



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 137 – The Lavender Life with Victor & Vickie Bennett

### Elisa Morgan & Eryn Adkins with Vic & Vickie Bennett

[Music]

**Vic:** There's over 440 thousand kids in foster care in our country alone...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** ...right in our own communities, every community, every county.

**Elisa:** That's right.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Vic:** ...They are there. And they need people to be patient with them. They need to understand they're coming from hurt places. They're coming from brokenness, and they are broken. And they need lots of compassion. They need lots of help. And lavender, like with Xander, is a simple tool God gave, a simple plant God gave.

[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*.

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

**Elisa:** And I'm Elisa Morgan. Do you like the smell of lavender? Did you know that smelling lavender can reduce anxiety by calming the body's fight-or-flight response?



**Eryn:** Today we are talking with Victor and Vickie Bennett, the proud owners of a lavender farm in Michigan. While they use the lavender for body and culinary products, they also discovered a unique need where lavender can help people dealing with trauma.

**Elisa:** We'll let the Bennetts share their unique mission right after we hear how they met and how they came together, during this conversation on *God Hears Her*.

**Vickie:** My dad was a pastor growing up, and we had moved to Binghamton, New York, and that's where I met Victor. I was 14 at the time, and I found this cute little farm boy and kinda liked him. And my parents just absolutely loved him. And...

**Elisa:** I love the twinkle in his eye as you're sharing...

[Laughter]

**Eryn:** Oh, I know.

**Vickie:** We won't tell how old he was at the time. [Laughter] ... He's a little bit older than I am. Just a little.

**Eryn:** Okay, okay.

**Vickie:** And we kinda grew up together. We were childhood sweethearts, really, and he went off to college. And I finished college, and we just really hit it off right away. I mean, first of all, our names were the same, Vic and Vick, and...

**Elisa:** So fun!

**Vickie:** ...that was kinda cool, but we just really had the same heartbeat for a lot of things growing up, even though we were so young. There was a... a love for children right at the very, very beginning of our relationship. And we served together in VBS and Sunday School and all kinds of things. And he went off to Baptist Bible College, and I finished up high school. And it was the summer of 83 that my dad, who was the pastor, was on his way to his deacons' meeting. And he was in an accident that took his life that day...

**Elisa:** Oh!



**Vickie:** ...And Vic was there with me the entire time and really just kind of stepped right into our family and was a mentor but a... a brother, ...uh... an extra son to my mom. I mean he just...

**Elisa:** Precious.

**Vickie:** ...was so precious to our family. And my dad had already given me his blessing that if I ever wanted to marry Vic Bennett that he was fully behind that...

**Eryn:** Aw!

**Vickie:** ...even mentioned he didn't know why Vic would want to marry me. [Laughter]... But if he did, that he'd given me...

**Elisa:** That's a dad for you!

**Vickie:** That's a dad! We were 18 and 21 and started our ... our life together and began to create businesses. And Vic was a schoolteacher. We've had... I think we've had a lot of different lives in the last 39 years.

**Eryn:** And so, Vic, for you, being a farm boy, she said...

**Vic:** Yes, I was.

**Eryn:** ...So tell us about that.

**Vic:** So I was on a dairy farm, large dairy farm in upstate New York. Well, I was in charge of all the young stock, all the young ones, and that was my main task. So I didn't realize that, growing up, being in charge of little ones ...uh... little calves, that God was training me in this ministry to be looking out for kids...

**Elisa:** Wow!

**Vic:** ...You know, especially kids in trauma. And that's just one layer that God was doing that ... looking back of experiences that God gave me to ... to do what I'm doing right now.

**Eryn:** So it sounds like there's no doubt in the way that you guys pursued things. Did yall ever experience resistance in ...



**Vickie:** Oh my goodness...

**Vic:** Oh my goodness...

**Eryn:** ...Okay, yeah.

**Vickie:** ...I think everything we've ever done, there has been huge resistance. Like *Why are we doing this?* And starting a spa business in a big area in Grand Rapids and being the very top level was right at the 2007-08 when the economy...

