



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 109 – Let's Talk About Married Sex

### Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy with Debra Fileta

**Debra:** The work that we're putting into the relationship often overflows into our sex life, and that's why this big holistic conversation. And even in a book about sex, it's not just a book about sex because it can't be. There's so many other layers to it, talking about our own personal health, as well as the health of our relationship, and that's kind of what flows together. But I think the key is to realize that sex is a symptom. Sex is a signal. And how can I learn from what's happening in the bedroom, or not happening in the bedroom? How can that inform what we need to do to keep our relationship strong and healthy and stable and Christ-centered?

[Theme Music]

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

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

**Eryn:** And I'm Eryn Eddy. Before we get into our conversation today, we want to let you know that this conversation is for adults only, so make sure to listen on your own, or with another adult, because today we're talking about married sex.

**Elisa:** You heard that right. We're going there with Debra Fileta, a licensed professional counselor and author of books such as *Choosing Marriage* and *Married Sex*. She also hosts her own podcast and writes a popular relationship advice blog.

**Eryn:** We are so excited for this conversation with Debra on *God Hears Her*.

**Debra:** My name is Debra Fileta, and I am a wife and a mother of four kiddos, so that in and of itself is...

**Elisa:** That's a lot!

**Debra:** ...talk about messy...



[Laughter]

**Debra:** In my professional world, I'm a licensed professional counselor specializing in relationship issues and personal issues, you know, mental, emotional health. And, ultimately, the message that God continuously puts on my heart is that if we want healthy relationships, we have to start by being healthy standing alone. And so that's kind of the theme behind what I do.

**Eryn:** Debra, would you take us back to when you were a little girl? Did you know that you wanted to be in this space?

**Debra:** You know God has kind of taken me on a journey with regards to what I was going to do in my future. If you asked me in different seasons, I mean, one season I would've told you it was the WNBA.

[Laughter]

**Elisa:** I love that!

**Debra:** The other was inner-city ministry. I had such a heart for people in need and people at risk. And then, at one point, I thought I was going to go into the medical field. And, ultimately, I think, the theme has always been helping people and caring for people in some way. That's kind of been the thread of what God has put on my heart. And so fast forward to my college years, my dating years, I started realizing that dating and relationships are not simple...

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Debra:** ...Even when you're a Christian, you're not good at relationships and dating just because you have the name "Christian." It's something that we've got to learn. And seeing how hard it was kinda gave me a passion for that subject, and then I started dating my now-husband, and the lessons that we learned along the way... I...I remember saying to myself at some point, *I want to help people do relationships well.*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Debra:** And so I...I became a licensed professional counselor. That's kinda the path God led me, but I always knew at some point I wanted to help people with relationships, because I felt privileged. I felt grateful that I, by God's grace and the mentors He put in my life, was disciplined to do relationships well. And...and now I realize I want to help people do relationships well because I've done them well, and I've [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



done them not so well. And...and now I want to help people have to skip over some of those hard things. And that's kind of led me to where I am today, very passionate about helping people in their relationships.

**Eryn:** In the work that you do, what are some misconceptions about relationships that you've observed?

**Debra:** Well, I would say people assume *Just because I'm a Christian, just because I'm walking with Jesus, I'm going to be good at relationships.* And I think we get into marriage, and we're shocked that we're not good at relationships. It's like *What is going on here?* You know? And...and there's all these other myths that go with that, that kind of fuel it...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Debra:** ...such as, *Well, God told me to marry this person, and now here we are. And this person's not what I expected them to be.* Rather than saying, *I'm not what I expected myself to be...* You know?

**Eryn:** Right.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Debra:** ...*This person's not what I expected them to be, and relationships are hard, and I'm not happy, and there must've been a mistake somewhere.*

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Debra:** You know? Instead of realizing, well, no one is relationally compatible. Like we all have to do the work to get to a place where we're good at relationships. When we come to Jesus, we don't assume that all of a sudden our cholesterol levels are going to be just right. But with emotional health, with mental health, with relational health, we kind of assume that's gonna happen. *I'm just gonna be good at this because I have Jesus...*

**Elisa:** Yeah, that's really good.

**Debra:** ...instead of realizing *I'm not good at this.* And that's what Jesus reveals. When I come to Jesus, He reveals the things that I need help with. And now I get to partner with Him and work on becoming the best version of myself. So I would say the first myth is that I'm going to be good at relationships.

