

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

Katie Axelson: Welcome to Have Hope; Will Travel. When we travel, we get to know people who are different than we are. We hear different perspectives, we better understand others' stories. We learn to stand with people instead of just having opinions on issues. I'm your host Katie Axelson. Today I'm here with a new friend, Karis Meier. Karis and I said I met through a podcasting group that we are both a part of. She is the author of "Suffering Redeemed: Finding Strength to Endure, Purpose in Pain, and Hope for Tomorrow." Karis and her husband live in northern Virginia with their kids. Karis, welcome to the show!

Karis: Thank you!

KA: Do you want to share a little bit about the brief version of your story to get us started?

KM: Sure! So I guess I'll start with my younger years. My parents are missionaries so we moved around a lot. I was born in Chicago but my parents were kind of back and forth from overseas. So we were in the Philippines for a while and Singapore, a little later on I lived in Costa Rica for a year. But - and then in between was in Minnesota, kind of our home base was Minnesota. So yeah just kind of a lot of different experiences. In Singapore we went to a British school where there was, was like over sixty different nationalities within the school. Which was just amazing. I just, I absolutely loved it as a child and thought you know, I just thought that that's how the world was. Like everyone was together and it was just very accepting atmosphere, because everyone was different and that was good. So then moving back to Minnesota where it was quite different was definitely challenging for me in just different ways. But yes I went to high school in Minnesota and also college, graduated with a degree in Christian Education and taught for a year, but realized teaching wasn't really my thing. I actually, I really wanted to do counseling but thought, at the time, felt like it was too much school. So I decided to not do that but then later on I ended up pursuing that. So anyways, my last year of college I met my husband, now-husband who is a friend of my sister. And he was in the military, so we got married in 2006 and he was stationed in Alaska, so I moved up to Alaska with him.

KA: Just go from cold to colder, right?

KM: I know! [Karis laughs.] I didn't think I could get worse than Minnesota but -

KA: From the Philippines to Minnesota to Alaska. [Karis laughs.] Oh my goodness!

KM: And dark!

KA: And dark!

KM: Add the darkness on top of it. That was probably more challenging than the cold for me.

KA: I bet, yeah!

KM: But yeah it was another experience. Shortly after we got married, my husband got called to Iraq and so he was deployed for fifteen months.

KA: Wow.

KM: And during that time I started getting quite ill and couldn't recover, didn't know what was going on for several months. I lost a lot of weight and just had a lot of different complication symptoms. And finally figured out that I had picked up some different parasites while I was in Pakistan six months earlier visiting my sister who is a missionary there. So, yeah, I had to go through several different treatments. It was kind of a rare - well there was a few different parasites that I had quite, they were quite rare and hard to treat. So yeah so it was several months of treatments and then from that I just - I never really recovered from that. I didn't... the doctors were like, "Well the parasites aren't there anymore," but the kind that I had can get into your organs and do damage, and so I had - yeah, from then on I just - I had been very athletic, and very active, played soccer, track, you know. So twenty-five years old, all of a sudden being in a body that just did not function well was really hard.

KA: Yeah.

KM: Also just having not really any answers from the doctors. But, but we just - I had a solid relationship with the Lord at that time, which I am so thankful for because that really - even from the beginning of this journey with chronic illness that I've lived, it was God that I went to. And not to say that it was easy, because I struggled a lot with questions and wondering why. Anyways I'm kind of getting ahead of myself, but it's - so from that point, the doctor said, "Well you're not going to be able to have kids," because of some of the things that had - I won't go into all the details, but basically they said "You're not going to be able to have kids." So I went and got my Masters in counseling, but towards the end of the program I got pregnant! And - which was such a blessing because we really wanted kids and so we had our first son and ended up [Karis laughs lightly.] going back to Malaysia to go see some other family and got parasites again.

KA: Oh my gosh.

KM: And - yeah, the cycle got worse and got... anyways had heart problems, kidney problems, pancreas problems. It just kind of went downhill from there. I ended up in the hospital on feeding tubes, in the cardiac unit, and in between all of this you know, I had two more kids. So we had three kids now by miracles, by the grace of God.

