



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 78 – Loving Your Neighbor Through Conflict

Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy with Alexandra Kuykendall

**Alexandra:** But Jesus didn't say *Love your neighbors who agree with you. Love your neighbors that make you feel comfortable. Love your neighbors that give you strokes for what you are doing with your life or are happy that you go to church.* He just said, "Love your neighbors like you would like to be loved."

[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 Eddy.

**Elisa:** And I'm Elisa Morgan. Would you say your first reaction is to love the people around you? Do you smile at strangers at the grocery store? Would you wave to your neighbors even if they have different opinions than you? Or even if you've had past disagreements?

**Eryn:** Today we are talking to Alexandra Kuykendall about how to love *all* of our neighbors, meaning all of the people around us. She's passionate about loving people the way that Jesus did when He was on the earth.

**Elisa:** Alexandra Kuykendall is a good friend of mind, and she's the author of four books including her newest, *Seeking Out Goodness*. She's also the cohost of the Open Door Sisterhood podcast where she and her dear friend Krista Gilbert talk about how women can take the next step in their lives and be world changers right where they are. She lives in Denver with her husband and four daughters.

**Eryn:** We are so ready for this conversation on *God Hears Her*.

**Elisa:** You know lots of times, Eryn, when we have a guest that I have met – maybe in a ministry setting or, you know, we shared a platform or something, or...or maybe somebody else just introduced me to them – I go "Here's my friend," you know. And...and I really meant it. I mean I'm not being \_\_\_\_\_



[fake-o?]. But in this conversation we're about to have, this woman is really my friend, and we've done lots of life together. And so I'm excited to bring you, Eryn, into the life of my friend Alexandra whom I fondly refer to as Alex. So excuse me if I do that occasionally in our conversation. So, Eryn, meet Alexandra Kuykendall.

**Eryn:** Alexandra, it is so nice to meet you. We actually met back in – I don't know when. We were just talking a little bit – maybe February, March, feels like almost a year ago. And one thing that I remember sharing with Elisa that I was ... I just had the honor to be a guest on your podcast. She reiterated and shared with me that you're just so real and authentic. And I experienced that with you in that interview. And I got so excited when I learned that you were going to be a guest here on *God Hears Her*. So thank you for being here.

**Alexandra:** Oh, well, thank you. I don't really know how to be any different than who I am. Heh. So I value authenticity, but I don't really work at it. Right? I just decide that God can handle who I am, and I want to give people...other people permission to be who they are. And I think the best way to do that is to be honest about the things that we're wondering, doubting, loving, not loving in our lives.

**Eryn:** That's so well said. Would you peel back the curtains a little bit and ...uh... share with us: How did you get to that point? So let's go like rewind, all the way back to maybe: Where did you grow up? Are you one of any...any siblings? Could you share just a little bit about....

[Laughter and several people talking simultaneously] . . . \_\_\_\_\_

**Elisa:** Those are great questions... Those are great questions, Eryn, and I love that you started there because Alex's background, like all of ours, shapes who she is.

**Alexandra:** Yeah. So I grew up the only child of a single mom. And that was mostly in the Seattle area, but my dad lived in Barcelona. And so my childhood was kind of back and forth between Europe and Seattle. You know we kind of lived an adventurous life. We moved a lot. We lived on an island off of the city for a while. And then, when I was in high school, I was invited to this thing called Young Life, and it was there that I heard the gospel for the first time. And, you know, as a 14-year-old, I thought I'd lived a pretty long life. And I couldn't believe that I had never heard this before, but this was new information. You know I'd seen symbols of faith, and I'd even bee...been to church before, but not enough to really know what it meant until my Young Life leaders explained it to me. So then I went off to college, and I was a pretty good student. Books are kind of my love and, I mean, probably being an only child, too, books were my playmates.