**Elisa:** You know, to dig into that just a little bit...



**Debra:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...I really hear what you're saying, and I love the comment you just made that none of us are naturally good, gifted — heh — in a relationship. And, you know, we expect — especially if God has revealed to us that, yes, this is our life partner, and we say yes, or we say okay, and we ask and we make that commitment — there is an assumption that we've chosen right, we're following correctly. This is the situation. This is the one place where I'm going to have the fit.

**Debra:** Right.

**Elisa:** That's a huge myth, because the reality is this is the place where God's going to help me be refined, you know. This is the ...

**Debra:** A hundred percent!

**Elisa:** ...relationship where God's going to grow me and sharpen my partner, my...my husband, my spouse. You know this is where the work's going to get to be done, not this is where it's going to be all rosy. And if it's okay, I would like to put on the blinker and turn our car directly into one of these topics where I really do believe God refines us. And I think we carry that wrong assumption into this area of relationship, maybe even more than any other area of relationship; because, Debra, you've done a lot of work in this area, and you are doing a lot of work in it. And it's our married sex relationship. Oooh, I just said the word "sex" like four times there, and everybody'll be like *Ahh! You know here she goes!* But, heh heh, why are we so confused sexually in the most precious relationship that we have, which is our marriage relationship?

**Debra:** You know we come to the table of marriage with all of these beliefs and expectations about sex, and sometimes those expectations are rooted in healthy things and truths, but most of the time they're not. Most of the time, the expectations and beliefs that we have about sex come from our family of origin, come from unhealthy experiences that we've had, come from false narratives that we've been taught. So we come to the table with these unhealthy or unrealistic expectations, and when sex doesn't measure up to those false expectations, we can get really confused and scared and frustrated and angry at God, at our spouse, at ourselves. And so I think the best way to begin to unpack this conversation is to maybe point out a couple of those things that we might bring to the table and see if we can align them with God's truth.

**Elisa:** Okay.

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**Debra:** One misconception that I would say people assume: *Just because I wait means sex is going to be great...*

**Elisa:** Uh huh. Yeah.

**Debra:** Right? So I know that God's Word tells me to keep the marriage bed pure and to avoid sexual immorality. And...and so some of us come to marriage with this belief that *if I'm a virgin, I'm gonna be good to go! It's gonna be great! It's gonna be fireworks! There's gonna be no pain!*

**Eryn:** It's gonna be fireworks!

**Debra:** *Yes, it's gonna be amazing, and...*

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** *...the honeymoon is just gonna be like a dream!*

**Eryn:** Right.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Debra:** And so we save ourselves, and we get there, and it's not great, and there's a learning curve, and it's not what we expected, and there's pain and awkwardness. And...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Debra:** ...I mean if you want to talk about awkwardness, in *Married Sex*, I talk about my honeymoon night and just the complete awkwardness. And, first of all, whose idea was it to have 500 buttons down the back of the dress...

[Laughter]

**Debra:** ...You know? With...

**Elisa:** Right!



**Debra:** ...no tools...

**Elisa:** Yes.

**Debra:** ...to get out of it.

[Laughter]

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Debra:** Like okay, let's get over this hurdle first...

**Eryn:** Right, right...

[Laughter]

**Debra:** ...much less everything else...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** ...you know, that's about to happen. And, you know, and...

[Laughter]

**Debra:** ...you just have these expectations that are completely unfounded. And then you're disappointed. It's like *God, I thought I was supposed to feel good. I thought I wasn't going to have pain. I thought I wouldn't have any guilt or shame here because I'm married now.* But there's all these other things going on that we have to unpack, all these false beliefs that we bring with us from, like I said, our family of origin, our culture, or even pornography, or all of these things that now we've got to sort through.

