



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 92 – Called to Care with Jennie Clevenger Eryn Eddy & Elisa Morgan with Jennie Clevenger

[Music]

Jennie: Identity definitely is the word I would choose to describe, you know, my life. The question of identity: *Who am I? Am I an American? Am I Guyanese? Am I White?* Because in Guyana, having a... an American mom, I am a little fairer than some of my neighbors and friends there. And so, in that culture, you call people what they are.

[Music]

Intro: You're listening to *God Hears Her*, a podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His. Find out how these realities free you today on *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Elisa Morgan.

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Eddy. When you were a kid, how did you feel about where you lived? Did you ever think about your culture, or the ways other people expressed themselves? Or maybe you're wondering *Do I even have a culture?*

Elisa: Maybe you did, but for a missionary kid like Jennie Clevenger, these questions about culture were often on her mind as she moved back and forth from Guyana to America, a transition that brought on lots of feelings of being misunderstood, ignored, and even unseen.

Eryn: We've all felt those things at one point in our lives, but for Jennie, it created a foundation for who she is today.

Elisa: Jennie Clevenger grew up in Guyana, South America as a missionary kid and is still involved in ministry there to this day. She currently works as an RN at a Covid-19 testing and vaccination center. Jennie's hope is that her efforts there with her wonderful coworkers will somehow encourage and support the community in any way possible. She's passionate about listening to, and sometimes even butting into discussions, involving women in the church. She feels a sense of urgency to learn more, read more, and discuss more about the importance of lifting women up in their homes, community, and the life at the



church. She's been married to her husband Ryan for 13 years, and they have four beautiful girls. The three oldest are adopted from Guyana.

Eryn: We're so excited to talk with Jennie Clevenger on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Jennie: Okay, let's see. I grew up in Guyana, South America. Not to be confused with Ghana, Africa.

Elisa: Thank you, I had...

Eryn: That's...

Elisa: ...to get out my map honestly.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: It's up near Venezuela.

Jennie: Yep.

Elisa: It's kind of on the...tell me if I'm right. Like on the northeast coast of South America.

Jennie: It is on the northeast coast of South America, neighboring Suriname and Venezuela, and Brazil is below it. It's a wonderful country. It's part of the Amazon Basin. It is the only English-speaking country in South America where English is its official language, and...

Elisa: Oh wow.

Jennie: ...even though they speak their own dialect of Creolize there, and they are considered part of the Caribbean because of that. They are the only mainland-based Caribbean country.

Eryn: Wow.

Jennie: And so I'm half Guyanese. My dad is a citizen of Guyana. He was born there. And...

Elisa: Nice.

Jennie: ...my mom is from Lowell and...



Elisa: Ha! Whoa! So you're about...

Eryn: So you're back home.

Elisa: ...that's amazing.

Eryn: Or back where your mom is.

Jennie: Yes. Yeah, some roots here and so a person from...I'm a person from both homes, and my dad's family is from India. He is East Indian, and his...

Elisa: You're just like multi everything. [Laughing] That's amazing.

Jennie: And my mom's family is from Germany, from Switzerland—German/Swiss.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And so my dad's family immigrated to Guyana; my mom's family immigrated to the States and are dairy farmers and very ah interesting mix of cultures there. [Laughing]

Elisa: Very much.

Jennie: Yes.

Elisa: Did your mom go down to South America? Did she go down and met your dad there or how'd that happen?

Jennie: Oh, well, Guyana is now a socialist country. It used to be a British colony and when they got their independence, a lot of people did leave the country just because of the way the country was going into Communism actually. So my dad and his family immigrated to the States...

Elisa: Okay.

Jennie: ...when he was a teenager, and he ended up in Lowell, Michigan because a relative of his worked and lived here, and he came to work and live with him.



Elisa: Hmm.

Jennie: And the relative owned the nursing home, so he got a job there. He was the janitor, and my mom during summer breaks in college was a nurse's aide there, and because her mom was the charge nurse there, and um they got to meet and know each other and cause quite a scandal at the nursing home. [Laughing] You know everybody loved seeing them.

Eryn: Bet they loved seeing them together.

Jennie: Yes. [Laughing] And that's how they met. And then eventually got married and decided that they felt God calling them to be missionaries to Guyana.

Elisa: Oh my goodness.

