



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 102 – Loving Bravely with The Teigens

Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy with Rob Teigen and Joanna Teigen

Joanna: God will ask me to do something that feels too hard. It's just too hard, but you take one tiny step of Yes, and all of the help from God just floods in to give you what you need. It wasn't on me to generate courage in my marriage. It was on me to say *With You, I will*. And it was huge, and it changed everything.

[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*.

Eryn: Welcome to *God Hears Her*. I'm Eryn Eddy.

Elisa: And I'm Elisa Morgan. When Jesus was on earth, He handled relationships and people with love. Always. He was able to love them despite their past mistakes or current problems. We know how hard it is to always love first in our relationships. When someone hurts us, we want to run away from them or fight with them. When someone leaves us, we want revenge or answers. What would it look like to love bravely in our relationships despite the past hurts or conflicts?

Eryn: Rob and Joanna Teigen both know what it looks like to love bravely. They have celebrated over 25 years of marriage and are loving life with two sons, three daughters, and a beautiful daughter-in-law. They serve as foster parents, marriage mentors, small-group leaders, and authors that are passionate about helping couples, moms and dads, to experience the power of God in their families.

Elisa: I can't wait for this conversation to unfold on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Welcome, Rob and Joanna, to our show. We're so excited to have you.

Rob: We are so happy to be here. Thank you for ...

Joanna: Yes, so much.

Rob: ...very much.

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Eryn: I want to know first like where did you guys grow up, each individually? Where are yall originally from?

Joanna: Right. Well, I ... actually that's part of our stories that overlap is we're from everywhere!
[Laughter]...

Elisa: You're from everywhere?

Joanna: You lived in Minnesota before I met you, and I lived in Wisconsin before I met him, and we met at school. But both of us were very transient growing up. Our families moved all the time. I mean I've lost count of how many grade schools each of us went to. And so I think that almost helped us understand each other a little bit better.

Elisa: It's almost like a...in a way, a third-culture life...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...I mean I'm not hearing you being ex-pats out of the country, so to speak. Maybe that is part of your journey, but when you move around that transient way, the way you just described, Joanna, you do have a different skill you develop for how to enter a new world repeatedly, so tell us more. And then how did you meet each other?

Rob: Yes, to settle down we had to meet at Bible college. We had to go to Bible college and meet. And so it was funny, cause we were looking at the same two colleges...

Elisa: Mm.

Rob: ...eh... One in Minnesota and one in Chicago, and we both ended up in Chicago.

Joanna: Right. And I think for me what I've always felt is my sense of home isn't so tied to place. And I think when I met Rob, my sense of home was more about being tied to him. So where Rob is, home is. So...

Eryn: Oh, I love that! How old were yall when yall met?

Joanna: Our first date was on my birthday weekend when I turned 19...



Elisa: Mm.

Joanna: ...I was just a baby! [Laughter]

Eryn: Okay, so take us back to that. So were you dating anybody at the time? Were you like on track of dating Jesus?

[Laughter]

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah...

Joanna: Right. Well...

Elisa: ...Yeah.

Joanna: ...I think we both entered Bible college...

Eryn: Yes.

Joanna: ...pretty wary, actually...

Eryn: Okay.

Joanna: I'd had some unhealthy dating relationships, and I was like *Eh*... And I was very new in my faith, too, and I didn't trust myself to make a good decision.

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: That was the... The joke was when we went on our first date, I made it really clear to her, "This isn't a date. Just friends." I know wait...great way to start off. Right? But the...

Joanna: Yeah.

Eryn: Honest!

Rob: ...same thing. The same thing, you know, we...



Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...just kind of in a bad relationship. And I just was I didn't wanna...

Eryn: Oh! Mm-hmm.

Rob: ...think it was going there, but it was pretty clear after the first date.

Joanna: Right.

Elisa: And how long ...

Eryn: Oh!

Elisa: ...after that did you become engaged?

Joanna: It was ten months.

Elisa: Wow!

[speaking simultaneously]

Eryn: Oh wow! You really...

Joanna: Yeah!

Elisa: You moved along.

Eryn: ...did...yeah...

Joanna: Right?

Elisa: I am really...

Eryn: Right.



Elisa: ...struck by the comment that you made a few minutes ago, that you felt like you'd found home. That is a powerful recognition. Did you know immediately that you had found home?

