



# God Hears Her Podcast

## Episode 112 – Christmas Changes Everything

### Elisa Morgan & Eryn Eddy

[Music]

**Elisa:** You can start seeing this dawning recognition 33 years before the crucifixion, but even the birth of the Christ child began to change them and everything around them. And I think it's the big idea I want us to hold in this conversation is that when Christmas becomes Christmas, when it becomes more than what's been handed down in our traditions, or more than what we see in the department stores, or more than what we see sung about on the Christmas special on TV, it does change everything. It changed everything two thousand years ago, and it changes everything now. It changed everything in the original characters' stories, and it changes everything in our stories.

[Theme 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. The Christmas season often brings feelings of joy and excitement. You know I know it does for me, but today I want to go deeper and talk about how Christmas changes everything.

**Eryn:** Get your Bibles out and join us for a conversation about Christmas you don't want to miss on this episode of *God Hears Her*.

**Elisa:** Eryn, ...eh...if I ask you this question, I want you to roll your memories back as far as they go. Probably you're a child of some age, and I want to hear descriptions using all of your senses. Okay? Taste and see and hear and touch and smell, okay, what does Christmas mean to you from as far back as you can remember?

**Eryn:** Hm.



**Elisa:** What'd it look like, smell like, feel like for you?

**Eryn:** So Christmas looked like a lot of nutcrackers. We collected nutcrackers...

**Elisa:** [laughing]... And you're not talking about people. You're talking about the device. Okay?

**Eryn:** Yeah...

**Elisa:** ...Okay...

**Eryn:** ... The cute little soldiers that...

**Elisa:** Yeah!

**Eryn:** ...would crack nuts...

**Elisa:** [makes a strange sound] ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...on their mouths, yeah...

**Eryn:** So my parents developed a tradition where every year of our age, we each got a nutcracker every year. We got to go pick it out, of what we wanted...

**Elisa:** Oh how \_\_\_\_\_ [inaudible]

**Eryn:** ...So we have... like each of us have like thirty-plus nutcrackers. And so, over time, my mom would put them on the stairs, going up the stairs. So as I...

**Elisa:** Wow!

**Eryn:** ...grew up, it would be so fun to bring all the nutcrackers out, and to see how like they changed them, like manufacturing them, the way that their outfits were, and the way that the ribbons glued on or stapled on...

**Elisa:** I love that!



**Eryn:** ...or \_\_\_\_\_. So I immediately go to like nutcracker...

**Elisa:** Nutcrackers!

**Eryn:** ...tradition. Yeah.

**Elisa:** Christmas is nutcrackers. Yeah!

**Eryn:** But it's also like – when I think about taste, I think about tradition. Every Christmas was monkey bread in the mornings. And my mom would make monkey bread...

**Elisa:** That's...

**Eryn:** ...which is like...

**Elisa:** ...not out of monkeys. It's...

**Eryn:** It's not out of monkeys. It's like.... [laughter]... it's like Pillsbury rolls, and you just douse it in so much butter...

**Elisa:** Wow!

**Eryn:** ...and brown sugar...

**Elisa:** Mmmm!

**Eryn:** ...and then you get it out when it's still not cooked all the way, and it's gooey. So I grew up with that, but then we also did... We had traditions like...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...that go to like breakfast a lot. We did waffles in pajamas on Christmas Eve. And I think about all the different types of Christmas movies, the old...

**Elisa:** Oh!



**Eryn:** ...stop-motion Christmas movies. I mean I grew up with all of those...

**Elisa:** What...what's stop-motion?

**Eryn:** ...Rudolph...

**Elisa:** ...What's that?

**Eryn:** Oh. Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer...

**Elisa:** Gotcha!

**Eryn:** ...where it was like tick-tick-tick... little clay figures...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** ...or like boink-boink-boink-boink — stop motion.

**Elisa:** Gotcha. That's awesome. I'm going to share some of my memories, too, but I love how descriptive you're getting, because all of those things have a lot of feelings, don't they, attached to them? I remember one of my earliest Christmases, we were in Fort Worth at my grandmother and grandfather's house. We called them Munna and Bop.

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Elisa:** And it was my mom and my older sister and my younger brother and me. And my grandmother had gotten little baby Christmas trees. I mean just ... they were like two feet tall, real ones, and had three — one for each of us — and had our own little stacks of presents around them. That was just magical! And then we... as a family growing up a little bit after that... My parents were divorced. We had a single-mom family, and we would open presents from external family or, you know, remote family on Christmas Eve. And then we'd have Santa Claus on Christmas morning. And I could barely sleep on Christmas Eve, because it's like the sugar plums were dancing in my tummy. You know I just could hardly wait until Christmas became Christmas, and we could go in. And one year my mom ... we didn't have a bunch of money, but she was real creative. And she took the paintings off of the wall in our family room, and she hung on the nails three nightgowns for my sister and I each. And it was kinda like a department store window. And it probably didn't cost her that much, but it made Christmas just super special because it was creative. So those are some of the things that come to me. Andy Williams' Christmas album and, [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org)



yes, Rudolph the Red-Nosed Reindeer. And, you know, we would have steak on Christmas Eve and turkey on Christmas Day. And it...it just... all that stuff — that's what was Christmas! Right? Well, all of this is, you know, stirring up, I hope, memories in every single one who's listening. I mean there are bad memories with Christmas, too, for heaven's sakes. You know I can remember the one when my mom was sick with cancer and, you know, I can remember all kinds of bad ones, too. But the...the magic of Christmas is what first made Christmas "Christmas" to me. And...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...what I want to think about is: I've realized in the last layers of my life that Christmas actually became the real Christmas when Easter became Easter to me...

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Elisa:** ...When I started understanding that God loved me so much that He would actually have Jesus born as a baby and walk this planet as a man and then die on the cross and then rise again to give me life... when I started realizing that, everything changed. And, for me, I was probably a process between like when I was maybe 8 and 9 and 10, 13. And then when I was 16, it was this dawning realization until this *kaboom!* *Wow, you mean God is really God!*

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** And I began to understand Jesus as my Savior. When did Christmas become more than carols and more than family and more than tinsel and more than Rudolph for you, Eryn?

**Eryn:** It was when I started getting older that I started seeing sadness around Christmastime, if I'm honest. And my mom's mom passed away around Christmastime, and so every year it was really hard for my mom to celebrate Christmas. And so, as a little girl, I saw like the sweet offerings that she would... she would do; but I could tell, as I got older, that it was really hard for her to do some of these things. So, for me, like Christmas, it became more real to you when you understood Easter. And when I started understanding the crucifixion, I then started understanding the birth of Jesus...

**Elisa:** Yeah!

**Eryn:** ...and I so align with what you're saying, because before that, Christmas was these little holiday little fun things that you do. And then it was sadness in my mom's heart, you know, processing a grief every year. I mean she used to wait last minute to put up Christmas decorations because it was hard...



**Elisa:** Mmm.

**Eryn:** ...and sad. And so, for me, personally, kind of being the observer of somebody else's Christmas, little girl growing up, to then my realization, it was me embracing the crucifixion first...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm. I've thought a lot about the original characters in the Christmas story. They didn't even know what Christmas was. I mean there wasn't Christmas. There was the birth of the Christ child. We call that Christmas — Christ Mass — you know that's how the term has been coined. But as I've been thinking about this question of: When does Christmas become Christmas? When *did* it become Christmas? When *will* it become Christmas? I've been reading back through the various stories in the Gospels and the original characters to whom those stories belong in the Gospels. And you can start seeing this dawning recognition 33 years before the crucifixion, but even the birth of the Christ child began to change them and everything around them. And I think it's the big idea I want us to hold in this conversation is that when Christmas becomes Christmas, when it becomes more than what's been handed down in our traditions, or more than what we see in the department stores, or more than what we see sung about on the Christmas special on TV, it does change everything. It changed everything two thousand years ago, and it changes everything now. It changed everything in the original characters' stories, and it changes everything in our stories.

**Eryn:** