

[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, and we better understand others' stories. We learn to stand with people more than having opinions on issues. Be sure to hit subscribe so you can catch the episode every other Monday. I'm your host Katie Axelson. February is American Heart Month with author Lori Ann Wood. Lori Ann is the author of "Divine Detour: The Path You'd Never Choose Can Lead to the Faith You've Always Wanted," and "When You Can't Talk To God: Five Prayers and Promises You Can Lean On." She's also a heart failure survivor. Lori Ann, welcome to the show!

Lori Ann Wood: Thank you Katie. It's so, such a blessing for me to be here.

KA: Yeah I'm so excited to have you here. I'm so excited to hear a little bit more of your story. I know we've chatted a little bit. But I would love to hear your story from your perspective of what brought us to this place.

LAW: Well first of all I think this podcast and the theme that you have going on is perfect, because it - I felt like I was on a journey. I think we all do, where we're on this journey and then at some point we realize "Oh wait I'm not on the road that I had planned to be on, or wanted to be on." And I call that a "detour" and we'll talk more about that later, but detours - everyone faces them. And mine started, it's been a little bit over seven years ago. I had a medical evaluation for a life insurance policy and they told me I had less than three percent chance of ever developing heart disease.

KA: Wow.

LAW: Because I had such good numbers! My blood pressure was great, I had low cholesterol, all the things. I had no lifestyle risk factors, I had no family history and despite all of that, three weeks after I was told that I had less than three percent chance, I found myself in end-stage heart failure from an unknown cause.

KA: Wow. Wow. That's mind blowing.

LAW: It was - it really was. it was something that I - if I had listed all the things that I was concerned about, healthwise, heart disease would have been at the very bottom.

KA: Sure.

LAW: And in fact the week that I went to my doctor, it was Thanksgiving week and so I went to Convenient Care like we tend to do. And they looked at it, gave me an inhaler. I went home. I wasn't getting any better. Three days later I went back to convenient care, 'cause it was the day before Thanksgiving. I got an antibiotic, it didn't do anything. And then the day after Thanksgiving I went to see my family doctor, and in my mind I'm thinking, "This is probably the flu." A really bad case of the flu. It could be pneumonia, I hadn't had pneumonia before so I didn't know what that felt like. I ended up being direct admitted to Cardiac ICU that day. My doctor took an x-ray, a chest x-ray, and as we were going into the X-ray lab he said, "If we're lucky, this is pneumonia." And I remember thinking that, doesn't sound very lucky to me. So it was - it came out of the blue in some ways, in other ways it was something I probably should

have seen coming. But I spent fourteen days in Cardiac ICU. And my enlarged heart was functioning at the point when I was admitted at just six percent. And I did not have a good prognosis. Later the doctors told me – they don't tell you this at the beginning because they don't want to scare you, I think, which is a blessing – but they didn't really expect me to leave the hospital. And I was just at a point where they really couldn't do anything, and I was flown to the Cleveland Clinic. And the Cleveland Clinic, a lot of people know is the top heart hospital in the nation if not the world. And I immediately became the patient of the head of transplant in the Cardiology Department there. She was my doctor and she still is my doctor and I - she's now told me that I was her most critical patient for the first year and a half that she treated me.

KA: Wow.

LAW: And that my heart was the largest heart she had ever seen. Which was just something - because I didn't really feel that bad. I have to be honest with you, I did not feel like I was in that bad of shape. But I ended up wearing - they gave me an external defibrillator, it's called a life vest and it's that you wear on your chest and then there's a camera light, camera looking device that you wear around your neck and I wore that for nine months.

KA: Okay.

LAW: And they put me on some really high-powered medication.

KA: Yep.

LAW: And then eventually I wasn't getting any better so they - I have now implanted an internal defibrillator and pacemaker that's designed for heart failure. And I spent sixteen months from the day that I was diagnosed until I ever got any improvement, just sort of in this silent period and kind of in limbo. People were praying for me around the clock, but I wasn't getting any better. And the funny thing is, sixteen months to the day from when I was first diagnosed I came down with appendicitis and that was like, "Oh no, not this now!"

KA: Here we are!

LAW: Yeah. [Lori Ann laughs.] And nobody would do the surgery because my heart was so weak. And so they took another echocardiogram to see where my heart was in function, and my heart function was normal.

KA: Wow.

