



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 25 - The Practical Benefits of Gratitude

Eryn Eddy & Elisa Morgan

Elisa: Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5, I think it's verse 18, "Give thanks in all circumstances." He said it's not "for" all circumstances but "in" all circumstances. You know, just kind of acknowledging that God's still there. And so in that moment to...to kind of look at that one item on your Thanksgiving turkey or your finger turkey and go (pffft) okay, I don't want this in my life; but I am...I'm gonna give thanks in it.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Trusting Your character, God, in it. I think that shapes us.

[musical interlude]

Woman: 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. In this holiday special, we want to ask what the holidays mean to you. Are you still filled with childlike joy and nostalgia? Do you find it easy to think about the birth of our Savior, Jesus? You maybe feel, especially this year, overwhelmed with the process of turning regular life and it's anything but, right, into a magical winter wonderland for the holiday season.

Eryn: Today, Elisa and I will talk about the sometimes overwhelming layers of the holidays and all the emotions associated with them. We'll pinpoint some of our own lessons from past Christmas celebrations while also highlighting ways in which we can focus on turning this often stressful season into a season all of us can once again enjoy. That's coming up on *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Okay, so we're thick into the holidays. Is that a good way to describe it? Thick into the holidays.

Eryn: Thick, for sure. There's lots of layers to the holidays.



Elisa: Yeah, and you know we're in between Thanksgiving and Christmas. You know for me that means I'm starting to do that panting breathing that I think women do in labor.

Eryn: Paper bag.

Elisa: Yeah, paper bag. Yeah, I like to say that...that women give birth to Christmas. Literally, the first Christmas was given birth to by a woman—Mary with Jesus. And...and ever since, we've been giving birth to the celebration around us, you know.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Just seems like everything kind of falls to us to turn regular life into holidays.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: Yeah?

Eryn: Yes. Goodness, the holidays bring out different parts of us that we didn't know we had inside or that we've suppressed that we did know we had inside and that just comes to a bubbling point.

Elisa: Yeah, yeah.

Eryn: Right?

Elisa: Yeah, you know and I think for me a lot of it goes back to this elicitation of childhood memories. It's like I flash back to, I'm five and Santa's come. And you know it's the magical moments. And I, as an adult, I want that for myself again.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And yet I've been disappointed enough to know that's kind of stupid.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: You know that's not really the meaning of the holidays. But I still have this (huh huh) thing that bubbles up inside me, and I want it for myself. And I want to give it to those around me.



Eryn: Yes, yes. Expectations maybe like we can have expectations that we're supposed to feel a certain way like we did when we were younger. Now as we are as adults, we recognize we don't feel the same way as we did when we were five that we do now. There's...there can be a little sadness to that sometimes I think the holidays can bring that out.

Elisa: That's super honest. In fact, I've got a teenage grandson. And he's actually said that. He's in his late teens. You know, it's kind of not the same as when I was little. And I think yeah, welcome to real life. And it isn't. I mean maybe think of what your most disappointing holiday season. Can you think of one?

Eryn: Yes, I can. Oh gosh.

Elisa: Can you share about it?

Eryn: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I can. I remember when I was newly single after being married for almost 10 years, the invitations to parties quit showing up in my mailbox.

Elisa: Oh.

Eryn: And you know you would get those invitations of people's families and you're invited Thanksgiving, potlucks, you know, Christmas parties to new year's parties. I used to get all of those in my mailbox, and then they stopped coming.

Elisa: Wow.

Eryn: Pretty abruptly. And that was really hard, because my holiday season was kind of around socializing to not socializing at all.

Elisa: Why was that as you look at that? Why do you think you stopped receiving invitations?

Eryn: I think there's a complexity to an ending of a relationship that people don't know how to process it, so they avoid it. And so I had a lot of avoiders, understandably because they didn't know how to walk towards separating.

Elisa: But people felt like they had to pick sides or something?

Eryn: Kind of yeah. And it's like even though I never wanted them to pick sides, they put that pressure on themselves to pick sides. So the holidays...



Elisa: Oh wow.

Eryn: ...show that. You know it's just kind of like oh well we don't know if we should invite her or not, so let's just not.

Elisa: Ah.

Eryn: You know, instead of well let's just invite her anyways. It's typically people would lean on the latter of that.