Jennie: And so they returned. They went there in 1988, and took us three kids—me, my sister...my older sister, and my younger brother—and I grew up there as a missionary kid.

Elisa: Wow.

Jennie: And they are still there. They are still missionaries there.

Elisa: That's a whole thing right there...

Jennie: Oh yeah.

Elisa: ...in terms of how you're shaped, and, you know, being a...a missionary kid. Back in the day, I'd hear people talk about being an MK, and that was just the lingo, you know.

Jennie: Yeah, right. MK.

Eryn: MK, PK.

Jennie: Yes.

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: So I'm so curious, you're parents are still there.



Jennie: Yes.

Eryn: What brought you back over here to the United States?

Jennie: Well my mom always says this about us kids. She was adamant that we were not going to grow up to be the weird MKs. [Laughing] We needed to be normal, because growing up she...

Elisa: What are those guys?

Jennie: I know.

Eryn: That's so good.

Jennie: She met so many missionaries as a child and always had them in their homes, and she was just adamant her kids were not going to be the weird MKs, so [Laughing] I came back to the United States to finish high school as a junior and senior and launch into college so that I could finish my education. Guyana did not have a school system that uh we kids could be a part of, so we were homeschooled with American curriculum so that we could come back to the States and finish our education. And that was a very interesting time.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: Very tough going from your home overseas to your home in the US, and yeah.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Where did you live during high school then? Did you live with a family or did you...

Jennie: At that time my parents were scheduled to come back to the States.

Elisa: Okay.

Eryn: Yeah.



Jennie: During my childhood every four years...we would have to stay four years on the field and then come back to the States to visit our supporting churches, our supporters, raise support if needed, and then go back.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: And I remember coming back to the States when I was six, turning seven, and then coming back to the States ten, turning eleven, and...and then in high school. And those times were very exciting at the beginning because where we were in Guyana the...the entire country was not really hooked up to technology at the time. You were privileged to have a friend or know where you could make a phone call. People did not have phones, ah landlines. Nobody...nobody had computers, and we ah lived in partial electricity. Most of the time we wouldn't have electricity. Just a very different way of life.

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: And so I remember as a child, it was so exciting on holidays—usually just Christmas—where we could go to the nearest coveted phone, call collect to the States and knowing that our big farming extended family was together for Christmas, and we might be able to talk to our grandparents or answer uncles, um people that I didn't know. I, you know, I didn't know them. I just knew they were family and that I loved them. [Laughing] So we would get to talk to them, and it was always interesting calling collect because the operator on the Guyanese end thought that Michigan was located in New York City. So...[Laughing]...it was usually hard trying to connect...

Eryn: That's so funny!

Jennie: ...to Michigan. And she would always say, *Michigan, Michigan, where in New York is that? Ah, ah. It's not New York.* [Laughing] So it was very exciting to get to talk on the holidays. So coming back at those times to the States was always exciting because back in those days when you flew in on an airplane, your family members or whoever was picking you up could pick you up from the gate. Right from the airplane gate. I'm sure you remember this.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.



Jennie: And I certainly do because it was so exciting. Oh my goodness! There would be, to me as a little kid, a crowd of people...

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: ...there who hadn't seen us for four years.

Eryn: Oh!

Jennie: Was just...just waving and clapping and crying that we were finally home.

Elisa: That's so nice, yeah. [Laughing] So welcoming.

Jennie: Yes, and that was always so exciting. We would be dead-dogged tired, but so excited to hug our relatives and my first thought was always *Wow, you smell like America!* [Laughing] You know, as you're hugging people and you just hug and you smell them, you're like, *Wow, that must be what America smells like.* [Laughing]

Elisa: Oh my gosh!

Jennie: So the times coming back to the States were...each time was so different, such a new experience. My parents were I think, you know, at the time, their relationship was so unusual, you know, to you have my mom marry somebody like my dad, and when they had children and went to Guyana, I just don't think it really occurred to either one of them to talk about cross-cultural families. You know, being a biracial family.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: I mean, those terms weren't really even around, I think. I don't think that that was anything they were even aware of. We were just family and we lived and served and worked in...here or there. And so my dad having come to the States almost close to adulthood also, you know, as a...as an immigrant, I don't think it really occurred to him in the same way either. You know, so where I am a citizen here, but also Guyanese, so those times where we came back to the States were exciting and very difficult.

Eryn: Mmm.