**Vic:** Oh gosh!

**Vickie:** started to nosedive...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Yes.

**Vickie:** ...and even the wealthy people were pulling back on their dollars spent. And going to spa wasn't on the top of their list.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vickie:** So making it through that, and then we were introduced to the... the Amway and the JW Marriott hotels and said, you know, "We'd like you to take over and do our spa businesses." And we invented a spa cart that you could wheel into the guest room. And off of this cart, you could perform any spa service imaginable. Lots of resistance there, like *How do you do that? What's that like?* But as we began to demonstrate it to the different hotels, the Hyatt brand bought onto it for the New York City and DC areas. So that kind of spread us there, so everything comes at a cost and a resistance at first. And you do feel like giving up, but when it's just the two of you, and your income relies on what you make, you... you keep trying it until it works.

**Vic:** The acrostic of LIFE is our values: Learning, Imagination, Friendship, and Excellence.

**Elisa:** And maybe why each one's important.



**Vic:** Sure. Learning: We think one of the greatest values we have to offer people is to show them and teach them that God has already taught us. And so we need to keep learning, but we also want to share that in the process. And then Imagination: You know our God is a creative God, and He loves it when we get to reflect Him, and to look at things in different ways — not just settle for the ho-hum, everyone does it this way and it's a lot easier to do it this way. We always look at things — *Let's introduce everything in a brand new way to people...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** ...things that they may have already been aware of, but do it in such a unique way that it's creative. And that has always served us well. And then Friendship: Making friends wherever we go. You know we worked in Manhattan and struggled through union wars. We walked through "Occupy Wall Street." One of our hotels was right on Wall Street. We've been in and out of some really rough positions in business, and we have learned if we just work toward friendship too — no matter who we work with. A lot of people don't even have the same worldview that we do, but we can still be friends, and we can still show friendship and actually reflect Jesus in their lives. They never rejected us. Many times, too, we would talk and they would open up their life to us. And we'd say, "So how can we pray for you?" We always would say that, and they would just look at us like *You're kidding me? Okay, here it is...*

**Elisa:** Oh!

**Eryn:** Aw!

**Vic:** ...I'll spill it out...

**Elisa:** Oh beautiful!

**Vic:** So each time we'd go back to New York City, it would be like, "When is Vickie and Vic coming back, because we want to just sit and talk." You know? Not just do business, so...

**Elisa:** Oh gosh!

**Vic:** ... E is Excellence because God is holy, and He is excellent. He wants us to strive toward excellence too.

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Vickie:** Never reaching perfection, but striving for excellence...

**Vic:** Striving for excellence, yeah.

**Elisa:** You're such a team. You look at each other, and you listen while the other one's talking. And they both have their ball caps on from their farm. It's called "The Lavender Company..."

**Vickie:** Lavender Life...

**Elisa:** "Lavender Life Company"

**Vic:** Lavender Life Company, yeah...

**Elisa:** It's just beautiful...

**Vickie:** So the LIFE...

**Elisa:** How have you learned to give each other space to be strong? So many couples, like just one can be strong in the relationship and the other one just can't...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...And that's just the rule...

**Eryn:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...But ...eh... I can feel it, and you guys are very peaceful. And it's not just because we're sniffing lavender, you know... [Laughter]... But you... you respect each other.

**Vic:** Well, I think we've learned what each other's strengths are, and we celebrate them. For instance, Vickie loves numbers, and she loves charts and graphs and loves to get in and needs to see how everything is grafted and charted and all that...

**Eryn:** Spreadsheet?

**Vickie:** Mm-hmm. Yes.



**Vic:** And...and loves to delve into statistics and all of that. And I need to give her space to be able to do that. Though I might be really excited about sharing something relational that's going on in the business, or a new idea, or what I just created, I need to give her space to get out what she's working on...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** ...And sometimes some projects that we work on are weeks long, you know, and we need to set aside... *Okay, during this time, we're giving her space to do that*, and vice versa. We go through seasons of heavy creation and sometimes heavy seasons of implementation of ideas.