LAW: And it was not expected, it came out of nowhere and I thought that was the end of my story. I thought, "Oh I went on this little detour. I'm back on the main road now. Mine is a story of divine healing and answered prayer I get it." And then three years ago, my heart function dropped and I was in active heart failure again.

KA: So you're a two-time heart failure survivor?

LAW: I'm learning a little bit more about heart failure, the longer I have it I's really a chronic progressive disease so a lot of people deal with chronic illness in different forms, and for the heart failure that I have, medical science can manage the symptoms using things like medication, devices like I have, and lifestyle changes. So for most people, the symptoms can be

managed in a way that they can continue to function at a pretty high level or at some level. But – and for some people, they can slow down the progression – but ultimately it only goes in one direction. And so what I'm learning is as you're on that downward - if you think of a line graph and you're on that downward slope, as you go along that, you can have some spikes and go up, but in general the direction is still down. And so that's kind of where we're at.

KA: Yeah, wow. How is this affected your faith?

LAW: This has been a very, I would say, challenging period of time for me, but it's also been the period of greatest growth that I've had in my faith. I mean, I've been - you know I've believed in God for as long as I can remember. I grew up in a home where I knew about God and I was - we went to church, my family was, we're all believers. But I didn't really grasp hold of a need for Him until this happened and I found a lot of questions in it. Because I just ran up against some things that I couldn't reconcile with what I thought I knew.

KA: So what did you do with those questions?

LAW: Well I - it's funny, because I'm sort of an unlikely writer. I was not trained to be a writer. I have a master's degree in tax. [Katie and Lori Ann laugh] So I am not trained in this, but I always kind of knew that there was this tug at me to write, but I was always busy with doing the everyday things that I needed to do and I never took - listened to it. But I when we were in the throes of this early on my husband urged me to keep a journal and I resisted very strongly from that. Because I didn't want to relive it.

KA: Sure.

LAW: I kind of wanted it to go away.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And I remember my friend dropping off a journal at my hospital room, and she probably meant for me to be writing who do I need to write thank you notes to? Or, what are some of the things I need to remember to do once I get home? It's really for lists. But I started writing in there and it first it was just really angsty, almost mean things to God, and to the way things were going and... eventually I started keeping this journal on a regular basis. And it kind of felt good to just get it out. I really never expected to read it again. I never expected to open it again. And I started to blog and I found that for a lot of people the stories that I was telling, although they weren't on the same exact journey I was on, they were on sort of a parallel journey in their own life.

KA: Oh, interesting.

LAW: You know, being disappointed with God.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: Being disappointed with our life. And so then I started writing articles and then I started working on this book that's coming out. And the funny thing is once I was writing, I stood back and I looked at all that I had written over these, maybe four years, since I had started. And everything I was writing was falling into these three buckets interestingly.

KA: Interesting.

LAW: And so what I - yeah! It was very - it wasn't something when I started writing I thought "I'm going to write one of these three things," but when I looked at it and I put them all on sticky notes and covered a wall in my house with them and moved them around and thought, "There's really just three questions I'm asking. It looks like I'm asking a million questions, but I'm really just asking three."

KA: And where were those three questions?

LAW: They were strangely parallel to the questions, you know, we talk about when Jesus went into the desert right before he started His public ministry that He had three temptations. And that's what we call them, but if you think about what a temptation is, it's really something that you're questioning in your mind.

KA: Sure.

LAW: When you face a temptation you're saying, "Is this worth it? Should I do this? Is that a better plan? Is that a better way?" And so that's what I was doing. I was wrestling with the same three questions that Jesus faced when He was in the desert. And in Matthew 4 is one of the accounts and the first question, the first temptation that Jesus faced is the enemy says, "Tell these stones to become bread." And a very hungry Jesus had to weigh whether His immediate physical needs and His survival were the most important things to Him at that point.

KA: Oh sure.

LAW: And I think when we're on a detour and we think about getting detoured into a desert or any place we don't want to be, one of the first questions that we start to ask is, "Is our immediate concern - should that be the ultimate concern for my day?"

KA: Oh yeah.