**Elisa:** What is the pain that we're talking about that women can have? What is the awkwardness? Can we unpack that a little bit more?

**Debra:** Yeah, absolutely. Eryn, you mentioned the word "pain" right away. That was one of the first things that came out of your mouth.



**Eryn:** [laughing] Elisa and I, in preparing this conversation, I just shared with her. I was previously married, and I was married for nine years... a little over nine years. And I believed wha... exactly the misconception that you're sharing, that if I do all the right, good, Christian-girl things, and then I get married... I save myself. Our sex life is gonna be amazing! And when I said "pain," it was physically painful. That's what I was specifically talking about. But then there was also just the pain of the reality was painful because it didn't match...

**Elisa:** So there's a physical pain possibly, not always, but possibly. Okay...

**Eryn:** And an emotional pain of it not aligning with what you had envisioned, which you don't have to experience sex to experience that kind of level of pain of your reality not matching what you're dreaming or desiring.

**Debra:** Yeah. And you know for some people it's discomfort. For other people, they feel awkward, maybe some insecurities that they're struggling with. Other times, a lack of emotional connection kind of interferes with our ability to have a healthy sex life. There's just so many things that come up, and it's different...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Debra:** ...for each person; but I think, at the end of the day, the key is realizing that sex is something to be mastered. It's not something you come into marriage already having mastered. It...it's something that takes work and practice and conversation and communication. And we don't wait because of what it will do *for* us. We wait because of what God is doing *in* us through the process of waiting and obedience, the character, the discipline, the trust that it's stirring up inside of our hearts as singles. It's the same character and discipline and trust and self-control that we will need to function in a healthy marriage...

**Elisa:** Mmm-hmm.

**Debra:** So it's not about what it's going to give me. It's about what it's building... And so I think when we go into it with that perspective, it helps us realized, *Okay, I have my expectations in a healthy place. I know this might require some work, just like it did in singleness.* Saving yourself for marriage, remaining pure in your heart, in your mind, in your body, requires a certain level of discipline. And it's that same character and discipline that you're going to need in marriage when there are days that you're tempted and...and struggling, and your heart, mind, and body are moving in the direction of temptation. Those are the same character qualities that God is going to use by His Holy Spirit to keep you in a healthy place *in* marriage.



**Elisa:** Mm.

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Debra:** So God's got a purpose through it all...

**Elisa:** But, you know, what about for the couple who has been sexually active before marriage? You know maybe they knew Jesus, and they had wanted to (quote) "stay pure" and whoops! Or...or maybe they came to know Jesus later, or maybe they just fell into sex and... Anyway, how does that affect their married sex? What would you say there?

**Debra:** It affects different people in different ways, for sure. I've worked with couples who feel stuck and are kinda battling the guilt and shame from their past, and it's starting to affect their present sex life because of it. There's a process of acknowledging and taking ownership of our past and working through it as a couple. And I think being open and honest with each other and talking through, *Hey, these are the things that have stuck with me. These are the things I feel guilty about. These are the things I'm still convicted about.* Together, bring them before the Lord. Confess them to one another. Pray with one another. But then remember not to let the sins of your past sabotage the gift that God has given you in the present. When you're in the context of a healthy sex life and doing sex in God's way and in God's time, the enemy would want nothing more than to hold the sins of your past over your head and keep you from enjoying the gift that it is today. So deal with it, and then realize that God doesn't want it looming over your head. He wants you to enjoy the gift of sex in the present.

**Eryn:** Debra, I had listened to one of your podcasts. I think it was an episode where one of your guests asked you: How do I overcome my girlfriend's past? Or it might have been boyfriend's past. She has had multiple partners before she met her person that she was engaged to maybe. I would love for you to speak into that. How does somebody navigate when carrying choices that they've made that look different than what they want to model in the relationship now?