**Elisa:** Mm.

**Eryn:** Aw...

**Alexandra:** ...and so...

**Eryn:** ...I love that... [laughter]... That...that...

**Elisa:** What a fun way to put that!

**Alexandra:** Well, they keep you entertained when you're bored and you're sitting home...

**Eryn:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** ...and, you know, and I was a child in the 80's. I didn't have an iPad to keep me company... [laughter]... So...

**Eryn:** Right.

**Alexandra:** ...I went off to college and got involved in the college ministry on campus and became a little bit – “obsessed” would probably be an unhealthy word... um... “smitten” would be a cuter word for it – with a certain young man that was two years ahead of me. And he left ... came to Colorado to work for Young Life at a group home called “The Dale House Project,” which at that time was owned and run by Young Life. And it was a group home for kids who were aging out of foster care or were terminating their sentence with the juvenile justice program. So a lot of young adults who thought, you know, *I might want to work in ministry. I might want to go into social work. I might want to just do something for a year after I graduate,* would go there to kind of be trained in urban ministry. So I followed him there. [Laughter]

**Elisa:** Stalker!

**Alexandra:** Yes.

[Laughter]

**Eryn:** Smitten! It's called smitten!



**Alexandra:** Yeah, I felt God's very clear call to be there, to be a part of that ministry.

**Elisa:** Spiritualizer...

**Alexandra:** Yes...

**Elisa:** ...I love who you are... [laughing] ...

**Alexandra:** ...and...

**Eryn:** A lot of "S's" ... a lot of "S's" here. [Laughter]

**Alexandra:** And I knew He was calling me there for more than one reason...

**Elisa:** Mm. Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ... So we quickly kind of became a couple there and then got married a year and a half later. And my husband, Derek – still married to him – we have four daughters. We now live in Denver, and he runs a ministry that's really very similar to "The Dale House," in that staff live in the properties. But it's really geared towards adults coming out of homelessness, so they own a number of properties in the city core and deal with people who are working on sobriety and who are leaving domestic violence situations or just trauma in general that put them in a place of housing vulnerability. And so that's where we live now and what he does...

**Elisa:** Alex, would you share the name of that...

**Alexandra:** Oh yeah...

**Elisa:** ...in case someone listening is interested...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...yeah...

**Elisa:** ...cause it's a powerful ministry.



**Alexandra:** It is called Providence Network, and it has been in Denver for a long time. Derek didn't start it, but it was one of those things. When he was hired, we could see all of the threads of his previous experiences, including The Dale House. But then he got his master's in social work. He worked in public housing here in the Denver Metro area for a while, to feel like *Wow! God was preparing him for this in such a unique, beautiful way*, with all of those experiences. And, you know, not everybody thinks that God works that way, but it was an opportunity that felt so rich because it was using even things that he felt were insignificant or annoying or boring in his past jobs were now very useful...

**Elisa:** Wow!

**Eryn:** That's really cool.

**Alexandra:** Yeah. So when we had a few kids, and I had had a very significant MOPS experience here in Denver, personally, as a MOPS coordinator. And I felt God's call to go work at MOPS, which really shocked me, cause I was just planning to stay home full time. So Elisa let me come... [Laughter]... and be part of the team...

**Eryn:** Oh!

**Alexandra:** ...And I was there for a stretch...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...Then Elisa left!

**Elisa:** Abandoned you...

**Alexandra:** Yes.

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** That. I was just going to say *I'm not going to talk about my abandonment issues in the context of all of this ...* [Laughter] ... But Elisa left, and during that time, I...I was given lots of opportunities to grow professionally, and given chances to be kind of at the front ...



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...which isn't my inclination. I'm not a person who wants to be at the front. But I also knew, from my just MOPS coordinator days, that sometimes you don't ask to be put in front, but you are the best person to be put in front...