LAW: Is what I have to do today the most important thing or should I have a longer-term vision? So that first question, I call it the question of worry. And the question of worry is: is this life all there is? Because you know, if this life is all there is then just go ahead and eat that bread. Live for the moment. Worry about yourself. And that was something that I wrestled with multiple times, again and again and again. I wanted to know if there was something more important that I could do because I knew this was a life-limiting illness. And should I be doing something better with my time than putting out all these daily fires? I still had kids at home. Life was still relatively normal outside of what was going on with my health. I just wanted to know, and I asked questions of - questions about loss and uncertainty and fear and regret. And that was the first question that I found that people ask when they get on this detour in life.

KA: So the first one was about worry. What's the second one?

LAW: The second one was when, just like when Jesus was in the desert He was tempted a second time. And there the enemy said, basically, he said "Throw yourself down and the angels will protect you." So in other words just go ahead and jump and I bet you won't get hurt. The angels won't let your head strike against a stone. And what Jesus had to be hearing, and what I

think we hear is that, "You're God's favorite. God loves you. He would not let you suffer like that." So we run up to this question of doubt. And that question of doubt is: is God always good? If He loves me, why isn't He keeping me from harm and pain and disappointment? And so I wrestled with things like His protection, vulnerability, idols, resilience. And I think that's pretty common for people who find themselves on this path that they don't want to be on. They - a really common question is "Does my current pain that I'm feeling somehow indicate God's level of care for me?" And does this God I - for me especially, following God all of my life, I was like having a re-examine, "Does this God that I loved all my life really love me? And if He does, why doesn't it feel like love?"

KA: Yeah. That's hard. And those are real questions.

LAW: Yes. And it was hard to scratch that all back because you almost feel like you are being disloyal to God when you're doing that, or weak or. And you know, I want to think I've believed in God for all these decades. I should be so strong and asking those questions felt weak at the time.

KA: Have you moved forward from the point that they feel weak, or do they still feel weak?

LAW: You know I have really learned a lot about questions and questioning, because one of the things that happened was that sixteen month period of silence was something that was very hard to deal with. And I think we pull back from God when we feel like He's pulling back from us. And that's what I did. I gave Him, like I said I think I mentioned that I was equating God's goodness with how well my life was going at the time, and how closely my life aligned with my plan.

KA: Sure.

LAW: And that was kind of a sad realization for me. And I had this sort of faith crisis in there where I was like, "I just, I don't know anymore. I feel like I got - maybe sold a bill of goods, and I don't understand why all of this is happening." And so those questions that I started writing in my journal, I didn't realize that they were going to get me to the place that I am now. And those questions really propped up my faith and really gave my faith room to breathe. And I think it wouldn't be as strong as it is now if I hadn't had that opportunity.

KA: Yeah. I think that's so real. Life goes sideways in whatever capacity that looks like and we think, "Oh I must not have heard God. I must be out of His will. I must be away from His plan. I must have been disobedient." I wish - there's an Old Testament policy - er, Old Testament theory that obedience equals blessing and disobedience equals cursing. And I so wish that was true sometimes! Lie, if I'm obedient I should be blessed, right? Wouldn't that be so delightful? But alas, it is not reality.

LAW: That's right. Yes and it's kind of hard to unlearn because we're conditioned that way a little bit, you know as human beings that good things happen when we do good and bad things happen when we don't. And certainly we can mitigate unfavorable consequences by choices but we can't mitigate everything.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: Because this world isn't the way it's supposed to be.

KA: Yeah, no that's so true. So the first two questions were about worry, the second one about doubt. What's the third one?

LAW: The third one was, back to the story of Jesus in the desert. Satan said, "If you'll bow down to me, everything that you see will be yours." And what Jesus had to be thinking through that temptation is "Is there a better plan?" Is this plan - because He fully knew what was ahead of Him. He had to be thinking, "Maybe there's a better plan. Maybe there's a better way. Maybe this guy has a point." And maybe this one was the most difficult for me and it was the question of control. And the question ultimately of control is: is God's plan enough?

KA: Sure.

LAW: Can I leave it at that?

KA: Yeah.

LAW: I think we wrestle with things like disappointment and waiting. Waiting a long time sometimes, and failure - our own human failure and just flat-out trust. And we - we get to that point of control because we feel like we're on a dead-end detour. We were going along fine, we got off on this road, it looks like it's going nowhere. I'm trusting You God, and now you're sort of got me off the path and maybe I was wrong. Maybe I'm reading the wrong GPS. I don't know. But this isn't looking like what I thought it would. And there has to be that leap in there where you say, "I know it doesn't look like what I thought it would but I'm still going to trust the One who sees the entire picture." And that's where I had to get to from that question.