Jennie: I said earlier we speak a dialect of in Guyana called Creolize. It's a mix of Hindi words from the huge Indian population that immigrated there, and English words from the British, being a British colony, and local words from our local American Indian tribes. We call them Amerindians instead of American Indians. And so the Creolize is what I grew up speaking, and you can definitely understand English, but there's a lot of nuance...there's a big difference in coming to a country where you have American English, American slang, understanding the humor here, understanding even sarcasm. People in Guyana are not sarcastic, so I learned that my American side of the family is extremely sarcastic. [Laughing] And I did not...

Eryn: Or maybe...or maybe what you thought was very rude. [Laughing]

Jennie: Well yeah, yeah, right. If you don't know what sarcasm is, it can be very hurtful, so...

Eryn: Right.

Jennie: ...when you're little, you're trying to process, *I'm here in Guyana; this is what God wants us to do.* I never knew as a child that we were going back.

Elisa: Oh.

Eryn: Mmm.

Jennie: It was assumed that we kids knew that. That we were here for a little while and going back, but I just don't think it was talked about, so there was this anxiety and...and depression and sadness and fear that we may not go back home. And then at the same time, we were so excited to come because, you know, my mom being an American from Lowell, she is coming home. She's coming home to visit her family, and...

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: ...her hometown. We were supposed to be excited because we were coming home, but I didn't understand why it felt like I wasn't coming home, because it wasn't my home, you know.

Elisa: Mmm. You had a nomadness, yeah. Kind of a nomadness, but your heart didn't know how to put down roots, and maybe you were afraid you'd have to and have to sever ties to Guyana which was your real home. I can hear that pain. That's...that's a lot as a little kid. Yeah.



Jennie: Yeah.

Elisa: So you...you end up going um...settling so to speak. How'd you end up back in America and pursuing who you are? You know, what did you do with that pain. How'd you navigate it and how did that bring you forward?

Jennie: When we came back, there was some talk knowing that I was going to finish high school and go on to college, and in my mind at the time, I thought, *This is it. This is the end of the...end of the road. End of my journey as an MK.* And I thought at the time, probably due to my immaturity, not understanding just life in general, that I would have to stay here forever. I thought it was final. I thought that it meant that I was never going back.

Eryn: Mmm.

Jennie: I don't know why I thought that. I just remember very clearly thinking that and remembering that the time I was back when I was eleven, I was in sixth grade. We...we did have to enter the US public school system when we came back, when we visited, and those times were very interesting. Very difficult. My brother and my sister loved it. My sister flourished. She...very academic, and I was scared every day. And so thinking about that coming as a high schooler then I thought, *It's going to be just like that. What am I going to do? I don't know anyone. Are they even going to understand me?* We practiced Michigan English very hard. [Laughing] And that first year in high school here, I was quiet. I didn't speak. I remember not speaking the whole year unless I needed to.

Elisa: Wow.

Jennie: And it was a gigantic school. I've never been a school that size. I never saw that many American kids in one place...

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: ...and they knew that I was different. I thought that coming back I would somehow be able to find the kids that were Christians. I thought that that would be a comfort zone, you know.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And I couldn't. I couldn't find them. In Guyana, the major religions are Hinduism, Islam, and...and Christianity, and when you become a Christian there, you know who is a Christian there. Your life



practices...because in those religions what you do on a daily basis looks very different from how Christians practice their lives. And so the religion is tied into your daily life—what you eat, what you wear, where you go, your prayer life, your religious life, and so even in your yard, there are markers in everyone's yard to tell you...you can see when you walk down the road who was a Hindu, who was a Muslim, and who was a Christian.

Elisa: Wow.

Jennie: And it's village life, wo in the life of a village, everybody knows everybody, everybody knows everybody's business.

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: And the community life is very different. And I thought that that's the way it was here.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And it's not. So I was very depressed and disappointed to find that I couldn't find my community, my people, you know?

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jennie: I remember visiting a church in the Lowell area and my parents were speaking there, of course, as the missionary speaker, and I saw high schoolers from my high school there. I saw these teenagers who were going to youth group, Sunday school, and at church there, and I couldn't believe my eyeballs. I was...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: ...I thought, *Oh my goodness. Are they the Christian kids? I couldn't even tell. I would have never known.*

Eryn: Wow. I would imagine that impacted your trust maybe with people, in developing trust in relationships. It was very upfront for you, so walking into a relationships and not knowing where they stand...