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Alexandra:** ...And so I experienced in that context – that very safe context of my church home that was caring for me as a MOPS coordinator that was dealing with some really hard things – that when God puts in you that position, and you step up to the challenge, you grow in such incredible ways. And so, while working at MOPS International, then I moved on to work at the office. I was given some changes to do some writing and some speaking, and the biggest thing was I was given a book contract. And if you want to hear my personal story in detail, that book is titled *The Artist's Daughter*, and it was my first book. And it really did talk about how my childhood and then my experience at The Dale House and my early years of marriage all impacted who I was when I became a mom...

**Eryn:** Wow.

**Alexandra:** ...and then how motherhood kind of layered onto layers of that, of expanding who I was becoming. And, you know, I think for a lot of us we think, when we become moms, then it's just like the dial's turned and we're on a new channel. But we're bringing all of who we were before into that context. So anyway...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...When I left MOPS, part of the reason I left was because I really did like writing a book. And I really liked going deep into a topic. And I still only have 24 hours in a day, and I had four children at that point. And so I...I had to leave. And I have written four books since then, so...

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Alexandra:** ...that's been a wonderful joy because it's been a work that I can do at soccer practice. I mean, honestly, I can do it in thirty...ss...minute sections, and it has worked really well. But ...

**Eryn:** Wow!



**Alexandra:** ...then most recently... I don't know if you guys wanted my whole life story...

**Eryn:** We did...

**Elisa:** Sure, we do!

**Eryn:** We do! [Laughter] I have like ...

**Alexandra:** What is that... [laughing]...

**Eryn:** ...notes that I've made in my head...

**Elisa:** Yep. Yep...

**Eryn:** ...and questions that I'm gonna...

**Elisa:** ...we do...

**Eryn:** ...I'm gonna share in a sec...

**Elisa:** ...\_\_\_\_\_ you're gonna drop some \_\_\_\_\_ [pens? Or hints?]. Yep, yep...

**Eryn:** Continue, continue...

**Alexandra:** Okay. So as I was writing and doing some stuff outside of MOPS, my friend Krista Gilbert, who is a friend of mine from college, she was starting to do some writing. And she is very much a doer, like *We're gonna do something*. And so she said, "We're going to invite a whole bunch of women to my parents' lake cabin, and we're going to do a retreat." And I was like, "This is great! This is exactly what we need." And I just, in my mind, thought *We're going to have the same group of women come back every year where we are pulling together people that we feel really kindred with that are kind of at the same phase of writing and communicating*. And Krista said, "I don't think so. I think God's calling us to plant seeds and then do a different group every year." So we've done that for the last seven years. We did take a year off with Covid, and that then became our podcast, which is called "The Open Door Sisterhood" ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Alexandra:** ...podcast. And the retreat is under the same name. But we knew we couldn't replicate the retreat to meet lots of women's needs. We could only do one small group every year because we both have four children, and it just requires a lot of time...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...But the podcast was a way that we could reach a broader audience with this same message of: Let's harness each other's strengths, each other's knowledge, for each other's benefit as women – especially as women in the Body of Christ. And then we can support each other as we try to live this life of faith in a time that's really unique. Now I know a lot of people are kind of down on the world. Right? Like ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...*It's so hard to be a Christian right now.* And I don't mean to say it with kind of a funny voice, but to me it sounds a little bit funny, because the gospel is still true. And God is still good! And we are not the first people to say: Where are we? And what is happening in the world? I mean this has...

**Elisa:** Exactly!

**Alexandra:** ...been true throughout history. Before Jesus came, people were wondering that, and since Jesus came, people have been wondering. So I just think we're in a unique time...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** ...That's how I like to phrase it. We're in a unique time, which allows us to have creativity in how we live out our faith, but also how we encourage each other.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** Like this podcast. Who would've known ten years ago that you both would be doing this?