KA: Yeah.

KM: We both believe that. But it was, it was - daily life was very challenging. And then - and my husband, you know he's in the military, he travels a lot you know, had another deployment. So just a lot of you know, learning how to live in a weak body, taking care of kids with a husband who's gone a lot and learning how to do that by the strength of God is really, is really what my journey has been all about. And trusting Him with the unknowns and the unanswered prayers and things getting worse instead of better. You know, when you pray for something and it seems that God is not, not that He's not even listening but that things are getting worse and I know that's not the truth, because He - He's always listening to us, He's cares about us so much. But when we look at the circumstances of our life sometimes it appears that way. So in two thousand let's see - I had my third in 2016, so 2017 I started having kind of a new condition where I - my legs and my arms went completely numb and I couldn't feel anything. I couldn't walk, I couldn't - basically I was really weak. So I had to go back in the hospital and again, they were trying to figure out what was causing this, why this is happening. And so they never really

figured out, and later I found out I had Lyme disease but it was just enough, a very deep and dark place of like - it was kind of like where I hit rock bottom, during that year. And it was then that God really started speaking to me that I needed to start writing which was so interesting because I was thinking like, "I don't anything - what am I going to write about?" I felt, I felt so depleted at that point I didn't think I had anything to give other people. But I did. I just started, you know, writing on my computer like, keeping a journal of what God was teaching me, you know struggles that I was having, questions that I was having, and I just devoured the Word of God because I needed it. I need to know what God says about this, I need to know. You know? So a lot of it was working through scripture and asking God questions and waiting, asking why or how. So I started a Facebook group, and then I started a blog and then the beginning of this year I kind of used a lot of content that I had written over the years and put it into a book. So yeah, that's kind of parts of the story.

KA: Sure! Yeah, yeah the summary that brings us to where we are now. Can you help us understand what life is like with chronic illness?

KM: So I think, you know it's interesting because a lot of people, you know when - when there's - when somebody is sick or there's a crisis or even a diagnosis, it seems like people are quick to want to help, you know? And be there, and support. And I think with something that's chronic it can become tiresome both for the person who has it but also the people who supporting. Because it's like, it's hard. It's straining. It's a very - it's draining and straining circumstance. And so it's - I think it can be isolating because, especially for me, for someone who is very aware of not wanting to be a burden to other people and not wanting to come across as complaining, especially in the beginning years, I didn't talk about it at all. I didn't want to share with someone because I didn't want them to feel like they had to feel sorry for me or that I was complaining, because I would often compare my suffering, I'm like "Well there are people around the world who are suffering so much more than I am!" So who am I to complain about this? Which I know is not necessarily the right mindset to have but that's just kind of the way I was raised, and the kind of circumstances we lived in a lot. I just saw a lot worse things. But yeah, so I think it can be isolating. I think it can become something that the person identifies themselves with, it can become part of their identity. So for me I've really had a struggle with, my identity is not someone who is sick. I have illness but that's not that's not who I am. That's not - that doesn't limit me. I mean in some ways it does in what I can do, but not the core of my being, which I think people who have certain diagnosis, it can become a part of them. And it's hard to kind of detach that and live, and live certain things because you feel imprisoned by that.

KA: Sure.

KM: Which I've definitely felt myself. Yeah I think, I think it's just, oftentimes I feel like I have so many ideas and things that I want to do and I just feel trapped in my body. I'm like, I just especially you know, there's some days where it's just like "oh." I get all these plans, like "Oh I could do this," or - I have such a heart too for wanting to serve, serve God and even with the counseling and different things. But I've had to really scale a lot of things back because my body can't handle what most people's can. And so I have to have more rest. I have to - I just have to be really careful about how I sleep, about how I eat, about just - so, it takes a lot more intentionality and it's not, it's just that you wouldn't have to think about I think if you were healthy.

KA: Sure. How does it affect different aspects of your life?

