



God Hears Her Podcast

Ep65 - Building a Co-Missional Relationship

Eryn Eddy & Elisa Morgan with Beth and Todd Gukenburger

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[music]

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

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

Elisa: And I'm Elisa Morgan. Have you ever felt disconnected from your partner, spouse, or... or some you're close to? Maybe your schedules are getting more and more busy every day, or your kids distract you from paying attention to the other person. Well, today we're talking to Beth and Todd Gukenburger, a married couple who decided years ago to set aside 2 hours of their night working on growing their marriage.

Eryn: Beth and Todd have an incredible story and work on what they call a co-missional marriage while being parents to 11 children. They are also the founders and leaders of Back2Back Ministries in international orphan care organization they started in Mexico, which will have a link in the show notes.

Elisa: We're so excited to hear their story and spend time with them on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Eryn, have you heard the term "co-missional marriage?"

Eryn: I have heard it, but I'm not extremely familiar with it. I don't think I've had a conversation on it.



Elisa: Yeah. I... It could be sound a little weird. [Laughs] If you just take it out of context, you know, co-missional. Okay, try to expand our little minds here. What do you think it could mean, and by that word it's "c" "o" and then "missional."

Eryn: So, I think two and then on mission coming together...

Elisa: Oh, look at you little linguist.

Eryn: Ohh, look at that.

Elisa: Good Job.

Eryn: That's the first thing that comes to my mind, like on a mission together.

Elisa: Together. Yeah, I think co means together. Yeah, that's good, that's good. Okay, we are talking with Todd and Beth. Y'all have somethin to say about co-missional marriage, right? Welcome.

Eryn: Welcoooooome.

Beth: Thank you. Thanks for havin us. You know, gosh, for us co-missional marriage... we have decided to tie our lives together not just in a marriage and no just as co- parents and not just as friends; we also vocationally share a calling. And we didn't like set out to do that. I don't think in the beginning we imagined 25 years later we'd still be doing it, but, man, that idea that we are focused on something outside of ourselves. And we watch that focus actually bind us in ways that we couldn't have manufactured through date nights, and, I...that... that's kind of... co- missional marriage is like this experience of deciding I'm gonna try as best as I can to put my gifts next to your gifts, my thinking and insight next to your thinking and insight, my challenge exertation, correction next to yours. Let's see if one plus one can actually equal more than two, which is really... probably what our testimony is. We've watched something get multiplied in that... in that effort.

Todd: Yeah, and I think it's all, you know, summed up in purpose, greater purpose, you know, very intentional.

Elisa: I wanna hear how that evolved, but the first question that's coming to my mind is... is... isn't really every marriage intended to be that way?



Eryn: Yeah, right, exactly.

Elisa: A...a... and what do you wanna say to that as we set the stage here cause you guys have a specific calling, but the way you backed up, Beth and then Todd, and... and talked about how when you lay each other's gifts alongside each other you get more than two. Talk about that a little bit more.

Todd: Yeah, and I... we obviously serve in ministry together, but we believe that anybody can have a co-missional marriage. It's really about being other -minded, other-centered but focused on something bigger than just yourselves, but to be... to be aligned together focused on some other thing...

Eryn: Right.

Beth: It really is like this decision we made at... at some point that we didn't just wanna add up the days and see what we ended up being we were gonna put some strategy in thinking behind it that was hopefully more elevated than our own thinking, like God what is it that you... we'll how do we even know each other and why... why would you have put us together? And is there a... is there meaning behind this particular combination that's bigger than just the children that we birthed all the vast giant, I mean we have 11 kids, but sometimes you can make your family life be your exclusive mission. And I think that is certainly a huge part of our life, but that is not the entirety of our life.

Eryn: Yeah. Would you say it's a mindset and a lifestyle?

Beth: Yeah. I...I mean, probably the most radical thing we would... we'll say on this podcast, I'll say next, we have been married about a decade. And it wa... well nobody was doing anything wrong, like he... we still liked each other, but when we saw one another coming, at least I... I like to confess that I was thinking, *what can he do for me right now?* Our house was growing we had... we had tons of demands, and I... I when I saw him, I wanted him to help me. When he saw me he wanted me to help him. Our interactions were becoming increasingly transactional.