Elisa: So giving into the awkwardness.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah, I think a lot of people go through that, Eryn. That's huge. I remember in our family a Thanksgiving where I was like super not thankful. Just...I'm just gonna be honest. I was like not a bit thankful. We had had just a huge crisis in our family. My son was away. He was a teenager and he was away from home. My daughter had had a crisis in her life. There was a blizzard outside. And the only other friends that we had invited you know couldn't make it. And so we sat there just my husband and my daughter and me and then this one other couple who were so faithful sat there at the table. And you know what? I used to make everyone in our family do those Thanksgiving turkeys.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: Where...where you draw around your hand. And everybody was like oh mom, you know on a piece of construction paper. And then draw around your hand and you cut it out, and you've got this turkey, right? You know we'd decorate them. And...and this year, you know, I...I didn't even have the energy to do that. But I came up with this idea. And...and it was like okay, we're gonna write something that we're thankful for on each of these fingers. And everybody was like, oh mom. They wrote...nobody could think of anything. And so then I flipped it and I thought, I know. Pick a finger, any finger, maybe the middle finger and write the thing you're not thankful for on your turkey. And you know what? The ice broke. And everybody kind of giggled, and everybody went okay. And they could write, I am not thankful for the blizzard. I am not thankful for the crisis we're facing. I am not thankful that we're missing my son. I am not thankful. And something happened in that moment of honesty in this super bad holiday.

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: And you know I had had this friend actually who was my boss, okay, call me...call me, a super godly guy. And he had called me before like I was setting the table a couple of days ahead and that kind of thing. And he goes, Elisa, have you given thanks in this circumstance? And I...I...I just wanted to get little daggers and like claw his eyes out.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: I was like, what are you talking about?

Eryn: You're like there's nothing to be thankful for.

Elisa: That's exactly what I felt like.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And I was just...it just made me mad. But because he was my boss and he was super godly, I thought okay. And he...he talked about how Paul writes in 1 Thessalonians 5, I think it's verse 18, "give thanks in all circumstances." And he said it's not for all circumstances but in all circumstances, you know just kind of acknowledging that God's still there. And so in that moment to...to kind of look at that one item on your Thanksgiving turkey or your finger turkey and go (pffff) okay. I don't want this in my life, but I am...I'm gonna give thanks in it...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...trusting Your character, God, in it. I think that shapes us.

Eryn: I love that. I just think about what you said in giving thanks in it. It's not saying that what you're experiencing is invalid for you to feel upset. You're not saying how you feel is wrong. But you're saying give thanks in it by recognizing God is in it with you.

Elisa: Hmm, yeah. I think that's what Paul means. I think that's what my boss meant. It's like when we try to go straight to giving thanks and we skip over the pain of what hurts in life, maybe there's an insincerity. Maybe there's like a becoming unhooked from reality. It's...it's inauthentic. It's not true.

Eryn: Yeah.



Elisa: But...but when we take those things and identify them, I'm not really thankful that I'm single this year and nobody's inviting me to parties.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: I'm not really thankful that I don't have a family to be with. I'm not really thankful that my job is not what I want it to be or I don't even have one or that I'm scared about my bills. I'm not thankful. When we say that, I think we're a little bit afraid that it'll sound like whining to God. But maybe it just sounds like honesty before God. In that circumstance, I'm thanking You, God, by saying I'm not thankful. Help me here.

Eryn: Yeah, amen. Are we done with this podcast? Cause that is like whoo. That's amazing. I feel like that is such a great application. You're giving people permission to be honest with their struggle to be thankful. And I love that illustration that you did at Thanksgiving with the little finger.

Elisa: Yeah, everybody can borrow that if you want. Maybe we'll put the... put it in the...

Eryn: That's a great illustration.

Elisa: ...show notes so you can figure out how to do it yourself. But the reality, and you probably read Ann Voskamp's book *One Thousand Gifts*. And I read it kind of during this season too. It's beautiful. She just spent I don't know how long writing down every day like three things she was thankful for, and it turned into this one thousand things that she was thankful for. And her book just really describes how it changed her. And...and I think that's what I'm discovering is that in the thick of the holidays, when we're [huh huh huh] panting toward Christmas and trying to discover what is the real meaning here...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...as we push our way through to that, gratitude changes us.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: It's a scriptural promise that, as we enter it, we're...we're changed. And it's been proven actually in...in studies about our mental health. There's this dude, Robert Emmons, he did a study. And he divided people into three groups that made I think it was weekly entries into their journals. And so one group he had write five things they were grateful for. And one described five daily hassles. And then there was this control group that listed five events that impacted them in a kind of small way. And he found that those in



the gratitude group, he called them, the ones who wrote down five things they were grateful for, they felt better about their lives overall. They were more optimistic about the future...

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: ...they even had fewer health problems.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: I know.

Eryn: So how do you go from acknowledging what you're unthankful for, being honest, to then being grateful and thankful and being also physically healthy. Like where's that...what's that...

Elisa: Poof.

Eryn: Yeah, what's that [inaudible]?

Elisa: It's just a formula, Eryn. You just write down five things and then tomorrow you're better. It's just a formula. It just makes total sense.

Eryn: I wish it was that easy.

Elisa: I know. But that's what the study found, and I think I'm processing how does it change us? I'm trying to think about it. Have you ever tried to be grateful for something that you really weren't grateful for? Or is it just finding some other things that you're grateful for? You're nodding...that...that you can lay on top of the things you're not grateful for.

Eryn: Yeah, yes. In the thick of something I'm ungrateful for, I don't think I've ever tried to like change my perspective to like be thankful for it. But what I will do, I will look around at the other areas of my life too and...and recognize what I am thankful for and cling to those.

Elisa: Okay, so maybe you're in...you're in a situation where you're not invited to the Christmas parties, and that hurts. And you're not thankful for that. But you look around, and you think but my parents are healthy. And they're gonna invite me.



Eryn: Yes, exact...exactly. And honestly, I learn...I did actually. It's funny you said that, cause I did that. I was you know just so sad, I just felt like rejected or just not like you know. You feel like, man, no one wants to invite me anymore to anything. Cool. What's that mean about me? You know. But then I was like oh my goodness. I never had the season of life where I could actually go and spend time with my parents to this amount of time. And I'm so grateful that I can, and they're healthy. And we get to like really have a lot of fun decorating the tree together. And I hadn't done that since I was young. And like I guess I pivoted. It was kind of like okay, that was painful and that was more of a good...a circumstance than an ongoing thing that happened for me that caused me to be unthankful. But I did pivot, and I was able to find other areas to be thankful for.

Elisa: That's fleshing out I think this concept that Paul writes about, about giving thanks in all circumstances. And let me...let me apply it for my life too. So it is looking at other things you're thankful for and maybe that makes you feel better. So I'm looking at I'm thankful I have some friends that are calling me. I'm thankful that I had a little bit of money here to give somebody a present. I'm thankful for those other things. But it's also, and this is the real...it's like turning something inside out. And I think that's what Paul's writing about when he says give thanks *in* all circumstances. And...and that's the kind of thing where then what I did at our Thanksgiving table with our finger turkeys is I had to go through my own. And I think okay, I'm not thankful that my son isn't at the table, but I'm thankful that I know where he is. I'm thankful that he's in a safe place. I'm thankful that he's made a healthy choice.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And I'm not thankful about the crisis my daughter is facing. But I am thankful she is at the table. And I'm thankful that she's making a healthy choice today. And I'm thankful she's alive and well and with us. And I'm not thankful for the blizzard that kept so many people from our table. But I am thankful for this one couple friend who was able to make it. And I am thankful for my husband who is so faithful. See, there is an amazing thing. It doesn't diminish the bad. It's still there. But maybe it puts it in perspective...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...that helps us in that circumstance to find gratitude.

Eryn: Yeah, when I hear you say that, I think about it's like accepting that our ideal is not going to be ideal. Like it's not. Our ideals of what we desire, our expectations aren't going to be met. And it's finding the thankfulness around them.



Elisa: And...and Christmas especially the holidays are times where ideals twinkle you know like the tinsel. And every commercial and every Hallmark movie.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And every family at church and the advent presentation with the lighting of the candles and the two-year-olds doing their angel impersonations. You know all of these things are so twinkly and wonderfully magical. It can be disillusioning to go home to our empty house or our messy house or our hurting house and hold onto something that will bring us through the holidays.

Eryn: So you kind of...kind of brought me to a thought. Comparison is in the holidays. Comparison...

Elisa: True, true.

Eryn: ...where we compare a lot. I compare a lot. I'll look around. And like what you're saying like the twinkling. It's like you do. You compare like what that family looks like or what their holiday card is or...

Elisa: Oh my goodness.

Eryn: Right or do all of our outfits match? [laughing]

Elisa: Yes. The holiday cards, the Christmas cards, the Christmas letters with all the perfect families. Oh my word. I remember thinking you know if I had to write a Christmas letter this year about my family, it would...it would look like the, you know, the upside down you know, the...the inside out part of Christmas...maybe like the Charlie Brown tree where all the little needles fell off onto the ground. That's what some of our Christmases have looked like. And you're right, Eryn. We not only compare and think everybody else has got it all wrapped up with a bow. We think that we're the only ones who don't. You know, it's...it's just me. And sometimes even competition can just sneak in. You know, it's like I've got a friend who just thinks she has to give the best gifts of anybody in the world. And so I think oh no, I've gotta top her, you know, because gifts are so important to her.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And so I just didn't like you know I'm always trying to look for something that's gonna be perfect and wrap it exactly the way she would want it, because that's kind of her love language. And yet I feel so stressed when I do that.



