



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 61 - Loneliness

Elisa Morgan and Eryn Eddy

Eryn: When I have been alone, there will be this little, quite lie that will disrupt my contentment on being alone and...

Elisa: Can we call it a hiss?

Eryn: Hiss. And it will say to me, like instead of enjoying a Friday night by myself and cooking dinner and maybe doing some oil painting or a puzzle or reading a book, instead of just like being so content in that; this little hiss comes in. And it reminds me that I could be doing this with somebody. Or why didn't I get invited to that thing?

Elisa: Ooh, there you go.

Eryn: And so it's me acknowledging to go from unlonely, to me it's like fighting the lie that I can actually be content and be alone and be happy.

[music]

Voice: 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. Recently, Elisa has been looking into the topic of loneliness while planning and writing her book *You Are Not Alone: Six Affirmations From a Loving God*. A link to get this book is included in the show notes with the podcast description. Elisa, I am so excited to hear what you've been learning about loneliness. And to dive into this conversation about feeling lonely, I'm...I just cannot wait to see what you share. All of us, including myself, have felt lonely. Maybe we even feel lonely right now. So Elisa, let's talk about loneliness on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Eryn, listen I want to ask you how you respond to this statement?



Eryn: Okay, I'm ready.

Elisa: Okay, you are not alone.

Eryn: I think I experience a sense of relief when I hear that statement.

Elisa: Yeah, tell me about that. Why...why?

Eryn: I think because I can tend to feel like I'm alone in my emotions, in my struggles, my circumstances. I can find myself thinking I'm the only one that's experiencing the weight or this burden or you know whatever it is that I may be going through. And so when I have a friend that says, "You are not alone, Eryn," there is just relief in those words for me.

Elisa: Yeah, thanks for being so honest. You know I...I...I feel relief too. And I know it's true most of the time, you know, that I'm not alone. And I'm not talking just about my husband, Evan, or my dog, Coach, or my friend, Erin. You know I know in my heart of hearts that God has not left me alone. And there is great relief in that and companionship in that. But you know I think still even though we may know in our heads that we're not alone, hmmm, do you ever feel lonely?

Eryn: Yes, and sometimes...and I will say I...if I'm going to be like fully transparent...

Elisa: Please, yes.

Eryn: ...when I have heard, you are not alone, I do find relief. But I have also found maybe an eye roll to that statement too.

Elisa: An eye roll...a push back.

Eryn: Yes, like a...a pessimistic maybe response of okay, yeah, thank you. Thank you for that.

Elisa: Or maybe a little sarcastic, right.

Eryn: Right, okay, yeah.

Elisa: I'm not alone, thanks. Where is...



Eryn: But I am, you know.

Elisa: ...anybody?

Eryn: Right, right, right.

Elisa: Now that's kind of what I want to dig into today. Because I...I think there is this gap between the truth and the reality that when we know God and we're in a relationship with Him, we're not alone. But [pfft] we can feel like we are. And the emotion that comes to the surface is loneliness.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: Yeah, well so there's a difference, right, between alone and loneliness.

Elisa: Yeah, what do you think it is?

Eryn: I think within loneliness, there is a...a sense of despair, of forgottenness. Alone I think you can be content in being alone. But loneliness, I don't know if there's contentment but this stirring, this wrestling in our spirits for our souls of longing for a deeper intimacy and feeling like we aren't experiencing it.

Elisa: That's so good, you know. Some people have tweaked the words *solitude* and *loneliness* to...to express that difference that you're getting at here. I mean I...I've been alone and felt empowered. I remember the first time I ever went to a movie by myself. I went to see *Terminator... Terminator*.

Eryn: I love it. That was the movie?

Elisa: The very first *Terminator*. And I felt so empowered. And...and I remember a time I took a trip all by myself, you know, like way far away. And...and I felt empowered. That's a kind of thing that maybe solitude is. But loneliness is...I think you're on to it. It's more of a...a hollow, a hole, a gap.