KA: Yeah. That's such a hard thing to get to, to re-surrender because the questions become, "Okay, is God's plan enough?" And even deeper, "Is God enough?" And recognizing that, of course you and I as Christians believe the answer to that is yes, but the reality of that in our lives, sometimes it feels like a no. And so being able to re-surrender to the Lord and offer yourself back to Him and your whole life back to Him is hard! But it's necessary and beautiful.

LAW: Oh yes, absolutely it is. And I think a lot of people give up on that when they're on a detour because a lot of times the detour - as mine was - is very silent time. And we feel like that is God leaving us, He's abandoning us, I had this all wrong. But really that's the time where He's doing the deepest work in our hearts and that's the time when He gets our attention. And you know, one of the things that's really hard though I think for me, when I was in that silent time and I wasn't hearing anything and sometimes I still feel this way from time to time. But I felt like I didn't have the words to say to God, and when I didn't feel like I had the words, I just didn't pray. I just didn't do anything. I was clinging to the fact that I did have a prayer chain going on twenty-four hours a day and hoping that was enough because I couldn't find the words. And what I didn't realize is that it's okay to borrow other people's words.

KA: Oh that's good.

LAW: And it could be the prayer chain that I had. It could also be the Psalms, Lamentations. So many times in the Bible, people are expressing maybe what you're feeling. How long? Why? Where are You?

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And it's right there for us to use and also just reading other people's work. Sometimes it just felt too - the wound was too fresh for me to go directly into the Bible and try to find something. It felt like it was something I wasn't ready for. But I think if we can bridge that gap with other people's words, we can get back to that. If you're, you're in a situation where at that point on your detour where you're in survival mode for your faith, and if you can grasp a lifeline through other people's words, that's an absolute easy call to take that. And that's one of the things I learned about being in that time. Another thing I learned in that silent time that I was really reluctant to do was to lament. And I hadn't ever done that in prayer. I had [Lori Ann laughs.] in my mind, whether I meant to or not, the standard formula I guess. But there are so many advantages and faith strengths to gain from lamenting. And I don't think we do that enough. Because it does feel like we're being disloyal a little bit it. It feels kind of messy. But when we lament, we're saying "This doesn't feel right." You kind of have a foot in both worlds. You're saying, "I believe in You but I'm questioning. I trust You, but I'm in pain." And those times are when you can lament, you're still holding on to your faith, you're still communicating with God and He does not shy away from that. And I can't remember who said it, I remember reading during that time that lament may be the most theologically sound thing we do in faith It's because - if you think about it - when you lament you're saying, first of all you're saying, "I believe You exist. I wouldn't be praying to You if I didn't know You exist." Number one. Number two, you're saying "I believe You're powerful. I believe You can affect a different result. I believe You can change the situation or I wouldn't even be asking."

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And number three, when you're lamenting you're saying "I believe that You love me or I wouldn't be complaining to You. I wouldn't be bringing this up. I wouldn't be coming to You." And so if that's all we ever get out during those hard times, that you know, you believe God exists, You believe He's powerful you believe He loves you: that's a win. And sometimes we have to just learn to lean into those laments like that. That journal that I was keeping, it was - it was not pretty poetry or anything like that that you'd want to see again, but in a form it was lamenting.

KA: Sure. I feel like sometimes we feel like everything has to be beautiful because we love Jesus and our positive attitude has to prevail over everything else. And we forget that lamenting is also scriptural. There's a whole book on it, right? Or, like you mentioned, the Psalms. Like, David had some brutal words for the Lord. Usually the Psalms, the lament Psalms end with words of praise again but I will say personally sometimes I can't get back to those words of praise. Sometimes I just hang out in the lament portion of the psalm and sometimes that's where I need to sit. And I felt bad about this at one point until one of my pastors said to me, "Katie, God's a big boy. He can handle it." And I was like, "Hmm you're right." He's a big boy, He can handle my lament and my anger, and I don't have to force myself to get back to the praise today. Because I know that my life will get back to the praise at some other point.