Eryn: Yeah.

Beth: And one... I was studying the biblical books about truth with some friends of mine, the Song of Solomon and Psalms and Proverbs, Ecclesiastics, and I read this verse in Song of Solomon 2:15. It says, "Catch the little foxes, the little foxes that wanna come into your vineyard, and ruin it while it's in bloom."



Elisa: So good.

Eryn: I love it.

Beth: And, I had this moment with my friends where I said, “Oh my gosh, I totally thought the good Christian woman thing to do was if a fox came into my vineyard to shield Todd from it so that I just always had my best foot forward.” And, I said, “I wonder what it would look like if I told him what some of the metaphorical foxes were that were comin into my vineyard?”

Eryn: Wow.

Beth: So, we had this like date, and I... and I said, “Okay, so, what would you do if I told them to you?” and he said, “Well, I’d get my bazooka out and shoot those foxes cause I’m real interested in your vineyard being in bloom.” And, I said, “Okay, well, here... here are some of the foxes that I have...” and some of them are... were innocent, like fatigue and busyness. Some of them were more complex from, you know, history and... and sin and all that. And we decided okay let’s... let’s just tackle the whole busy, fatigue issue. And, we made a decision that felt really radical. It doesn’t feel so radical to me cause we’ve been doing it now over 15 years, but we decided we were gonna spend 2 hours a day not co-managing our household, not co-parenting our family, not co-working in our ministry. We were gonna spend 2 hours a day wearing only this... the hat of... of woman or man of friend of spouse. And it was so...in the beginning... we di... we decided to do it from like 9 to 11 every night, no email, no laundry, no dishes, no kids, no work talk, no nothing. And, in the beginning, the kids were like so confused because the door gets shut and like there was like a no trespassing...

Todd: You had to be bleeding.

Beth: Yeah. And I can remember like one of our kids knocked on the door like, “oh my gosh we didn’t finish math. I need mom for math.” And Todd was like, “you can go to second grade next year, it’s fine,” you know, and we had some teenage girls who are in our family, and one of them will knock on the door like, “I broke up with my boyfriend I totally need to talk to her right now.” And Todd was like I’m positive you’ll still be sad tomorrow; check in then, you know...,

Elisa: Oh, my goodness.



Beth: ...we had to teach our children that there was gonna be some time set aside for us to be adults. But, what we saw happening later, overtime was... I mean, one that became the deepest breath of our day. It totally, radically saved our marriage as well as the commission part of it because we did much better job commissioning the other hours of the day, knowing that those hours of the day were about investing and indulging and leisuring together. But, I... I think our kids began to realize, one, like if they saw tension in our relationship, which we're human so they did sometimes, they were like oh it's fine they're gonna work it out tonight when they're together. There was no... and... and now that most of our children are young adults and making choices about their life partners, we're realizing we really, hopefully, put on display for them the... the aggressive nature you have to take, the posture you have to take to protect that kind of intimacy.

Elisa: That's radical. Yeah. We kinda jumped right into the thick of it, which I love...

Beth: Yes, we do... unapologetic about that...

Elisa: Yeah. So, now could you back up and... and share a bit of your story, you know. Who are you, Beth? Who are you, Todd? How did you become the Gukenburgers together?

Todd: So, were, I think, unique now bu... but we met in high school... went to different high schools, but in local Cincinnati area. So, started dating our junior year and then dated all went college to Indiana University together, got real involved with the campus crusader crew. And, so, loved serving, loved ministry, had a heart for the orphan. We had a couple key events happen and in... with orphans in particular in college and then early marriage after where we got married in our senior year in college and.... So, we felt the call... we felt incredibly called to serve orphans and vulnerable children, specifically in Mexico.

Elisa: Wow.

Todd: We were both teachin, so we saved one of our salaries for a year completely...

Beth: No, no kids at the time so...

Todd: Yeah, no kids, yes. So, we... we had lots of.... And, so, we just socked away one... one whole income and we felt called. And we, literally, the end of that year we quit our jobs and we drove to the border of Mexico, and we had a couple of relationships we visited in March before that. But it was really



just kind of on faith we're just gonna trust God that He's gonna open doors for us to serve in Mexico, and that was in 1997. So, next year'll be 25 years of Back2Back so.