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: You used the word *longing*. Yeah, there's an emptiness around it. C...can you dig around a little bit, Eryn, and think of some times when you have felt lonely in the past or maybe you feel lonely today?

Eryn: Yeah, yes. Man, a few circumstances pop into my mind immediately. It's not really hard for me to find times in which I have felt lonely.

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: I remember there was something really exciting like a celebration that happened. And you know maybe it was my book release or something within my business or something with family like a breakthrough or like I've experienced those types of moments. And I've just wanted...you know I'm single. I live by myself. I've just wanted to call somebody that was like or...or come home to somebody that I could experience the excitement with. You know and it's funny, because I think you can be surrounded. I was surrounded by people and affirmation and celebration and all of that, and I still felt lonely. And then I can think of a time after a breakup when...

Elisa: That's good.

Eryn: ...texts messages aren't the same. And phone calls aren't the same. And you know you adjust from pursuing a relationship to the relationship ending. And so then there's this emptiness you feel. Loneliness to me has been specific to a relationship with somebody.

Elisa: Good. Yeah, thank you for being honest. I...I can actually truly identify with what you're sharing. I've been through breakups. You know I've been through...I've been single. And those are some of the things that come to mind. I also think about gosh, you know, as a...a mom of teenagers, I have felt lonely when my kids may look different from what I thought they should look like. And I think everybody else has some other kind of little bow-on-top kind of family. And I have felt lonely. I have felt lonely when I haven't been invited into meetings in leadership, you know, at work or considered for using my voice in a significant way when...when I feel like God may want to use me. I have felt impatient and lonely that way. You know it's interesting because when I've been...I've been studying this...this whole topic of loneliness. And I have bumped into these incredible statistics about loneliness for right now. Okay, listen to this.

Eryn: Okay.



Elisa: A recent survey found that almost half of Americans feel alone...half...half...half. Nearly 50 percent feel lonely, left out, isolated, or lack companionship. The number of friends people report today is one or none.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: Whereas, 20 years ago, people could name on average four close relationships. I...I know that the pandemic that we've experienced has actually made loneliness an epidemic within an epidemic, if you will. We're zoomed to death. We're gradually putting our toe back into the connection of face-to-face meetings, but we all are careful. And it's weird. It's like the very thing that gives us life is the thing that everybody tells us is dangerous.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Being together, going to church, meeting in a small group, going to work face-to-face. No, no work remotely. Watch online. And *bow*, you know, it just is exponentially difficult for us.

Eryn: Wow. One or none friends. That is so wild. It's...

Elisa: It's heartbreaking.

Eryn: ...this longing for...again it's going back to that word...it's longing for companionship, longing for intimacy. And I found myself you know being fully surrounded and...and...and being celebrated and yet I still have that longing. Why do you think that is?

Elisa: Well that's...that's such a poignant, perfect question, Eryn. Because when I...I look at it in Scripture, I look at loneliness, and I think where did it come from? You know, where did it come from? And you know what? If you start off reading in Scripture in Genesis 1, 2, 3, "tadum," here comes loneliness. It's introduced when Adam and Eve, man and woman, husband and wife, partake of the only thing they're not supposed to partake of that the tree of knowledge between good and evil. And as a result, they're immediately embarrassed, ashamed. They break so to speak, and they hide. And who do they hide from? They hide from God. And I think...honestly, I think that's where the pain of alone first enters. And you and I have carried it ever since. We were never meant to be broken off in relationship from God or from each other. And so you know throughout the...the pages of Scripture, you're gonna see this story of God coming to rescue us from the pain of alone to give us a way out of our lonely and a way back to Him through His relationship with us through Jesus. But you know that doesn't mean that the experience of



loneliness is wiped out while we're on this planet. I mean you see it in all kinds of people in Scripture. I mean Hannah, who's wailing because she doesn't have a child and Moses, who's on the backside of a desert for decades waiting to be used, and Elijah and depression in a cave, and Jeremiah, the weeping prophet, and you know, on and on and on. And...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...even Jesus in the garden and on the cross...lonely, lonely.