**Eryn:** Mm.





**Alexandra:** ...But because this is a unique time, when this is how people communicate, and you can reach a large swath of women this way, why not? Why not...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...do that? So I think for Christian women, it's a really beautiful time to say *Okay, God, You've put me on the world at this point in history, in this circle of influence...* And for a lot of women – I'm going to get emotional – but for a lot of women it feels very unsexy where they are...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** ...Right? Like they can look at my life, and be like *But you write books and...* But you know what? My biggest sphere of influence is at my kids' high school...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...where I sit in the bleachers. And I'm sometimes nice to people and sometimes not. You know? Like that's where the rubber meets the road. I can...

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...Because it's easy for me to write a book and not live it. It's much harder to live it...

**Elisa:** [gasps] Okay! Now let's...

**Eryn:** Ooooh!

**Elisa:** ...let's go in there, cause that is profound, Alex. You know I've already heard about three or four different principles I'm going to lay out for all of us who are listening...

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Elisa:** She's talking about now she can look back at the layers of all the things God has used to create a contribution in her and then, after that, through her. So there's layers and, you know, maybe you need to write down your layers and think: What are the million layers that God's built in my life? And then, secondly, I've heard you say, you know, that God really gives you invitations, and sometimes they're surprising...

**Eryn:** Yeah, right.

**Elisa:** ...You know, *You go up front. Well, I'm not...I'm not a front person...*

**Eryn:** Right.

**Elisa:** ...*I'm a behind-the-scenes.* But no, in this moment, Alexandra, you go up. You know, so there's that one, and when you can respond. Then I'm hearing you talk about your relationship both with MOPS and with Krista to team up with other women. You can't do it all by yourself, but now as you dig into this, you know, what is the real nut of what is your passion right now? And why? And I'm hearing you continue to talk about influence. And it...it's not just the...the glamorous stuff that we, in our culture, think counts. You know?

**Alexandra:** Right.

**Eryn:** Right.

**Elisa:** ... It's the everyday. An...and that's what I...I've been watching you do in the last several years is dig into the everyday. Your books have been "*Loving my Actual Life*," "*Loving my Actual Neighbor*," you know, "*Loving my Actual Christmas*." And now a new book that you have, which is called *Seeking Out Goodness*, which really comes out of *Loving My Actual Neighbor* too. Can you go into that? Well, you just said it: We live in this world where it's like *wah, wah, wah*, you know, no fun to be a Christian, and *wah, wah, wah*, you know, no fun...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...to actually live sometimes. It's just hard. How do we lift up our heads in the now to authentically not super...

**Alexandra:** Mm-hmm.



**Elisa:** ...you know, gooey spiritual, but authentically...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...be influencers with our lives?

**Alexandra:** Yeah. Well, I think Jesus was pretty clear that we had two main things you were supposed to focus on: To love Him with all of who we are, and to love our neighbors as ourselves. And “neighbor,” I think, can be defined lots of way, but it essentially means everybody else. Right? Like...heh... [laughter] ...you know, cause the neighbor can be the guy who has the political sign in his yard that you think *I could never ever even respect him, much less...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...*be friends with him because of that sign.* But Jesus didn't say *Love your neighbors who agree with you. Love your neighbors that make you feel comfortable. Love your neighbors that give you strokes for what you are doing with your life or are happy that you go to church.* He just said, “Love your neighbors like you would like to be loved.” And so I think that's the big general job description while we're walking this earth. And then we each – like we said – have this place of influence that we've been put to say *Okay, if I'm to do that, I need to look around and say “Who are my neighbors?”* Who are my neighbors today? Who is within arm's reach that's not my bestie, but that I could grab onto? And maybe it's the person who sits next to me at the office. Maybe it's the person who sits next to me on the soccer sidelines. Or maybe it's the person who really does live next door to me. But who are the people within our circles that we could love better? But the question always is: How? Right? Like that's a nice idea, but *how* do we do that? And that's why I really try to write books that are practical, because we need to know, *okay, she tried that, and it worked, or it didn't. Or she...um... observed that somebody else tried that.* Because we're learning from each other, right? She observed that somebody else tried that. I'm going to try that too.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Alexandra:** So *Loving My Actual Neighbor* talks about seven things that I think are really important in loving our neighbors. And it really starts with holding a posture of humility. And by that I mean we remember that God is God, and we are not. And so when we approach people, we often go with