**Eryn:** You have learned to fight well.

**Vic:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Would you explain what that means more specifically?

**Vickie:** Well, early on, you know, everybody always said, "Don't ever go to bed angry," and all of that. I don't think we can claim that. I think there's been seasons of feeling frustration and anger over long periods of time, and I don't think that that goes away. But I think continually hiding it, or not bringing it up, or bringing it up in inopportune moments has been more devastating for us than it was helpful. And sometimes it's just good to get away and to talk about things. Victor's better than I am about that. I'm usually very "just the facts, ma'am" type of person. And he's more of the *Okay, what did you mean by that? Or I don't understand what you're talking about*, and just kind of really drawing it out. There are some areas that we just stay away from, cause then we know it's high intensity. But for the most part, everything we've been able to slowly work through. And I think, too, when we actually look back and have moments like this where we are able to reflect and talk about the past and where God has brought us from, it binds us that much more together. So we need more of those \_\_\_\_\_ [Massepa's?] in our life, those Eleazar moments of knowing, *Oh, remember when we were here, and God got us through this? And we did this all together*, because pretty much we are. We're together all the time.

**Vic:** All the time!

**Vickie:** Every day.

**Vic:** Yeah. I go to bed with the CEO every night.

[Laughter]

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**Elisa:** I'm hearing space, I'm hearing respect...

**Vic:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...And I'm hearing perspective, which is really important.

**Vick:** Yeah.

**Vic:** And time because...

**Elisa:** And time.

**Vic:** ...I'm recognizing a potential landmine here. I need to give space to pray, cause I can't trust myself right now. I need time to pray for the Spirit to work on me, to be able to approach this potential landmine...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** ...for it to be diffused. You know, if I'm wanting to fix it, and it's going to be fixed by noon today sort of thing, it never gets fixed and becomes a mess. So...

**Eryn:** Creates more...

**Vic:** ...so we've learned through the years how...

**Vickie:** And still learning...

**Vic:** ...how to identify the potential landmines, how to work through them.

**Elisa:** I also hear self-awareness. I think that grows with age, but like you were expressing, Vic, "I'm recognizing that I may be nearing a landmine." You know?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...And it's that intuition in knowing and trusting that, trusting that that's from God, *let me pull back and give God space to work*. That's super mature.





**Eryn:** Yeah. So we went from a lot of small businesses, and then you brought up spa. So you were in the ... How did yall transition from like *All right, let's do spa business now, go all in...*

**Vic:** I was in charge of kid's ministries. I was a pastor of kid's ministry and family ministry for 14 years...

**Eryn:** Oh wow!

**Vic:** ...all while we were doing a number of...

**Vickie:** Businesses, yeah.

**Vic:** ...the businesses at the same time. And it was during the last year of that time that we had a business, spa business, that was really growing very quickly. And it was the rough economy, and it really needed my expertise of how to get it back on good standing.

**Eryn:** Okay.

**Vickie:** Joined me in the spa world and really became all of the ... COO of all of the operations. He was really the operational person for everything that we needed. And we did... did that right up until 2014, when we finally got it up and going. The economy had recovered, everything was going very well, and like all entrepreneurs, when they finally have a cash cow, they sell it. Because... not because they want to get money for it, but because they're just so darn tired.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vickie:** It was done, so we ended up selling it in 2014. Maintained the... the spa operations in New York city and DC for a while. But we really... we were starting to plant the lavender at that point, out on the farm. We had sold everything, and we were going to slow down for a simpler and softer lifestyle. Wow, were we wrong! [Laughter]...