Elisa: Wow, wow. Woah.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: So why vulnerable kids? And how do you define a vulnerable kid?

Eryn: Yeah.

Beth: Gosh, the why, I... I believe that God actually said that seed into our hearts before we met each other, but we had a catalyst moment on a mission trip. So, the middle of that... that trip I was just so frustrated with painting and hijacked the trip. Got in a taxicab, tri... like said the word orphan with a bad Spanish accent cause we had been to Albania once in college on a mission trip and had visited an orphanage one time and it left this impression on us. So, we found an orphanage who that... in that city who told us the kids hadn't had meat in over a year. So, the next day we brought em some meat.

Elisa: Oh, wow.

Beth: Were feeding the kids. One of the little preschoolers came up for like her fifth serving and Todd was like, "go find out where that kid is going, I don't know anyone who could eat that much."

Eryn: Yeah.

Beth: And I followed her to her dorm room. In there, I could see all the preschoolers were helping each other lift up their mattresses, and they were sticking the food underneath their mattresses.

Eryn: Awwwww

Beth: And we just stood in the doorway and thought about all the people we knew who would buy meat for orphans if they only knew how to do it.

Eryn: Yeah.



Beth: And that...that moment was kind of like a... are... are we gonna like a... we had matching SUVs, super cute condo, like... like are we gonna let go of this trajectory and wonder what God might do if we respond and....? Sometimes when people ask me like explain exactly how the calling unfolded. It's not anywhere in my Bible, but it, honestly, it felt like a magnet, like, it just... even when we resisted against that calling you could feel the... the resistance. And, so, today Back2Back Ministries were like all over the world, 350 staff. When I... when I think about what God in... is doing, so much bigger than us. I think... gosh, we stand in a long line of people throughout biblical history that are like ill-equipped and immature and under resourced and.... We... we didn't really have it, but He just kinda looks for people who are obedient and faithful. And that's what we've tried to stay true to.

Todd: Yeah. And... and I think both of our giftings complemented each other really well. We weren't... I think sometimes it, unfortunately, some couples have the same gifting, so it feels a little bit more competitive. Or there's friction, but our gifts really comp each other. I was really handy, loved to serve with my hands, love to... we both loved to serve. So, it was... it was kind of a win- win and it just... we just felt compelled and... and took the next step and it was.... And it felt low risk in some ways cause we had not kids yet. Of course, we got pregnant almost as soon as we moved to Monterey, which is kinda crazy cause surprise, but... whoops. But... but we... but, you know, we've worked through that and it was... it was a beautiful year.

Eryn: What was it like in your journey of just growing more intimately in your reliance on the Lord? As you became more reliable on God and you were resisting, what... was there anything specific that you can pinpoint and go, He did this in me through saying yes and I'm so glad I said yes but it was the hardest thing to go through.

Todd: I'll... I... I'll go first cause mine's simple. I actually feel like I'm not equipped to do anything. God has given me every...

Eryn: Yeah.

Todd: ...every ounce of a... of equipping. You know, like, even running an organization, I say we're a ministry and an organization you have to have good operations and good systems, but you also have to be on your knees praying. The operation system... I had no experience in that, but... but God literally gave me the resources I need that to train the right people in my life. And, so, I can pinpoint key people, key conversations that helped form my decisions, that helped us be spirit lead and made sure that we



stayed agile, just some really great things all go down in history, saying that there's nothing that I've been able to do without the Lord, 100%.