Eryn: David, Esther. I would imagine...

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: ...Esther probably in waiting to be called by the king, there was immense...

Elisa: So true.

Eryn: ...loneliness.

Elisa: A...all throughout Scripture. One of the things I've been working on, and I want to throw this out and see if it sticks with you, Eryn. Listen and let's...let's just take these things apart. I've...I've actually come up with six different types of loneliness if you will. See if these resonate. And if they're not true, let me know. But if you can think of examples of them, we're just gonna kind of go through them. And okay, the first one is emotional loneliness. And that's this feeling that nobody really loves me, okay. And the second one's relational loneliness, and that's this experience that nobody really knows the real me. I feel unknown, missed, right? Then vocational loneliness which is the feeling that my life really doesn't have any meaning, nobody really cares if I'm on this planet or not. Spiritual loneliness is feeling literally alone and being cut off from God. Physical loneliness is...there's nobody to share the alone. I have to do everything all by myself...oof. And then situational loneliness which is this experience of not being included, being cut off, excluded. It's something that happened with the pandemic too. Okay, how do those sit with you? Do those ring true? And does maybe one or another describe where you are today?

Eryn: All of those.

Elisa: [sound effect] Okay, yeah.



Eryn: All of them stick out to me. You know emotional loneliness...would that be feeling like you are not being seen or received or accepted by how you are hardwired? And so you feel lonely within yourself? Or would that be relational?

Elisa: I think, you know, we don't have to like split them apart...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...because sometimes there are small hairs. But I think you are on to it, Eryn, yeah. Emotional and relational are tied together. Emotional is this feeling of nobody really knows me. Relational is nobody really gets me. So we often feel both of those kinds of loneliness together. You know I feel super lonely because nobody loves me because they don't understand me. And that's just so real. And...and I want to point out that all six of these kinds of loneliness, they're just categories to help us identify what we're experiencing. Usually, just like you said, Eryn, we feel all of those all the time.

Eryn: Yeah, yeah.

Elisa: Or maybe we're a little bit on a roller coaster, and we'll go [whoop] up on the vocational one, and then [brrrr] down on the emotional one and the [whoop] up on the physical one and down.

Eryn: Exactly.

Elisa: You know, because we are humans.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And we experience this great loss. And it's very difficult, this loss of connection.

Eryn: I would identify I think with the emotional the...and the relational a...as of right now.

Elisa: Okay.

Eryn: And I think that, you know, with the pandemic and then with work and it's just kind of a combination. It's almost like sometimes you just feel like you're being hit in all corners. You know I guess that's why I say all of them, cause I feel like everywhere I turn, I can be hit with that feeling that I didn't know existed until a circumstance brings it out. Cause sometimes I think it's a circumstance or a person or a lack of a



person or...or there's a friendship that falls through or a friend that is too busy and...and whatever it may be. You turn a corner, and you're hit with that. And you're like oh, I didn't realize that that's how I felt. Turn a corner, oh I didn't realize that that was how that situation made me feel.

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: And what do you do what that?

Elisa: Yeah, I love the way you're entering this, Eryn. Thanks for being raw here, cause as I've been processing this, I think we're going to feel all of them. But what...what is helping me is to try to tweak what exact kind of loneliness am I experiencing here? Because I think God speaks to each one of those needs in us kind of uniquely. We're holistic people. We're not just compartmentalized. But I think He speaks to us. Like for instance, vocational loneliness is this feeling that my life doesn't make a hill of beans of difference, you know.

Eryn: Yeah, yeah.