KM: I would say it affects every aspect of my life. I - you know, I think the thing I've been most concerned about over the years is how it affects my children. Because you know, I don't want them to feel – especially my older two who are very sensitive, very in tune with other people – and I've seen them anxious, I've seen them worried about me at different times when I've been in the hospital or when things have gotten bad. And so I just - yeah I worry. Or like, what if, what if they struggle in their faith because they don't see God answering prayers? Things like that, that I just - but on the other hand I've also sees how they have really grown in compassion and loving people and wanting to pray for people who are sick, and really aware of other people's needs, where a lot of kids aren't like that. You know? They're more self-centered. So I can see even though there's a lot of hard things and because of my condition you know, it's limited in what we've been able to do as a family. But I think it's also opened up opportunities that are good. It impacts so many things like, even my relationship with my husband and what we can do. Like we used to enjoy going out for meals but I have such a limited diet because of what I've been through that we can't really go out to eat anymore, which is a small thing but it's just - you know sometimes it's the small things that make it hard. You know when you feel - or like, if I go out to a like, a Christmas party or something, it's amazing how much food is just so much part of our culture, you know? And so just missing out on things like that, which I don't feel like - for me it's not like, "Oh I can't like I miss the food so much," it's just like the social kind of normalcy that it brings to be able to celebrate in that way with someone.

KA: Right.

KM: So that's part of it. But I think just feeling the fatigue and the - it's a constant distraction, I guess is what I would say. So whereas when I'm doing anything, whether it be making a meal or trying to write a blog or something, you know I just think my body and the things that are going on, it's always kind of taking some of the energy, taking some of the concentration that I would want to be pouring into whatever I'm doing fully. And at times it's worse than others. So I've had to learn how to, yeah just how to give myself grace and not push myself and try to surrender to God, and say "Okay God, maybe I'm pushing too hard, and I need to surrender this to You." And so yeah. I'll just share that for now, I guess.

KA: Yeah. So you talked earlier about being able to separate your illness from yourself. Can you tell us a little bit about what that process looks like or any advice that you have for somebody who's walking through an illness or something different like that?

KM: So something that I started doing several years ago when I was really I think I had a lot of shame, I was carrying a lot of shame and guilt because I was sick. And I think it's a Christian especially, because I know God can heal and I've seen Him heal other people. And you know, people – out of probably just trying to help, you know – have asked things like, "Oh are you sure you have enough faith?" or things like that, you know? So I've had to struggle with just feeling like, the condemnation maybe and trying to push that away and the shame of like, "Why is God punishing me?" Which I know, again, it's not the truth but when you're living in something, the truth is hard. It gets conflicted with how, what's going on internally and how you start to feel when something is chronic like that. And so a lot of it is just, for me, was needing to speak the

truth about who God says I am, about kind of replacing that with very intentional of those thoughts start coming up in my mind, about whether that's guilt or shame or you know, thinking less of myself because I can't do this or that or whatever. Or comments people make. You know, not trying to be mean but just because they don't understand basically. You know? So just, a lot of things but I think a lot of it's just being intentional about replacing those thoughts with the truth from God's word. And for me it's been really helpful to write those down and speak them out loud and memorize verses about my identity in to who God says I am. I think it's just something that has to be repeated constantly, because there's always negative thoughts, there's always - I mean there's always going to be lies that are coming at us, coming up that we have to fight. No matter who you are, different areas of your life that, that become hard to resist when it's a cycle.

KA: Yeah. For sure. How has it affected your relationship with God?

KM: That's a good, that's a good question. I remember reading back and I'm someone who like enjoys writing. I keep journals and kind of writing out prayers and what God's teaching me but I remember looking back at some of my journals from before I got sick and just like my early twenties. And I had such a - a sweet, innocent kind of relationship with God. I think it was just very easy for me to just, I don't know. I think of it as the kind of the early romance in a relationship. I was just so sweet, you know? I just enjoyed God's presence, like it was He was so loving and just easy for me to accept all His promises and - but I think I think the struggle that I've had to go through in this process has really matured my relationship with God. And I've learned a deeper dependence definitely. I think - I don't think it's comfortable because sometimes it feels like the desperation that I have for God or for the Word is - is too - it's like, out of my control, you know? Because I-I would like to feel more in control myself, but I think it's brought me to a level of deeper surrender and letting go and also of humility, of really recognizing that He is God and I don't - there's so many things that I see, you know, in His word that don't necessarily match up right now in my life. But that doesn't mean it's not true. And so I'm going to keep believing what God says and what His word says, even if I haven't experienced the fullness of that yet. And I think that just - it takes, it takes you know the daily dying to self to get to a place where you can say "Okay God, this is really hard but You're still good. I'm going to say You're still good, even though this does not feel good." And so yeah, it's - I would say it's definitely been good, but it's also definitely been very challenging.