**Vic:** Yeah, our goal was to introduce lavender, which was the most popular of the herbs and essential oils in our spas that we had developed, just to introduce them not to just the high-end spa goer, but to the everyday person. And we thought we were just going to plant a little bit of lavender, do a little bit of product, and offer a few products here and there because we were slowing down. And God said, "*No, you are going to speed up. And you're going to speed up in a way you've never sped up. And you're going to have a reach nationwide that you never dreamed of having in My name.*" And it's been quite the ride.



**Elisa:** So how has God woven your entrepreneurial skills, your passion for young things – children – to your spa / slash / aromatic / slash / lavender — how has He woven that into your current offering?

**Vickie:** Oh wow! They all come together so beautifully. This is the first business that we've owned that fits us both, like that...

**Vic:** Mm. So well.

**Vickie:** ...everything that is us. It's the farmland, it's the flowers, it's the creativity of creating things that have never been before. You know, how many ways can you possibly use lavender? Well, there's a lot!

**Vic:** We have over a hundred and twenty ways...

**Vickie:** ...and different products...

**Vic:** ...that we...uh...that you can purchase...

**Vickie:** We... we grow culinary lavender is what it is, so there's a lot of baking things. But it's still the traditional lavender too that you put in your bath and body products. But the one that... that really brought everything together... we had no idea. God kind of blindsided us. We knew that our children were married and going to have children, so we thought we need to introduce a toy that's filled with lavender to bring the children down in their emotions and calm them. We knew that we were going to fill it with Michigan cherry pits, since they're very plentiful. And they're warmable, so they're kind of like a warmable toy...

**Eryn:** Okay, yeah.

**Vickie:** ...And you pop it in the microwave, and so as we were forming this first bunny we chose, this very, very soft plush bunny, our daughter Erica was in the process of fostering and brought a little 2-1/2-year-old boy into our lives. And he was helping us, sit in the kitchen floor, and putting them together — putting the Michigan cherry pits in the bag...

**Eryn:** Ohh!

**Vic:** Very first fifty.



**Vickie:** ... And he was there, and we just handed him... I said, "Here, take this home." You know, let's see if he likes it. And he loved it, and his mom came back the next day and said, "This was a game changer. He was able to sleep for the first time. He's relaxing..."

**Eryn:** Ohh!

**Vickie:** ... We're taking it to all of his appointments." So it helped him in all the transitions. And we looked at each other. We didn't have a name for it...

**Vic:** First week of our business...

**Vickie:** ... We just said, "Well, let's call it Xander Bunny." And the little boy's name was Xander, and "let's call it Xander Bunny." And then we looked at each other. We always have to have a mission as part of our businesses. And all the other ones had been very broad...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vickie:** ...like... and they sounded very astute...

**Vic:** An engine to support kids' ministries worldwide.

**Elisa:** Very formal, very formal.

**Vickie:** Very formal.

**Elisa:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Vickie:** But this became very personal because this was a little two-year-old boy. And Victor and I both said at the same time, "I don't know how this business is going to go, but for every one we sell, we're going to donate one to a child in foster care."

**Eryn:** I love that.

**Vickie:** And that's exactly what we've done, and that's been over — well, at this point, it's 78 thousand have actually gone into the foster care system...

**Eryn:** Wow!



**Vickie:** ...but we'll have another five thousand that we'll donate before October of this year...

**Elisa:** Oh my goodness!

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Vickie:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Oh my goodness! So people who are listening, if you go to your website and purchase a Xander Bunny, or you actually have Xander Pets...

**Vickie:** Right. Right.

**Elisa:** ...you will then donate...

**Vickie:** Exactly.

**Elisa:** ...to a foster child?

**Vic:** That is correct.

**Vickie:** That's how it works.

**Elisa:** That's amazing! What a vision!

**Eryn:** Wow! I know!

**Vic:** Every Xander Friend.

**Elisa:** And I love seeing God weave this altogether, you know, all of your skills...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...You guys... you're like in this place almost where you get to watch the creation as it's formed. You know, you don't have to wait twenty years. You're watching it right now be formed...



