



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 110 – Grace That’s Daring

Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy with Amanda Carpenter

Amanda: I always say too, fostering has taught me that grace is loving others when they dare us not to anymore. And I am telling you, that if you step into foster care, you’re gonna have kids come in your home. They didn’t ask to be there, so you have to remember that. I’m mainly talking about my big kids, my pre-teens and my teens. They would much rather go back and live in whatever conditions they came from with their biological family, almost all of them. And I know that doesn’t always make sense to us. We can’t wrap our mind around it. Here I am being like, I can offer you a pool and a this and a that and this awesome life, and you can go to whatever camp you want to go to. They don’t want that. They just want their family and their familiarity. And...and they don’t want your healthy food. They want their junk food, right? They want whatever it was. And I’ve realized that they’ll push you away, and they’ll push you away. And they’ll test you. Oh my goodness, we have been tested.

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. Have you ever thought about being a foster parent? Maybe you have, but fear is stopping you. Or maybe you haven’t, but you’re curious to know more about it. No matter how you answer that question, you don’t want to miss this conversation.

Eryn: Today we’re learning from writer and speaker, Amanda Carpenter. Manda and her husband, Eric, are foster parents and hosts of *A Longer Table* podcast. They live with their son, Shia, in Los Angeles, California. And they have a huge heart for foster parenting.

Elisa: Before we dive in, we want to let you know that this conversation includes stories of domestic violence. If you or someone you love needs help, you can call 800-799-7233 or go to thehotline.org to learn more.

Eryn: Thank you, Elisa. Now let’s dive into learning about foster parenting with Manda Carpenter.



Elisa: How did you get to where you became a foster mom?

Amanda: Yeah.

Elisa: You know, what was your journey like?

Amanda: Yeah, to tell this story, I have to take it all the way back to my childhood. But basically, I grew up in a divorced home. My mom and my dad divorced when I was like a year old. So I don't have any memories of them ever being together. They both remarried multiple times. So I had an interesting childhood, to say the least. And...and I like to give the disclaimer that it's both/and. It was both chaotic and beautiful. I was both loved and, in some ways, neglected. It's both/and. It wasn't an either/or situation. And so when I was seven years old, it was actually my seventh birthday, I was at my dad's house for the weekend. And he was remarried to my step-mom at the time. And they had a pretty tumultuous relationship. Unfortunately, there was a lot of domestic violence that was occurring. And so on that particular day we were supposed to have my birthday party, they got into an argument about ice cream flavors. I have vivid memories of the ice cream flavor argument. And then, all of a sudden, like glass shattering, blood everywhere, my dad beating on her, her fighting back. I actually grabbed my baby sister at the time...half-sister. So they had had a daughter together. She was about a year old. I grabbed her. She was like in a little bouncy chair and unfortunately had gotten like hit in the midst of all that was going on. And so I like grabbed her cause she's wailing, moved her into my bedroom closet to like hide her and kind of give her shelter from this, honestly like war that was going on in our living room. I was terrified. But honestly, like at seven years old, the best way for me to explain it is like instinct. Survival instincts just kick in.

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: And so I vividly remember a point where my dad was on top of my step-mom. And it was really, really horrifying, and things were getting really bad to the point where at one point I pick up the phone. My step-mom is saying, "dial 911." And I was actually already doing that. My dad was saying, "Mandy, don't do that." You know, he wasn't thinking. He wasn't in the right state of mind. Neither of them were. I mean this kind of paints my dad as the bad guy. They were both in the wrong all through and through. And so I called 911. The police show up. My dad is taken away in handcuffs. He goes to jail. My step-mom is put on a stretcher. She's taken in an ambulance. Thankfully, she did survive. But things were really bad. I know I'm saying this in a two-minute time span telling this story but this was like very traumatic. It was really horrible. And how this ties into me becoming a foster mom years later is that I believe that that catastrophe in my life was the catalyst for my calling.



Elisa: Okay.

Amanda: I think that that is true for so many of us that the catastrophes in our lives are the catalyst for our calling...

Elisa: That's so true.

Amanda: ...if we let God redeem. And so at the young age of seven, I don't think I consciously made a decision about like, oh I'm gonna be a foster mom. But being talked to by a social worker and kind of having my own introduction to foster care of hey, it's not safe or appropriate for you to live with your parent anymore. So here's what's gonna happen next. Like hearing a social worker say that to you when you're seven years old on your birthday, like that changes you. And so thankfully, I ended up being raised by biological mother. And so I didn't have to spend like years in and out of foster care or anything like that.

Elisa: But you went into foster care for a bit that very day?

Amanda: Yeah, like a short...like a temporary holding, like nobody had gotten a hold of my mom at that point. My memories are pretty repressed for parts of this journey.

Elisa: Sure.

Amanda: And so I've relied heavily on like conversations with my mom, with my dad, with people about what happened. But I try to tell the story from my memory and...and have verified what's true, you know. And so of course therapy they say that's normal. It's trauma. You're gonna have repressed memories. It's norm...you know. And how many of us even remember a lot from when we're seven...

Elisa: Right.

Amanda: ...unless it's really negative...

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: ...that something horrible happened. So anyway, what ends up happening is I think it wasn't a conscious decision. But I think God planted the seeds at that time in my life that later were kind of watered and nurtured along the years of my life as I continued to encounter people who weren't



necessarily in safe places. And...and I just think that God grew my heart for how can I love and protect and, the best way to put it is, just serve children and families who are in crisis. Because I knew what it was like to be one of those people. And so yeah, by the time I was end of high school, it was like oh for sure. When someday when I'm an adult and I'm, you know, on my own, I'm gonna be a foster parent. That was a non-negotiable for me in dating. And so...

Elisa: Ooh.

Amanda: ...and then throughout dating in college, things obviously things get more serious. And eventually I met my husband. And to make that a long story short, he had the exact opposite childhood as me. And so he didn't even know foster care was like a thing. He was like wait, what? Some kids are abused and neglected and they can't live with their families? Like what is this? But what's really beautiful is that he didn't make any grand promises at the beginning like yes, I want to foster. We just continued to date. And his passion for it grew as he got educated on his own kind of like apart from me.

Eryn: That's so beautiful that's what you would want versus him adopting something you wanted that he will just feel obligated or obliged to do it.

Amanda: Totally, totally.

Elisa: It's got to be a mutual calling. That's right.

Amanda: Absolutely. I can't imagine us fostering and having gone through what we've gone through or be in what we're in now if we weren't on the same page both fully wanting it. Fostering is not something that you can like drag a partner along for. I think that it's a quick way to ruin your marriage honestly. And we've always said we'll put our marriage first. And so we respect each other when...when one of us needs a break we do that, so...

Eryn: And how long have you and your husband been married?

Amanda: So we just celebrated seven years.

Elisa: So you stopped fostering like three years into your marriage or so if I'm following this correctly.

Amanda: Yeah.



Elisa: So Manda, you start fostering, and you said 16. And I would imagine there are lots of different ages. You know, what's important to know about...and you're in California, cause it's different state to state. What's important to know about the foster care system and about what it means to foster just generally? Because again you gotta find out your own state's guidelines.

Amanda: Yeah, yeah I'm glad you brought that up. Because we now live in Los Angeles, California, and we're foster parents here. But those 16 kids prior to our biological son, Shia, were all in Chicago, Illinois. And so now having done this in both states, I can say the baseline kind of across the board similarities or standards are...foster care...the first thing that people need to recognize or to know is that the goal of it is reunification. So while you've probably heard of someone or seen on the Internet or know someone who's adopted out of foster care, and that's beautiful. And we can celebrate when a child gets permanency if they need that. I always want to kind of reiterate just how important it is that people go into foster care with the knowledge that the goal isn't for you to keep the kid. The goal is for you to partner with a family who is in crisis to work with them in a partnership type of setting where you're caring for their kid while they have the time and the resources allocated to help them heal in whatever that looks like. But kids come into foster care primarily for two reasons. There are sort of two big buckets, and then within these buckets there's a lot of things that can happen. But it's abuse or neglect. If a child's been physically, sexually, emotionally, verbally, any type of abuse, that's one way they can come into foster care. And then neglect can look like a lot of different things. And so something that my husband and I are super passionate about is partnering with the parents of any kids that we have in our home to get to the root. Is poverty the ultimate root of why they are being neglected? Okay, well then let's solve that. I'll give a real life example. Our very first placement, I worked with mom. We signed her up to take her GED test, cause she had never gotten her GED, or she had been a high school dropout and so paid for her to study and take her GED. She got her GED. We celebrated...started building some confidence then worked on a resume, then helped her apply for jobs, then got housing. Then we found an organization in Chicago that furnishes homes of people who are transitioning out of homelessness. So we got them to furnish mom's new apartment. All of these things happened, and her girls went back to her. And here we are five and half years later; and they're still with her. And they're thriving. She needed someone to meet her where she was at and to hold her hand through different tasks that, once we were able to accomplish and set her up for financial stability, she wasn't intentionally neglecting her children. It was a cause and effect relationship of honestly generational trauma in her own life and in her own story and financial insecurity in her own family. And so I guess all that to say we have had the privilege of reunifying a bunch of our children. And those that weren't able to reunify, we've had the option of adopting. And we have not adopted any of our kids. And I'd like to also just say, to be a great foster parent, you don't have to adopt all the kids. You don't have to be a family that drives a 10-passenger vehicle and like have all these children. A lot of...a lot of people do that that are in this world, and it's beautiful. We need those people. I'm not that person. But what I can do, is I can care for a child until they either reunify or until a permanent