Eryn: Yeah, yeah, yeah, yeah that's so true. And that robs the...the joy I think of being present in our circumstances, doesn't it?

[musical interlude]

Elisa: And when we come back, we'll brainstorm some tangible actions we can take to daily cultivate a heart of gratitude and really enjoy this holiday season even this year. That's coming up on *God Hears Her*.

[music]

Elisa: Hey, friends, if you're enjoying today's episode, go ahead and hit that "subscribe" button so you never miss a new episode of the *God Hears Her* podcast. When you subscribe, new episodes are delivered straight to your device or computer. So hit "subscribe" right now and remember that God sees you. He hears you, and He loves you because you are His.

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[music]

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

Eryn: And I'm Eryn Eddy. And in just a moment, we will consider some action steps that can help us not only grow in our daily habit of gratitude but also really enjoy this holiday season. But first, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode but also they include a link to a free resource. It's an e-booklet titled *Windows on Christmas*. This free download can help us experience Christmas in a new way by pointing us back to God's heart for this Christmas season. So just click on the link in the podcast description, or visit our website at godhearsheer.org. That's godhearsheer.org.

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Elisa: Now back to our conversation on gratitude and enjoying this Christmas. Let's begin by asking how we can learn to accept our not so manicured lives and focus on the true gift that Christmas offers. This is *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: So I feel like we've discussed a few things that impact our ability to be thankful. So we have ideals, expectations, comparison. Are there any other ones that you can think of that kind of rob our ability to be thankful?

Elisa: No.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: I can't think of anything else.

Eryn: Yes, I know. I think those are it, right? Comparison for sure is one for me. It's so much easier to look at the house next door that has all the lights and think that their life is just much more manicured than mine.

Elisa: Manicure that's a great word. And I think there's some fun to it. You know I...I can get into a good Hallmark movie and just kind of escape...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...and enjoy it for a while. But...but the reality is, you know, nobody's really living a Hallmark life. You know we're all living real lives. And you know honestly that's where it comes. We've gotta pull ourselves back into the...the truth of...of the holidays. What are they really about? And they're about this stunning act of our God to come to rescue us to...to use a woman like us to give birth to a Savior who walked the planet with real feet and touched people with real hands and whose heart broke over the brokenness in our world with a real heart and who hung on a cross and died for us as a real Savior. I mean maybe there's not tinsel on that. And hey, there's not tinsel and twinkly lights on a crucifixion.

Eryn: Right.

Elisa: It's a painful reality that meets our need. So when we...when we bring our longings and our yearnings before our real God, you know that's where the hope comes. That's where the real hope comes.



Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: So I want to ask us some questions, Eryn, if we can kind of...

Eryn: Okay.

Elisa: ...throw this up and see if anything sticks. What kind of handles can we offer on learning to get our grateful going if you will? You know we can think about the true meanings of the holidays, and that is absolutely vital. You know get a good Christmas devotional and walk your way through it every day and...and spend time re-orienting your crazy Hallmark mind towards what this real thing is about anyhow. But what other kinds of things? We've talked about keeping a gratitude journal. And...and I think that's a super practice. My brother's in a relationship with a friend who's kind of like a you know, what do you call it...a mentor. And he...he asks him every day to send him a gratitude list.

Eryn: Oh.

Elisa: I think that's stunning. And so my brother has to every day think, okay, what am I grateful for? He gets up in the morning, that's on his mind. And he has to email his friend like five things he's grateful for every single day.

Eryn: I love that.

Elisa: And...and that...that gets his thinking going.

Eryn: That's creating a...such a healthy discipline for your mind. That's so good. So okay, a gratitude journal. Let's see what else. What about creating like some sticky notes to put all over your house like physical reminders to like remind you of certain things that bring you joy.