**Vickie:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ... What a beautiful experience!

**Eryn:** Yeah. What have you learned in creating this new business, having had businesses in the past, about yourself now that you're kind of surprised by? It's like *Oh, I didn't know that I would be continuing to learn in this space.*

**Vic:** There's been times in business that we've felt like we weren't as comfortable to share our faith in a forthright way with everything that we do. But with this business, especially with how lavender helps people, people are gravitating to an herb that helps them with their anxiety, helps them sleep, helps them with lots of different things. It brings to the forefront, to us, people in great need. It's not just children who are... who have trauma and trauma brain that needs to be rewired. There's... there's adults, there's many people buying these in various sizes for themselves as adults than there are for children.

**Elisa:** And I'm listening to that, and you just used the word "trauma," which I don't think we've used yet in our conversation. So maybe can you unpack for us how your concern about trauma ...

**Vickie:** Sure.

**Elisa:** ...in children and adults, and how these little animals ...

**Vic:** Yeah and...

**Elisa:** ...and lavender...

**Vic:** ...and there's some history with that, too. My mom could have very well been a foster child. Her dad died when she was twelve, and was left in a very abusive setting, and she ended up running away. And she has always had ... and I grew up with that instilled in me. She rescued... she always has had an eye for — my dad too — an eye for a child who was in trauma, and would come and rescue and be part of them. And the whole farm was kind of a respite place for them.

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Vic:** So I grew up with that. And we wanted that same thing for our farm. A safe place for families to be but also for children, and whatever we produce to help and to bring awareness of trauma. Foster care is



kind of a faceless crisis. You know we... we have to cover their face whenever a picture is shown or whatever...

**Elisa:** Yes. Yes.

**Vic:** ...to protect... in order to protect them. So because of that, it's hard for people to rally around this crisis because everything is on the lowdown. But there's over 440 thousand kids in foster care in our country alone...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** ...right in our own communities, every community, every county...

**Elisa:** That's right.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Vic:** ...They are there. And they need people to be patient with them. They need to understand they're coming from hurt places. They're coming from brokenness, and they are broken. And they need lots of compassion. They need lots of help. And lavender, like with Xander, is a simple tool God gave, a simple plant God gave. But it is a powerful little tool. You combine it with a plush toy that they love, with the long handles, and they carry wherever they go. We hear every single week from families who are foster families, from agencies, from police investigators who are removing children from homes, to you name it. We hear wonderful reports of how this toy is making a difference in people's lives.

**Eryn:** Wow! I mean we have one right here in front of us. There was so much intentionality in the way that you designed this...

**Vic:** Yes.

**Eryn:** ...cause you could've made a funky looking bunny.

**Vickie:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...And it is the most... it's like you want to pet it. You want to pet the center between its eyes. What was that process like for you guys to have never made... you've never made a stuffed animal before to...



**Vic:** Yeah. And Vickie has designed all of our Xanders...

**Vickie:** They're so fun. You know you look at the eyes. To me, that's the biggest thing, the... kind of like the sad... little bit of sad eye but yet cute at the same time, the big nose. The feet have to have toes. I original... they've all gone through a little bit. I'm pretty obsessed about how soft things are and how cute things are. So having them with extra long ears that actually reach to the ground as they sit, you know, a little tail. Even the clothes have a little hole where the tail comes out...

**Elisa:** I love it.

**Vickie:** ...It just looks so cute...

**Elisa:** Love it.

**Vickie:** But the feet and the glow-in-the dark heart on the foot was version two that came out. We know that children in the nighttime, that's when they start thinking about things. That's when they have a rough time sleeping, and we try to teach the mams and the daddies to tell their little ones that "you are loved, and you're not alone. And so when you see that..."

**Vic:** Even in the dark...

**Vickie:** ...that heart glowing in the dark, just remember you're loved, and you're not alone." And so those were all of the things that we thought about. The other thing that we put right out there — Vic was mentioning sharing our faith — is on the bags it does say, "Jesus loves me, this I know."

