



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 81 The Importance of Your Origin Story

Elisa Morgan, Eryn Eddy, Rasool Berry

Rasool: I'm from brokenness. I'm from generations without intact marriages. I'm from a family who has taken on other people's children as their own for generations. I'm from family secrets and strife. I'm from the unexpected child. I'm from a mom who chose life instead of a doctor's recommendation to abort me to save hers. I'm from a God who saw me in my mother's womb and called me to be a prophet to the nations. I'm from a Father who adopted me by sacrificing His own Son. I'm from Philly, but I'm really from heaven – dual citizen. I am from divine intervention.

[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. We all have a story to share. Where we're from is part of who we are and who we become. Where are you from, and how did that shape you?

Eryn: On this episode of *God Hears Her*, we're talking with Rasool Berry. Rasool is a teaching pastor at The Bridge Church in Brooklyn, New York, as well as the Director of Partnerships and Content Development with Our Daily Bread. He hosts the *Where Ya From?* podcast and a travel documentary series called *In Pursuit of Jesus*, where he learns about Jesus while journeying through five continents.

Elisa: We're so excited to learn about Rasool on this episode of *God Hears Her*. Eryn, we have a guest with us today who's a friend to each of us. But I don't think the three of us have ever had a conversation, so I'm excited to welcome Rasool.

Rasool: Thanks. I'm excited to be here. I...I feel like I got invited to an exclusive club to be able to hang out with the sisters...



Elisa: Yeah, baby!

[Laughter]

Rasool: Yes! So thank you for having me.

Elisa: Yah, yeah, absolutely. I've gotten to know you through a lot of things at Our Daily Bread but primarily through *Discover The Word*. And if our listeners haven't listened to *Discover The Word*, let me encourage you to. It's like a real-time Bible study group around a table, and sometimes Rasool leads us. Sometimes other members of the team lead us, but...uh... we just get to dig into a slice of Scripture together. And we're going to do something different today. Eryn, what are we going to do today?

Eryn: Oh, we're just going to have a conversation. We're just going to get into it, just a real, raw conversation. I would love for our listeners to get to know you, where you're from. I would love for you to share just a little bit about where you grew up, and then where you live now, and what brought you to where you live now?

Rasool: Cool. Ima do something a little different, since we doin' something different here.

Eryn: I like it! Come on!

Rasool: So a few years ago I was in a leadership program, and there was a Native American woman, a missionary. Her name is Renee Begay.

Elisa: Great name!

Rasool: Yes, you know, she's such an insightful person, but she was talking about how it was very disorienting when the leadership program began. And soon as you...you came in, it was like *All right, like, introductions, and then let's start talking about leadership*. And because in her indigenous culture, there was this sense of getting to know each other as people before we went into strategy and ideas and whatever the agenda was for the day, that that was the first thing on the agenda. And so she shared that with the leaders. And so they said, "Well, we want to expand how people experience with this and engage with it." And so, as a result of consulting with her, they started to implement sharing an "I am from" poem.



And so I wrote this nine years ago. So here we go: I am from asphalt and concrete, busy streets and colorful people, feisty five-foot tall women who took no lip but who loved like giants. I am from Eloise and Richard the Second. I'm from Germantown, Philly born and bred. I'm from a family whose focus and passion for food is only rivaled by their culinary skills. I'm from brokenness. I'm from generations without intact marriages. I'm from a family who has taken on other people's children as their own for generations. I'm from family secrets and strife. I'm from the unexpected child. I'm from a mom who chose life instead of a doctor's recommendation to abort me to save hers. I'm from a God who saw me in my mother's womb and called me to be a prophet to the nations. I'm from a Father who adopted me by sacrificing His own Son. I'm from Philly, but I'm really from heaven – dual citizen. I am from divine intervention.

Elisa: Amen! I mean Amen! You know just for a second ... [loud sigh] ... I just want to let that linger. And I guess what I want to do is I want to go write my own, and I hope everybody listening wants to go write...

Eryn: Yeah, me too.

Elisa: ...your own, because we're typically say "I'm a mom," you know, "I'm a writer, I'm this old, I'm from this state." And what you just described are all the forces that shaped, all of the fibers that express you; but...eh... as well, the future...

Rasool: Yeah.

Elisa: ...that claims you...

Rasool: Yeah.

Elisa: How would we go about that exercise ourselves? Just write down "I am" and then fill in what comes...