preconceived ideas or opinions, which is natural. You know we can't really change that about ourselves. We're going to have biases. We're going to have opinions based on our lived experience...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...And, at the same time, we are not God, and we don't know every person's story. We don't know every person's lived experience, so we have to hold this humility to say *Okay, I know what I've lived. I'm curious about how you've lived as well.* And so it starts with – Elisa, you mentioned the word “surprising” – that willingness to be surprised...

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Alexandra:** ...by who God puts in front of us, and also what they're going to reveal to us about who they are and then, ultimately, about who God is. [Music starts] And I just think that this is the challenge of our moment, because we do want to categorize people. It's just easier. It's easier to silo people and say *Yep, I've got you down. You are this kind of person, this kind of person, and this kind of person.*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...But the truth is we're complex, and I don't know anybody who agrees with me. Let's just talk politics for a second, cause that's fun. I don't know anybody ... [laughter]... who agrees with me about every single issue. I mean even my husband. Right? Like... so why would I expect that, in order for us to be friends, we would have to agree on things?

**Eryn:** Right.

[Music]

**Elisa:** When we come back, Alexandra Kuykendall will talk about “cancel culture,” a new idea in our culture where we shame people for the mistakes they make publicly or privately, or even when we disagree with them. She'll also talk about how to love people we don't get along with. That's coming up on *God Hears Her.*

[Music]



**Eryn:** If you're a fan of this podcast, sign up for our *God Hears Her* email newsletter and find even more inspiration and encouragement from women just like you. These weekly emails are filled with stories you can relate to and other fun goodies that will brighten up your walk with Jesus. Go to [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org) and sign up. That's [godhearsher.o.r.g](http://godhearsher.o.r.g). Now back to the show.

**Eryn:** Well, I want to say real quick, though, just to touch on what you were saying, Alex. In order to ...uh... have the willingness to see somebody that doesn't look, believe like we do, we have to have that posture to be willing to see. I want to know what have you learned about what that posture looks like? You said humility is one, but would you unpack it a little bit more? And then I do want to get into the cancel culture. And I...I want to know what your perspective is on that, Alex. But the posture to see somebody – you have to be willing to, and you have to get to a point where you actually do want to. Because, I know, I had friends where they just don't want to budge. They don't think that they need to see people differently than them, cause they're very comfortable with their lifestyle. And they believe they're living a fruitful lifestyle, so they actually don't carry themselves with that posture, and I wish that they would.

**Alexandra:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** What would you say?

**Alexandra:** Probably you can't do much more than be an example in their lives, but I think if... if we are thinking, *Okay, I want to do better at this* – which I think a lot of women do...

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Alexandra:** ...They really want to do better. The first thing is simply to pray and say *God, show me. Give me eyes to see the people in front of me that could use a kind word today, that could use some eye contact...*

**Eryn:** Yeah, that's good. Eye contact...

**Alexandra:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** ...That's...that's so simple, and it's powerful.



**Alexandra:** ...*Bring to mind somebody that's programmed in my phone that could use a text today.* You know I often think, *Who has experienced loss recently?* And loss might be a job, or it might be a person, it might be a move, and they've lost their community – that could use a text that says, "I'm thinking about you. How are you?" That takes thirty seconds to do that. That's one thing. In...in *Loving My Actual Neighbor*, I talk about asking questions to learn, which is different than just asking questions. Like to really have that curiosity and say *I'm going to ask questions cause I really do want to know how you came to this conclusion or what it's like to be the person that you are. Like what is it like to be working three jobs? I've never had to do that. Tell me. What's your daily schedule look like? Or What's it like to be someone who's 47 and single? I...That's not my lived experience, so I just want to know how are you feeling now that it's the holidays or the new year, and you're faced with . . .*