**Debra:** When you're the one that has a history of some sexual past... First of all, let's all be honest in that we all have some sort of a history...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Debra:** ...you know, whether it's something we saw, or something we heard, or something we did or experienced for a moment or for many years, we all have some sort of a sexual history. And I think it's





important to start there because it starts us at a place of humility and grace and realizing that none of us are perfect. And we don't bring perfection to the table, but I also think it's important for us to take ownership and acknowledge our past. The Bible says to take off the old, to renew our mind, and to put on the new. There's kind of a formula for becoming new and entering into new seasons. Take off the old, renew your mind, put on the new. Well, the old doesn't come off automatically. Right? When you get home from gardening outside, or...or painting something, and...and your clothes are dirty, you don't just put your hands in the air, and they just fall off on their own. You've gotta do the work of taking them off. You take off the old. And when we look at our past, there's a process of taking off the old. And I...I really believe that process means owning it and taking responsibility for it. One practice that I would recommend is writing out some of the things from your past that bring you the most guilt, shame, grief — the things that have really affected you. Write them out. Write down those different experiences. Face them one by one and bring them to the feet of Jesus. Ask for His forgiveness. "Confess your sins to one another so that you can be healed." So bring somebody that you trust and love, somebody who's walking with Jesus to come before you that you can kind of talk through some of these things. *Hey, here are some of the things I have been through that are holding me back.* Take off the old. The second part is: renew your mind. An...and I think the old can really affect the way that we think, the things that we believe, like we talked about before, those expectations, those beliefs that start to take root.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Debra:** And this is the part where, if you feel stuck, I do encourage you to work with a professional counselor, to start unpacking some of those things. How did that past experience impact what you believe today? Renew your mind. Make those connections. And then put on the new. Those new experiences in the context of marriage begin to rewrite the old experience. They begin to override them when you are engaging in a healthy way. But only if you've taken off the old. Sometimes we try to...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Debra:** ...put on the new before we've taken off the old, and then the old gets in the way. And that's why I'm always saying sometimes you've gotta go backward before you can move forward. And there's nothing wrong with that. It's not a setback.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** It's just a step towards healing. It's a step towards moving forward in the right direction. So I really believe that those three little things can kinda help move you in the right direction. And going back to if it's your partner who is the one who's had a history, and you struggling with that, I... You know if...if we talk [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



about that first portion of confession, I think confession is important in the context of marriage; but I will tell you this: If your sexual history is like a book, or like a chapter in a book, you don't have to talk them through every single word and every single sentence. But it's important to give a chapter summary.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** *Here are some of the things I've experienced. I want to confess and ask for your forgiveness, so that you can move on together, so that there aren't lingering questions in your head. Because sometimes the unknown becomes worse in your head...*

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** ...than reality. If you're imagining...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** ...all of these faces and...and people and...and women that, you know, ...eh... Instead of just hearing the truth, having confession and conversation, you don't have to know the nitty-gritty details...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** ...but you do need to have some sort of a summary so that you can begin to process and move forward. And...and if we come into it with the attitude of grace and...and the realization that none of us are perfect, we've all got something that we struggle with, I think it helps us have an attitude of grace rather than an attitude of judgment.

**Elisa:** So what are some of the challenges that make married sex difficult? And how can we master married sex?

**Debra:** So I think one of the most important things is to kind of come to terms with our expectations. *What did I expect?* And like we mentioned: Just because you wait doesn't make it great. But also what are the expectations you had of sex coming into it based on your family of origin, based on the things you have been taught? Is there shame there that needs to be unpacked? And guilt? Is there a trauma history and maybe some abuse and bad experiences with sex that need to be healed? Had there been exposure to unhealthy things, like pornography, or even just sexual behavior that you've struggled with? And now  
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we've got to realize that that stuff needs to be healed and unpacked as part of the process of having a healthy sex life.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Debra:** And sometimes we just want to push through and plow through and not face some of those things from our past. I even worked with a couple who, because of the narratives from church — “sex is sacred; don't have sex before marriage; stay pure; honor God with your body” — it was so drilled into her head that when she got to marriage, she had a hard time letting go of some of the guilt and shame, even though now she's in a safe...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** ...healthy context. It was still hard for her to let go of some of those feelings that had been accumulating through the years, like *Could this really be good?*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** I think part of that is because, in order to help young and older singles stay pure — I'll use that word, even though I know it's a little bit of a trigger for some people — but in order to help our generation honor their bodies, sometimes we use guilt tactics like *This is bad*. It's almost like a “Say No to Drugs” campaign, you know...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Debra:** ...And we maybe talk too much about the negative without balancing it with the positive that God says sex is good, that sex was created by God for us, that sex is a way that we can honor and glorify God, that sex is really a symptom of our need to connect in an intimate way, that God wrote an entire portion of Scripture called the Song of Songs. I mean one thing that my coauthor kinda unpacked about the Song of Songs, he was saying how, in ancient times, when you call something or someone “the something of somethings,” they're not just the best in that category, such as Jesus is the “King of kings, Lord of lords.” It's like not just the best lord of the lords, not just the best king of the kings, but the King of all the kings. Like the top. When you think about a book called “the Song of Songs,” you'd think it'd be a book about prayer, or fasting, or something super spiritual. It's the Song of songs. It's about sex.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.