[Music]

Jennie: Yes.

Eryn: ...I would imagine that would be really hard to adapt to.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: Oh yes.

Elisa: I can hear the pain in that, ..

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...and it's been a long time, Jennie, but when our little souls get seared...

Jennie: Yeah.

Elisa: ...with an experience, you know, it carries us forward and it stays with us. You know, even though God may have helped us understand it, we may be in a different place, whatever...

Eryn: We can logically place it.

Elisa: ...the reality is when we talk about it, we can go straight back into it. Thank you for your vulnerability with us about it because I can hear it.

[Music]

Elisa: When we come back, Jenny will share about adopting her daughters and the work she does now in Guyana. She'll also remind us of why we're all worthy and known by God, a lesson we all need to be reminded of in our moments of pain and hardship.

[Music]

Elisa: *God Loves Her* is the newest book in our *God Hears Her* series. You know, we all just want to be reminded that we are loved, and in this devotional, women writers share personal stories about God's love that is unconditional. Not only can you receive love from Him, but you'll want to share it with others.



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Eryn: Let's get back into our conversation with Jennie Clevenger on *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: What I know a little bit about you now is that you are a woman who is married to a apparently Caucasian man. I know him a little bit.

Jennie: We joke, and I say I'm married to a tall, skinny, white guy. [Laughing]

Elisa: Okay, good for you to say that. Not me.

Jennie: Yes.

Elisa: And you guys have Guyanese daughters.

Jennie: Yes, we do.

Elisa: And so I'm just really feeling that you must have great passion about who you are as a mom in...in the shadow of your mom and your experience and who your daughters are welcomed to become.

Jennie: Yeah.

Elisa: You know, as you live in Lowell, a...again, you know, can you bring us forward into how have you negotiated and navigated those experiences, and, you know, how looking now at your life are they shaping you and the next generation?

Jennie: It is so interesting to me now to look back and see how God used all those experiences, all those things. The journey of deciding to adopt...

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: ...started a long, long time ago, and we moved locations in Guyana to serve in a new area. My parents were church planters. We planted a church in a new area, and at that church, there was a family coming. They were an Amerindian family, a...a native family, and they had children. They had the most beautiful babies, I remember.



Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: But something happened and there was a baby that just was not being cared for. The circumstances surrounding it I don't remember, but I remember my mom saying she wished she could take that baby home. And I had never thought about that needing to be done. I had never at the time as a kid, you know, you grow up in the church understanding your adopted as sons in Christ and...and we are adopted into God's family, but the real story of the fact that there's real adoption in the world had never occurred to me.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And at that moment I thought, if there's ever a chance that God brought me children to adopt, I would do that.

Eryn: Mmm.

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: Because in our country, in Guyana, women and children are not considered...they're treated as second-class citizens...

Elisa: Okay.

Jennie: ...and children especially if they don't have family, they are neglected.

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: And growing up seeing that was really hard. I as an adult did not choose to adopt because I'm saving the world. That's a poor mentality to have when you go into adoption. You're not going to save children. You're not going to save the world.

Elisa: Like you're the hero. Yeah.

Eryn: Yeah.



Jennie: You are entering into a life of becoming a parent to a child that needs a parent and loving them unconditionally and helping them navigate all the hurt and all the trauma and all the loss that they've experienced.

Elisa: Mmm. Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And helping them to grow up to be a person that can live in this world, and by the grace of God, hopefully have a life where they can be at peace. So our children...we have four girls total...

Eryn: Aww.

Jennie: ...three of whom are adopted from Guyana, and our fourth is our biological.

Eryn: Where's the lineup? Oldest to youngest, how old?

Jennie: So our oldest is 15, which is funny when we say we've been married 13 years. [Laughing]

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: Our oldest...

Eryn: Right.

Jennie: [Laughing] and then 11 and 9, and our biological daughter is 8.

Eryn: Aww.

Jennie: They're just so beautiful.

Elisa: I'm sure, yeah.

Jennie: One of them might be ease dropping right now. She's in the basement.

Eryn: Oh! [Laughing]

Jennie: But ah when I think about them, and, you know, we adopted them as older children, so they are from Guyana, and I have spoken a lot with them over the last couple of years about just growing up there,



because they spent a significant little portion of their childhood there, and we identify together on the things we like, our favorite foods, can we make our Guyanese food together? And that's always something special. You know the places, the smells, the people, we talk about that often.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: And we talk about the culture and why...because they have many questions, why is the culture one where there are children that need to be adopted?