Elisa: And we can really get stuck there and, therefore, feel emotionally lonely. Nobody loves me, you know, or relationally lonely. Nobody gets me. If they did, they would invite me into using my gifts. See, but if I just stay on vocational loneliness and think, does my life have meaning? I'm forced to kind of dig down and look at where are the lasting contributions that God has invited me into? Maybe it's a friendship. Maybe it's as a mom or a grandmother or an aunt. Maybe it's a marriage. Maybe it's a ministry. Maybe it's a hobby. Maybe it's a relationship with a neighbor. But when I...when I get it, that's what makes me tick right now is I want to go to bed at night knowing that I've contributed, knowing that my footprint on this planet mattered today. Well then I can hone down in that. So...so that's another example of these six kinds. And another thing I want to say is that I...I've written this book on this too which is why I'm also nicely outlined in my conversation, cause usually I'm not that way as you know. But...

Eryn: I love it. I'm taking notes over here. See my pen?

Elisa: Yeah, I'm turning into teacher Elisa here. But I also have realized that God gives an affirmation towards each of those kinds of loneliness. We may not be able to meet the need of that loneliness in a relationship with each one of them, but God speaks to us. And so I just want to run through those. And you know we can put these in our...in our podcast notes later. But for emotional loneliness, God gives a promise that He loves us. For relational loneliness, God gives a...His perception. He says I know you, cause I made you. For vocational loneliness, God gives a purpose. I know the plans I have for you, He



says. And for spiritual loneliness, God gives His presence. And He says I will be with you. For physical loneliness, God gives His provision. He says I'll provide for you. And for situational loneliness, God gives His perspective. He says, I'll use all things for your good and My purposes. That's a lot of words right there and a lot of p's honestly. But...but I've been trying to put those things in action. For instance, when I feel vocationally lonely, does my life make a difference, then I...I think back to hmm, how has God had a purpose for me? I mean who knew I was going to be like the daughter of divorce...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...or of a broken family? Who knew that I wouldn't be able to have children biologically? Who knew that...that I would go to seminary? I mean you go through every step of your life, Eryn. God knew each one of those things. And He's used each one of those things. I mean try to answer that. Who knew? And fill in the blank for you. Wow.

Eryn: Goodness. Well when I look back on how the Lord has delivered me from emotions that I'm currently experiencing back then, that gives me strength to not feel so lonely in it. I have to recall those memories, and I journal them. I mean we...we all know Eryn's a journaler. [inaudible] talk about it. But I have to do that. And I think what would be so helpful is honestly, to journal those...those types of loneliness in my journal and just write down a memory so when I start to feel that way, I can reflect back on the Lord's faithfulness and what He...the emotion that He delivered me from and reminded me that is not a fact, you know. Just cause I feel it, doesn't mean it true. But it's true for me right now. And loneliness is something that I've had to go like just...just pure surrender to, *Lord, I am lonely in this area of my life. Where are You? You know. I'm lonely in this area, this area, this area. I feel this way. Will You speak truth or give me a memory? Give me...give me something to hold onto that gives me hope, that will deliver me from these thoughts in my head that do want to spiral.* And I know that my...the way my brain is wired, it will spiral. Like I don't interrupt it with being like well I'll just be productive. No, I like just let it. I like get on. The...I'm like let's go on the road, you guys.

Elisa: Off you go, yeah.

Eryn: So because I know that about myself, it's so important for me to disrupt my thoughts with what He has done.

[musical interlude]



Elisa: And when we come back, Eryn, we'll share our own moments of feeling lonely and examples about how different types of loneliness can affect us at the same time. That and more is up next on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Loneliness is a struggle for so many people, especially during a global pandemic that has forced us into isolation. But the truth is, we are never really alone. God has made a promise to be with us. In Elisa's new book, *You Are Not Alone*, she shares reminders about God's person, His plan, presence, provision, promise, and purpose. My prayer is that, as you read this, it speaks to your heart and helps you see that you are not alone. Go to store.ourdailybread.org/notalone to get your copy. That's store.ourdailybread.org/notalone. Now, back to the show.