Rasool: Yeah, I...

Elisa: ...next...



Rasool: ...yeah, there's no.... That's the beautiful part about it is that you can just kind of use that as a framework. "I am from," and then kind of start to fill in the blanks; but, yeah, it is a more personal way of sharing that but also getting a glimpse of who someone is, so I wanted to offer that to yall.

Elisa: So what do you want to pull out of that, Eryn? I mean I'm like I want to pull like 19 of those things and go into it...

Rasool: Yeah.

Elisa: ...right this second...

Eryn: Well...

Elisa: Yeah.

Eryn: ...here's the thing. Everything about it I want to pull out, but you even more piqued my interest when you said "five-feet women" ...

Rasool: Oh yes. I said ...uh... "feisty five-feet-tall women who took no lip but who loved like giants."

Eryn: I love that line! And I would love for you to unpack: Who are these feisty...

Rasool: Yes.

Eryn: ...women that...

Rasool: Yes.

Eryn: ...love like giants? [laughing]...

Rasool: Yeah. That's a great place to start. So I was probably giving my grandmom, on my mom's side an inch or two. I don't know if she was ... [laughter]... quite five feet, but Eloise...

Eryn: Oh gosh!



Rasool: ...the first, we call her, cause she actually named my mom Eloise, which I thought was always such a telltale sign that she...

Elisa: Yeah!

Rasool: ...actually named her after herself...

Elisa: I love it!

Rasool: ...but she...uh...was born in Lawrenceville, Georgia, and came up to Philly with part of the “Great Migration.” And, for those who don’t know, the “Great Migration” – I’m a little bit of a historical, you know, nerd – and it is the largest voluntary movement of people in the history of the world. Like in a span of about from the 1920s, 30s, 40s, about, you know, a 20- or 30-year period, you had millions of African Americans really fleeing, in a sense as refugees, from places in the South where there was a lot of domestic terrorism through the KKK, just inability to make it beyond sharecropping, which was just another form of indentured servitude and slavery, to just, you know, trying to make a better life for their families that they couldn’t see around them. And so my grandmom was young, that with her parents that made that move with their extended family, and found themselves in Pennsylvania. And that was the story on my mom’s father’s side too. He came up from South Carolina as part of that migration. And so they came, and they began to establish roots. But one thing about my grandma, who actually just passed away last April at 101 years old...

Elisa: Mm. Mm.

Rasool: ...and a half!

Eryn: Wow!

Elisa: Mm, mm, mm.

Rasool: ...And...

Eryn: And a half!



Rasool: Yes. Gotta add that. She was bearing down on...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...on 102 very soon. But...um...she was known for her feistiness. You knew where she...you stood with her. You knew she didn't play games. And so, even though she was small in stature, she was enormous in the type of influence and respect that she demanded and garnered. And even the house that she bought, that was like her pride and joy. She moved there in 1955 in the Germantown area of Philadelphia. And in order to even get the house, she had to do it surreptitiously; because back then in Philly, a woman couldn't own property...

Elisa: [whispers] Wow!

Rasool: ...by herself. Not...not to mention a Black woman; so her Jewish Realtor basically bought the house, and she was making payments on it for like two years, you know. And then they, you know, move in. And then immediately "For Sale" signs go up in the entire block...

Elisa: [gasps]

Rasool: ...you know, within...

Elisa: Ugh!

Rasool: ...a week or two.

Elisa: Wow!

Eryn: Aw.

Rasool: ...But she kept it alive and kept it going and through lots of difficulty. She was an incredible cook. She was the best caterer I knew. She was known all around for that. Her famous pina colada and rum cakes that, you know, she would make... [laughter] ... fried chicken...



Eryn: Whoa!

Rasool: ...and all this...

Eryn: So much soul!

Rasool: ...And so, any case... Yeah! Yeah! I would wake up in the morning to the smell of this fresh-baked bread. And so I became her cooking buddy, and ...um...

Elisa: Oh, a little sous chef, huh? I love it.

[Laughter]

Rasool: Yeah, yeah. My...her sous chef! So that was her ... But her character _____ [insurance?] really permeated the same as with my mom. She was very strong, my aunts, and so I just...

Eryn: Wow!

Rasool: ...grew up with incredibly strong women than inspired me, challenged me, helped me to be who I am, but also were not physically intimidating, but ...[laughing]... could be still very intimidating nonetheless.