Beth: Yeah. Yeah, my answer is a little bit more complex. I grew up in a Christian family, and nobody tried to build this into my theology, but I inadvertently absorbed this, what I felt like truth, but if you do the right things, hard things won't happen. And then, before... after we got married but before we became missionaries my 51-year-old father got cancer and died, and I was so shocked because we did all the things my Bible told me, like, we prayed in Jesus name and with oil and after we fasted and with two or more of us and.... So, when I had to like make room in a faith frame for hard things happening to good people it... I can see now, I mean, if I'm really honest with you and your listeners I'd say I would way rather not have learned the lesson and still have my dad around, that's just honest. But what God did for me and through that was He helped me understand how to be comfortable in the middle of stories that are hard and painful, which set me up for the next 25 years where when you work with orphan children all of their stories are hard and painful. And I'm not sure that the faith that I carried prior to that would've sustained me in the middle of such difficulty. I really had to learn that lesson and see what God can give you in the middle of really hard things and see how... you know, that... I... I kept saying after my dad died I felt like I had a spiritual bruise, and the way the bruise healed was understanding God is sovereign and how sovereign is actually one of the most powerful words. I can hang my hat on at the end of the day, so. That... that's some of the things that God did especially in those early years. I mean, I still can get shocked by stuff, but in the beginning it's just everything was so shocking to me. The life experiences of kids, and just what they had walked through at such early ages was so shocking. So, I had to keep saying "God you're sovereign," "you're sovereign to like remember that you taught me that."

Elisa: He can redeem it all.

Eryn: That's so good.

Elisa: I'm hearing you express in... in what I think is a very fresh way the truth that God equips you for that to which He calls you, but the way y'all are expressing it is to understand that God's economy is so different from our economy. And, that He truly can take one, meaning Todd, plus one, meaning Beth, and when He puts you together the end result is much more than two. My husband will refer to this as a win-win-win scenario, you know, a win for Todd, a win for Beth, and a win for the Kingdom. And, if all of our relationships could be oriented that way... and... and I think that's what being in the community of Christ really looks like, you know, then we never have enough. You know, I love how you said it Todd, you know, [weird noise] I didn't know how to run an organization, and, you know, Beth, you know, I had to



have my worldview turned upside down. And, then as God meets you uniquely, in Todd and Beth, He then meets you in the Gukenburgers and then He meets you by your expanding your offering for the world to accomplish much more than you could by yourselves.

Beth: There's this expression in Spanish when you have more people come to dinner than you were planning on, you add more water to the beans, and we were kind of walking that world of like "add more water to our beans" and opening our door and opening our home and opening our table and.... And our life and... our... our theme verse really became 1 Thessalonians 2:8 where Paul says 'I was delighted to share with you not only the gospel but my life as well....' And, when we realized okay gospel advancement is about life sharing. We first realized we had to do that with each other, which we... we first had to learn how to sit with each other, listen to each other, encourage one another...

Eryn: Yeah.

Beth: All tho... all of those words, and then kinda out of the strength and overflow of some of the things we were doing in that place in space, we can grow our household, or grow our ministry, or grow our community and invest in them. And, again, if we're being really honest with your listeners, the struggle is to protect yourself from being co-dependent on one another, which means if I have a good day, Todd has a good day; if I have a bad day, Todd has a bad day. That's not very healthy. But...

Elisa: Don't know what you're talkin about.

Eryn: That's real though.

Beth: Yeah. We really wanna be interdependent, not independent, not co-dependent but really that interdependency, which, again, as now as we're starting to raise and release adult children, that's what that looks like. I c.... I... I don't totally want them to be independent and forget that they have this home base that they don't live with anymore. I don't totally want them to be.... I definitely don't want them to be co-dependent on us and need us when it's time for them to be adults. But, that interconnectedness, especially in our international travels we started to see in other cultures... lots of other cultures do that much better than we do in America, and so we were being influenced by certain families that we saw in other counties who were... who... and... and we just started to say let's just deconstruct everything that we were taught and try to build something that feels maybe global but certainly... hopefully biblical.



Todd: Alright. Now I think too like even the early days, I guess, but... back to commissioning is it was hard in the beginning because we were still... we... we actually dated for a long time so we... we did... we didn't have like any first -year marriage troubles or anything like that, but in working together side- by-side, we didn't do the same things. But... but there was friction cause we had different, you know, priority lists in those same things... and some of those things, so... so I think we had to work through those things early on. But I think once we learned or grew to and... and now really do valued what it... the other offered, and then kinda honored that and helped prioritize that. That actually became a difference maker than how we could offer it to other people.

[Musical interlude]

Eryn: And when we come back Beth and Todd will share more with us about their family and how to be co-missional in any relationship. This and more is up next on *God Hears Her*.