**Elisa:** Oh cute!

**Eryn:** Ohh!

**Vickie:** ...so that is ... um...

**Vic:** They come in a little backpack and...

**Eryn:** That's so cute!



**Vickie:** So a lot of these kids don't have anything that they come with but a garbage bag, so we did want to have a ... and that's where I'll, you know, if they do have any items where it's... it's taken. And we have a little bunny that goes — and the dog and the cat — that actually fit into the backpack so they can use the backpack for other things at a later time.

**Elisa:** So smart.

**Vic:** People send pictures all the time, and agencies, of a child from the back with their Xander on... in a backpack...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Vic:** And it's just heartwarming to know...

**Elisa:** And you... oh gosh, and you have a little card that goes with each one...

**Vic:** Yeah, it's a little note from Xander...

**Eryn:** Aww!

**Vic:** ...from a Xander animal...

**Elisa:** You want to read that, Eryn? It's so precious.

**Eryn:** [in a childlike voice] "Hello! I am your new Xander friend. Thank you for adopting me. I was born on Lavender Life Farm in Caledonia, Michigan, and have many brothers and sisters. For every one of us that has been purchased, one is donated to a child in foster care. Have your adults follow the directions on the back in order to take good care of me. Give me lots of hugs, and I will hug you right back. I already love you, Xander."

**Elisa:** Ohhh!

**Eryn:** "I already love you." It's so sweet.

**Elisa:** It's so precious. That's awesome.





**Eryn:** Oh, I just love it. Vic, you said something that just really — I hadn't heard that term before. You said, "Foster care is a faceless crisis."

**Vic:** Yes. Yes.

**Eryn:** What do you feel is, in your experience and just witnessing all the stories that yall both have seen or have been touched by, what's a misconception, or what's something that nobody knows that yall became aware of?

**Vic:** One of the things ... we get comments on Facebook sometimes from people who don't really understand what traumas are like. And they say, *Oh, you don't need to buy a toy. They get all the toys they need. They get money from the state,* and on and on and on. Very cold hearted, not understanding where the hard places where these children come from. Another is that *I can't really adopt a child out of foster care. It's way too expensive.*

**Elisa:** Oh right.

**Vic:** ...And it is just the opposite, a child out of foster care. And by the way, there's over 17 thousand children that every year age out of the system...

**Elisa:** Age out. That's the hardest...

**Vic:** ...because they... they weren't adopted, but neither did they have a foster home, seventeen thousand...

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Vic:** ...every year. A hundred and eighteen thousand are waiting to be adopted who are in foster care, where parents have released their rights, but they are in need of an adoptive home.

**Elisa:** Foster homes, aren't there, Vic and Vickie, that it's a short-term situation, where you're really helping that child become stable or stay stable while the family heals...

**Vic:** Yes...

**Elisa:** ...for reunion...



**Vic:** ...Yes, reentry, yes...

**Elisa:** ...and reentry... uh huh...

**Vic:** ...Yes, and that's very important.

**Elisa:** And a lot of people don't understand that. That's another ministry we can have in each other's lives.

**Vic:** Yes.

**Vickie:** It would be huge for somebody to come alongside of these moms and dads who have maybe lost a little touch with their family and need some help, because pretty much I think the statistic is like 83 percent will never be reunited with their families.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Vickie:** ...They will try, but there will be... something...

**Elisa:** They may have hit a legal issue...

**Vickie:** ...will happen...

**Elisa:** ...or a financial issue, or a, you know, traumatic issue or addiction issue. Yeah.

**Vickie:** Yes, exactly, yeah. So that's a whole ministry of itself is people that could come alongside of these families so that ... No judgment, I mean, there but for the grace go all of us of what could happen in a family. And there's really not a socioeconomical line that's drawn that says, *well, these kids are the only ones*. I mean there's kids that are being taken out of doctors' families. You know it... it's just things get out of control sometimes. But to help those families to reunite again would be our ultimate goal.