[Laughter]

Elisa: So...so what...

Eryn: [laughing] Oh, I love that!

Elisa: ...a powerful description. An...and yet I...I heard, too, just as Eryn pointed out the "I love the women," I heard shadows within the men...

Rasool: Mm.

Elisa: ...in your heritage. And...



Rasool: Yeah.

Elisa: ...I hear you talking at two levels about fathers. Can you unpack that for us?

Rasool: Yeah. So one of the things that my brother and I, we would kind of always notice is that there wasn't any marriages that had stayed together, on either side of our family. And oftentimes it was, you know, men who kinda left or were unfaithful or whatever. That wasn't really the case in our father's situation. He was very committed, so even when things didn't work out, him and my mom... there was still this commitment to the relationship. Unfortunately, though, he was murdered when I was seven.

Elisa: Whoa!!

Rasool: Yeah. And so ...uh... it was a devastating situation for especially my older brother, by this point, because they had broken up when I was two. It wasn't as emotionally formative for me in all the ways. In some of the ways that just linger – right – like that sense of like not having someone teach you how to tie a tie, or shave, or those kind of things. And the uncertainty, and what does that look like to build a house and a family that...like those things. But for my older brother, it was more impactful thing. He was named after him, and he lived with him for a time. And...and so that's the immediate impact, but on either side of the family there was, I would say, just the undertow of what it meant to be Black in America and the male fallenness, brokenness. There was a lot of different complex factors, but on the flip side, I have all male cousins. I have no female cousins at all...

[All speaking simultaneously]

Elisa: And you didn't have a...

Eryn: And no _____...

Elisa: ...sister either? Yeah.

Rasool: No sister...

Elisa: Yeah.



Rasool: ...growing up...

Elisa: Huh.

Rasool: ...until my mom married my stepfather when I was like in high school. I inherited a stepsister...

Elisa: Okay. Okay.

Rasool: ...but, in my formative years growing up, I had just my older brother and all male cousins. And so, in that sense, they were very formative, too, in ways that, you know, just helped me to see the world in a different way and be challenged...

Elisa: The...the way you describe yourself in your opening is so relational...

Rasool: Hm.

Elisa: You descended from a family tree that is complex. And you also made an allusion to your family tree actually having branches that reach ...uh... beyond this world to another world...

Rasool: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Can you talk about that a little bit?

Rasool: You know that aspect of my spiritual journey and basically – long story short – my senior year in high school is when I came to faith in Christ. It was a scenario ... Actually, once again, it involved women. Basically, I tried to be a player...

[Loud laughter]

Rasool: ...I tried to have two girlfriends.

Eryn: Just say what it is! Right? We said “real conversation” _____...



Rasool: This is real conversations. But, as the saying goes, “you can’t be a player if you don’t have game.”

Elisa: Mmm!

Rasool: And so ...

Eryn: I like that _____

Rasool: Yeah. I mean the girl called me out. And, honestly, it really was about being told that for me to be a man I needed to have sexual conquests. An...and if that didn’t happen, then you were just not fully formed.

Eryn: You were less of a man?

Elisa: Hm.

Rasool: Yes, less of a man, right. So there was this girl that I ended up meeting. I wasn’t really that connected to her, but I figured that she was kind of open to...to that aspect in a way that, you know, the girl that I really liked wasn’t, because sh...she was a Christian. So any case, I ended up in this space; and the one girl said, you know, “Are you cheating on me?” And I said, “Yeah.” Now up until this point, I am saying all the right things about ... and I meant it to an extent, like about how much she deserved to be treated well and this and that. And...and I remember she said, “You’re no better than the other guys. In fact, you’re worse because you think you’re better.”

Elisa: Oooh!

Rasool: And suddenly this glass-distorted image of myself that made me think... I was a secular, self-righteous person.

Eryn: Hm.

Rasool: I was somebody who didn’t have a faith dynamic to my self-righteousness, but it was ... I just thought I was better than everybody else...



Elisa: Yeah.

Rasool: ...I had great grades. I was senior class president, National Honor Society, voted “Best Role Model” in the class. I was that guy, so I thought. And then, though, I came to the end of myself in that moment and realized *Wow! Like I really just treated this woman terribly because of my own desires.* So then I go and confess to the other woman – cause at this point I’m just like I’m literally depressed. Like I literally was like *Wow! I thought I was something I’m not.* And so I go to the other girl and share. And she says, “I forgive you.” And I’m like *What? Why?* I just got chewed out over here. And she said, “Well, Jesus has forgiven me for everything that I’ve done...”

