



God Hears Her Podcast

Episode 215 – Parenting Boundaries with Steph Thurling

Elisa Morgan with Steph Thurling

[Music]

Steph: I want them to follow Jesus. And that's the best thing that we can want for our kids. And so, it's really important that while we focus on the good things for our kids, we keep the best thing in mind. And so sometimes that means we have to redirect our conversations or the decisions that we make as a family so that we can continue to point our kids to Jesus and that our family can continue to be centered around Him.

Eryn Eddy Adkins: You're listening to *God Hears Her*, a podcast for women where we explore the stunning truth that God hears you. Join our community of encouraging one another and learning to lean on God through Scripture, story, and conversation at GodHearsHer.org. God hears her. Seek and she will find.

Elisa: Hey friends, before we get started, feel free to download or print our new Bible study show notes to fill out while you listen. You can find those on our website. So today we're talking with Steph Thurling. Steph is the executive director of the Christian Parenting Organization, the podcast host for the Christian Parenting Podcast, and a mother of three. Today we're going to talk to her about all things parenting. So let's dive in. The conversation we're about to have, I know, is going to strike straight to the heart for a lot of women. And then there are going to be some women on the outside going, *Hmm, not me. Click.* But I want to encourage you to hang in there with us. We're going to be talking about the topic of parenting and how it shapes us, how it shapes our children through us, how it shapes our world. So, whether you're a mom, or a mom wannabe, or a grandma, or maybe you have relationship with kids in your world, you know, I... I welcome you. Our conversation's going to be with Steph Thurling, and she is with Christian Parenting Podcast among other things. Steph, welcome to this conversation.

Steph: Thank you so much for having me.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Absolutely! And you know, just as we get going, what would you say at the get-go to a listener who's like, *Mm, I don't think this one's for me.*



Steph: I think parenting conversations are for everyone because kids are in our world, and they are the next generation of Christians. And they are the next generation of leaders. And even if you're not a parent, you are probably interacting with kids in some way. And every parent that you know wants you investing in their kids.

Elisa: That's awesome!

Steph: It's the greatest gift that you can give is investing in loving someone's kids.

Elisa: Oh, that's awesome! You know, I would say before I became a mom, it was harder for me. I mean, I was kinda like, *Ew kids! Ew!* [Laughing] And, you know, now I'm a grandmother of a zillion, well four. And I think my whole life has changed because of my relationship, both with my own kids and with my grandkids. So, I hear you. You know, it really is about legacy, and it's about influence, isn't it? So, help us understand, you know, Steph, who are you? How did *you* come to know God? You know, how did He grab *you*? Were you a kid or were you older than that?

Steph: Um, I was kind of in the middle. So, I grew up in... well, first I'll start where I live in Minnesota. I have three kids. They're 13, 11, and 9; boy, boy, girl. So, we're right in the middle of it, and we're just trying to figure it out as we go and balance all the things. And we're right there with all the parents who are listening. So, I grew up in a... we would call ourselves a Christian family, but we went to church maybe on Christmas and Easter and sometimes prayed before meals. And that was kind of the extent of it. Like we acknowledged that God was real, but that was kind of it.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Steph: And I actually became a Christian and started my relationship with Jesus and my own faith journey when I was 11 at a Christian summer camp. I...

Elisa: Really? Aw.

Steph: Yes, I was invited by a friend, and my group of friends that year — it was the summer after my fifth grade year — we lost one of our best friends in a plane crash. And, obviously that wrecked us! We were very little. And I got to summer camp, and these counselors explained the hope of Jesus to me in a way that I just knew that I wanted more. And so I came home and I was like, "I want devotionals. I want to go to church." It wasn't until then that I really realized like there was more to this Christianity and Jesus thing, that Jesus wanted a relationship with me, and that He offered me something that the world didn't. And so



that shift from knowing *about* God and knowing that He was a Creator and something I should acknowledge, to actually knowing him and having a relationship really changed everything.