[Music]

[Woman speaks]: Do you struggle with loneliness? If so, you are not alone. Whether you are part of the increasing percentage of people who actually live alone, or whether your complex emotions rise from other causes, feelings of isolation can affect every area of life. Most importantly, loneliness can cause us to forget core truths from God's word. Truths like God loves you. God gives life meaning and purpose, and God will never leave you. In Elisa's new book, *You Are Not Alone*, she shares six affirming reminders of our loving God's person, plan, His presence, provision, promise, and purpose to encourage you. Go to store.ourdailybread.org/notalone to get your copy. That's store.ourdailybread.org/notalone.

Elisa: Now back to the show.

Eryn: I have a question, you know, as we're talkin about co-missional, and you touched on co-dependency. And I think it's so easy to become co-dependent on each other. I would love for you to speak into that a little bit more, especially... I'd love to learn how you came to understanding the differences between interdependent, dependent, independent, and interdependent because y'all... y'all got married out of your senior year of college. And so, at that age, you're not really equipped with like attachment styles and, you know, all... co-dependency and all of those things, and so, how did you get to understanding that to then understand co-missional mindset between the two of you?



Todd: You know, I'd say some of the... the red flags over the years have been, you know, if we're disconnected then we're done, like not we're done marriage, but we're done ministry. Like you... we can't do that, you know, and so I... I think those were red flags that led us to have conversations about, you know, I don't like it when I feel this way. When we're disconnected, I don't like that I also wanna quite my day job, which is what we're called to do, and so, there's some... there's some emotion attached to that. And then I think even actually we fostered a ton of teens. I think there's a lot... lot of life stories that come out of that. But I think, you know, for at least to identifying where the problems were was one of the key... in the learning process.

Elisa: I...I we'd be remissed if we didn't pause for a second and say, yet again as we've referenced it several times, y'all have 11 children, and they come by birth, they come by adoption, they come by fostering.

Beth: Yeah.

Elisa: I'm curious, A, why you have 11 children, but, B, how did embracing this many children grow out of your co-missional marriage? And were there spots when it was like I feel called to this child, I don't. You know, what was... how did that come to be?

Beth: We just had that conversation last night, very fresh.

Elisa: From 9 to 11.

Beth: Every child was a joint decision, which praise the Lord. And so sometimes I'll talk to women who want to adopt, and their husbands don't. And I always say do not push him cause inevitably there's gonna be a really hard night, and on that really hard night, you don't want someone saying well go get your son because.... And... and not claiming them, the responsibility, so for sure all of our kids came as a joint decision. No... but we did... I mean, we're not from large families. I'm not even sure I met maybe I knew an adopted child growing up, but it wasn't like that was our culture in any way. They each have kind of unique stories on how they ended up in our household, and... and the best part, like especially during COVID when lots of them were home... college students were home... we had some grad student who... who decided to come home during COVID, watching them interact with each other is, I mean certainly one of my greatest joys, is watching their relationships with each other. And Todd always calls it, you know, great accountability. I might be saying please change your shirt you smelly teenage boy, but I don't have to say it because someone is definitely telling him.



Elisa: I love it.

Todd: I love...I love the dinner table cause at the dinner table they call it... they just call each other out, but it's not mean, it doesn't cross the line, it's not even really sarcastic, it's just truth, and yeah. And so, I ...I love the dinner table cause it's... it's we don't have to do it it's account... they give each other their own accountability.

Elisa: You're havin 12 helpings of those cinnamon buns.

Beth: Yeah, yeah, way to go.

Eryn: How many boys, girls, ages... I wanna hear it all?

Beth: There's se... seven girls and four boys, so the youngest is a biological son who's 18. And we have an adopted son who's 19. Then we have a bio son who's 21, then we have an adopted son who's 23, a bio daughter who's 23, and a newly... newly adopted daughter who's 23, she's been with us for a long time, but.... So, three 23-year-olds. Then we have three girls who we've fostered for eight years, and they are 25, 27, and 30. And so, they aged out of foster care in our home, but never with our last name. Todd always says if they still cost us time and money they count, and they do definitely, so they're...

Elisa: That's right.

Beth: ... they're in the house ...

Eryn: I love that.

