that's a great question. Where I started actually was I reached out to some older women that I used to attend church with. Um...

**Elisa:** Older women are the best, yeah.

**Blair:** The older women, they are great. And I just shared what was going on with me. I was at my small group. They asked me about the accident. I talked to them about the accident. And as I was driving home, I thought I was dying, you know?



**Elisa:** Yeah, yeah.

**Blair:** And...and they said, oh, yeah, it was, it...it was amazing. Right, "Oh, I felt that before," you know?

**Elisa:** Oh, yeah, panic attack. Okay.

**Blair:** Yeah, like, yeah, I've been there, done that.

**Elisa:** Oh, what a gift ...

**Blair:** And it was so comforting to start there, because I thought...I think because of the shame, we often feel alone. We're isolated. And it's like, oh, again, I'm crazy. Something's wrong with me. I'm the only individual in the whole world, you know, who's dealing with this.

**Elisa:** Right.

**Blair:** And so they just showed me, no, I'm dealing with it. There was one sister struggling, having a thyroid issue. Someone else, oh, I can't even go in a Target because it...I get overwhelmed. You know, like...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...and I was just like, "Oh, wow." And one of those sisters, um, who's actually a pastor's wife, sent me some resources. One of those resources is a manual, and it talked about the difference between a heart attack and a panic attack. That was so helpful for me.

**Elisa:** I bet.

**Eryn:** What did you learn?

**Blair:** I learned that they're different. For one, you can't die from a panic attack. Praise be to God. Okay? But, you know, the fact that a panic attack, it comes on certainly very strong. Anyone who's experienced it, you know it's awful. You know, I don't wish it upon anyone. But eventually it does subside, and typically it can take, you know, on average, it's gonna be different for different people, but within about 20 minutes it's gonna subside. Whereas a heart attack typically doesn't. You know, it's...it's gonna continue. You're



gonna feel that pain usually, you know, not only in the heart area. Sometimes it comes down into the neck and the arm. Um, so that, having that tidbit of information was helpful when the next panic attack came.

**Elisa:** Okay. Yep.

**Blair:** And then I did go to counseling. So I immediately found a counselor. So I was appreciative of my church's help because they kindly used benevolence to help me to get counseling, cause we were...

**Elisa:** That's great

**Blair:** ...on a pastoral salary.

**Elisa:** Sure, sure.

**Blair:** And so did that. And it was interesting because what the counselor did, the therapist, she started walking back through my childhood, and I thought, "Why are we doing this?" I just need to deal with this accident and just get over it...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...so I can keep on with my life, you know?

**Eryn:** Right, right.

**Blair:** And even to...I was so, I think, skeptical that I was like, "I need a different counselor," you know? So I left her, went to a different counselor, and she did the same thing. [laughter] She was like, "Let's talk about this."

**Elisa:** Yep.

**Blair:** And...and it was so helpful. And to journal, you know, to get to the heart, to, uh, to have tools, breathing techniques that she helped me with, you know, to...and she was a bi- biblical counselor, but she was also a therapist. And so it was just a wide range of tools that she gave.

**Elisa:** Good.



**Blair:** To help me, and so that was great. And I want to say, too, I also started making use of my community. So, you know, because of the shame and the isolation, it can be so easy to feel like, "I have to deal with this on my own."

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** And we are taught to be independent. I think we're in such an anxious age in our world.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** We have all these pressures and stressors and all these things that we need to do, and sometimes we, sometimes we put it on ourselves, sometimes our community puts it on us; so we don't deal with the heart of what is actually going on. Why? We never ask ourselves why the stress, why the angst, why the panic attacks? So I think a good counselor can help to unfold and kind of pull back the layers of the onion so that we can figure out what's happening in the center.

**Eryn:** Blair, um, could you encourage the person that went to the hospital because they thought that they were dying, turns out they're having a panic attack, and they just don't know if it's worth facing it, instead just making a home in their anxiety, um, making a home and just keeping it instead of addressing the issue?

**Blair:** Yeah. That's a good question. You know, I think it is important for one to not ignore it, and one of the things, even why I would say anxiety became the best thing that ever happened to my faith, is because it helped me to see my humanity. And one of the things that, you know, sinful anxiety is about often is control. We want to be in control. We want to believe that we have unlimited resources and that we are the ones who can fix whatever the care or the concern is in our life. And the truth is, we are not in control. But often something like anxiety or a panic attack can expose that truth to us. It exposes the truth that, again, we are but human, but also that we have a God. Especially as...as Christians, you know, we have a God who says, "Do not fear," or, "Do not be worried," but He says, "For I am with you." And we often leave that part out, but it is the most important part. It is the most important part, you know, to realize that we don't have to deal with this by ourselves. We have a God who has unlimited resources. Any concern that we have, any care that we have, any worry that we have, any physical, uh, affliction or ailment or suffering that we're dealing with, it is an opportunity for us to see our dependence upon God. And it, you know, it reminds me, there's a Scripture that I just want to read in 2 Corinthians 12, and it says...and this is...this is Paul. You know, Paul had the thorn in his side, and we don't know exactly what that thorn was; but we know because of the great things that Paul had seen, um, God used this trial, this



suffering, to humble him so that he would not become boastful or proud. And he prayed to the Lord, and he asked God, "Would You take this away from me?" Three times, the Scripture says. Verse 9 says, "But He said to me, 'My grace is sufficient for you, for My power is perfected in weakness. Therefore,' this is what Paul says, he says, "I will most gladly boast all the more about my weaknesses so that Christ's power may reside in me. So I take pleasure in weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and difficulties for the sake of Christ, for when I am weak, then I am strong." And so to ignore this weakness, right, that is so evident in our panic and anxiety, is to ignore a great opportunity to see God be strong in our life. To see God be near us in the midst of our weakness. So do not ignore it, sister. Walk with me through the process of seeing...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Blair:** ...your anxiety so that you can fully see your God.

**Eryn:** Gosh, that's such a good word. You are worthy to be seen in your weakness by your Jesus, yes.

**Elisa:** You know, Blair, so much of your discoveries that brought about healing are like the antithesis, the opposite of the good moral girl, you know, who...

**Blair:** Hmm.

**Elisa:** ...had to do it all herself. I have a feeling that God may have given you some words for you and then maybe for others on this topic. Do you have something...a spoken word you could share with us?

**Blair:** Yes, I do. And that is, I think, an important part to know about me, because I am a poet. There's a poem that I wrote, and it's titled "Our Resurrected Hope Amid Suffering." And I'll just read a few lines of the poem.

**Elisa:** That'd be great.

**Blair:** Suffering never tastes sweet. Never mango ripe. It is a bitter cup, a thorn in our flesh, a hip out of joint. Suffering is imitating God. Reminds us of our Savior, don't it? Our God who never broke a bone but was broken bare. Raw like an open wound He remained when the sky turned the shade of coffee grains as black and bitter as His pain. Though He is the truth, He refused to open His mouth when He raised His hands, surrendered to the paradox, looked death square in the eye because He knew His Father had the



wheel, was the pilot when He was handed over to Pilate, exchanged for Barabbas. No guilt, but received sin's wages. What humility to bleed for only ever doing good.

[music]

**Elisa:** Well, friends, be sure to check out our website to subscribe to our email list or check out the *God Hears Her* books and devotionals. Find all that and more at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org).

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

[music]

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

**Mary Jo:** We also want to thank Kristi and John for all of their help and support. And be sure to keep an eye out for the big *God Hears Her* finale coming this fall. Follow our socials or subscribe to our YouTube channel to make sure you don't miss it. You can find all those links on our website or in our show notes.

**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.

[music]

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