KA: Sure. I can see how it'd be really challenging because of what you're reading and what you're experiencing are feeling like two different things. And figuring out: okay God is good but my circumstances sure aren't good and I'm trying to reconcile those together. And then we as Christians - as good intentioned as we are - sometimes things just don't come across the way that we mean them to. So let's talk about things that are intended to be supportive, and actually aren't. And then we'll flip it and talk about things that are supportive but there's kind of a bigger need for them.

KM: Yeah. That is such a great question. I'm so glad you asked that. In my book actually, the last chapter is called For the Loved Ones because I've had a lot of people over the years ask me, "Write something for people who are trying to support!" because I often wrote, you know, for people who are suffering but there's a lot of people who are like, "I want to know how to support someone who is suffering." And it's something my husband has asked me a lot too, has

struggled with, because he's like, "I don't know how to help you!" You know? So I think... what I've found is there's so many people who really do care and they want to help, but they - for one: they're just uncomfortable. I think a lot of people are uncomfortable with suffering, so if somebody asks like "How are you doing?" And it's like, "Well that's really bad. I'm struggling with..." whatever, whether it's mental health or grief or physical or trauma or whatever. I think a lot of people in my experience too, is just kind of freeze up. And then try to avoid, you know, like change the subject or just kind of tiptoe, don't know what to do. And I think in that moment, that can be very difficult for that person because they feel like, "Oh maybe no one wants to hear," you know? So they kind of shut down. And it feels like they're just trying to - like other people are trying to avoid them. Which is not necessarily true that's just how it comes across. So yeah, I think avoiding the person is probably not a good thing. [Katie and Karis laugh.]

KA: Right?!

KM: And then another thing I think is just making very simple, or trying to offer like very simple, very easy suggestions or answers. Which again, I know in my experience people really want help and they want solutions. They want to offer solutions. So for me personally I've had so many people offer this herbal remedy and this diet and this and this and this, which is not - I'm not saying it's bad. Because sometimes it can really help people and that's not initially a bad thing. But when it's 0 I think that's when the first go-to and then you have, then that can feel kind of - I don't know it feels like they're just trying to throw a solution at you and if it doesn't work then that's too bad. Because me personally, I've tried so many things and you know.

KA: Oh I'm sure.

KM: And I've prayerfully considered it but at the same time it's hard to know, you know? Because some things do help some people and some things don't and it's just something that we have to kind of handle with care. But - and then, just I think making judgments too without knowing the full situation, you know. And I'm not saying just like, "Oh well you're sinning so you're sick!" But people have said that in different words to me. And yeah, I admit I'm a sinner! You know? [Karis laughs.] But I know God doesn't punish us. I mean there are consequences to sin, yes! But I don't believe we get punished, that God doesn't punish us for our sins, you know, I think Jesus did that on the cross. But I think the comments sometimes we can make, especially to someone who's very sensitive and going through something very difficult, can be taken as judgment and it can make someone who already is feeling guilty or shameful, just make it worse, you know, and spiral down into depression. or whatever. So I think on the flip side is just trying to get informed on the person's situation, whatever it is, asking questions. I don't think - unless a person says "I don't want to talk about it," I think trying to ask questions and listening is probably the best place to start. Just simply, just asking follow-up questions, trying to put yourself in that person's shoes to see what it's like, what are they going through, and in that process you will find, probably figure out what their needs are. Maybe they just need someone to be with them, you know, to not feel alone. Maybe it's not even talking, maybe it's just you know spending an hour together watching something or whatever. You know, simple things can make a huge difference when you're struggling. And then - I think even asking, specifically asking the person "How can I help?" It's not always a meal. I mean I know a lot of people are like, if someone dies they throw all these meals at them which again is not a bad thing! But maybe there's other