Joanna: You know, I did, and we actually met through mutual friends at a birthday party. And I remember her sitting on the porch, and we were just getting acquainted, but he was leaning toward me with these blue eyes like honed in on me. And I had never had anybody that attentive and that sincerely interested in what I had to say. And I knew right away like *This is a safe person that can receive what I say and feel and everything else.* And it was almost like a voice in my ear where God's like *He is for you!* Because in myself, I attracted the pushy, domineering, controlling, self-serving kind of a guy. That was kind of my bent. And here's...

Elisa: The users, yeah.

Joanna: ...someone who's very sensitive and, yeah, just present.

Rob: I think that's why I leaned into her and listened to her so closely, too. She was going to a previous college, a different college, and was saved. So she ha...was a brand new Christian, and I grew up in a Christian home, and I knew all kind of the right answers. But here to see somebody who was so passionate in a fresh new way about their faith and...and so honest and real. So I just felt like I was kind of staring into her soul when she was talking to me...

Eryn: Oh!

Rob: ...because she just had just a new love for Jesus and a new passion that I hadn't, I guess, seen before.

Elisa: In your own faith, were you hungry for that kind of freshness?

Rob: I think I was, but I didn't know it. At...at the time, I didn't know it. I was just doing kinda what church kids do, you know...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...And I was always a rule follower, so I was always a...a good kid. When I went off to Bible college, it was with that "doing the right thing." I wanted it to be a calling, but at the time I wasn't sure...

Joanna: Yeah.

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Rob: ...that's what it was about. And so here I saw somebody who was just following Jesus, not following the...a rule, or following... but just following Jesus into this new life. And so I was like *I need that*.

Eryn: That's so beautiful, though. I mean there is something to...when you get almost in this routine of faith where you think that *I do all these right things. I check off all these boxes*. But then you encounter somebody that is around your age that is so on fire for the Lord that it does this newness in you. And what I think is really powerful to any woman that's listening is just hearing you, Rob, share how you were so attracted to her passion and fire for the Lord.

Rob: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah, and it was definitely God, cause I think we were so young, and we didn't even know, you know? And of course when we...we got married, we learned a lot the hard way I guess, you know...

Elisa: Sure.

Rob: ...just in...in life. And we ...eh...had our unexpected blessing, our son, you know, earlier than we were expecting. So that brought a whole new...new level of learning into it. But that foundation of that passion for God is what...what kept driving us.

Elisa: And are you both working? Or are you...what are you doing with your time when you're... become pregnant ...

Rob: Yeah, I...

Elisa: ...with a child?

Rob: ...We're still in school...

Elisa: In school?

Rob: ...so I'm still...

Elisa: Wow!

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Rob: ...finishing up...

Joanna: Well, a little sideways in that story is we took a semester off after we got married just to get our bearings...

Eryn: Yeah. Right.

Joanna: ...before we went back to...

Elisa: Yeah.

Joanna: ...school together. And God had made it very, very, very clear to me in that season that I wasn't supposed to go back and that my best work would be in supporting Rob in finishing. But I was so conflicted then with this pressure to please man over God, actually, because I...I'm like, well, I _____ can say I dropped out of school for my boy, and...

Eryn: Right.

Joanna: ...that I kind of blew it. You know?

Elisa: Mm.

Joanna: ...And that pressure to please and have the right appearance won out, and I did get back to school. [laughing] And that did not go well...

Elisa: Mm.

Joanna: Isn't that a surprise?

[Laughter]

Eryn: Tell me about that. I want to know ...

Joanna: Right.

Eryn: ...about that.

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Joanna: Well, we went back, and then we really ... It had to be every man for himself, and we had a financial crisis, and just everything that could've gone wrong seemed to go wrong. And so that semester I got the best grades I ever got, but we were miles apart by the end of that semester. And I remember someone at my job — she didn't even know what she was saying to me. It was just the Holy Spirit in her. "Joanna, if your husband's not your top priority, then something needs to change."

Elisa: Wow.

Joanna: And she didn't even know. And I went home, and I said, "Rob, I'm...I'm quitting school. I want to be here for you. I've failed you in this way and disobeyed the Lord so clearly." And so I made that decision, and it was interesting because it was probably six weeks later we found out we were having our son. And I feel like that was God's mercy, cause I couldn't say, "Well, I had to quit school because we're having a baby." He's like *No, you're quitting school out of obedience to Me.*

Elisa: Mm.