LAW: Right. And that brings up another point. While you were talking, I was thinking about, you know, God is a God that doesn't want the conversation to end. That's His biggest concern because you know, the opposite of faith isn't doubt or questioning. The opposite of faith is just

indifference. Just walking away. And so even in those times when, you know, we feel kind of disloyal or we feel like we're not being a good Christian by asking these questions. God's ear is still bent towards us and He still is longing to hear from us. And that is what will keep your faith going in those times. So I really think that questions are something, you know when you find yourself on a detour like this, we're gonna to have the questions. And if we just bury 'em and hide 'em and we don't contend with God about 'em, and we don't poke and prod and wrestle and question Him, we're just going to walk away. And it's just going to become a silent, forever silent relationship, and we're just going to move on. So when those hard times happen, if you can lean into the questions, if you can lean in to the hard conversations with God, that's when you grow.

KA: Yeah that's good. So we've talked about leaning on the words of others, leaning on the words of scripture. Still trying to encounter God. What other recommendations do you have when people feel like they can't talk to God?

LAW: Well I think some of the best things that I did when I was in that silent period is, I wrote down some statements that just, what I was feeling. As if it was someone sitting across from me and we were having coffee or on a phone call with a friend. And I just said, "This is how I'm feeling, this is my honest feelings." And the statements I wrote down were, "I feel abandoned by You. I feel like I'm out here all alone." And then I also wrote down, "I don't know why I'm having to go through this. I don't know what the reason is." And then I said, "I can't see the end of this journey. I can't see how this will end in a good way." And sometimes I couldn't even see the next step in the journey. And then the fourth one I wrote down was, "I feel stuck in this holding pattern. And I don't know if I'm ever going to get out." And then the last one was, "I'm not sure I can still trust You." And by writing those down, I was able to - it felt like I was being completely honest with God. This is what I'm feeling. And from there I was able to find the promises in Scripture that addressed those specific things that I was feeling. And from there, I was able to take the scripture and be able to make a prayer. And I wrote it out for each one of those five statements, I wrote out the prayer that I felt like I needed to say to God based on the scripture and based on how I was feeling. And sometimes I would pray those over and over and over again, the same exact prayer. And that's why - and I have a resource on my website that lists all of those five statements that I just made, and the prayers and the scriptural promise. Because I think it may not be the exact same statements that someone else is feeling, but I think it gives a pattern for how you can take what feels like almost ugly words to God and turn them back into His promises. And turn 'em back into communication with Him.

KA: Yeah. That's so good. Tell us about the book. What prompted you to write it? Yeah, what prompted you to write it and what's it about?

LAW: Yes so my book is - it's not primarily about my medical events but it's based on that and that's what prompted it. It's primarily about these three questions that we talked about. And it is a book of essays, it's forty essays because one of the things I - another thing I noticed out there is forty was a reoccurring theme in the Bible. Jesus was in the desert for forty days, and you know that's really God's environment for change in scripture, is forty. It's a challenging time, but it's an environment for change. So there's forty essays where I look at those three life questions. A question of doubt, a question of worry, and a question of control. And then I hope to steer the

reader into handling those questions on their own, and being able to ask the questions and see how I address them throughout those essays

KA: Where can we find the book?

LAW: The book is available at LoriAnnWood.com/Books. There'll be links there to select where you'd like to purchase that from. And there's also some other companion products coming out but the paperback and the hardback are available there.

KA: Awesome. And the book is in pre-order right now so I know there's a bunch of pre-order fun deals for us to take advantage of right now too.

LAW: Yes, yes! So anyone who pre-orders will have access to a lot of really great, useful information. There'll be some downloads, there'll be some special gifts that you'll get, and I think everyone will be excited about that. It'll be something that is helpful I think for people that are on a journey or people who are on a detour and those people that are trying to come alongside people who are on a detour.

KA: Yeah. Oh for sure. So coming alongside people on a detour is a whole different facet that we haven't talked about yet. One of the things that we like to ask here at Have Hope; Will Travel because we like to hear people's stories and people's perspectives that are different than ours. We'd love to know: what is supportive and what is not supportive? Especially when we think about heart failure.