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home is found for them. And so if we can find a pre-adoptive placement for one of our kids or all a sibling set of kids that's a good fit, we will work with that family to make sure it's as smooth of a transition as possible. And we just did that with our latest placement. Our big boys, and that's what I always call them online, they were with us until 48 hours before my son was born, which he came four weeks early. So we thought we were going to have a little empty-nester transitional honeymoon kind of period.

Elisa: Right.

Amanda: We did not get that.

Elisa: Yeah, there are a couple things I really wanted to unpack for everybody. And the first one, and we'll just mention it and then we'll go on, cause then we'll come back to it. But the goal of fostering being reunification is a new...newer goal. And it's really led by the courts and custodies. The old goal used to be, okay you adopt these babies like you're saying, or these children. But it's very clearly to help put the children back in their family of origin. And that's something to really understand as...as you're going into foster care. But the second thing I wanted to touch on because I...I feel like some of us listening are going, wait, wait, wait, wait. You said that she's a legitimate mom, but her goal is to turn the child over. So how is that a legitimate mom if you're a foster mom? So Manda, is it because your goals are to launch? That's the goal of a regular mom too. You know what makes you the legitimate mom as a foster mom?

Amanda: Yeah, I love that question. Because I think what you're naming is that tension of, well if the goal is to reunify them, how can you also like be their mom? And here's the reality. We don't know that a child or a group of kids that you have in your home are going to be able to reunify. We fight for that, and we make that our goal until it's not and until the judge changes that goal. But as far as the differences between mothering a child who is in foster care versus mothering a child who's a biological child, and now it's a gift that I can speak to both now. Cause I used to only be able to speak to the fostering side. And I love that I now have a biological son, because I can tell you, here's what I tell people all the time. My love for Shia and my day-to-day life with Shia doesn't look much different than my love for my foster kids and my day-to-day life with my foster kids. You know the only difference with Shia, my biological son, no one is checking in on me or him. We don't have to go to court. We don't have to go to therapy. We don't have to do paperwork. They aren't coming to count how many pairs of pants are in his dresser cause foster parents, there's all these checks and balances and just accountability in place. I don't get a stipend to cover the cost for Shia's needs, which in foster care, it's less than like I forget. Every state is a little different. But we're talking under a dollar an hour is...so...so people who think like you can get rich off of fostering or people do this for money, that's crazy to me. It is just enough to cover their basic needs, and I'd be lying if I said we didn't dip into our own funds. We don't really keep score or keep track. But I'd be lying if I said we didn't use that towards our kids that are in care. Because ultimately we treat them all the

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same. So if we're going on a family vacation for example, we went to Florida. We got permission. You have to go through a lot of hoops to make this happen. But once we were able to get approval, we took our foster kids to Florida. It wasn't like we just said, oh we're gonna go and we're gonna leave him behind. Which sometimes you have to do, and there's no way around it. But we were able to do that. Who pays for that flight? We do. So I know I'm sharing a lot of things. But the difference between my m...mommying with Shia and my mommying with my foster kids honestly isn't very different at all.

Elisa: That's helpful. Thanks.

Amanda: I mean you are their mom. You are the one signing their permission slip. You are the one telling the school nurse what allergies they have or what medications they have to take. You are making all of the decisions. I like to say too, there's a little phrase that I've come up with that, with foster parenting, you have all the responsibility but none of the power. You don't hold the power of at the end of the day, if they're going home, if they're staying with you, if they're transitioning to another family member. You don't get that...to decide that cause they're ultimately in the custody of the state. So the state has custody of them. You're just there kind of stand-in parent. And the more you can kind of shelter them from feeling ostracized and like they're a foster kid, the better. I often will ask our kids. I've asked so many of our kids. A lot of our kids have been pre-teens and teenagers. And I've asked them, you know, when I go in your school and they say, hey Dee, mom's here to pick you up; I've said to him, does that bother you that they say mom's here to pick you up in front of your friends? Do you want me to go by auntie or a friend or...? And he has said so many times, anything but "foster mom." I just don't want them to say "foster mom."

Eryn: I love that explanation. How do you posture yourself in that type of surrender? Because I would imagine that when you don't have the power, especially when you have the emotional resiliency that it takes, I would imagine it would be very hard to exercise surrender. And it's almost like a muscle. And you're th...you know you've experienced this 16 times to exercise that muscle. And maybe take us back to the beginning when you started learning, oh I don't have a voice in this as I desire to. Or maybe you entered into it and felt like you could surrender easily. Would you share a little bit about that?

Amanda: Yeah, I'm kind of over here laughing and nodding my head just like yes, yes. Because I, for people who are into the enneagram, I'll just say I identify as an enneagram 8. I'm a challenger. I like control. This is so hard for me. I'm like a micromanager just by nature. Like I don't even know how to not control everything around me all the time. It's something I'm always, a work in progress. God is always refining me. But I think that, couple things that come to mind for me are the first case we ever reunified that I just mentioned with our girls that they went home to their mom, it felt like a sink or swim situation. And I saw a mother swim ferociously the way she does when she loves her babies. And it changed me. It made me realize that, despite how much I love these kids, that God loves them even more than me. And I

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could trust that, at the end of the day, they're gonna be okay. And I remember there being a time where I said to my husband, I was like I had a conversation with God. And like I know for a fact that I'm supposed to trust that if something goes wrong, we have developed a beautiful relationship with their mom that perhaps she's gonna reach out to us directly before things go really bad and the kids get like taken again. And the cool thing is that was true. When mom hit a couple bumps in the road along the way, she reached out and was like hey, I could really use a break. It's a lot when you don't have your twins for nine months and then they're back in your care. And suddenly you've got a job and an apartment. And you didn't have all these things. It's a lot. And so we regularly started watching the girls again, just outside of no court involved, no judge involved just friend to friend. I'll watch your kids so you can get a break on the weekends. I'll watch your kids so you can pick up an extra shift. And so I think the more I have surrendered to God, I know this sounds a little crazy. But just the more I realized that He cares about these kids even more than I do, as crazy as that sounds. Because if it were up to me, I would have kept those girls. If it were up to me, they would have had the best life with me, right?

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: That's a story I wrote that they were better off with us.

Elisa: Oh.

Amanda: But yet, they're living what God has decided is their best life with their biological mother who has worked so hard to get where she's at. And there's nothing more beautiful than a redemption story, so I'm here for that.

Elisa: What other kinds of lessons or principles has God revealed to you or you've been trained in that help you go back and do this again?

Amanda: The most common phrase I hear from people, whether it's like friends or strangers that I run into at a grocery store, somehow they find out I'm a foster parent and especially if my kids don't look like me, maybe they're a different ethnicity than me, and so somebody's just blatantly asks. And I'm like oh, I'm a foster parent, whatever. One of the things that's recurring is people will say, oh I could never do that. I'd get too attached.

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: If I had a penny for every time someone said that, I'd be rich. What I say to those people is, oh if you'd get too attached, then you would be perfect for this. Because that is exactly what these kids need.



They need someone willing to get too attached. They don't have a choice to be in the foster care system, so why should I have a choice on whether or not I get too attached. That's the way I see it.

Elisa: Oh, that's beautiful.

Amanda: I am going to love them. I'm going to get too attached. Getting too attached, to me looks like a lot of things. It looks like not withholding your love in fear of what will happen. I mean we do this in our romantic relationships. There's a point where you just have to say, I'm willing to take a risk.

Elisa: I'm in, yeah.

Amanda: I'm going to put my whole heart in. But mainly I look at children, and I'm like they didn't ask for this. They're living in some ways their worst nightmare. So who am I to say or to suggest that, oh getting too attached it will hurt me too much. For me and my relationship with God, there is a deep conviction and a deep calling that says, nope you don't get to be that selfish. I called you to more. I called you to sacrifice. Now I don't believe this is for everyone. I often tell people too, I don't think that everyone is meant to be a foster parent. So that is not my heart to say everyone should be fostering. But I believe that if you feel that tug on your heart, pay attention to it. If it doesn't go away and it stands the test of time, pay attention to it. And if you're worried and you almost don't want to do it only from a place of fear, then that's probably exactly where you need to go. Because I think that when we are positioned to fully rely on God, that is the sweet spot. And fostering, for me, is one of the few places where I am fully positioned to rely on God and to need God.