Elisa: Oh man!

Rasool: ...so I don’t think I should hold it against you.”

Eryn: Wow!

Rasool: Mind blown! Like have no category for what she just said. I’m like *Uh...what? ... uh...* But I did have a category, all of a sudden, for the need spiritually. See, up until that point, the pride that I had had prevented me from really thinking about Jesus as anything more than a historical figure, anything more than this religious person. But now it was like I had a need for forgiveness. What do I do with this sinning? Not just forgiveness, but also a sudden awareness that, in the time that I need my sense of morality the most, that’s when I’m less likely to be moral because of my own sin nature. Right? And so that discovery caused me to go *Well, I can’t depend on myself anymore.* So I asked her to tell me more, and she started inviting me to church, and I heard the gospel. And it was like a salve to my soul. It was like, oh, that cocoa butter when you get burned on your skin, and you’re just going to like kind of rub it, and it starts to help with the healing. And that was my entry into faith...

Elisa: Did you marry this girl? No?

Rasool: No.

Elisa: Just checking.



Eryn: You were wanting to see the story take an...like a Hallmark to...turn... _____

[Laughter]

Rasool: Yeah, tha...that...that...that would be the Hallmark version. But I will say that that relationship is what really made me the type of man that I could even hope to be for my wife, Tamica, and begin to learn. But I would meet her a few years after that when I was in college, cause all this happened... like I was ... the summer... like just weeks before I started up at University of Pennsylvania. So my spiritual formation and my like intellectual formation happened at the same time...

Elisa: Hm.

Rasool: ...and...uh... made for – heh – an interesting ride in college.

Eryn: You know what's so neat? I mean there's so many principles and just beautiful parts of your story that we could go down, but the one that I really love is that ...that of the woman that you have really hurt and betrayed met you with a confidence that she knew that your unhealthy choices didn't have anything to do with her, as much as it was something going within you, to where she could forgive you and act on her faith, practiced it in front of you with this boldness that changed *you*...

Rasool: Yes.

Eryn: ...I think that's so...so beautiful how she played a part in your story.

Rasool: Yeah! The other part that I reflect on often is the power and impact that it showed me of forgiveness...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...And...eh... what I expected from her was wrath – understandably...

Elisa: Sure.



Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...Yeah, *I just liked and cheated on you*, and yet the space that she had for God to extend forgiveness taught me about the forgiveness of God in a way that no lesson, no sermon could ever have done, cause this was real life. This was what I knew I did, and this is what ...

Eryn: [whispers] Yeah.

Rasool: ...and this is what I was extended instead of. And that just ... that's what made it real to me. Like I was like *Okay, where did this come from? Cause I know that didn't come from you...*

Elisa: Yeah. An...and, Rasool, I've watched you have conversations – maybe they were a little more distant than that one and maybe a little less confrontive. But in the show *In Pursuit of Jesus* or in *Where Ya From?* podcast, I've watched you have these conversations with people where you can dig beneath the surface in a non-threatening way. But it's like now *you're* not afraid to engage some of those deeper things ...it... How does that thread through the experiences that you've had, the way God called you to Himself? How does that thread into your current conversations and the way you relate to people?

Rasool: Yeah. I think in several ways like, one, just realizing that the main barrier to me even experiencing the grace and the mercy of God was my own pride. And while that is still something that's a struggle, it's not like *I came to Jesus and now I've got pride no more*. But...

Elisa: And you're so proud that you don't. Yeah.

[Laughter]

Rasool: Right, exactly. But what it like informed me is that... Like I...I love the fact that Jesus will often say, "he that has an ear, let him hear," you know, "what the Spirit of the Lord is saying." And there's this huge emphasis on listening. And I think it's only when I recognize that I don't have all the answers is when I begin to ask the questions and listen to other people.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Rasool: So I came with a sense of brokenness, a sense of need; and I think that approach and that orientation that I think we get in the Scriptures, it gives us an approach to remember to be “slow to speak and be quick to listen,” and that when we do that, we can expand our minds. We can expose ourselves to truth that we didn’t see in ourselves because we just didn’t see it, and we just didn’t hear it, and we just didn’t know. And I think that’s definitely something that’s continued to shape me, and I do think that that, particularly, is important. Like always look out for those who are marginalized around you, because those are the ones that you can learn the most from because they’re often not heard. And you often maybe haven’t even been exposed to really listening to their perspectives. And so that’s something that I think I’ve been blessed with by being surrounded by these incredibly strong women throughout my life, is recognizing there’s all of this insight and wisdom and life that has happened that I’ve gotten a chance to listen to and, as a result of that, be shaped by.