**Vic:** One of the exciting things that we see happen... When we donate through a community partner, who commits to take on their whole county, build a relationship with every agency in their county, they ascertain how many children are served in kinship care and/or foster care for a whole year. We get them that many Xanders. A lot of them are faith-based groups and churches, and a lot of times the churches, when they show up with the Xanders say, "Okay, here are Xanders for you. What more can we do to help



you?” And the people just look at them and sometimes weep. And they say, “Really? You’re asking that question? Well, here’s a list. We need mattresses, we need respite care – families, we need foster families, we need adoptions, we need parenting help so that these children can someday get back into their family, we need drug addiction help, we need English as second language; on and on the list goes. And we have multiple churches that we donate to that provide that for their county. And the Xander Friends open the door for them to be able to do that.

**Elisa:** We all need a friend like Xander, don’t we? What is your hope in the next foreseeable future of what you’d like to see God do?

**Vickie:** Talking about this the other day. It’s like, you know, *how do we expand this business? How do we do this, how do we do that?* And we’re just like *Well, we’ve just got to get more Xander Friends out.* And actually we were talking about the exact same thing. There are 440 thousand children in foster care. We’ve only donated 80 thousand, you know, 79-80 thousand, over 83 by October. We are falling really short of the number of children that need these, so our vision is just to keep going on with this faceless crisis, as Victor has said. We want to bring awareness of this and seeing how the churches can fit into this so easily. Talk about an outreach program — just to be able to get these Xanders into little children’s hands. But then also we’ve had a vision just recently of being able to put a face to these children. And what I mean by that is, you know, they... again, you lose the emotion without seeing a child’s face that is in need. Well, there are a lot of children that are in hospitals right now suffering with different illnesses who are also in their own sense of trauma.

**Elisa:** True.

**Eryn:** That’s right.

**Vickie:** And so we thought, well, hospitals are known for having wonderful donors that step alongside and say, you know, *What can we do to help get these children well?* That doesn’t happen in the foster care system, but what would it look like if a donor came up to us and said, “Hey, lookit, I want to take care of, for us, it would be Helen DeVos Children’s Center. I want to make sure all of those children get a bunny.” And we would say, “Great! You purchase these bunnies, and we’re going to match that with one to children in foster care throughout the entire area...”

**Elisa:** Beautiful. Beautiful.



**Vickie:** ...so there's a double give. That way it's able to bring a face to a huge crisis on both fronts, but yet it's a double give every time. Instead of the onesies and twosies, we'll be able to do it in a much broader way. So that is our new vision.

**Vic:** We have some counties — Los Angeles County is one of them — there's two individuals, real go-getters, who are doing the research to be able to get Xanders to every child in foster care in Los Angeles County. That's over 35 thousand children in that county alone.

**Elisa:** How about if we pray for these, you know, God to raise up these Xander friends, literal Xander friends, friends of Xander...

[Simultaneously]: Yeah!

**Elisa:** ...who will multiply the Xander friends influence. *Oh Father, thank You for Your gift of life, of learning and imagination, friendship, excellence. Lord, thank You for gifting that acronym to the Bennetts. And, Lord, we pray You would multiply that gift by Your Holy Spirit's power, and You would draw to Vic and Vickie, in this Xander project, people who can see the amazing multiplication of their efforts by becoming involved, thinking of a child that they want to gift this to, thinking of maybe somebody that they feel they need to come alongside, or Lord, even connecting them with a foster care organization where they can make a difference. Thank You for this vision. Thank You that You are a good God, a creative God, who equips us for the work to which You've called us. In Your name we pray, Amen.*

[Simultaneously]: Amen.

[Theme music]

**Eryn:** Well, before we go, make sure to check out the link for Lavender Life Company, and look into the adorable Xander Friends. You can find that and our blog on our website at [godhearsheer.org](http://godhearsheer.org). That's [godhearsheer-dot-o.r.g](http://godhearsheer-dot-o.r.g).

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

[Music]



**Eryn:** Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank John and Matt for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[ODB theme]

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