Joanna: *Let's make that real clear.*

Eryn: Yeah.

Joanna: Yeah.

Eryn: Wow!

Elisa: For a woman listening who maybe is in school with her husband, do you think that's kind of an individual thing where God just made it so clear to you...

Joanna: Oh absolutely!

Elisa: ...that you needed to do this? Yeah.

Joanna: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Because this is one of those things that we all wrestle with, is like: *Is there a right way? And, boy, am I messed up if I don't hear it. Oh no!* You know...



Eryn: Oh, right.

Elisa: ...and...and we panic.

Joanna: True.

Elisa: I'm hearing you talk about a very personal...

Joanna: It was personal, and Rob in that whole season, he was nothing but supportive of me.

Elisa: Mm.

Eryn: Aw.

Joanna: ...He saw more potential in me probably than I saw in myself, and only wanted good for me. And he was willing to sacrifice whatever he needed to do to help me achieve...

Elisa: Gorgeous!

Joanna: ...the goals in front of me. But it was in my own heart.

Eryn: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Take us forward into now you're in a marriage, you have one child, then you begin to have more children, I'm guessing. And what kind of work are you doing together? And how's your marriage being shaped? And how does God begin to move you into a unit that has a unique offering?

Rob: Yeah. Well, you know, I think, as Joanna shares her struggle, I started entering into the career world. And that became a drive, too, and so I think that's the challenge – right – in marriage, is that you have your individual struggles and your individual passions. And then you have to bring those together and find that common ground where you can come to the Lord together and seek His face together, but it's very easy to go our...our own way. And so as, you know, she had her seasons of wrestling and laying down that, and I had to have my season. So, for me, I got into the publishing world, and I was traveling a lot and working hard in sales. And, yes, we did keep having more kids. I fe...you know I saw that "be fruitful and multiply." I'm like *There's a command I can...I can obey!* ... [Laughter] ...So we just sort of kept having... So we had ... At this point, we had our son, and then we had a girl and a girl and a girl...



Eryn: Oh!

Rob: Yeah, but I was traveling a lot, and she was doing ... It seemed like a lot of times, like there were points in that where I was traveling fifty percent of the time. And so she was homeschooling some of that time and definitely felt like a single mother a lot of that time.

Elisa: [whispers] I bet, yeah.

Rob: ...And so, even in that, it was a constant challenge because we had kind of started learning how to do everything separately...

Elisa: Our separate worlds.

Rob: ...you know she...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ... She learned how to run the house without me, and I'd come home and I'd be like, *How do I fit in here?*

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...You know, and I loved being with my kids, so it was easy to connect with them, but connecting to each other and all that was the... a challenge, you know. At times, I remember with the...with all the young kids and ... to the point where I finally laid that job down. And I took a job that required a lot less travel. You know my upbringing, too, was my dad was always traveling, and I thought, *I want to see my kids grow up.* And so, you know, I made that change, that sacrifice, for...for my family and...and don't look back. It was a good decision, so...

Joanna: Yeah.

Eryn: And, Joanna, how did you process him now stepping back in? Was there any resentment during his travels?

Joanna: I think it was kind of that whole frog-in-a-pot analogy where we didn't realize just how destructive it really had been to have that level of separation and that level of independence from each other, until it got to the point where I...eh... we didn't know what to do with it...



Eryn: Yeah.

Joanna: You know? And we kind of had this epiphany, like *Wow, we're not where we need to be, but we don't actually know how to be partners anymore.* And so leaving his job was truly sacrificial. He...you loved your job, and he shined in that job, and it used his gifts in a really unique way that I just loved to see. He got to travel the world. I mean they were... It was a real sacrifice...

Eryn: Oh!

Joanna: ...And it meant leaving a part of the country, cause we were in the Pacific Northwest, which is stunningly beautiful!

Rob: Yeah.

Eryn: Oh how...

Joanna: So it was...

Elisa: Yeah.

Joanna: ...quite profound to me that he would be willing to do that for us. But then we felt like we had to go back and relearn how to do this thing...

[speaking simultaneously]

Eryn: I'm sure...

Joanna: ...you know...

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: ...you probably how to date each other again.

Elisa: Yeah.

Joanna: We did! We...



Eryn: Yeah?

Elisa: I love it.

Joanna: ...called it “do-it-yourself marriage counseling.” So...

Eryn: I love that.