Elisa: That's beautiful. Tell us about your journey into motherhood. What did it look like? How did it change you, shape you? How is it changing and shaping you?

Steph: Oh, I mean, it's changed everything about me. Like everyone else, you know, I was so patient and was going to be the best parent until I became a mom. And then they just kind of break you a little bit.

Elisa: Oh gosh!

Steph: And you have to let go of some ideals and release control and learn to trust God in just a totally new way. Had to learn to set boundaries with my kids, with other people. You just have to learn a lot, and it's so sweet, just the sweetest journey, but it's so sanctifying. I had my kids really close together. My oldest was three when my youngest was born,

Elisa: Wow. So three in three years.

Steph: Yeah, it was like a lot of babies! And I had...

Elisa: And they're not twins!

Steph: They're not twins. They're not twins. People were like, "Are you okay?" Because I had a lot of postpartum anxiety. And so truly when I got pregnant with my third, people were like, "Are you going to get through this?" I did, but my postpartum journey nearly wrecked me. And there were days that I just couldn't function. I had to call in reinforcements. I had to have my parents come or friends come. My husband had to come home from work because I just couldn't function, like the anxiety just crippled me. And I just could not... I don't know how anyone gets through that without faith and without community too.

Elisa: Yeah.

Steph: Having friends to lean on and also pray... like when they would come over to help me with my kids, they would pray over me. You know? So having Christian community was just so essential in those little years cause they were hard.



Elisa: Yeah, they really are. So did you intend to have that many children all in a row, that consecutively and closely?

Steph: Well, the third was a little of a surprise. [Laughing] We wanted three, actually wanted four. We really wanted four. We were blessed that it was not difficult for us to have kids, which I know is not everybody's story, but we were lucky in that way. And the timing was a little closer than we thought, but we knew we wanted... we knew we wanted at least three.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm. And, and so your anxiety, did it hit you after the first one? Or did it kind of grow? Or ... talk to me about that.

Steph: I think that it hit after the first one, but I didn't really realize what was happening. I didn't really have words for it. No one in my community had kids yet. We were the first.

Elisa: Oh boy.

Steph: And so... yeah, so I just kind of thought like, *oh, this is really hard and I don't like it that much*. And like there are moments that I really don't like. And so I just thought that was normal and not really realizing like, *oh, there's actually something going on with me*. And so, when we had our second, my two best friends had kids at the exact same time, within like a couple weeks. And they just had totally different experiences where I looked at them and thought like, *This is not ... They're not feeling how I feel*. And so I just started to look into it, saw my doctor, and was like, "I don't think I'm okay." And we were able to go from there. So I just don't think I knew.

Elisa: Yeah. You were having a physiological-slash-mental response, you know, to this.

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah, a hormonal response to this. I think it's so terrifying when you don't know what is happening to you. And you feel like the oddball, and you look around, and everybody else looks like they've got this under control, and...

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: Yeah. I'm... I'm intrigued by when I asked you how motherhood has shaped you, and talk to us about your motherhood journey, the... the word you used was, "I learned to set boundaries."



Steph: Mm. Mm-hmm.

Elisa: I was like, *whoa, that's an interesting word to use with how motherhood has shaped me.* I mean, most people would say, *I learned I was out of control*, or *I learned that sleep was my best friend and it's gone on vacation*, or something like that. But you specified, "I learned I needed to have boundaries." Help us understand what that lesson was and probably still is like.

Steph: Yeah, well, I think you just learn that you have to say no to things and that some things might be good for another family, but they're not good for you. So you just have to learn to set boundaries around yourself to protect that sleep that doesn't happen so easily anymore, you know?

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Steph: You might have to say no to doing certain things that you sleep, or so that your kids can sleep. And that's a boundary that you have to create. Or there might be a relationship that isn't serving you anymore, and you have to say no to that relationship for the sake of your family and the life stage that you're in. And then you also have to learn to say no to your kids cause kids want to do...