[Music]

Eryn: When we come back, Rasool will talk about marginalization in society and how God invites all of us to be a part of His plan, even when we feel like we are on the outside.

Elisa: *God Loves Her* is the newest book in our *God Hears Her* series. You know we all just want to be reminded that we are loved. And in this devotional, women writers share personal stories about God’s love that is unconditional. Not only can you receive love from Him, but you’ll want to share it with others. *God Loves Her* is perfect to take on the go or to curl up with in your favorite spot at home. Get one for yourself and another to share with a friend who could use a special reminder of God’s love. Go to godlovesher.org to order. That’s godlovesher.org. Now let’s get back to our conversation with Rasool Berry on *God Hears Her*.

Eryn: Could you unpack “marginalized” for somebody that’s listening that’s maybe never heard that terminology before?

Rasool: Yeah. ...um... That’s a ... I’m so glad you asked, cause, you know, we can use, you know, words and not even remember that we’re not all coming from the same perspective. So one simple...

Eryn: Yeah.



Rasool: ...way to do it and just like thinking about like ...uh... word processor apps like Microsoft Word or Pages or whatever. Right?

Eryn: [laughing] Yeah.

Rasool: There's like the margins...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...of a page. And the margins have to do with ... you can set your margins wide or narrow, but they're the outer edges of the page. And the opposite to the margin would be the center of what is kind of the meat. And so, in the societal context, those who are on the margins are those who are on the periphery of like who matters and what is kind of centered as important and centered as, you know, meaningful and centered as ideal. And so it can be anything, like it could be in the culture where, you know, folks will like have a certain ideal for beauty. And so if it's long hair, and if it's a certain type of shape and figure, then those who don't fit that criteria – if we're looking for a homecoming queen or whatever – is on the margins of that.

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: And, similarly, in a racialized culture and society like we have, one that race has been created as a caste system, and there's kind of the center which, you know, would be White, and then on the margins it would be non-White – and you can even get into more depth about that, about how that works in this White/Black binary in the US – then those voices are on the margins; meaning that, like, you can grow up and not hear those voices. You can grow up and not learn their stories. It's on the margin, but it's not in the middle. And so what is interesting is that throughout the Scriptures, you see God intentionally investing Himself in the margins, in those who are on the margins. Right? So I think about Hagar...

Eryn: Mm. Mm.



Rasool: ... And you see this story where it's like Abram and Sarai are like the center. There's this plan that they end up trying to take in their own hands and saying *Oh, you know what? Use Hagar to bring the promised child.* Didn't ask Hagar's opinion about it. Just *use her...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: And then when things got uncomfortable for her, she said, you know, "Cast her out." And then there's...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...this incredible beautifully intimate scene where Hagar is cast out by Sarai, and she's on her own. And the fact that this is even in the Bible is fascinating...

Eryn: I know...

Rasool: ...to me, because...

Elisa: Yeah, right.

Rasool: ...in the Bible, like Abraham and Sarah, like, they're like the heroes. Like that's the...

Eryn: Right.

Rasool: ...you know, the patriarch and the matriarch. And yet and still, God's like *No, no. I care about the one that's on the margin.* And He meets Hagar as she's crying and says, *This isn't the end of your story. You're not going to end up dead here.* And she, interestingly enough, called the space, you know, what? "The God who sees me. This is the God who sees me." That...She names God, "the God who sees me." And it's like she couldn't even believe that God cares about those on the margins. And we see that story play itself out, and so I think for us to engage with following Jesus who did this like every page in the Gospels. It means to being...paying attention and saying, "I must go to Samaria." Why? Because Samaria is on the margins.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: And so that's what it means to engage in that space and what I mean by "marginalized."