Beth: And then we have twin girls who we met when they were 11 and they came home with us fulltime at 15, and they are 35.

Elisa: Wow.

Eryn: Wow.



Beth: And they both are married and have given us three granddaughters. So...so the youngest four are boys, and the oldest seven are girls.

Eryn: Wow.

Elisa: What a way to build a family a... and then a co-missional marriage that ends up in a ministry, it's called Back2Back Ministries, and tell us just for a second, wha... what do you do there?

Todd: So, Back2Back Ministries, we serve orphans [inaudible] around the world in eight different places in five different countries. We're about depth; God has given us a... a really holistic model to go deep with fewer kids than ma... the masses. We're really, really intentional about emotional and social development. We obviously want them to know Jesus and... and have personal relationship with Jesus, but emotional and social development, many of the kids we work with have, you know, come from hard places, come from traumatized backgrounds. And so, we do a real intentional job of equipping our... the caregivers, or the... or the foster parents, or whoever's the primary human life- on- life in their... in their life, equipping them with the right skills in trauma [inaudible] care. So that's one of our... our key bullseyes and... and that's really I think what helps us be most successful. It's hard when we're... when we're work with kids from hard places it's really hard and lots of heart break, but lots and lots of success. And... and lots of fun in it too.

Eryn: That's so beautiful.

Elisa: What would you say to couples or women, specifically, who are listening and have a desire to have this whole concept of co-missional living, but maybe their partner in that [inaudible], you know, just... just like mmm yeaah, mmm no not so much, you know, h... how do we... how do we keep on there?

Beth: Yeah, I'm a big believer in micro goals. I think that sometimes we...we have these really unrealistic expectations about how something might turn out, and, in our marriage, we talk about expectations or like pre-meditated resentments. They...make...they... they just kinda set you up for failure, so....

Elisa: Stop for a second, pre-meditated...

Eryn: Can you repeat that?



Beth: Expectations are like pre- meditated resentments. I mean, when I have an expectation on Todd, I'm really it's... it's... it's frankly pretty manipulative, and I might use a carrot or a stick whenever that version is that we have as wives in order to try and get him to do something I want him to do that's never very satisfying. We want each party to be intrinsically motivated to be interested in our own personal sanctification and our unity, and so, expectations are... are they're just not that healthy. So, for a woman listening who's like uh I... I wanna spend two hours every night...

Elisa: Exactly.

Beth: ...I think a micro goal is probably a much better place to start just setting aside time where you just... where you realize we're not gonna answer our phones, we're not gonna unload our dishwashers, we're not gonna help somebody with math homework, we're gonna just.... Because like what I say to people all the time is I like him so much better than I did five years ago, and I like him five years ago so much better than I did on our tenth anniversary, and relationships don't naturally move closer without intentionality. They... naturally we... it's pretty common to grow apart or to grow up in ways that you're not sharing with each other in real time, and then you look and you're like I don't even know you. And where did that come from? So, for... for some woman listening thinking I... I actually am curious about what do it look like to cultivate a friendship with my partner.

Eryn: Yeah.

Beth: I'm interested in what it would look like to see him in some way other than the father of my child or that, you know, whatever... whatever other role she might see him in. I wonder what he's curious about, I wonder what he's learning, I wonder what he's feeling today, I wonder what he's afraid of, I wonder what scares him, you know, or challenges him. Like, those kinda questions could start to build meaningful conversation and from that meaningful conversation you kinda just want more and more of it.

Eryn: That's good.

Todd: Yeah and I... my recommendation would be, be invitational. You know, invite your husbands into it, invite your husbands... cause I think everybody intrinsically wants something to be meaningful.

Eryn: Ah, that's so good, and when I hear you say that. I think about really it's not normalizing what's sacred and protecting what's sacred. And I think the more we normalize... we make those mini actions that normalizes something that is sacred. Being vulnerable like you said earlier, like, you have to be



vulnerable and honest with how you feel consistently in... in your communication with each other. Only you guys will have that deep intimacy with each other. The more we normalize it the more it does lose its sacredness and you guys have made... you made your... your moments, like your hours that you spend together sacred. You recognized this is sacred, and so, that just shows, I mean, that's just... that's so beautiful; that's so beautiful, and we do normalize things all the time. I was previously married for almost ten years, and I can look back and be so grateful for what God has taught me through that pain of going through the divorce. And... and... and recognizing about being... marriage is about consistently giving servings, being sanctified, and... and keeping things sacred like you guys are doing. It's just such a testament to your family can see it; It's so cool.