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: And that's a question that they're going to be asking for a long time, and a lot of adopted kids do, and that's one we talk about a lot. And our decision to adopt them for me comes out of my realization that I years ago realized that I can't be a hero, I'm not going to save the world, I'm not going to be some great missionary traveling across the ocean, but I am called to care for people. I want to care for them.

Eryn: Mmm.

Jennie: I became a nurse because I feel for people. I want to help them feel better. In my interactions with women and children, especially in Guyana, I want them to know that I care for them.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: And when you're talking about that in the context of doing that as a Christian, especially in Guyana, when you're compelled out of that kind of Christ-like love or care, there are things that will be done that seem so unusual and out of the ordinary. And even though in the States it's not unusual or out of the ordinary to find families that have adopted, I think it's a pretty big narrative here in the States. It's not down there.

Elisa: Mmm.

Jennie: And it's very rare to find Guyanese people adopting, and so when we did adopt and our brothers and sisters down there, you know, in Guyana we call our fellow Christians brother so and so, sister so and so. You are Sister Eryn and Sister Elisa.

Elisa: That's precious. I like that.



Eryn: Oh.

Jennie: Sister Jennie.

Jennie: It...yes. [Laughing] We had a lot of questions, a lot of questions from people in the church. Why would we do this? Why would we want these children?

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: Basically, what's wrong with us? Are we crazy in the head? [Laughing]

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.

Jennie: And so the church in Guyana is young. You know, when you look at church history, the church in Guyana is very young. The realization that we are called to care for everyone whether they have family or not is kind of novel sometimes in those settings, so it was so amazing to me to talk about that while we were there adopting our kids...

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: ...with our brothers and sisters and letting them know we're not doing this because of some...

Eryn: Savior mentality or...

Jennie: Right...

Eryn: ...like trying to be a hero or...

Jennie: ...and that's...

Eryn: Yeah, yeah.

Jennie: It's I want to love these girls. I want them to be my own, and for their sake, I think it's amazing that they look like me, you know?

Elisa: Oh, that's beautiful. Mm-hmm.



Jennie: And...yeah, yeah, and that we have connection, and we can maintain this cultural connection, and I can help them navigate that as they now live here in the States.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: And then helping them cross the language and culture barrier the last few years have been interesting and funny and fun trying to help them integrate new words, new language...

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: ...new foods that they need to eat.

Eryn: I mean, that's what's so beautiful, Jennie, is that in your upbringing when you were sharing earlier, there was maybe a sense of a lack of security, an unknowing of if you're going to go back or where you're going to land and how long will you land there, and then this piece of your identity. Well, you know, understanding what is your identity and there was uncertainty in your upbringing and security and an identity, and yet, you have these three daughters that you can instill security and identity in, and that just shows God, I think, in some of the pain and what you expressed it was tough. How He's brought you from processing that and can instill that and can make these strong, beautiful women that know who they are in their identity. I just think that is such a beautiful piece to your story.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Legacy.

Jennie: Thank you, Eryn.

Eryn: Legacy. Yes, that's what it is.

Jennie: Identity definitely is the word I would choose to describe, you know, my life. The question of identity: *Who am I? Am I an American? Am I Guyanese? Am I White?* Because in Guyana, having a... an American mom, I am a little fairer than some of my neighbors and friends there. And so, in that culture, you call people what they are.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Mmm.



Jennie: You get a nickname based on what you look like, and I'm the white girl. And I clearly am not white, and...[Laughing] ...here in the States anyways, but I grew up down there thinking, *Oh my goodness!*

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: *I must be white.* And, of course, we never about it, so when I would come back to the States and I had to fill out any kind of a form, oh my goodness, whatever form it is...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah.

Jennie: ...that you're writing down your ethnicity, I always filled in Caucasian. I didn't know what to put.

Eryn: Wow, right.

Jennie: Even as a young adult, and then it finally hit me, *Oh my goodness! I need to put something else. I'm not Caucasian.*

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: And I mean that was just one of those things where as a teenager and then getting into college just the prayers, the tears, the *Lord, who am I?...*

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: ...slowly got I think filtered out or parsed out.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: I really latched on to, you know, you're in this world but not of it.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.