Joanna: ... we would go to a coffee shop. And, actually, in the beginning, it involved sitting there and just having these extended conversations of confession. Like *This is how I wasn't there for you...*

Elisa: That is gutsy!

Eryn: Wow!

Joanna: ... *This is how I...I've actually been resentful of you about such-and-such.* And it was...it went both ways.

Elisa: Did you have any rules around that? Because...

Eryn: That's awesome.

Elisa: ...when my husband and I ...

Eryn: Right?

Elisa: ...try to do that, you know, we might slip into the *Don't you say that to me!* And *What about you?* And, you know, we kinda have to have ground rules. Did you guys just easily go, *Oh, I forgive you. And now your turn?* Or, you know, ha...what did that look like?

Rob: At first we didn't always. There are wounds any time you're doing that, but we did, over time after enough fights, kinda learn to not do the attack, but more of the *how I feel, how this is making me feel, what this is doing to me*, rather than *You're doing this*. And we cut the “always” and “never” out of it. That was huge, I think. It's so easy to do that, you know, when you're in that relationship tension of, you know, *you always do such-and-such, and you never do such-and-such*. And so cutting that out of... just those two things alone opened the door for communication.



Elisa: I'm hearing this beautiful honesty and an intentionality and a courageousness to look at where you are. You know I...I think a lot of us stop looking. We don't ask that question: How did we get here? We just think: *We're here. We're done.* And, I mean, this is a...a little bit of an ignorant thing to say, but sometimes people say, "Well, how have you stayed married?" And I say, "We stayed." I don't mean that in a simplistic way because it often is not the answer.

Rob: Right.

Elisa: But I'm hearing that under the surface of your commitment, too, is...is you stayed. You watched. You looked. You examined. You analyzed. You took responsibility. You sacrificed. You talked. You shared. You confessed. I mean this is a lot of hard work, you know? And you stayed.

Rob: Yeah. Yeah, and I think we did have that commitment early on: We won't talk about divorce. We will be committed. But it goes deeper than that because there are times where the covenant of marriage is all you have to hold onto, you know. It just...it...it is hard. Life is hard. But we also remind each other God had more intended for us than, you know ... Even in our rela...our covenant relationship that He has where He's so faithful with us, He has more in mind than just, *We're in a covenant, you know... We're...*

Eryn: Right.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Rob: ...*we're stuck.* He wants abundant life for us. Right? And so we have to remind each other, when we're in those points, that we don't want to stay there. Like sometimes the covenant holds us together, even when we're fighting against each other, but we don't want to just stay there. We want an abundant marriage. We want a lively marriage. We believe that's what God wants for us too. That's what we're fighting for. We're not fighting just to stay...

Elisa: Hold it together...

Joanna: Yeah.

Rob: ...I think sometimes that can be just as challenging. Like if you just say, *well, divorce is off the table.* And that can be an excuse, you know, to not do the work to love each other.



Elisa: You're right. You come to a crossroads of *I'm going to stay*; but then there's another crossroads of *I'm going to love*.

Rob: Yeah.

Elisa: ...And that's where a lot of that sacrifice comes in. I...I really appreciate, too...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...that you just said, "in those points." You didn't say "at that point," you know, and so...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: Yeah.

Elisa: ...did you ever ran back...

Eryn: Lots of points!

Elisa: ...to this... Yeah, lots of these points...

Rob: Yeah.

Joanna: Yeah.

Elisa: ...you know, time and again, we're...we're still not where we want to be. *Oops! Now we've slid off from where we want to be. Oops! Now we're pulling in the wrong direction from where we need to go.*

Rob: Yes. Yeah, just a few weeks ago we celebrated thirty years of marriage.

Elisa: Congratulations!

Eryn: Wow!

Rob: And...

Elisa: Yeah.

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Rob: ...Joanna tells people she's been happily married for ten years. No! ... [Laughter] ... I'm kidding. No. ...uh... No. But...

Eryn: She's like, "It's 15."

Rob: Yeah...

[Laughter]

Elisa: Maybe 20. Yeah!

Rob: Yes. And so, you're right. Our marriage is kind of built in seasons, and we have had hard seasons with our kids, and we've had hard seasons with each other. We've had seasons where one of us is really struggling, and the other doesn't know how to come alongside each other. And...and that can pull you apart, so it definitely is a journey.