things that would be more helpful, that - I think when we ask and genuinely follow through, that can speak so much. I mean sometimes it's a practical thing that person needs. And again going back to the listening and providing the empathy, the feeling with the person is probably the biggest thing. And not in a way that is like, "Oh poor you!" you know, like showing them pity. Because that is not what - I don't think anyone wants to be shown pity, at least for me like that's why I didn't tell people because I didn't want people to feel sorry for me. But in a way that's more of an arm of support, like "I'm going to be here with you no matter what."

KA: For sure, for sure. Thank you for sharing that because I know that it's hard, right? To be able to be like, "I know that somebody's trying to help but it's really not helpful. It's making it worse." So thank you for being willing to say, "Hey this is actually not helpful," and then being able to offer some "This would actually be helpful," ideas too. So we talked about how like, God does not punish us for our sins, Jesus has already paid for that. But still there is suffering. Do you think there's a purpose in that suffering or that suffering is redeemable? What are your thoughts?

KM: It's something that I have really really struggled with. I think I - I've looked a lot at suffering. I've studied suffering a lot in the Bible. And I used to think if I was suffering for something that was, you know if I was being persecuted for my faith and suffering because of it, that would be worth it. That would be purposeful, it would be obvious, it would - I mean Jesus even says we will be persecuted for our faith. So - but you know, the more I studied it and the more I was living through it, I do believe that God will not waste any of our suffering when we are living, when we are offering to Him and living in a path of obedience to Jesus, that our lives - He's not going to waste any of what we go through. I think - I do believe He will redeem every aspect of it. And again, I don't know how that's going to play out and how that's going to look. For me personally I have seen, I've definitely seen some of the fruit of suffering, both personally in my own sanctification, in my family, also in the outreach of reaching out to other people who are suffering, and in being able to share the gospel with other people. Just because it comes up, because people ask, and then I'm able to share. So yeah. I used to think like "Oh, I want a testimony of healing so I can tell everyone, like how Jesus healed me!" Which is great. A lot of people have those testimonies and God uses that. But He also uses testimonies of people who are suffering and continue to follow Him when when we don't get healing. Because a lot of people turn away, because God is not who they think He should be in their lives, when He doesn't do what they think. They just can't - they just can't put together the evil in the world with a good God.

KA: Yeah, Sure.

KM: But I do think yes, I believe that there are purposes and even gifts. I have a chapter towards the end of my book about the gifts, the unexpected gifts that we can sometimes miss unless we are looking for them, unless we are willing to look past. Because I think sometimes when we're suffering we're so focused on the one thing or things that we're missing or we want, it's easy to forget the hugeness of the other blessings that God has given us. Not just physical, but eternal which is much huger than you know, the physical and long-lasting.

KA: Yeah. So tell us about your book. I know you've studied suffering a lot and now you've

written a book called *Suffering Redeemed*. Tell us a little bit about what prompted you to write it and what's it about?

KM: As I shared a little bit earlier, I- [Karis laughs.] It was actually in the middle of the night one night and I just felt like God was telling me to start writing. And after a few weeks I did. So it was really I felt like it was a prompting to write. And at that point I didn't really know what it was going to be. I did use some of the content in a Facebook group I started called *Suffering Well* and a blog, but a lot of it was just questions that I had, working through moments of despair, of questioning my faith even. Like, just very deep things that were going on internally that a lot of times God would speak very clearly through the Word, give me a series of things and I would just start writing. And a lot too was just things that were going on in my life, like I would see situations that I think God was just working through that I was able to write some more like, personal stories. A lot of it was just my own personal struggle, struggling and processing. And then at the beginning of this year, I yeah - I was just was like well I had almost a hundred pages that I had written and I was like, "I could write a book." And so just started a process of learning how to do that basically, putting it together and it was it was - I enjoyed it. It was a lot of work, but yeah. So I cover some of it, there's some personal stories but a lot of it is just a lot of the things. It's not, it's not only for chronic illness. It's kind of a very broad book on suffering and so I talk about like the intimacy with God that comes through suffering, living in this in-between, the already/not yet of God's kingdom, it talks some about that, talks about the purposes of suffering, learning how to suffer well. Like, so how do we, when we're struggling with something for a long term, how do we do that in a way that pleases God so we can live fully, even when our lives aren't what we want them to be. And so yeah. There's just a lot of different things that I cover in it, but that's kind of... So it launched at the end of October.