Elisa: Everything.

Steph: ... I mean, in this stage of my life... you know, before it's about safety and about training and disciplining. And now... and still is that, but now my kids are in all the sports and all the activities, and they want to do it all. And I have to look at them and say, "no, this sounds really fun, but you can't do it because you have two other siblings, and we can't spend all this money and all the time." And we have to have boundaries around those types of things too. And just to protect your own family's peace, and that's going to look different for everybody. But you do have to learn *what do I say yes to and what do I say no to for my best self and for my kids' best self, and for my husband's too?*

Elisa: Yeah. Can you share a story where God helped you understand this and respond in health to the chaos of parenting with boundaries?

Steph: Yeah, we have been part of a church plant for five years. I guess it's not really a plant anymore, but I think you forever call it a church plant.

Elisa: It feels that way. Yeah. Mm-hmm.



Steph: Yeah. And I started the kids' ministry program there. So when we started, I was there from the very beginning, and I helped write the curriculum. So I was writing curriculum for Sunday mornings and for a midweek community group that we would do. And I loved it. I loved writing curriculum. It's just one of my favorite things, and I felt so honored that they asked me to do it. But a year in, I really felt the Lord saying *this is a lot*. Like it was a part-time job...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Steph: ...in a volunteer position. And it was ... like I was kind of feeling the nudge of *there's something else for you*. And I had to say no to that and say, "it's time for me to step back from this. I still want to serve in kids, but I can't write the curriculum anymore. I can't be the main point person. I have to just be a standard volunteer." And it wasn't exactly what I wanted to do, but I felt very convicted that it was the right thing, not just for me, but for our family too. And it was actually soon after that that I started my job at Christian Parenting. So, it was God saying, *close this door. I have another one for you*. But it was, you know, if I had just listened to myself, I would've just kept doing it forever cause I liked it.

Elisa: Yeah, that's interesting because I heard you say it was a volunteer position, and then the Lord provided a paid position for you. Parenting young children is usually in a season of great financial need. Few of us are just like flush in those years, you know, of raising a family. And we're so torn, especially as moms, between how do we faithfully parent and how do we also faithfully provide? What would you say in that space? What have you learned there?

Steph: Oh my gosh — so much! Because I was home with my kids for ten years before I went back to work, and so it has been a learning process for me and my husband. It's been very, very hard. I work full-time now, so...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Steph: ...went from me home full time to... to I'm... I'm working full-time. I'm blessed to work from home, which really helps. But it's been really hard, and we did spend a long time being like, *I... Lord, I want to have something that provides the finances for me to send my kids to private school*. That was what I was praying for. I was like, *I just want to be able to pay for school. Like, that's what I want to contribute*. And I just was like, I don't know how that's going to happen, but that's what I was praying over. And He did provide that in my position. But there's a season for everything, and I thought in my head that I could continue to do most of what I was doing with my kids while working. And I cannot.



Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Steph: Again, it's more boundaries. I have to have full-time childcare in the summer, and I can't go to the amusement park when I want to with them in the middle of the weekday. And my house isn't as clean as it used to be. Our meals aren't as perfect as they used to be. Not that they ever were, but you know, I just, I can't quite do it all anymore. And that's okay cause I think I'm also giving my kids the gift... cause they've told me before, they're like, *it's really cool that you're doing what God called you to do. Like it's really...*

Elisa: That's awesome!

Steph: Yeah. And so they're seeing me work really hard for something that the Lord has called me to, and that is expanding His kingdom and working in ministry, and so I'm giving them a gift of seeing that instead of what I was giving them when I was giving them the gift of staying home.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Steph: Both are good.