Eryn: I love that you pointed out like there's just different seasons in a marriage. And I think there can be this misconception that you can mistake your feelings for truth, especially in marriage, where you start allowing your feelings to go a certain way and take you down a path that's unsafe. And it's like *Abort Mission!* And you ignore all the signs of caution to go down those thoughts. Would you share maybe some advice or some thoughts that you have that you've learned from your story and when you recognized that your feelings are taking you down a path that needs to abort mission?

Joanna: I would say, for me, I didn't even know it when we got married, but I brought into our marriage a pretty deep-seated fear of abandonment. And so, when that's a core fear, you run everything your husband is saying and doing through that filter: *Maybe this is going to lead to abandonment.* Even though Rob has never given me any concern that he's going to break our vows. It's...it's not rational, but that was what was driving a lot of my responses to him.

Eryn: And that can feel so real...

Joanna: Oh so much...

Eryn: ...and so true.

Joanna: Right.

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Elisa: Because it's so built in to so many of us. Mm-hmm.

Joanna: Right. And then you throw in physical absence or parenting stress or setbacks or whatever, and you just see it. And so my response to fear of abandonment is self-protection, and so Rob would just wonder, across the course of our marriage, *why when we're divided over something, why does she run away? Like why does she want to head for the hills, "See ya later, honey"?*

[Laughter]

Joanna: ...because it...

Elisa: Flight. Yeah.

Joanna: Yeah, it's like it is a fight-or-flight response. Right? And that was my response to that fear of getting poked at with guardedness. And so having to break down *my* walls of self-protection to even begin to work on healing with each other was a slow grow, let me tell you. Yeah, and I'm just grateful that God at least allowed me to see it, so even now, if I notice that tendency, it doesn't have to take over and run the show.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: I really appreciate you sharing that example. And we all have those escape hatches, you know, that... that we think we should dive down. And we typically think of things of like a...inappropriate relationship. We bite off a spot and run to a place that creates separation rather than intimacy, and it's not very obvious. It's kinda ss...slinky, you know. It...it just... you don't really...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...know it's there. And it can sure take over.

Joanna: But when I'm in self-protective mode, I'm not even thinking *how can I love Rob today?* And there was a day it kind of came to a head where God's like, *Joanna, what would happen if you loved Rob in a way as if you weren't afraid, even if you are? What would it look like to love him bravely, even if the emotions don't present? Can you do that? Can you move toward him? Can you be warm toward him? Can you intentionally meet his needs, but do it scared? Can you do it scared?*



Eryn: Yeah.

Joanna: And...

Elisa: Yeah.

Joanna: ...I said, *I don't think I can, but I want to with You*. And it was really amazing to me. [Music begins] And I've seen this over and over. God will ask me to do something that feels too hard. It's just too hard, but you take one tiny step of Yes, and all of the help from God just floods in to give you what you need. It wasn't on me to generate courage in my marriage. It was on me to say *with You, I will*. And it was huge. It changed everything.

[Music]

Eryn: When we come back, Rob will share how he reacted to Joanna retreating from him. They'll also share how your own soul care and trusting God can lead to healthier and more committed relationships.

Elisa: Hey there! *God Hears Her* recently celebrated its 100th episode! If you missed it, you can find our conversation on our *God Hears Her* website or anywhere you listen to podcasts. For the 100th episode, we created a fun *God Hears Her* package just for you. Check out our website for a limited-edition *God Hears Her* tote bag filled with our three devotional books, a notebook, stickers, and a lot of other stuff. You can order this set on our website, godhearsher.org/shop. That's godhearsher.org/shop

Elisa: Let's rejoin Rob and Joanna Teigen on this episode of *God Hears Her*. Sliding over to your side then, Rob, I'm assuming you know what she's talking about here.

Rob: Little bit, little bit. I've spent a lot of those thirty years, you know, knocking on that bathroom door.
Hello?

Eryn: Oh!

Rob: ...uh...*Are ... are we okay?* Yeah.

Eryn: *Are you still in there?*

Rob: Yeah...



Eryn: *Is the window open? Did you leave?*

[Laughter]

Elisa: So when the door cracks open, and, you know, you see her trying to love you bravely, what happens inside of you?

Rob: I think, at first, I put my own walls up, you know? *Is this real?* And I think you do some of those dances enough in your marriage where, you know, the trust comes down. And I do tend to be the... kinda the pleaser personality. And so ... and the peacemaker, you know, when it's in the Spirit. And so I always wanted to bridge that gap. Didn't necessarily want to dig deep, but I just wan...didn't want there to be conflict...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...you know?