KA: End of October. So where can we find it?

KM: So it's on Amazon right now, so it's - yeah, there's the Kindle still at ninety-nine cents and the paperback and then my website is KarisMeier.com and you can also go there, you know, see my blog, there's information on the book, and some other things on there too.

KA: Wonderful. We'll make sure to link to that in the show notes as well.

KM: Yeah.

KA: What advice do you have for those who are suffering or struggling with hope?

KM: I think one of the biggest things is to remember the bigger picture that we live in, for all of us, especially people who are in suffering it can become a very tunnel-vision type thing where it's easy to get self-focused. And, and it takes a lot of needing to look back to God, to keep our eyes on Jesus. There's actually a - something I read this morning was in from Psalm 16:8. It says, "I keep my eyes always on the Lord. With him at my right hand I will not be shaken." And I was just thinking about what a good verse that is, like we have to always keep our eyes on the Lord and it's only by keeping our eyes on Him that we won't be shaken. Because there's so many things in this life that are going to shake us. So I think that's one of the biggest things is to remember God's greater plan and purpose and that we, our stories, each of our stories is going to fit into that in His perfect way. But we're not going to know the whys a lot, we're not going to know. His ways are so much higher than ours and we just might not know the answers. And so

that's I think part of it. And then also just, the importance of standing on the promises that God has given us in His word and believing them and declaring them, even when - like for me a lot of times I'm like, "I don't feel this. I don't necessarily see this. But this is what God's word says, so I'm going to keep saying it." You know? I'm going to keep - and I think it's such a life-giving thing when we're able to dwell upon those things, because whatever we're thinking about, whatever we're dwelling on, that's what's going to come out of us. That's gonna - our minds, our brains are such powerful part of who we are. And our whole bodies kind of follow that lead, so I think just learning how to keep the focus of our mind in the place that is like Philippians 4:8 says, you know on all the good things, not on all the negative things.

KA: Oh I wish it were easy! [Katie and Karis laugh.]

KM: I know right!

KA: Wish it was one of those, "Oh oh, look! Done! Mastered it!" [Karis laughs.] What have I not asked you that you want to share about?

KM: There is times I think through my struggle where it has gotten so hard, where I felt like I wanted to turn away from God. You know? And I - because I'm like, "Well I've tried it, God. You're not answering, You're not there." But I just think about, you know in John, I think where - I think it's John 6 where the disciples, Jesus is asking the disciples like, "Well are you going to turn away?" Because it's a hard teaching about the communion and they're like, "Jesus where else would we go? There's nowhere else to go." And I feel like that too because there really is no other - I mean, God is really the only foundation that is going to be rock solid and that we can always turn to and He's going to be faithful. And I have learned through the Psalms really how to pour out my heart to God, how to relate to Him in a way that is real and that I really have learned how to find intimacy. I think in the beginning of the struggle, I was afraid, so afraid to dishonor Him or to say the wrong thing that I didn't really share very honestly even though it sounds funny, 'cause I know God knows everything anyways. But it's - He just wants us to pour out our hearts to Him. He wants us to come to Him first. He wants us to be real with Him and there's such beauty in that. And so, just don't - don't lose, don't miss that opportunity to find comfort in God in those moments.

KA: That's good, that's really good. What do you wish everyone knew?