Elisa: So if you are approaching somebody and wanting to have a conversation, in addition to thinking God puts this person in the center of the page, what other messages do you nudge yourself forward with that you could join and see the person the way God sees them? And so that you are able to see and hear and see and recognize other humans – people who are different from us, people who maybe disbelieve what we believe, people who might even be antagonistic to your faith. How do you converse? How do you connect?

Rasool: You know it was funny. My daughter – heh – she mentioned recently that this person, this I think a character on TV, they like "Oh they had main-character syndrome." [Laughter] And...

Eryn: Ha! I love that!

Rasool: You know, a "main-character syndrome" sounds like the cousin to like – what do they call it? – like "lead-singer syndrome?"

Elisa: [laughing] Yeah!

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: Or like, you know, in the band where it's ... _____

[speaking simultaneously]

Elisa: And the girl band and the boy band...

Rasool: Right...

Elisa: Yeah.



Rasool: ...And it...and it's this idea of the person who basically, because they're the front man or the front woman, not only has a certain charisma that's unique, a certain swag. But they also have a certain self-preoccupation that assumes that they are the center of everyone's story – not just their story – but of all the stories. And I think, in many ways, many of us are prone to “main-character syndrome.” And then... So imagine main-character syndrome, but then you have a whole society oriented around reinforcing that the thing that makes you in the center is actually true and good. And the thing that makes others... So like, you know, one of my daughter's favorite movies was “Mean Girls.” And it did a great job of painting this picture – right – like you had the “in” circle that was like you had to meet these criterias in order to do that. And that gave them the *carte blanche* to treat everyone else like trash because there was this almost ... this social contract where they were the ideal that everybody wanted. They were in the center, the others were not, and so there was a pecking order. And then that gave them the right, but when we understand the story from God's standpoint, that it's totally the opposite. Because it's like, okay, God is actually at the center, but look at what He does. He spent all the pages of Scripture bringing people into the center who were out on the margins – even the nation of Israel. He said, *I didn't pick you because you were so strong or so many. I picked you cause you were on the margins. Like you...you were few.* And so when I have the standpoint of understanding that there's a bigger story than mine and that, when I look at how God models what to do about even being in the center. He's the only One that's rightfully in the center. What He does is He invites people into the center with Him. You know, relationally, right? Like He...only He gets the glory, but there's this aspect of I...*but I want to share My glory with you...*

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: And that's the...the posture that I think is helpful when I think about whatever posture I'm in in society that might put me in the center in some ways, cause all of us have certain things that give us advantages, that give us kinda close...or it's almost like if you have like a... the diagram, the XX's and a Y. And...and there's aspects that we can almost plot yourself, in terms of how you orient yourself in how society says that is like where you belong. And part of the work that we do to be more like Christ . . . You know I love what...in Philippians chapter 2 where it was like, “though He was in equality God, did not think that equality with God was something to be grasped. But He humbled Himself and became a servant...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Rasool: ...and became obedient to death, even death on the cross.” And so you have there this picture of what Paul is saying, is that God was in the center, but He didn’t demand to use that only for Himself, but He decided to humble Himself and become a servant to bring other people in.

Eryn: Mm. You know it kind of brought in a question that I have about the main-character syndrome. Do you think the reason we fall into that space of desiring to be a main character is because we wonder if God does see us ...

Rasool: Yeah.

Eryn: ...even the One that is the main character?

Rasool: ...sh...Yes! And it’s this complex thing, and this is the thing that, I think, as I’ve gotten older in my faith and in life, the key word that I think is so important is “nuance.” You know there is this aspect ... For instance, the Great Commandment where it says “Love the Lord your God with all your heart, your mind, your soul, and your strength. And the second command is like it: Love your neighbor as yourself.” And that interesting thing is “love your neighbor” is the being others-centered. But then it says “as yourself.”

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Rasool: So it’s like this implication, this subtle, little fact that says I have to know how to love myself and have a sense of agency and perspective about the fact that I am made in the image of God, that I have dignity and value and worth, for me to even know how to love to other people...

Elisa: Right.