**Debra:** And how much do we undervalue that gift? There's a lot of root work, deeper work that has to be done, I...I really believe, in order for us to get to a place where we understand that sex is good, and it's truly a gift from God for us.

[Theme music]

**Elisa:** When we come back, Debra will explain what we can do with the different seasons of sex in marriages. How can communication increase sex drive? What do you do when you're not happy with your sex life? Debra will answer this and more when we get back into our conversation.

**Eryn:** Hey yall! *God Hears Her* recently celebrated its hundredth episode! If you haven't checked out the episode, you can find it on our website or anywhere you listen to your podcasts. As part of the celebration, we also want to offer you a special limited-edition *God Hears Her* tote filled with things that you'll love, including the three devotional books: *God Hears Her*, *God Sees Her*, and *God Loves Her*, with pens and stickers and a notebook and other great goodies too. You'll want to get your hands on this ASAP. Check it out on our *God Hears Her* website. That's [godhearsher.org/shop](http://godhearsher.org/shop). Again, that's [godhearsher.org/shop](http://godhearsher.org/shop). Now back to the show.

**Elisa:** We've talked a lot about the beginning of the marriage relationship and sex there and how we need to learn to master it and our expectations that we're going to — Bing! — you know be perfect at it. But I'm old, you know, and...and I've been married 43 years. And one of the things that I've experienced, I call it the seasons of sex in our long relationships, you know, and ...eh... Absolutely at the beginning, there's so much learning, but there are other seasons we go through. And maybe could you comment on those, and maybe some of the challenges that go with each season, and what you see as you do therapy, and even in your own life?

**Debra:** So I would say the thing that I see the most, as a therapist, is a season of drought in sex life, where sex isn't as frequent or as often as you imagined it would be. And many times, when you ask a group of people at a conference, for example: What is your satisfaction with the amount of times you're having sex? There's usually a discrepancy there. You know one partner wants it more, the other feels like it's too much. They're not always on the same page with regard to sexual frequency, and there's extremes, you know. The majority of couples in our surveys were having sex about 2 to 3 times a week, but then there's other ends of the spectrum where people say they can't remember when the last time they had sex, or others who say 2 to 3 times a week isn't enough. And so there's these discrepancies where people kind of get to a point where they're struggling with their different drives, or they get to a point, like I mentioned earlier, of a season of drought where it's just not a significant part of the relationship. And so when we get to those points, I think the key is communication, and communication [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



one to another about what's going on and starting to unpack: Is this an emotional issue that there's some tension or conflict in our relationship that's holding us back? Is it that one person isn't enjoying sex as much as the other, and how can we help you enjoy it more? What's going on underneath the surface here? Let's talk about this because the frequency of our sex life and our satisfaction with that frequency exposes a lot about what's going on underneath the surface...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** ...But if you think about it, most of us aren't comfortable having those conversations even in marriage...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Debra:** There's a learning curve. You spend so much time not talking about sex. I can't tell you how many couples struggle with conversations about sex, like about what they desire, what they don't desire, what they enjoy, what they don't enjoy, the frequency level, all of that. People are really struggling to sit down and talk about these important things, and it's kind of creating a gap between husband and wife.

**Eryn:** Why do you think that is?

**Debra:** I think it's a muscle. There's a learning curve. It takes practice. You're definitely going to be comfortable the first time...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Debra:** ...and so it's truly something that we've got to practice and build into our relationship. It's just kind of like talking about emotions isn't comfortable for everybody, depending on how you were raised, depending on your personality type. So one of the best things I think we can do for couples is giving them the tools and the language and the words to have these conversations.

**Elisa:** The reality is that it's, you know, it's integrated into our whole relationship. So if we've had an argument about whether or not to let the toddler sleep through the night or let him get in bed with us; or if he's been gone too long, and we've been having no break between our job and our tasks at home; or if money is short, and we have different opinions about how to spend — all of those things are elements of our being that we're trying to express to this perfectly wonderful mate that God has chosen for us and we've chosen. And when that doesn't go so well, we're hurt, we're wounded; and, for heaven's sakes, we don't want to talk about, you know, where I want to be touched, you know, because *you don't feel safe to*  
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*me right now.* You know all of this, I'm pretty much speaking from personal experience, being an old person, like I said; but, you know, the...all of it gets woven together and integrated into our relationships. And...and I don't think we can really isolate. And I'm...you're not saying we should, but I think we try to. And when we try to talk about sex outside of the context of our overall relationship. So can you speak to the constellation of life, you know, and how, if we're hiding in one area, we're probably going to hide in the sexuality as well?

**Debra:** Absolutely. What happens above the sheets *feels* what happens under the sheets...

**Elisa:** Oh, that's so good!

**Debra:** ...And that's to the point that you were making. So much of our life and relationships — our intimacy, our connectivity, our communication — fuels our sex life. And like we mentioned earlier, if sex is a symptom, if sex is a signal, then we have to look at our sex life as a signal of what's going on in the relationship? If we're in a dry season, what's really going on underneath the surface? Is it about the sex? It might be. In some cases, it simply is about the sex, and *I'm not feeling good because I need you to do this a little differently or that differently, and let's talk through it.* But the majority of the time, it's a little more complicated than that, and it involves our emotional connectivity, our spiritual connectivity, how we've handled conflict and communication. Are we feeling emotionally intimate and connected? The work that we're putting into the relationship often overflows into our sex life, and that's why this big, holistic conversation. And even in a book about sex, it's not just a book about sex, because it can't be. There's so many other layers to it, talking about our own personal health, as well as the health of our relationship, and that's kind of what flows together. But I think the key is to realize that sex is a symptom. Sex is a signal. And how can I learn from what's happening in the bedroom, or not happening in the bedroom? How can that inform what we need to do to keep our relationship strong and healthy and stable and Christ-centered?

**Eryn:** Debra, would you share, in light of all of that, why is sex so important in the context of marriage — whether you've been married for two years or fifty years.

**Debra:** I really believe that sex is one of the ways that God connects us in a marriage. It's such an exclusive experience that you have with this one person. And, not only that, but underneath the surface, chemically speaking, the oxytocin that's released during sex, that's connecting us and binding us and helping us feel closer to one another. There's something really intimate there. And, you know, this kind of stirs up in my mind another expectation that ...eh... a false expectation that we bring into marriages, that sex is just about the man...