Jennie: Trying to identify being a creature of many places,...

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Jennie: ...I don't have to pick one. I don't have to choose just one, and I felt this pressure growing up that I had to. One place needed to be home. One place...one people needed to be my people.

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: One thing was right. The culture in Guyana is very black and white, so you're either right or your wrong. There's either right or left. There's no gray area, so coming to the States and thinking this is it. I will never be going back there is so black and white, and I didn't understand that. But to accept that this is the life God gave me, this is such a privilege to, you know, have all these experiences and knowledge of different cultures and the ability to speak a different language,...

Eryn: Yeah.

Jennie: ...and to then take all of that and use it to help raise our kids has been really amazing.

Eryn: You know that developed a grit in you...

Elisa: You're right. Yes.

Eryn: ...too and a soul that...

Jennie: Yeah.

Eryn: ...is a desire for people too to have that bravery. They want that bravery, but they're scared to embrace it and I think that that just...it's so evident in your story and who you are today. I mean, would you share to the woman that is listening right now that is wrestling with her identity and the pressures that she feels to be put into a box or check a box, would you speak to her on how God sees her and hears her.

Jennie: God doesn't make our lives so black and white that we have to fit into a mold that we create for ourselves or that we think our community or our church is making for us. It's okay to struggle and through that, it's so important to find godly help. It's important to find people to talk to. I think it's so important to acknowledge that we struggle and whether or not we're able to take ourselves to a person or a place



where we can talk through those things or just come to some self-realization that there are struggles that are coming to me, that I'm experiencing, that do come from maybe my experiences, my life, family society. Having an awareness of that can be so freeing. God gives us the gift of having community together with people that can help walk along with us in those hard times and sharing those burdens. I think as Christians, especially Christian women in the States, you feel like you're supposed to do it all. You feel like you're supposed to have it all put together. I definitely have felt that pressure. You feel like that if you are going to church, joining a ladies' Bible study, you're supposed to be some super spiritual mom that just always has the right answer and never struggles, and I always thought that I was alone in thinking that. I don't think I am. [Laughing]

Elisa: I don't think you are either.

Jennie: And...and it is strength to be able to acknowledge that we're struggling.

Elisa: Yeah.

Jennie: And I think it's very difficult for women to even figure out where to find help with that, because sometimes depending on where you go to church, there's no help there. And we need to become a community of family in our churches where we know how to help each other. There is this huge immense guilt that women especially feel when they go to counseling.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Jennie: And they think, *Oh my goodness, I'm going to my church.* Or they tried the church, and they didn't receive help. I'm here to tell you don't feel guilty. [Laughing] It's okay. I mean the miraculous thing about the way our bodies are made, our brains, our emotions, our lives, we can find truth spoken to us, we can find insight, we can receive help, and it doesn't have to be in the doors of the church. You don't have to feel guilty or even telling yourself that *what's wrong with me, I must be sinning. I must be doing something wrong. I must not be doing God's will for my life. Why am I so sad? Why am I struggling? What is going on?* Most of the time, no, that's not...that's not the answer. You're not sinning. We all need help. We need to...

Elisa: Amen.

Jennie: ...look at our lives and share them with others and hold each other up. Coming from a culture that is so black and white, when I go back there—of course, I do go back [Laughing]. I love going back. I love participating in the ministry there, and one of the most wonderful things that I get to do when I'm



there is speak to women and work in women's and children's health there. And to especially help the ladies in the church see that they're worth something. When you're treated like a second-class citizen or you feel like a second-class citizen or that you're less than or not worth as much as somebody else, you miss what God is telling you about yourself. If He says we're made in His image, just like brother so and so across the pew, I'm made in His image just like he is. I'm not second class. I am worth something.

[Music]

Elisa: Jennie's advice is so lifegiving for every single one of us. It's easy to feel unseen or unworthy.

Eryn: We've all felt that way in our lives, but we can hold tight to the truth that God always see us, because He is always with us.

Elisa: Exactly! Well, before we close out today's episode of *God's Hear Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. You can also find a link for learning more about mission work in Guyana. There are also links to connect with Eryn and me on social. You can find these links when you visit our website at godhearsheer.org. That's godhearsheer.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 Gabrielle Boward and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. We also want to recognize John and Will for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[Music]

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