Elisa: So let's transition. We've talked about all these kinds of loneliness. And I...I'm suggesting that it makes a lot of sense to figure out, you know, maybe the one or two or three that are really, really present right now and focus in on those. I would love to spend a few minutes talking about ways that we have learned to become unlonely, if you will. You know, what's helped us? What helps us? I mean the pain of alone is a real thing that's going to live with us from beginning to the end, because that's part of our human condition. And emotions are part of the pain of alone. And we've talked many times about feelings and...and how they're okay. They're signals to help us understand what's going on inside, you know, just like on a dashboard. They're like an indicator that you know we're too hot, we're too cold. Something's going on. And we need to pay attention to them. But...but how...what's worked for you, Eryn, to help you move from lonely to unlonely?

Eryn: Okay, when I have been alone, there will be this little quiet lie that will disrupt my contentment on being alone, and [inaudible].

Elisa: Can we call it a hiss?

Eryn: Hiss. And it will say to me like instead of enjoying a Friday night by myself and cooking dinner and maybe doing some oil painting or a puzzle or reading a book or watching one of my favorite shows or a movie that I've been wanting to see, instead of just like being so content in that, this little hiss comes in. And it reminds me that I could be doing this with somebody. Or why didn't I get invited to that thing?

Elisa: Ooh, there you go.

Eryn: And so it's me acknowledging to go from unlonely, to...to me it's like fighting the...the lie that I can actually be content and be alone and be happy.



Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: So I think about finding contentment in being alone and seeing being alone as a gift which I know that might be painful for someone to hear. Like being alone is a gift. But I...I think it can be a gift.

Elisa: I think especially when you silence that hiss, you know, that you weren't invited. That's such a great illustration. There's something wrong with you that you're not in a relationship. You're wasting your life because you don't yet have children. You're...you're not important because you're sitting at home.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: All those lies that just attack us when we're alone, yeah.

Eryn: They want to get after me. And I think me identifying that this is something that is trying to create division, create division in my friendships, those thoughts will make you become more isolated.

Elisa: Yeah, we start competing, don't we? Yeah, comparing ourselves.

Eryn: Yeah, oh absolutely.

Elisa: Yeah, okay, so that's super honest. So that really is recognizing where you're lonely and also paying attention to the lies and what they tell you about why you're lonely. Okay, what else? What else?

Eryn: Ooh okay, let me think. Let me think. There's a quote that I read in a book. And one of the chapters was specifically on lonely. And it says, "Sometimes we learn in loneliness to put our sword and our shield down and cry our guts out about the battles we've waged and lost, dreams and hopes not fulfilled, friends missed, intimacies not honored, opportunities not taken, and struggles with God not seen through."

Elisa: Wow. That's powerful.

Eryn: And, so when I read that quote, I think another thing that we can do is lament, lament our loneliness. Let...let us grieve it.

Elisa: Feel it.



Eryn: Feel it.

Elisa: Because when we feel it, when we recognize it, Eryn, paying attention to it and...and I think in what you just read and what you're saying is that we're acknowledging our need. And when we acknowledge I'm lonely, that's acknowledging the whole that God exists and desires to meet in companionship with us.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: So, and I don't want us just to be all super-spiritualize this, because loneliness is so absolutely real. But the way out of loneliness, the way from lonely to unlonely, you know, at the core is connecting to God. It's recognizing that I'm separate somehow because of the pain of alone in our world, and I don't want to be. And so back to how we started our conversation, you know, you are not alone. There is this recognition of it. I feel alone, but I'm not alone. So God, I invite You into my alone as my permanent partner in life. And you know that's...that's so easy to do. I mean it's just a simple cry. *God, I lament. I...I...I'm alone and I want You, and I need You. And please come and live in my life with me. Please be my partner through my days and nights.*

Eryn: Exactly.

Elisa: And I think other really practical things about unlonely is life really isn't all...all...all about us. You know when I acknowledge somebody else, I'm going to feel better about me. You know I'm going to feel better if I get involved with other people—if I become a friend to someone else for example, if I reach out and introduce myself at the gathering, if I follow up with a text message after I've introduced myself, if I say let's go to lunch; I'm taking all the risk. I know. But there's a reward that comes back to that. And even if it doesn't come every time, it does eventually come.