**Elisa:** So good, and so practical...

**Alexandra:** ...um...So then...

**Elisa:** Okay.

**Alexandra:** ... the third practice is being quiet to listen, because we often are talking. Obviously, you can't listen if you're talking. But often we're silent with our mouths but very noisy in our heads, as we are considering what we're going to say, how we're going to respond, what our follow-up question is. Because, if we don't, then there might be some awkward silence...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** Right? And that makes us uncomfortable, but here's what I've found about being quiet to listen. If there is awkward silence, [slight pause] ... it sometimes just gives someone permission to keep talking, because you're saying, essentially, *Tell me more. Tell me more.* And, you know, it's good to ask follow-up questions, but sometimes our follow-up questions are just based on our own lived experience, like *Oh, then I should ask her about how that's impacting her money, or that's...* I mean, you know, we put our own lens on it. But when we're just silent and with someone...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...that gives them the freedom to go in the direction that they want to take the conversation...

**Eryn:** Yeah.



**Alexandra:** ...without ignoring them. Being fully present and just waiting...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...And if we practice silence when we're alone, with the Holy Spirit, we are more in tune with the Spirit. So when those moments come up that we don't know what to say, we can say that quiet prayer, *Lord, help me. Spirit, help me.* And because we've practiced being quiet alone, we're better at being quiet with somebody else...

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Alexandra:** ...But I will say the fourth practice, which is right in the middle of the seven – I'm not going to go through all seven. I'm going to end here – to me is the most important. And that is standing in the awkward. Because it is the pivotal point in a relationship with someone whom you might now see eye to eye with on everything, where you decide, *I'm not going to leave. Just because this is uncomfortable doesn't mean I'm bailing on the conversation or bailing on the relationship,* cause I will tell you I'm a good awkward person. If I'm feeling awkward, likely the other person knows it, maybe even is trying to make me feel awkward. [Laughter]... Right? If I'm feeling awkward, they likely know it. And then if I don't leave, if I don't bail, I am telling them *You are more important to me than my own comfort.* And that, to me, speaks of the gospel in a way that nothing else can, because that's essentially what Jesus said. *You are more important to Me than My own comfort...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** And so when we tell people that, with our actions – not with our words – but just with our presence in saying *Okay, this is weird...*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ... *This is awkward. Where do we go from here?* That speaks, I think, to people in a way that we are missing right now.

**Eryn:** And that speaks into cancel culture...

**Elisa:** Yeah.



**Eryn:** ...I feel like. It...eh... I just believe we need to be students of each other. And this idea to cancel somebody, we lose any opportunity to be curious about why somebody has a perspective, which closes doors to understand each other and have this human connection.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** Yeah, I really think it is... It's a product of this unwillingness to be uncomfortable...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...And it's a product of feeling threatened that if we disagree, somehow, I might be wrong.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** But if we're pursuing what is true, if we're pursuing God honestly, like we're talking honestly here, then we're willing to have God reveal to us that maybe we were wrong on something. That gets back to that posture of humility.

**Eryn:** Really, yeah. That's what I'm saying. That's so good.

**Alexandra:** But also, when we cancel somebody because of a small portion of who they are... So this is how I define cancel culture: That we decide that somebody is not worthy of listening to or valuing at all because of one small part of who they are or what they believe.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Alexandra:** So let's say we voted differently. I keep going back to that, but it's kind of how people are ...

**Elisa:** It's a big one.

**Alexandra:** ...categorizing each other right now. We voted differently, so I can't possibly respect you on anything.

**Eryn:** Yeah.





**Alexandra:** Well...eh... that denies the dignity of the other person. It doesn't recognize this is an image bearer who reflects God's image just as much as I do...