Elisa: I love that, you know, maybe draw like a poinsettia on one or you know and think about that. Or...or maybe put a merry and bright kind of sticky. You just gave me an idea of what if we go to the Christmas tree in just a three-minute moment and pick one ornament to focus on. You might have the...the matchy-matchy kind of Christmas tree where it's turquoise and pink and everything is perfect, you know. Okay. Or you might be like me where it's kind of...it's the...the kids' ornaments or even my childhood ornaments. And I'm thinking right now of an angel that was turquoise and kind of made of this broom, straw material. And it's her little face is kind of worn off because she's over 60 years old. And she's been hanging every year for all these years. And I stop and look at her, and I think about you know



the...the years when I was maybe seven or eight or nine. And I think about, there were some not great moments, but there were beautiful moments. And I'm thankful for just her presence and a reminder to me over all the years. You know, what if we just picked an ornament like that every day to be thankful for?

Eryn: I love that. That's such a good physical representation to you. That's so good. Let's see, what else could you do? You could do...I definitely think our...the way that we talk to ourselves, we have to be more conscious of it; cause that robs us of being thankful. So like those little popping thoughts of well if only you did more of your family would be this. Or you know if you were more like this, then you would have been invited. Or those types of thoughts that we just...they just really creep in, and we don't even recognize it. And we finish the sentence. So I think...

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: ...I think our self-talk is so important to...to recognizing and...and going okay, I see that thought. And I'm gonna speak truth over it and be, and choose something to be grateful for instead.

Elisa: That is so good, Eryn. You know and...and because it's kind of a constant white noise in the background...

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: ...you know beneath the Christmas carols we may have on. We have on playing you know on our...on our phones or something, you know. There is this white noise of self-criticism and...and condemnation and accusation. And so to replace that self-talk with God-talk. You know, what does God say is true? That's...that's good. I know what I like what's happening right now is to partner up with somebody. Because you and...right now what we're doing is we're sharing ideas with each other.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And you're smiling. I'm smiling. And stuff that's going on that feels thick in the holidays is a little bit lighter, a little bit thinner if you will. Cause we're sharing that together. So to maybe have a gratitude partner like my brother's friend, you know, that kind of thing. And we can do that for each other, right?

Eryn: I love that, absolutely. Having that friend that you can call on and go okay, today was hard. But God...like this happened, this happened, this happened. Or oh my goodness, praise report. This happened. Like having a...having a buddy that you can have a praise report with you know and be...and express gratitude. I love that. I feel like that. You and I do that.



Elisa: Yep, yeah, we do. You know, Eryn, I think one more thing. And we see this on the news or almost every news station has some kind of focus during the holidays on this, and that's this kind of an outward orientation, you know, to be about other people. You know instead of wa, wa, wa, you know what I'm not getting. You know what's not happening with me. Can I be the one that's helping it happen for someone else? Can I surprise a neighbor with a scented candle on her doorstep? You know could I give a Starbucks card to a co-worker? Or...or could I pay for the person behind me in the Starbucks drive-up line? You know can I do something that's outward focused?

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: And cause that makes me just so excited.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: So excited.

Eryn: Yes.

Elisa: When I...when I think to do something like that for others.

Eryn: Yes, like sponsoring a family that needs dinner. I think thinking outwardly helps you get out of your head.

Elisa: It does. It does. So bottom line, we're talking about with our little list of ideas here a real intentionality.

Eryn: Yeah.

Elisa: You know to...to give thanks in all circumstances, not for them, but in all circumstances. And there are some really concrete things we can do. And you know when we get our grateful going, you know, you, me, every single person who's listening I can kind of feel a collective sigh of relief and a collective pause from the panting (huh huh huh) you know and a collective peace descending on our planet through our efforts.

[music]



Eryn: Although we may not always be thankful for our current circumstances, what a great reminder to practice giving thanks in those circumstances. You're listening to *God Hears Her*. And before we close out today's episode, just a quick reminder that the show notes are available in the podcast description. The show notes not only contain the talking points for today's episode, but they also include a link to a free resource. It's an e-booklet titled *Windows on Christmas*. This free download can help us experience Christmas in a new way by pointing us back to God's heart for this Christmas season. Just click on the link on our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.org.

Elisa: Not only will you find a link to this free e-booklet, but the show notes also contain a link to purchase the new *God Sees Her* devotional. And you can find links also to connect with Eryn and myself on social media. We would love to hear how this show has impacted you and even answer any questions you might have after listening. So again you can find these links in the show notes or by visiting our website at godhearsher.org.

Eryn: Thank you for joining us, and merry Christmas. And don't forget, even when you're struggling in hard circumstances, God hears you. He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

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Elisa: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark and Daniel Ryan Day. And today, we also want to recognize Nicole and Melissa for their help in creating and promoting the *God Hears Her* podcast. Thank you all.

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