Elisa: Yeah. And I love how you're just being straight-up honest about this stuff. You know it... you know, God is super creative in problem solving, not only in helping us create boundaries as we just chatted about, but in problem solving. I mean, I can remember I was at home with my kids up till when they were 3 and 5. I mean, I did part-time work, like what you're saying, and I would do it from home. And then the opportunity for this full-time position opened up, and my husband and I struggled. We knew it was a call on my life. And like you're saying, if I hadn't responded to that, I'm not sure what message that would've given the world or my kids. But I also didn't know how to faithfully parent if I was going to respond at that young age. And we got super creative. I would go to work super early in the morning, like I'd leave the house at — oh, I don't know — 4:30, 5. And I'd work until 2, and my husband would get the kids off to preschool or school, and then I would come home like at 2, and he would come home later. So there's that kind of a stair step. And another thing we did is we hired... This was, I think, our best one that God provided. We hired a mother-daughter team. So the mom was... her kids were 16 and 14. And she would take the morning shift with the kids and get them from preschool, back in those days, when neither my husband nor I were available. And then when school got out, her daughter who was 16 and could drive, would pick up the kids from that era, and then prepare dinner, And that...so I mean, God can provide super creative things. And it wasn't that expensive, and they were mom and daughter, so the mom was invested in her daughter making a little bit of money.



Steph: Mm-hmm.

Elisa: Those kinds of scenarios I think surprise us in terms of God's faithfulness to be there for us as we attempt to faithfully parent,

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: Right?

Steph: Yeah. No, I agree. And I think that the hard part about all of this now is that we see so much, especially for Christian moms on social media, and we're like, *this is how I'm supposed to be. Like, I'm supposed to do all these things with my kids...*

Elisa: Ugh.

Steph: ... *I'm supposed to be this way.* And it's so much pressure. And so then you add a full-time job in there, and you're like *How am I supposed to like homeschool my kids and make all these organic meals and work out and you know...* And, you know, and you're like...

Elisa: Right.

Steph: ... *I can't! I can't do it all.* And we're not supposed to, and we have to tune out that noise somehow...

Elisa: Yeah.

Steph: ...which is just a challenge.

[Music]

Jade Gustman: Hey friends, I'm just popping in to tell you about our monthly reading plan. This month you can check out "10 Days of God Loves Her." Find that reading plan in our show notes.

Elisa: You know, I would imagine your lessons and God's provision for you in your postpartum anxiety has been a layer, a foundational kind of layer for you to understand His provision in later-on parenting. Is that the case?



Steph: Yeah, I just... I think that I learned that He will see me through it and that nothing is permanent. And there are seasons for everything. And there are seasons that are going to be easy, and there are seasons that are going to be hard. But no matter what, He's walking through it with us in both seasons and will hold our hand and will light our path. And we can rely on Him for the provision and just that like there is good community out there. God puts people in your life to help you, like that mother-daughter team, like God puts people in your life to get you through. And that continues on now. We have a great nanny now, but even just I think of my friends who have kind of some unexpected friendships that I've developed in these teen-elementary years that have just been such blessings to me. And God provided those for sure, and it's just really sweet. It's very sweet.

Elisa: I love that. I love that. Your podcast that you share from, it's called "Christian Parenting." What's different about Christian parenting? And what kinds of... um... what kinds of words do you have to share with moms who love Jesus? Because I think when we love Jesus, we want more than anything in the universe for our children to love the God that we love.

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: What do... what do you want to say to us?

Steph: Yeah, I mean, that's my goal. Right? Like my ultimate goal in my parenting is that my kids will know, love, follow, and share Jesus. That's what I want for them. Like, yes, I want them to be successful. I want them to be happy. I want some grandkids someday. You know, like I want all those things, but most importantly, I want them to follow Jesus. And that's the best thing that we can want for our kids. And so, it's really important that while we focus on the good things for our kids, we keep the best thing in mind. And so sometimes that means we have to redirect our conversations or the decisions that we make as a family so that we can continue to point our kids to Jesus. And that our family can continue to be centered around Him. And that, you know, our kids' faith journey is going to look different than ours. And...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Steph: ...I think that parents have a hard time with that because I know what my faith journey looked like. And I... my kids are starting their faith journey earlier. They haven't ever not known Jesus in a personal way.