**Elisa:** Heh! Right!

**Debra:** ...and, as women, gypping ourselves of the gift of sex, because in our minds, *it's for him. I don't always feel like doing it. It's for him. It's more for him than for me*, rather than realizing it that it's just as much for me. It's a gift that God gave to me as well.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Debra:** And if I don't really believe that, how does that affect my sex life? How does that affect what I think and believe and do? I do feel like women are getting robbed of the gift of sex, because we don't really truly believe that it's for us. It's God's gift *for us*. And I remember specifically, in a season of having a lot of little kids. I've got four kids and, you know, when you're with kids all day, and you've got people needing you and wanting you and desiring you. *Mom, I need this, I need that*, or sick kids, or just that season of just needy, younger children. You just can't skip it, you know, and when there's more than one of them, it gets even more complicated. And you get to the end of the day feeling really empty. And then, you know, I remember a season of just looking at my spouse and thinking like *Ugh! I don't know if I have energy. I don't know if I have the desire right now*, knowing that it's enjoyable to connect and be together. And it's not that I don't *want* to. I just don't know if I feel like it. I don't know if I have the energy. And, of course, it's okay to say, "I don't have the energy tonight." But I also realized my mentality was wrong, many times seeing as *about him* rather than about me. And I know in Christian culture, we're taught to be selfless, and so we're wired to think of the other person because that's the right thing to do; but, at the same time, I had to reframe in my mind that this was also for *me* to feel good, for *me* to have an enjoyable, pleasurable experience because God wants me to. This is good for me. And shifting that mentality, realizing that sex is *for me* just kind of helps you get over some of those hurdles of feeling like *I've got nothing left to give*. Well, guess what, Deb? This is an opportunity for your husband to give to you, to pour into you. Let's see it like that...

**Elisa:** Yeah...

**Debra:** ...and that...

**Elisa:** ...that is so good.

**Debra:** ...and I think our perspective just changes everything.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm. There are many, many women out there, too, who can't get enough. And, you know, I think they feel underrepresented at times; because I think they're clear that *this is for me, and I'm going to*  
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*be better at my life if I enjoy sex with my husband all the time* kind of thing. So, you know, ...eh... kudos to them! You know they've probably taken that reality to heart in a neat way.

**Debra:** And it's not abnormal for us to go through different seasons where one season you're the spouse who enjoys less frequent sex, and one season you're the higher drive spouse. I mean it's not abnormal. In fact, it's common for that fluctuate throughout marriage, depending on what's going on, depending on your hormones, depending on stress and anxiety. So I think instead of being surprised by the differences in desire, we should just see it as a commonplace thing.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Debra:** It's just a matter of communicating, getting on the same page, making sure it's not a reflection of something deeper, and learning to love each other through our differences.

**Eryn:** That's so beautifully said. Would you speak about worthiness and sex and where our worth comes from and ha...the misconceptions of finding our worth in it?

**Debra:** It's incredible how so much of how we function in life comes down to our identity and what we believe about ourselves; because what I believe about myself impacts what I believe I deserve and the type of relationship I believe I should have. And when I believe in the good things that God says about me, I then believe *for* good things in my life and in my relationship and in my marriage and in my sex life. And when those things aren't good, it clues my radar into *Something's off here*, rather than when my identity is off, and I'm feeling shame and insecurity, and I'm struggling. Well, when I'm seeing things of that nature in my relationship, my radar isn't working as well because I'm...that's how I'm feeling on the inside, and that's what's happening on the outside, and there's no discrepancy there. So a huge part of this — like you said, Eryn — is coming down to the roots of what we believe about ourselves and who we believe we are and what we believe we have to bring to the table of this relationship and what we believe we deserve in the relationship. And that...when I say "deserve," I mean deserve because of who Jesus says we are. I don't deserve it by nature just cause I'm an amazing person. No! What do I deserve through Christ and what Christ has done for me? I deserve to live in a healthy way and see that health overflow into my relationship. It's just incredible the way that our beliefs get tweaked along the way to think that we're not good enough, or we don't deserve this, or I shouldn't speak up about this, or I should just be the one to fix everything. And all of those little things, the false beliefs that get put into our mind throughout our life, we end up living out of those negative things instead of who Jesus says I am.

[Theme music]





**Eryn:** It's amazing how our own perceptions of our identity can impact our relationships, our marriage, and our sex life. There is so much that goes into a healthy marriage.

**Elisa:** 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. Today we have a link for Debra's website and her book *Married Sex*. You can also find links to connect with Eryn and me on social. Find all of this and more when you visit our website at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.o.r.g](http://godhearsher.o.r.g).

**Eryn:** Thank you for joining us, and don't forget: God hears you, He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Music]

**Elisa:** Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman, Daniel Ryan Day, and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to recognize Linda and Kim for all their help and support. Thanks everyone!

[ODB theme]

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