KM: I love - I love the verse - I forget where it is - but it says, "God is for you." I think it's in the Psalms but anyways, just to remember that God is - is for you. That God is for us, and in Jesus, like we already have the victory. And so, you know, there's always hope. There's always - even on the days where I have felt hopeless - at the end of the day, I remember, you know, and I come back to His mercies are new every morning. So just like this continual patience and kindness of God that keeps pursuing us. And that we're - yeah, just that He won't stop as long as we are willing to keep going back to Him.

KA: That's so good. Karis, would you be willing to pray for us?

KM: Yes I would love to. So Father God, we thank You. We thank You that You are a God who is so passionate about loving us, loving us as Your children. And each person who is listening here God, You know their situation. God You know every detail of their lives, of their lives and

everything they have been through. And so God, I just pray for each one of them God. God, that You will speak to them in the way that they need to hear from You today. I thank You for Your word, I thank You God that You are so faithful. I thank You that You are so good and I pray, Lord that we will continue to see Your goodness in the land of the living, as it says in Psalm 27, Lord, that "I believe I will see the goodness of God in the land of the living," so be strong and take heart and believe that God will do it. So, God we just - I just speak that over each person, God that You will increase their faith, increase their belief, and God that we could see You and keep our eyes fixed on You, who's the Author and Finisher of each of our stories. In Jesus' name, amen.

KA: Amen. Thank you so much. I love getting to see people's intimacy with God when they're willing to pray out loud.

KM: [Karis laughs.] Thank you!

KA: Absolutely. So I have one final question for you.

KM: Okay!

KA: So here on the show we are always learning new things. That's part of hearing somebody else's perspective, is learning something that we didn't know before. And I would love to hear what's something you've learned recently?

KM: Hmmm. So I have been doing a lot of research on like, the brain and neuroscience because there's just been so much - well there's been a lot of studies on it recently. And - which I just find fascinating! - but there's, there's some, there's a lot of science that shows how the brain impacts so many different aspects of our bodies basically. And one of the things that I learned in one of the studies is that, let's see, anxiety and gratitude or like, thanksgiving cannot coexist in the brain. So the word that I had chose for this past year was "gratitude," just trying to practice gratitude. And I just, so I think it's just so cool that God you know, He tells us to be thankful always and to pray continually and to not be anxious, but that He created us to have brains that when we are practicing gratitude, when we are giving thanks, that we can't be anxious at the same time. And so, I don't know. That just gave me more inspiration to do it more because it takes care of the anxiety then.

KA: Right. I wonder how much of that is the opposite. I'm hearing this for the first time so I'm just processing as I learn it. Like, if you are anxious, not that it's impossible but like that it's really really hard to be grateful, or to think - just to think from my own processing is why when people are like "Just be grateful and list your way out of it!" or like, "Be thankful your way out of whatever mental illness you're walking through," like that's not going to solve it!

KM: No! [Karis laughs.]

KA: Like scientifically: not going to solve it! [Karis laughs.] It may help if you can, but it's not - that's not the fix.

KM: No, yeah.

KA: Yeah. Awesome. Well Karis, so thank you so much for your time today, for your willingness

to share your story and your perspective, to educate us on what's actually helpful and what's not at all helpful, and to help us understand a little more about what your life looks like on a daily basis.

KM: Yeah! Thank you so much for having me, Katie!

KA: Absolutely!

[Theme music: upbeat electronica plays in the background as Katie speaks.]

KA: As always: a big thanks for listening. Be sure to connect with Karis at KarisMeier.com. I would love to connect with you as well, you can find me at KatieAxelson.com. I've got some resources for you there on how to have better conversations with the people in your everyday world. Use what you've learned on the show, and learn something new about somebody else you already know. For another story of strength and hope, check out Episode {78} where Ana Maria Tromp shares her story about a dysfunctional upbringing and how she has grown to overcome perfectionism and become an empowerment coach. My friend, know that you too are an overcomer! I don't know what your story has brought you - I mean, maybe I do, maybe we've talked about it, but maybe we haven't! And I know that you are an overcomer and that you are stronger than you think you are. You are valued, you are seen, you are known, you are blessed. We'll see you again soon. Love you friend, bye!

[Katie stops speaking and the theme music: upbeat electronica ends.]