Elisa: Mm-hmm.



Steph: But that doesn't mean that they're never going to have hard times or doubts or big questions. My kids are still little. I don't know what's going to happen. I don't know what seasons they're going to go through. But I do know that God is sovereign over all of it, and He goes before it. And He's writing their story, and I'm not. As much as I would like to write their story for them, it's God who does; and we have to trust Him with that, even though it might look hard for a while.

Elisa: That's so good. There have been many times when either through a counselor, or straight up the Spirit directly to me, I've heard the words, "Elisa, God's writing His story in their life, just as He wrote His story in your life. Can you trust Him here?" You know, I heard those four verbs that you shared, Steph, and I wonder if you could pause on each one for a minute and help us understand them. I think you said "know, love, follow, and share Jesus." Those are four words that I have a feeling you've carefully selected.

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: Tell us about them.

Steph: Yeah. Well, I want them to know Jesus and know God's Word, you know, know who God the Father, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit are. You know, know Scripture, know the community of God, the Family of God, the local church. I want them to know all of those things in their head cause I think it's important. But I also want them to love Jesus in their heart and to internalize His Word. I've compared it before to like studying for a test, the difference between knowing and loving. It's like you can study for a test just to study for the test, and then to get the A, and then just forget all of the knowledge and just move on.

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Yes.

Steph: It's what I did for a lot of math throughout my life.

Elisa: Amen!

Steph: You know, you can do that.

Elisa: Yes!

Steph: Or...



Elisa: I was good at that.

Steph: ... you can study for the test and really internalize it and be like, "why do we do math this way?" And so then you remember it forever. And so I want my kids to have knowledge about the Lord, but I want them to internalize it and love the Lord too. And to faithfully follow and to continue to be sanctified and grow and deepen their relationship throughout their entire life, cause it doesn't end when they accept Jesus as their Savior. When they get baptized, whenever some of those big markers are, like your journey doesn't end then. I want them to continue to follow Jesus and then tell people about it cause it's good news. And so I don't want my kids to ever feel like they have to be quiet about their faith. I think that's hard these days. It can feel like a lot to step out and say, "I'm a Christian. I follow Jesus." But I want them to just boldly share that they have a faith, and that's why their life is the way it is and the way they live, the way they do.

Elisa: So just those four words maybe will be an encouragement to listeners right now, you know, to know, love, follow, and share. What kinds of spiritual practices, or you know, what kinds of routines work in your family for helping these four elements take root?

Steph: Yeah, we keep it really simple. I think there's a lot of pressure, especially from... like I mentioned before on social media, like we are supposed to have this perfect discipleship program laid out for our kids. I have tried all the devotionals to do with our family. And some of them stick, some of them don't, you know?

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah.

Steph: I love all the resources that are available, but at the end of the day, you just need a Bible. So you just need to share Scripture with your kids. So go buy all the things, go try it. Like I... I love that. We do it as a family, but just talking about Scripture and reading God's Word together is just all that you need to start with. So keep it simple but intentional. I mentioned before we're part of a church plant kind of... We're... we're older now...

Elisa: Mm-hmm.

Steph: ...but our kids programming actually only goes until age 5, and then kids are in the service with us.

Elisa: Oh, okay.



Steph: And so a big part of our family's faith culture is that we sit together in church. And our kids are seeing all the adults worship and serve, and they participate in the service. They'll read Scripture during announcements or help with communion when we serve communion. And so they're really invited into our church family. And we have a lot of great conversations about the service and about what we're learning because of that, which has been a huge gift to our family.