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Rob: And so the difference, I think, with Joanna is she did always want to go deeper. So when she wrestled with those feelings and emotions and stuff, then she would come towards me. As a guy, I'm like, you know, *Okay, like let's patch this up...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...*but let's not go too far...*

Elisa: *Let's not go crazy here!* Yeah.

Eryn: Right!

Rob: Yeah, yeah...

Eryn: Let's fix it, but ...

Rob: Yeah...



Eryn: ...let me determine how we...

Rob: ...yeah, exactly, you know...

Eryn: ...fix it. Right, right...

Rob: ...*Let's open the...the bathroom door, and let's go out for dinner. But let's not, you know, cry on the...the floor or anything.* You know? And it's giving each other grace to be able to do that, to work on it together but also give each other space to work on what that person needs to work on. And I think for us who do tend to be a little bit perfectionistic and like things buttoned up, that's hard to give the grace and do the work. But it's important, again, to not just have the covenant of marriage, but all of the benefits that come from a covenant of the rich, the laughter and the joy and those things too.

Elisa: I know that God has called you to certain work of marriage and family. And I appreciate the depth of this conversation, and I'm hearing, too, that even though you celebrated thirty years of marriage, you're still doing the work.

Joanna: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Right? How has doing the work, or having the work done, shaped your offering in these seasons of investing in marriages?

Rob: Yeah. Well, I mean we...we didn't seek out to become authors and to necessarily do what we're doing. God opened doors that we didn't feel worthy to go through a lot of times. And I think our tagline for our ministry to families is: Caring for the soul of your family. And that is a daily work. You know when you've got five kids and a marriage and life, it is a daily working when you have somebody's soul. And that's kind of what marriage is. That's what parenting is. I mean you've kind of been given somebody else's soul to care for.

Elisa: I don't think we look at it that way very often.

Eryn: We don't. That's such a beautiful way to see that. I love that.

Elisa: I remember when Evan and I were in marriage counseling, our counselor would sit down with us, and he'd go, "How are you doing, Evan?" And he'd look at me and go, "How are you doing, Elisa?" And then he'd look in between us at the space, "How's your marriage?" And he taught us, every time he started that way, that the marriage was its own entity, which is what I'm hearing you talk about as the soul
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of the family, and that you've been asked to steward that. It profoundly changed us. Instead of us being so at each other, we began to back away from each other and look at the marriage together. And that's kind of what I'm hearing you talk about here. It's a very respectful exercise where you finally see something beyond us...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...which is that it's its own thing.

Eryn: Yeah. I love that. That's such a beautiful visual analogy. You start to pursue writing. Is that right? So you just decided...

Rob: Yeah.

Eryn: ...you're just going to go into the writing space.

Rob: Well, I worked in Christian publishing...

Eryn: Okay.

Rob: ...so that was kind of my world...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...And it kind of happened by accident. I was in sales, and I had some accounts, and I knew some things that they like. You know?

Eryn: I love it, yeah.

Rob: ...And so it actually started in "oh nine" with joke books. I started writing joke books, and those kind of took off. And so, of course, as publishing works, it's like: *What else do you have?* You know? And I didn't have a lot in my...in my bank. But Joanna's actually the gifted writer. She is an amazing writer, and I just get to kind of tag along on her coattails. So I've...I have lots of ideas...

Joanna: No, no.



Rob: ...but I wanted to do a book for dads and daughters. And so we wrote a book together called *88 Great Daddy-Daughter Dates*. It's a very simple book on ideas for dads to connect with their daughters, with some conversation starters and different things. And...and then God just kept opening doors. At that same time was when we started the foster care journey.

Elisa: What brought that about?

Joanna: You know we had such a shared heart for children, even when we met, so we would even talk when we were dating and engaged, like "someday wouldn't it be amazing..."

Elisa: Aw.

Joanna: ...to be foster parents and potentially adopt? And maybe when our youngest is five." And so we actually moved to Michigan when our daughter was five. And I don't even know how we got on the mailing list of the foster agency, but we started getting mail inviting us to info sessions. And our kids...

Elisa: Wow!

Joanna: ...would follow us around the house with the post card. "Well, you guys have to go!" Like even our kids, they just had this...

Eryn: Aw!

Joanna: ...sense of passion for ...