LAW: Right, so heart failure. I think a lot of things fall into this category, is that if someone from the outside is trying to come along another person that has heart failure or pretty much any kind of heart disease, is that it's largely an invisible illness. People can look really normal and not be. And I remember checking in to the hospital and my heart function was six percent. And I've had several people tell me since then, "That's impossible! You can't be alive when your heart's at six percent!" It was bad. And I looked normal. I walked in there. I got dressed that morning and I walked in there.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And so we just need to give people the benefit of the doubt when we don't know what that invisible struggle is. And it might not even be physical. Because people can spend their life trying to justify this illness that they have, and that's a sad place to be. To have to justify to someone that, "No really, I am. I do have this illness." And one of the things that helped me was when I realized that people with invisible illnesses are not pretending to be ill. They're actually pretending to be well.

KA: Wow, yeah.

LAW: And that changes your whole outlook on what's happening with that other person, when you think, "Wow they're carrying a heavy burden," because they are functioning in a world that's pretty much a well, healthy world. And they're having to live in it. And so we need to give people the benefit of the doubt in times like that. And it's something that was a learning point for me too.

KA: Yeah. Oh I bet. I like that mindset shift too, from they're not pretending to be ill, they're

pretending to be well. Because you just look at life a little bit differently when you realize that they look well and they're trying really hard to look well.

LAW: Yes. And it's so hard, disease itself is just so widespread. One of the things that I've been trained at Mayo to be a community educator for WomenHeart which is a national organization supporting women with heart disease. And one of the first things I learned and like, I had to go back to my hotel room and Google it to make sure it was right. But they told us that heart disease kills more people – men and women – than all forms of cancer combined.

KA: Wow.

LAW: Didn't seem possible to me. Because there's a lot of information out there and so much good awareness about so many different forms of cancer. And I think a lot of times we think of heart disease as something that is only for people who don't take care of themselves or are born with a certain defect in their heart. And one of the things that I learned in dealing with it, when it came from nowhere for me is that the only self-exam for heart disease is awareness. We can't do any other self exam but being aware. And that's so important because an earlier diagnosis has a much better outcome. And so, that is something we need to just be aware of and just know your body, know what the early warning signs are, and just act on those.

KA: Sure. So as people listening - as it turns out, we all have hearts. What do you wish everyone knew about heart health?

LAW: Yes. I wish everyone knew that what I did was a bad idea. Which was to make excuses for a lot of things that I - I told you earlier that hurt heart failure sort of snuck up on me. And in a sense it did, the severity of it. But I had subtle warning signs. Looking back now for maybe ten years. And those were things that my family would bring up to me, my children, my husband, and say, "Mom that doesn't seem quite right. Maybe you should go check that out." And I didn't. Because I was ignoring it. I was kind of covering it up and making excuses, being a little bit stubborn. And I have some regret about that because they were things like an inability to exercise. And I just excused it as, I'm out of shape. My husband runs marathons, my kids play high school sports. I'm the odd man out. So that's that's what's going on. I had an extreme difficulty with inclines. Stairs, any kinds of incline walking was extremely hard. And I was exposed to a lot of secondhand smoke as a child so I just told everyone that it was that's what it was without getting it checked out. Shortness of breath, I didn't even really know what that was at the time. But I had that. Weight gain, which is which I found out later was really just water retention. I - when I went to the doctor that first week I stepped on the scale because they always weigh you no matter what you go to the doctor for. I had been sick for a week, had missed Thanksgiving dinner, and had gained weight. And I was very put out about that. [Lori Ann laughs.]

KA: Yeah.

LAW: But when I was in the hospital they drained fourteen pounds of fluid from me.

KA: Wow!

LAW: So weight gain. And again I'm thinking: middle age, I'm getting older. I'm putting on weight. A rapid heart rate, I had that all my life. Fatigue. And maybe the saddest one I had was

constant cough, is also a subtle symptom, especially for women, of heart failure. And again I'm thinking: second hand smoke, I don't know what it is, something with my lungs. And I mentioned these to my children because we didn't know and we still don't know for sure if there might have been something hereditary about this, they're still doing a lot of testing and a lot of studies on this. But I said, "In case it is hereditary, in case there's something that I've passed down to you, be aware of these symptoms." And I got to the last one which was constant cough, and I said, "That seems so weird. I don't think I was doing that." And my kids said, "Mom when we would lose you in a store, that's how we found you. Because we could hear your call."

KA: Oh wow.

LAW: And I had done it for years without, without really paying any attention to it. So that awareness and just having that on the forefront of your mind and just ask about it. I mean best case scenario of the doctor says, "You're a hypochondriac, you're fine." So.