Eryn: I love that, cause what you're also saying is that in feeling lonely, we have an opportunity to experience vulnerability by doing something we may not normally do. And that is extending, like being the one that shows up. For me, I'm like my friend's babysitter. Like I'm like I will...I actually like arrange for me to babysit every month, cause I want to pour into this little girl's heart; because she's so similar into the way that I was when I was a little girl. And it help...it just serving my friend who...

Elisa: That's great.

Eryn: ...you know she's...she's on a budget. She can't...I mean I'll just show up. And I enjoy it. It's a gift to me as much as I think it's a gift to this sweet little girl and to my friend. And so some of those things like



...serving having helped me to get out of my just constantly thinking to myself that I am lonely. It helps me to get out of this discontentment and recognizing that I have gifts that I can offer to other people that need them. Like they...I actually am needed you know.

Elisa: Yes, you are. Yes, you are.

Eryn: So I think that's...recognizing that you can be that friend that does the phone call instead of waiting for the phone call. You can be that friend that serves or cooks or whatever it may be that you see that you need to fill in the...the space for that person in your life.

Elisa: Notice there's somebody alone.

Eryn: Notice, yes.

Elisa: Yeah, you know, one thing that Evan and I have done is we try to, and we don't always do this perfectly, and I do this by myself too. I try to, when I'm with somebody, really remember to ask questions, lots and lots of questions and not focus on, are they gonna ask me questions? I mean that's another piece because that gets into the nobody knows me, nobody gets me. But if I model that, asking questions and genuinely listening to their answers. And you know the older I get, the harder this is, but trying to remember what they told me so that the next time when I see them, I can follow up. That's just basic friend-making skills. And it makes an enormous difference in our moving to unlonely from lonely, doesn't it?

Eryn: Yeah, it does. I think you can start to recognize what your heart is made of and what your motives are in those times. If I'm continually seeking conversation solely for somebody to ask me questions, I'm still self-seeking. And what I'm desiring is actually intimacy with somebody else.

Elisa: And there's nothing wrong with that, Eryn.

Eryn: Sure, sure.

Elisa: I mean that's a legit need. But when we recognize that, you know, we can't really solve that. We can't make somebody else understand us, somebody else value us, somebody else be present with us, somebody else carry the load, you know, all these kinds of loneliness. We can't make that happen. But we can ask God to make that happen for us and then open our eyes to how we can be Him making it



happen for someone else. And I...my experience is that like a boomerang, it gradually comes back to us, and we receive as well.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: Okay, so actually Eryn, walk me through this. Let's...let's say these things together—these reminders, these affirmations from God about loneliness and the different kinds of loneliness. And we're going to make this available for everybody on the podcast website too, because I just think it's such a powerful reminder. Okay, ready?

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: You are not alone. Are you emotionally lonely? Do you feel like no one really loves you? God says, I will always love you.

Eryn: Are you relationally lonely? Do you feel like no one knows the real you? God says, I know you because I made you.

Elisa: Are you vocationally lonely? Do you feel like your life has no meaning? God says, I know the plans I have for you.

Eryn: Are you spiritually lonely? Do you feel alone? God says, I will be with you.

Elisa: Do you feel physically lonely? Are you tired of doing everything on your own? God says, I will provide for you.

Eryn: Are you situationally lonely? Do you feel rejected, not wanted, excluded, or cut off? God says, I will use all things for your good in My purposes.

Elisa: God offers His promise, His perception, His purpose, His presence, His provision, His perspective. You are not alone.

Eryn: Before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but they also contain links to connect with Elisa and me on social and a link for Elisa's new book



You Are Not Alone: Six Affirmations From a Loving God. You can also visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks 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 Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. Today we also want to recognize Luanne, Kathy, and Jodi for their help in creating and promoting the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thanks, y'all.

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