**Elisa:** Yes.

**Alexandra:** ...And it's not believing the best in them, that they came to those conclusions based on thoughtful thinking. It assumes the worst. *You're too dumb. You're too uneducated. You're too ill-informed. You're too gullible to come to that conclusion.* We don't respect and honor the other person when we say *Well, you've proven that you're not worth anything.* And it's just not a way to live. And we're seeing the results.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** We just have to look around our communities and our families and our schools. It doesn't matter. School board meetings have become violent affairs. Right?

**Eryn:** Right.

**Alexandra:** Like that's...

**Elisa:** Yes.

**Alexandra:** ...seriously a problem. And it's because we're not willing ... You know people talk about civil discourse, but again, it's the how. So how do we do that? And that's what I try to help people see, that looking for the best in someone is a really great way to start. And we can do that by, you know, even ... Let's say Uncle George who came to Thanksgiving, and we can't believe that he came and said the things he did. And we're going to have to see him again in six months. How am I going to do that? Just to start making a mental list of all of the things you appreciate about him. And it can get really silly, like *he matches his socks really well.* [Laughter]... I mean, if you...if you are having a hard time, start with the ridiculous before you get to the serious. But I think you qu...quickly will be able to see he's a faithful husband. He has a strong work ethic. He's very kind to my children...

**Elisa:** He shows up. Yeah.

**Alexandra:** Right. He comes. He's loyal to our family, even when we don't agree.



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** He's willing to come and be a guest in my house, and that's it. He might be grumpy, but he came. Right? So...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** ...So try not to focus on the caveat that he's grumpy, but to focus on, you know, he came.

**Elisa:** This is just everyday relationship, and it takes effort. And...um... I love that you talked about, you know, some of what's going on inside us when we disagree with people. You know we think we have to be right, or that there is always a right and wrong in a given subject. And sometimes I find myself thinking I have to fix them.

**Alexandra:** Mm-hmm.

**Elisa:** ... You know that's another thing that bubbles up. *Well, you know, I'm a follower of Jesus, and clearly what they're saying does not match that, so I have to fix that...*

**Alexandra:** Yeah. We believe that being in a conversation means we must endorse the entire conversation...

**Elisa:** Oooh, wow!

**Eryn:** There it is!

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** And we don't. That's not a conversation. That's a dictatorship. Right? That we endorse...

**Elisa:** Whoa!

**Alexandra:** ...everything that's being said or done. But God gives us free will, so why don't we give each other free will? I mean, you know, the freedom to have it. ...um... And I get it. I'm uncomfortable a lot when people say things and I think *How could you possibly think that that's true?* Or *How could you possibly come to that conclusion?* I have that experience a lot. And...



**Elisa:** I do too.

**Alexandra:** ...And I want to correct people and say, *Well but...* And I will say it's often in defense of Christians. Like people will say, you know, a...a person that I know might not be a ... a believer will say things to me about Christians in general. And I want to be like *Well, but you don't know the people I know.* Or *You don't the... and you don't know the good work that's happening in the world because it doesn't get publicized, because only the crazy people get publicized.* And, you know, like I want to get into all the explanation...

**Elisa:** [laughing] Yes.

**Alexandra:** And...and just...

**Elisa:** ...I love this.

**Alexandra:** ...just like Eryn, my best explanation is to live a faithful life in front of them.

**Elisa:** Mm.

**Alexandra:** ...And that's humility. Right? Cause I want to defend. I want...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...to say...I want to say *Ugh! You are so wrong about us!*

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Alexandra:** I don't that Jesus wants me to do that. I think. He wants me to say, "How can I love you? And how can I serve you, even though you are driving me bananas?"

**Eryn:** Yes. My friend group is very diverse, and so many different views and cultures and perspectives. I'm so grateful for that, and Eryn ten years ago did not have that type of friend group. And I have to go through my own feeling misunderstood in such a painful capacity for me to then understand all of how...how to, I guess, attract different types of friends in different cultures and different walks of life. But the one thing that I still find myself in my young age of 34, I'm still learning, is that I'll be with some of my



friends. And I don't agree maybe with what is going on or what they're saying or what they believe or... And I just...I do try to remain a student. And sometimes I'll find myself questioning my own moral compass or my own foundation ...uh... cause they're so passionate about it. Would you speak to that a little bit ...