KA: I had a situation like that where I didn't really think it was a concern but I brought it up to my doctor and was like, "Do I really need to be concerned about this," and she gave me an honest answer of, "No but if you have these symptoms, yes." And I thankfully didn't have any of those symptoms. But it actually brought me a lot of peace of mind to be like, okay my doctor is not worried about this. I'm not worried about this, this is what I'll watch for to know if I need to become worried.

LAW: Yes. I think there's so much good information out there, and it's so easy now after the pandemic with - to just type out a question and send it to your doctor. It's not like you have to stop and go in and visit your doctor, it's so much more accessible that I hope that people will take advantage of that no matter in what type of health concern they have. To just ask their doctor about it. and keep that communication line open.

KA: Yeah for sure. So can you tell us a little bit more about detours of life and suggestions on how to handle those?

LAW: Yes! So the detours which is really the basis of my book, I found out as I'm writing this that not only are the stories that I'm using in the essays really a form of everyone's story, which was really surprising to me because people would reach out and say, "That same thing or a version of that that happened exactly to me and that was something only God can orchestrate." But that was done. But the other thing that was so evident was that everyone eventually ends up on a detour. It's not it's not an if, it's a when. Because we – especially in my life – I had, I had things go pretty well. I had made some good decisions, I've had a lot of blessing. And I had not felt like I was on an extreme detour. But these types of things happen at different points in our lives. It might be loss of a child, or divorce, or bankruptcy, or loss of a dream. And it's just gone. And that is where we start to feel like God has abandoned us and that's where that difficulty starts to really root into our faith. Because we're on this path that we don't feel is right. We don't feel we deserved. And what we don't realize though is that that detour becomes the route to a deeper faith.

KA: Sure.

LAW: And you know at some point it hit me that, "What if God has something more for me than this predictable life?" And all of this time I had just been straight down this road and maybe He had something more for me. And - and it turns out He did, because I mentioned that I had always, I had taught college classes in college business classes for about twenty-five years. And doing two and four hour lectures took a lot of energy and after heart failure I couldn't do that. I can't stand up that long, I can't project that long, and that was hard to accept. But what I found was I could sit and write and type on my computer for hours at a time and not get tired. And so I was given an opportunity to do this writing that I would not have taken in a safer, healthier life.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And, and that was something that has been a blessing to me. But again it was a detour. It's a path that I wouldn't have chosen. So, and I've already mentioned a deeper faith that I've got but what makes it hard is when we're on a detour and anytime in life when things aren't going like we want, we want it to make sense in our lifetime. We want the story arc to be complete. And we want to see the result. But God never promised us a resolved life.

KA: Sure.

LAW: We can see the end of a lot of peoples' story in scripture that they probably thought, "This is not how I thought this was going to go." We can think of the apostles, Stephen, John the Baptist. Did their story make sense when they were in the middle of it? Did they see the finished end? No! And we can look back on it and it makes sense now how that had to be part of the story, but we - we're not any less important than those people in scriptures. And yet we think that we should be able to see the finished end and we should be able to make sense of what's going on but it's really like, we feel like we can read one chapter of a book and understand the entire story. And our chapter is just part of this bigger story, this detour that we're on is part of that story that God's been writing since the beginning and sometimes our little piece isn't resolved and sometimes it isn't completed in our lifetime.

KA: Yeah. And that's so good. There's so many people who had no idea. I mean all of scripture is full of people who had no idea how the story was going to play out. Like I think about Ananias who was sent to go meet with Paul, back when Paul was still persecuting and killing people for following Jesus. Ananias was supposed to go essentially, what I'm sure was what he thought was to turn himself in. He had no idea that Paul had met Jesus on the road and had wanted to know more about Jesus himself. Like, they had no idea how that story was going to play out but I'm so glad that Ananias actually went and actually followed the Lord. And so sometimes I think about that in my own life, of like, I don't know how this story is going to go out, play out, but I feel like this is what the Lord is telling me to do. And so this is what I'm going to do. And then I get to trust the Lord with however it turns out. May not be blessings and cursings like we had talked about, it may be a detour. But we can still say like, "I was obedient, I did what the Lord asked me to do. There's going to be some beauty in this story. I probably just can't see it right now."

LAW: Exactly. Yes. And I think we can look at the scripture that we always go to, Romans 8:28, and think that means that in my lifetime I'm going to see how all the ends are tied up and all the little bits come together. And I don't think it says that. [Katie laughs.] So I had to really relearn

that. That I bought into this bigger story arc and I'm trusting the Author of that and I may not understand my part of the story right now, but you know, I get back to - in scripture where it says, "Where else would we go? You have the words of eternal life." So we can either do our detour alone, or we can do it with the One who has the words of eternal life.

KA: Yeah, yeah. No that's good. I love getting to chat with people and getting to hear their stories and I especially love it we're towards the end of the conversation, I just want to go sit and be with Jesus and I want to learn more from the,. Like I look forward to reading your book. If other people are in that same place, where can they connect with you online?

LAW: Yes. My website is LoriAnnWood.com. LoriAnnWood.com/Books is where you can order the book, you can pre-order that. And if you'd like a copy of those five statements that I wrestled through in the silent time when you can't talk to God, I have a free resource *Five Prayers and Promises When You Can't Talk to God*. And that is at LoriAnnWood.com/Hope.

KA: Wonderful. Thank you so much for that.

LAW: Of course, thank you.

KA: Yeah. Lori, would you be willing to pray for us?

LAW: Absolutely. Dear God, thank You so much for what you've given us in this lifetime. Thank you so much for the opportunities. Thank you so much for the - even the detours, Lord. We don't want those, we don't see those coming, and we pray that they don't. And Lord, we know that You are a god of healing. Remind us of that, God. But that God of healing is not always on this side of eternity. But it's always, always in the other side. So Lord we just ask that we are always reminded that You're not afraid of our questions. That You're a God who longs to keep the conversation going with us, and that You're a God who has good plans. And sometimes we don't see those from the detour that we're on, and sometimes we don't see that completed plan in our lifetime Lord, but we want to be a people that trust You with our lives and with our eternity. And we thank You for the promise and for the avenue that you have provided to us through Your Son. And we ask all these things in His name, amen.

KA: Amen! So Lori Ann the show is built so that we are always learning something. We're learning from someone else's perspective, we're learning from someone else's story. But I know that we are all always learning. So I would love to learn: what's something you've learned in the last week or so?

LAW: One of the things that I am wrestling with as I continue to wrestle with this chronic illness that I have, because I recently became a grandmother and have a new grandbaby. And I had all these ideas about, at first before I had a grandchild was about who the parent I wanted to be, the mom I wanted to be. And I had to lay those aside sometimes and that's a hard thing to do. And I've had to adapt my vision for the role that I'm going to have in my granddaughter's life as well. And I think part of surviving a detour - and I've started to wrestle with this more as my granddaughter is approaching her, her first birthday - is that you know sometimes, you just have to lay down what you had expected and what you wanted, and trust that there's a better way coming. And I wrestle with that, and I've had to adapt my traditions and what I wanted to do but

in adapting those, they became even more special. And became even more meaningful. So you know, I talked earlier about the question of control being the hardest one for me.

KA: Yeah.

LAW: And I think that that's true when, if you're like me and that question of control is one that's super hard. Maybe faith doesn't come easy for you, it doesn't come that easy for me. That it is an exercise in giving it a chance. Try letting go and see what happens. It's like falling into your friend's arms, you know in middle school, when they would catch you.

KA: Sure.

LAW: Sometimes you just have to feel that to know that you're going to get caught and it's going to be okay and that you can adapt and move on. And it doesn't have to look like what you thought it would look like.

KA: Yeah. That's so good. Thank you so much for your time today, for trusting us with your story, for encouraging and for challenging us in our faith, and for inviting us to embrace the detours instead of dodging them to avoid them. Thank you for leading us one step closer to Jesus today.

LAW: Thank you for having me, it's been such a fun time.

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

KA: As always: a big thanks for listening. If you enjoyed this episode with Lori Ann, check out Episode {77} where Kelsey shares her story of finding joy in hard times and her experience with having a spinal tumor. Be sure to subscribe so you don't miss future episodes. It would mean a lot to me if you hit that five star and left a review as well. It's how guests know that their stories are safe here. Until next time my friend, I hope that you are having a great week. I hope that you are enjoying life, you are seizing every moment of it, you are learning how to become your own hard circumstances. Know that you are blessed, know that you are loved, know that you are seen, know that you add value to the conversation and know that your story matters. We'll see you again soon. Bye.

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