Elisa: Wow!

Joanna: ...loving little babies. And so at that point we didn't actually intend to adopt whatsoever, but we did get our foster license, and we started caring for little ones. And then a little baby boy was placed in our home who is now our son...

Eryn: Aw!

Joanna: ...through a long and crazy road. And we say – and as far as how that relates to our writing – that was God's school of prayer for Rob and me. It's not that we hadn't prayed together before, but when you're in a situation that's that tender and where you're that in love with a little child that have no influence over their future, and every single day you have to put this child in God's hands in a completely new way
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than you've ever had to before, it really changed us. And so much of our writing now comes out of that season of just intensive daily prayer. And I love that that now has shaped our relationship. Our son is now 11, so this a lot of years of learning prayer with one another. And in that, too, we found that so often in marriage – right – and in parenting, you...you do come to the end of yourself. For us, it happened to be through foster care, but it's going to happen in any context for any couple. Right?

Elisa: Yeah, it will. Yeah.

Joanna: Yeah...uh...

Elisa: Guarantee!

Joanna: Right. And so to discover, when God said He's listening, and He said He's present, and that He's going to enter into this with you, and every promise He ever made, He meant it! And you can pray His words to Him out of Scripture. That has been life-changing for the two of us as a couple.

Rob: Yeah. I remember very distinctly. We were actually writing these prayer books, and we were doing the foster care. And he came into our home at two months and wasn't adopted until three and a half. And so it was...it was a long journey. And we were going through just some various challenges with our kids at that point and, you know, trying to write these prayers and just felt like...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...we were right on the battlefield. And I just very distinctly remember God saying, *The same heart and attitude you have that you're praying for you foster kid is the same heart and attitude. You feel out of control in this situation where you know tomorrow you don't the future of this, and it's the same. These...these are My kids...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Rob: ...*And the best thing you can do is put them in...in My hands.* And...and that's kind of what wrote these books, I guess, or what the heart of these books were written out of. And that changed us, but it... really it changed our prayer life because we realized that we have to take our hands off the reins, and that's so hard to do. But prayer is what keeps bringing us back to that reality.

Elisa: I am hearing this calling that God has put on your lives from early, early, early on. And it's a... a calling to care for the soul.



Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...Tha...that's what I'm hearing, just from this short conversation. And you cared for your own soul, you know, Joanna, and how you passionately fell in love with God. And then you cared for your soul, Rob, in how you were so attracted to that. And then you began to care for the soul of your marriage and very intentionally grow it and risk it bravely. And then caring for the souls of your children, the souls of your family, the soul of your family, the souls of foster. It's so memorable. Could I just invite you to speak some words to all who are listening – and Eryn too – that God's desire, like you were about His children, you know, God's desire for the soul caring that He's called us all to?

Joanna: Well, God is the Lover of our soul, and like for me, the best way to care the souls for my loved ones is to give them to Him. You know? Whether that's in prayer – heh – right? I mean that's huge, even in having a mindset toward my family, like *What is Jesus' mindset toward my family?* Yeah, He's for them, and He says, "Love always hopes." Well, how many times do you feel like giving up on people? Right? *Oh my kid! He's going in the...this direction. This cannot end well. What in the world could possibly turn them around?* Well, "love always hopes," cause we serve a God who's bigger, you know, and just to hold faith that God isn't done. You just can't see what's coming, how this could possibly work out. [Music starts here] And then depending on Him to supply the longsuffering and the hope and the "bearing with each other" and saying *I don't really like who you are right now, but what I'm looking at isn't what God sees when He looks at you. "Lord, give me Your eyes that You have for my husband."* You know? Even "*Give me Your eyes for how You see me.*" Right?

Elisa: Oh good. Mm-hmm.

Joanna: ...So it isn't even that we're excellent at caring for souls, but God is. How can we go with Him in that?

[Music]

Eryn: I love how Rob and Joanna shared the vulnerabilities within their marriage and how they worked through their hardest moments as a couple to cultivate a family that prioritizes prayer and soul care.

Elisa: Yeah. They wove such a beautiful story of ups and downs in marriage relationships.

Eryn: Well, 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. And there is a link to check out the Tiegens' website and godhearsher.org



their books. You can also connect with Elisa and me on social. All of this is on 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.

Eryn: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Daniel Ryan Day and Jade Gustafson. We also want to recognize Judy and J.R. for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[ODB Theme music]

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