Todd: We have this, around Back2Back, we have this phrase we say all the time, and it stemmed from a conversation I had with a c... one of my co-workers who I've served with, actually it was my roommate in college, and we still serve together 25 years later, but I was worn out. We were livin in the field at the time cause we lived in Mexico for fif...for fifteen years, and I turned to Matt and I said Matt I do...I don't know how much longer I can do this, but I'll stick it out if you stick it out kinda thing. And... so we out of that evolved this I'm in if you're in we call it. When you go through hard things and when you do hard things together it... it creates a... a intimate connection, or in the trenches together. We're literally fighting the battle together, we're not against each other, we might be shoulder to shoulder, we might be back to back fighting opposite directions, but we're in the trenches together. And I think that's the fruit of the co-mission. It's you're not alone in this, I've got your back, and it just builds a unique bond that, you know.... And I... and I think, to your earlier question, I think for spouses who want to engage their spouse in co-missional marriage, I think giving it to the Lord, you know, and asking God to soften their hearts, and for the right opportunity, and for the right invitation, and...and kinda baby steps towards it. Maybe it's a small thing rather than a big thing at first just to... just to dip your toe in the water.

Eryn: That's good.

Elisa: There's an obvious question that's kinda hittin me right now, and that's that, you know, a lot of us aren't married, and so, co-missional seems like well we can't have a co-missional marriage. Can we still live co-missionally, and what does that look like?

Beth: Yeah. I absolutely think we can. I think part of being co-missional is deciding my agenda is not the most important. In fact, I'm going to add my own ambition, my own understanding, my own vision, alongside of whomever, a co-workers, I've seen some really neat sibling co-missions, you know, all... I ... I...I ...



Elisa: Not just in pairs figure skating. Not... not just...[laughs]

Beth: Yes, exactly. Even, you know, you think about Ecclesiastics 4 when you see like a... a triple there, you know, a cord of three strands.... Like there's examples where God decides I am gonna actually put on display more of who I am as they... these disseminate parts come together and assemble. And, I mean, this is... this is how we can put on display for the world that God's ways work because it's hard... it's hard to be in partnership with other people. It's hard to be... to constantly be servant leaders, and better listeners, and not need to take credit, and pick up slack, and all the things you do in partnerships and in teamwork. But I ...I absolutely think you can be co.... co- missional. Part of the reason we talk about co-mission inside the context of marriage is because lots of times we value other aspects of the marriage or relationship above the idea that God might have called us together to accomplish something bigger than us, but that does not mean it is exclusive to those relationships.

Todd: Yeah. And I ... I might... I might even add, you know, within our organization, I mean, sure externally too doesn't have to be an organization, but... but the people we serve alongside, I mean, they're right there in the trenches with each... we're in the trenches with each other. We, you know, there's nothing I wouldn't do for one of them and they wouldn't do for me. And, you know, and... and there's one thing that I keep learning year over year is as Christ followers we have to stay on the same side. There can be nothing... nothing that can divide us. I... and we... we bicker over such small things sometimes, and I think it's really important... even... even if your group of friends, your group of people you fellowship with, your people to co-mission with them in... in one way can be really fruitful. We've done that in addition to our marriage, and I'm... we love that.

Eryn: It's beautiful.

[Musical interlude]

Eryn: Beth and Todd are such an important example of how to serve where God calls you and how to have a healthy and intentional relationship.

Elisa: A co-missional marriage, a ministry, and 11 children, it's incredible. Well, before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we wanna remind you 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 links to



connect with Eryn and me on social, and also a link for Back2Back Ministries. To learn more about that work, you can visit our website at godhearsher.org, that's godhearsher.org.

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

Elisa: Today's episode was engineered by Ann Stevens and produced by Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. Today we also want to recognize the amazing Our Daily Bread Contact Center for their help in promoting the *God Hears Her* podcasts, thanks so much.

[Music]

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