Elisa: That is so rich, Steph, because it's kind of a relief to hear you talking about coming together in the service with... where all the adults are. And it's not all up to you all by yourself. I have a couple of friends who had house church kinds of environments for their kids. And their kids are very different with adults. They're very comfortable with adults. They can talk about anything with adults. There is more of a communal investment in children. It's not just the parents who show up with your kids, and they have to, you know... And so I love how you're describing more of... you might want to call it the Body of Christ here at work together.

Steph: Mm-hmm. Yeah, it's very intentional the way that we've done that. And we've done that in our personal lives too. Like we have a lot of friends who we have just said, you know, like, "we want you to invest in our kids spiritually."

Elisa: Ah!

Steph: ... Like "you are not just our friend. You are going to be a resource for our kids." And they've taken that really seriously, like one of our...

Elisa: And they've agreed?

Steph: ... Oh yeah. They've agreed. They... and we are to their kids like this has just been a decision that we are like, "we are more than just friends who hang out." Like we are invested in each other's kids. And you know, we have a teenager now, and sometimes he has teenager-y moments. And he will go and like hang out with one of our adult friends, Mike. And Mike will be like, "Hey, do you want to go rock climbing?" And they'll have great conversations, and he just kind of walks along him and just saying like, *yeah, you're... Yeah.* And just... he's always reinforcing what we say cause we're all like-minded. But it's just having another adult who knows him and knows his story and cares about his heart and his faith, who he can go to when he doesn't want to talk to us, cause he doesn't want to talk to us all the time.



Elisa: Right. Right. Totally normal. I know our several people listening right now who are like, *oh, I would give anything for that kind of resource for my preteen or my teen or my tween or whatever*. You know, *I would give anything, but I don't know where to find that*.

Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: And, you know, I'm going to say right up, pray for it and... because God can provide that. But what would you say to the person who's like, *ah, I would give anything for that kind of resource*? What advice do you have?

Steph: Yeah, I would say besides praying about it, cause you want to make sure you're choosing the right people. I would say just ask. Like you probably have a friend who would be a good person and can grow into that role too. You know, we, with this group of friends, we have been talking about being these people for our kids since our babies were born. So this was always kind of the vision. But we had to text Mike and say like, "Hey, we need you right now. Like we need you, can you step up now?" And he was ready and willing. It was just like all of sudden we're like "Oh, he is a teenager. You're up." You know?

Elisa: Yeah. [Laughing]

Steph: And so, we had to ask him, and he was more than willing. But there have been people in our church who I've just noticed have such a connection with our daughter. And I've been able to text them and be like, "Hey, can you help me out here? Harriet's having a problem with this. Could you talk to her about it?" You know, and so I think you just have to ask. I think about like in a career, everyone is so honored when you ask... when someone asks them for career advice or for networking help or something. But people get very shy when it comes to their kids because it feels so big, cause it is big. It's the biggest thing of your life. But everybody who has a relationship with the Lord and cares about families and God's kingdom would love to walk alongside a kid. And it doesn't have to be huge. It's not, like I'm saying, *get together once a week and take 'em to dinner*. It can be twice a year or just checking in, or a lot of older kids have phones now. Just like a really quick text like, "Hey, did you watch this football game?" You know, like, "what'd you think?" Or "Thinking about you. How'd your test go?" You know, like very little things that can be so helpful but impactful, cause kids just want to be seen.

Elisa: Yeah. Yeah. Really helpful and so practical cause we make it more than it needs to be. And how about, Steph, for the... the kid who is resistant, who's, you know, just in your face. *No, I'm not interested in God. That's your thing. You're all about God. I don't even believe in Him anymore.*



Steph: Yeah.

Elisa: Hmm. What do you do there?