Rasool: ... Otherwise I’m in a co-dependent relationship. Otherwise I am in a dysfunctional situation because I don’t know where I end and the other person begins. Right? Like that whole boundaries and bonding thing – shout-out Dr. Henry Cloud. [Laughter] ... But when I understand the fact that, yes, God is at the center of the story... And yet that doesn’t mean I’m worthless, because He also says, “And I’ve made men and women in My image.” You know what I mean? “In My likeness,” *and I’ve given them a part in the story that I play.* So I can hold together in tension both the fact that, ultimately, it’s not about me. But, at the same time, my life is about the choices that I make and how I become the best version of myself. But why? Not as an ending to itself, but as an end to have my life be expended... “Consider



others more highly than yourself.” You know? Not as better than yourself, but consider that value, cause that’s the only way that we bring people into the margin. [Did he mean to say bring them “into the center?”] If I understand that there’s a goal and a mission and a need for me to sacrificially lay down my rights for the sake of someone else, even if I don’t necessarily know them that well.

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: Like what good is it if you only love people that you know, like Jesus says...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ...even, you know, those that don’t know God do that...

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: ... But when you love your enemies, those who you would find out that they’ve done something, they’ve said something behind your back. What does it look like to be sacrificial in that way?

Eryn: Yeah.

Rasool: Well, that’s complex sometimes...

Elisa: No kidding. Yeah.

Rasool: ...like how do I navigate that space? And so I don’t want to give like this simple answer, because there’s...there’s layers to it.

Eryn: So many layers.

Elisa: But what I’m hearing you say is that in order to love someone who’s been marginalized into the center, to include them, you don’t completely dismiss yourself, because you would...

Rasool: Hm-mm.



Elisa: ...be dismissing God's creation...

Rasool: Yeah.

Elisa: We all belong. We are all needed. But you get yourself out of the way where you value them and bring them and see them and hear them – even if we don't agree with who they are or what they believe.

Rasool: Absolutely! Cause you have to have that in order to decrease so that someone else, you know, can be even just treated fairly. Like when people are pushed to the margins for whatever reason, it gives benefit to those who end up becoming center, to their story and to their way of looking at things, to who they are. And the same is true in our society, and that's why, I think, in my "I am from" story, I make mention of the fact that people took on other people's children as their own...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Eryn: [whispers] Yeah.

Rasool: ...because that is a selfless act where ... it's at the core of this sense of my own even biological self-interest – right – versus this person who is in need, this child who needs a...a parent. And I am choosing to invite that person into my family, share what I have, you know, equally among them. And that's the adoption that we see in Romans – right – where, you know, we are brought in. And so Jesus, even though He knew no sin, He became sin so that we could be invited into the family and have a share of the inheritance that He has. And so I think that's a...a picture of what it looks like, in social terms. And any single time we've seen a movement, whether it was abolition, you know. You look at people who gave up power and privilege just to advocate for what they knew was right. You know what I mean? And that meant sacrifice, you know, to make that happen. I mean ...um... you look at Harriet Tubman, who...she gets freedom from this incredibly brutal system. You know what I mean? And goes back...

Elisa: Yeah, crazy.

Rasool: ...and goes back, and goes back, and goes back, you know.

Elisa: So that's not a losing herself. That's a using...



Rasool: Right.

Elisa: ...herself for other people.

Rasool: Right...

Eryn: And learning more...

Rasool: ...Exactly!

Eryn: ...about what she's equipped to do.

Rasool: Yes. Even when we don't know how, or don't know what to do, where to start, we can start with just what's closest to us and what's around us. I love what God told Moses. You know when Moses was like *Well, I don't know anything about how to liberate people and stand up to Pharaoh, the leader of the most powerful nation in the world, and I can't speak*, and all these things. And then God says, "What's in your hand?" And he's, "a staff." From that moment on, I love that like the staff is used ... put into the river to turn it into blood. The staff is used to split the Red Sea. And that aspect of "What's in your hand?"

Elisa: Mm!

Rasool: ...God will take and ordain and...and sanctify and bless whatever is...

Elisa: Yeah.

Rasool: ...in your hand in order for you to do the next thing to bring those on the margins into the center.

[Music]

Eryn: What a lovely closing remark from Rasool. I'm so thankful for this conversation on *God Hears Her*.

Elisa: Rasool's reflections about where he comes from have truly shaped him for the work he does now. I loved this conversation, too, Eryn.



Eryn: 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. The show notes not only include talking points for today's episode, but they also include links to check out Rasool's podcast, *Where Ya From?*, along with his docuseries, *In Pursuit of Jesus*. You can find these links when you visit our website at godhearsher.org. That's godhearsher.o.r.g.

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

[Music]

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

[ODB theme music]

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