**Alexandra:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...of how you can have this posture? Cause I'll...I'll find myself... I don't get defensive. I just start questioning myself. And I think that's why sometimes people surround themselves with like-minded individuals is because they don't want to be in that space of not knowing for themselves. Maybe it's not that they're threatened by that viewpoint, but they are nervous that they may have it wrong, which is a good tension.

**Elisa:** So it seems safer?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** Yeah, okay.

**Eryn:** Would you...would you just kind of speak on that side a little bit?

**Alexandra:** Well, sure. I've felt that way where people will be making a really good argument towards...

**Eryn:** Yeah!

**Alexandra:** ...something. And I'll think *Okay, then, I see where you're coming from. And I kind of agree with you on some of those things.* And so then I pause and think, *Okay, where is our common ground?* Where can I agree with someone? And what has God told me – and really it's through Scripture – about Who He is and about how the world operates. And then I think it also is helpful to have faithful believers around you that are living the kind of life that you want to live, because it's easy to surround ourselves with very vocal Christians who, when we look at their daily routines, their daily life, their commitments, their priorities, we think, *Eh, I'm not sure anyone would really know that you are any different than the rest of the world based on how you live your life.* And so I look for people that I think *I want to...I want my life to speak like that person's life speaks.* And then talk to those people about these bigger questions and to say, *You know, I don't really know what to think about this, because I'm feeling confused.* Which...I think God can handle our confusion. I don't want women to be afraid of feeling confused because if...



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Alexandra:** ...*Seeking Out Goodness* is based on Philippians 4:8, which starts with, you know, looking for what is true. If we are truly pursuing truth, God is going to offer it to us – maybe not on the timeline we want or in the way we want; but if we are pursuing truth, we can have that posture of humility and that openhandedness to say *God, reveal to me what is true*. And sometimes it's that Holy Spirit quickening, when we're reading Scripture or someone's speaking to us, and we think *Okay, this \_\_\_\_\_ [filled? field? feels?] in alignment. What I'm seeing in God's world, and what I'm reading on the page feel in alignment*. But there are some things that I still...I don't know. And I'm much more comfortable than I was twenty years ago, as a pretty new Christian, to say "I don't know." And that is part of seeking out His goodness is to say, "I am going to stand in awe and wonder that You are the God of all things of this universe." And we say that often, but I'm going to really think about the fact that You are the God of everything, and You know, and I don't. So what I'm going to do is I'm going to operate out of what I do know. I do know that my friends, who are having some pretty convincing arguments with me about some things, are people that I love and people that God loves. I know that, so I'm going to treat them well, no matter where we fall in the conversation. I also know that things go better when I'm not defensive, and they go better when I have that posture of curiosity, so I'm going to operate out of that. Like that's a little bit of Scripture and a little bit of lived experience. Right? Where the two kind of both speak to the truth, that those things are going to make life go better. And then I'm just going to kind of dig into it, and I'm also going to just be more comfortable being uncomfortable and not knowing.

[Music]

**Elisa:** Loving other people can be hard, but Alexandra is equipping us with her understanding and experiences of how to love other people.

**Eryn:** Yes. This is such a prevalent topic for right now, and we are so thankful for Alexandra's insights. Well, before we close out today's episode of *God Hears Her*, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. And there's a link to learn more about Alexandra Kuykendall and to order her book *Seeking Out Goodness*. There are also links to connect with Elisa and me on social. You can find these links when you visit our website at [godhearsheer.org](http://godhearsheer.org). That's [godhearsheer.org](http://godhearsheer.org).

**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 Mary Jo Clark, Daniel Ryan Day, and Jade Gustafson. We also want to recognize Andrea and Carla for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

[ODB theme music]

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