Steph: Yeah, I mean, I'm not there yet. ...um... I'm not naive to think... naive enough to think that I'll never be there, whether it's my own kids, or nieces and nephews, or kids that I care about. Like I know that these conversations will come. And I've been with my older friends who have older kids who have walked this path. But I would say I imagine it's one of the hardest places to be as a Christian parent, because again, you want the best thing for your kid, which is for them to know Jesus. And so, it's so frustrating and I think really scary, but I think the enemy acts out of fear. And God would act out of love. And so we can be afraid for our kids, or we can just step up, and we can just keep loving them and keep praying and trusting God with their story. And just don't cave to the fear of *this is the end, like this is it. This is forever*. Because God can move past that, and the enemy would like nothing less than for us to just give up and just say, "the story's done." And like, "there's nothing else I can do," when it's not over until you take your very last breath. You know, like there's...

Elisa: So good.

Steph: ...God has a lot of time to move in the life of your kids. So just keep loving them. Keep pointing them to Jesus. You know, be a soft spot to land, and keep the conversation open. I would say get really curious about what they believe now. You don't want to like shun what they believe, like "we don't talk about that." You know, like if they're just...

Elisa: Mm-hmm. Mm-hmm.

Steph: ...following all these different... they're gonna, I don't know, go learn all these different religions or say they're atheist or whatever. But get curious, cause if you're asking about what they believe, they're going to be more curious about what you believe. And you might have some really great conversations, you know? And eventually you're just planting seeds, and you just trust that God works.

Elisa: That's so good. We tend to think God's on a timeline, which is ours...

Steph: Yeah, it's always my timeline! My timeline makes sense in my head.

Elisa: ...Like by the time they're 18, they're supposed to be done, you know. And the reality is by the time they're 18, you stick a toothpick in, and they're pretty gooey in the middle still, just like we are, you know.



We're all.... we're all still in formation. I remember one time sitting in church, and one of my kids was way off. I didn't know where in the world they were, and just away spiritually. And there was a toddler sitting next to me, and you know how their little... their little legs go straight out on the... on the pew. And their little feet stick up. You know, there's no dangling happening because their little legs are as long as the pew is deep. And... um... the Lord just really directed my attention to that little guy's legs and shoes. And I looked at his shoes, and it was the weirdest thing. I just felt like God was going, *yeah, I know you don't know where your son's shoes are sitting right now. You can see this little toddler, and you remember him at that age. But I know where his shoes are, and I'm in his shoes with him.* And the bottom line is God loves our kids more than we do. And it's so hard to imagine that, but He does. And, you know, we are His vessels to communicate that. But it's not all up to us, is it?

Steph: Yeah. No, as much as we would like it to be.

Elisa: Yeah, we would. What's your prayer for yourself and for your kids, in terms of mothering and what you long for through your investment in their lives?

Steph: Yeah. I really try to parent with the big picture in mind, to realize that yes, like the schoolwork is important, and cleaning your room is important, and all those things are important. But what's most important to me in my prayer is that my family grows into a family 20, 30 years from now where we love to get together. And when we get together, we pray before meals and are having good conversations and all have hearts that know God and love God and love each other and just like to be together. And that is my biggest prayer, and it's what I try to keep in mind when I get frustrated in the now, because it's really frustrating sometimes. And you have to address the now, but you also have to parent the now with the big picture in mind.

[Theme Music]

Elisa: I love that thought to parent with the big picture in mind. And we can do that with all things in life when we trust that God is in control. Well, friends, be sure to check out our website to subscribe to our email list. Read the newest blog article or check out the *God Hears Her* books and devotionals. Find all that and more at GodHearsHer.org. That's God Hears Her dot o.r.g. Thanks for joining us. And don't forget: God hears you. He sees you, and He loves you because you are His.

[Upbeat music]



Elisa: Today's episode was engineered by Anne Stevens and produced by Jade Gustman and Mary Jo Clark. We also want to thank our listeners in Guyana for all their help and support. Thanks everyone.

Eryn: Our Daily Bread Ministries is a donor supported, nonprofit ministry dedicated to making the life changing wisdom and stories of the Bible come alive for all people around the world.

[ODBM theme]

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