Elisa: When we come back, Manda will share something she's learned through being a foster parent that I think we all need to learn about God's grace. But first, some exciting news from Eryn.

Eryn: Hey y'all. *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 podcast. 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. Again, that's godhearsher.org/shop. Now back to the show.

Elisa: How do you heal just the incredible pain and brokenness in children?



Amanda: I mean we don't, right? We are tools. We are people that God uses, of course. But I always say too, fostering has taught me grace is loving others when they dare us not to anymore. And I am telling you that if you step into foster care, you're gonna have kids come in your home. They didn't ask to be there, so you have to remember that. And I'm mainly talking about my big kids, my pre-teens and my teens. They would much rather go back and live in whatever conditions they came from with their biological family, almost all of them. And I know that doesn't always make sense to us. We can't wrap our mind around it. Here I am being like, I can offer you a pool and a this and a that and this awesome life. And you can go to every camp you want to go to. They don't want that. They just want their family and their familiarity. And...and they don't want your healthy food. They want their junk food, right? They want whatever it was. And I've realized that they'll push you away and they'll push you away, and they'll test you. Oh my goodness, we have been tested. But grace is loving them when they dare me not to anymore. That's when it becomes really tough. And I've just learned so much about grace. And to be honest, we are not the healers and the givers all the time. These kids and their families have brought so much healing and light and joy. And like they've been such a gift to us. I often will say like they have done more for us than we've done for them. And if you're only measuring by materialistic things, then of course, we've done more, right? But if you measure outside of that and you look at life more the way that I think God does, they have done so much for us. And so it becomes this mutually beneficial relationship that's hard, but it positions you to fully rely on the Lord in a way that you probably never would have or never have before.

Eryn: Yeah, yeah and that's the beauty of your surrender is like the surrendering you get to experience that gift. Oh, I'm like all teary-eyed over here. I have my glasses on. I'm dabbing my eyes. Manda, what have you learned about your inner talk and confidence in this journey?

Amanda: You know, I had a friend once say to me, you never stop talking long enough to listen. And it changed my life, cause I realized she was right. I like to talk. I'm a verbal processor. But that doesn't just apply to my friendships. When she said that to me that day, it hurt my feelings a little bit, but it changed my life. I became a better friend. I started being more intentional to shut up and listen to other people. But also, I took that to my relationship with God. And I was like how often have I just ran my mouth for 20 minutes and then walked away and been mad that God didn't change anything or do anything? And the reality is, I wasn't quiet enough to hear Him. I didn't give Him the space to talk to me. And so when you ask about my inner kind of how I talk to myself or how I navigate all of this and how that plays a role, I know there are signs that my soul gives. There are signals that go off when I need to quiet myself and be with God. It can look like being really short-tempered with my husband. It can be like snapping if a kid spills a cup of milk. I don't want to snap at them. But if that is naturally, organically coming out of me, then that's a sign for me that I need to go and be quiet and spend some time with God and that that needs to be part of my regular rhythms if I've lost sight of it. I often talk to myself. And one of the things that I say to

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myself a lot is, why? What's the motivation here? What's going on? Cause a lot of times we think something's going on, on the surface. And we need to quiet ourselves, and we need to ask some questions to get deeper and to get to the root. And so I do that, that's a regular practice in my everyday life. Or if something outside of me causes a big reaction inside of me, I need to pause and ask why? Why is that thing that doesn't actually have anything to do with me but that my friend posted on the Internet, why is that causing such a big reaction inside of me?

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: Yeah.

Elisa: That's really good. Dig it down. Dig it down.

Amanda: Yeah, dig it down and start to get to the root. And honestly, I'm not like a wise guru. I just feel like I have great mentors and therapists in my life who have helped me learn these practices.

Elisa: What do you want to say that we haven't asked you, especially as you know there is this huge group of people listening? What do you want to leave as your takeaway for folks?

Amanda: Honestly, I think that people can hear a conversation like this and they can say like oh, she's a saint. Oh that's so different from me, or oh thank God, God hasn't called me to that, right? You...we...we put people on pedestals. And something that I am really passionate about is not fan-girling over anyone. I just won't do it. I won't do it. I'm not surprised when great leaders have a big fall. It's unfortunate, and it breaks my heart. But nothing surprises me anymore. And that's because I've learned that people don't belong on pedestals. Even if you've done great things, you're a human being who's just like me. You're capable of sinning and messing up. You're capable of doing great things too. But I just want to reiterate that nothing matters more, nothing matters more than the condition of your soul. I have done some things I have been ashamed of that I have had to overcome and have a lot of healing towards. But I'm never going to be perfect. I'm never going to be qualified. I'm never going to have it all together. But if I am doing my work, and what that means is if I am taking care of my soul and surrendering and meeting with God and allowing God to transform me and not change me which doesn't last, but transform me, I'm not striving. I'm surrendering. The fruits of the Spirit are organically coming out of me. I'm not striving to like modify my behavior to be patient, yet patience is just coming out of me organically, right? That's what I'm talking about. When I am doing that and living in the light in that way, then things are limitless. God can call me to do whatever, to love my neighbor next door, to love people across the country. It doesn't matter what it looks like. And I don't have to be ashamed of my past. I don't have to worry about people saying, who does she think she is? I can just kind of put my blinders up and walk forward. And that's what I'm



choosing to do. I'm not letting my past, which has to do with infidelity and sin in my marriage, stop me from now living out my calling and fully investing in family and children. That's really what I want to say is if somebody puts me on a pedestal, it would break my heart. Because you're gonna find out really quickly like I am not all that and a bag of chips. I am just like everybody else and that we are all capable of doing both amazing things and investing in other people and living out our calling and falling short. But nothing matters more than the condition of our soul. And so if we are living in the light and we are pursuing healing and we are doing that work to take care of our soul, then we don't have to worry about what anyone else thinks or says or judgment. We can just follow God wherever He leads and trust that it is good and let God redeem.

Eryn: Manda, would you share, you know, you said I have to sometimes just stop and be still and listen to just hear God and what He's doing in this moment. Would you share maybe to somebody that's listening that feels like they've been still but they wonder if God does hear them? Has there been a moment in your life where you have experienced that question on if He hears you? And maybe some encouragement that you could give the listener right now.

Amanda: Absolutely. I mean I always say I wish God had a neon sign and just said "this way, do this, yes, no." Like that would just make my life so much easier.

Elisa: Yeah.

Amanda: But God doesn't. And to be honest, I can tell you there's not a whole lot of times I've ever felt like I've heard an audible voice from God. And so two things that come to mind, number one would be trust your gut. I think that feelings are meant to report to us, not rule us. So if we let our feelings dictate everything, we're gonna be a mess. But God did give you intuition for a reason. And I believe that when you are living in a relationship with God that your intuition is so connected with the Holy Spirit. And so you can trust your gut. So if you're not sure about something, and you're praying about it and you're trying to hear from God, I believe that God gives us free will and that certain things God doesn't really care. And you can just make a choice, and God's gonna be with you wherever you go. This happened when my husband and I were trying to decide between at the time, Chicago and New York. We were like, okay God. Where do you want us? Chicago or New York? Chicago or New York? Neither of us felt like we got any clarity, and we were just like maybe God doesn't care if we're in Chicago or New York as long as we follow Him. Like...

Elisa: Oh I love that.



Amanda: ...wherever you are. And so I always tell myself like God doesn't care about the petty things that I care about. Like it's probably not that big of a deal. And to be honest, even if we do make the quote-unquote "wrong choice," I believe that God is so loving and so gracious and so fun, that He'll meet us in that wrong choice and find a way to redeem like we talked about already. That's like a theme in my life. I have been able to trace and recount all the times in my life where God has redeemed. So trust your gut and that God's got you no matter what. Don't make the small stuff big stuff. The second tangible thing when you're talking about like the voice of God and like being still, we romanticize what time with God looks like. So stop thinking that God can only talk to you in one setting with a candle lit and worship music on. Like it doesn't always look like that. Sometimes God talks to us through other people. And that has been so true of my story. So we have to be paying attention, and we have to be willing to humble ourselves enough to say I'm no better than anybody else. And if God's gonna use Joe who lives on Sixth Street to tell me what I need to hear today, then I'm open to receiving it.

Elisa: I love Manda's openness. Foster parenting is such a special calling. I'm thankful Manda could share her insight with us, you know.

Eryn: Me too, 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. There, you can find a link for Manda's website and for her book *Soul Care to Save Your Life*. You can also find links to connect with Elisa and me on social. Find all of this and more when you visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Thanks for joining us, and don't forget. God hears you. He sees you. And He loves you because you are His.

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

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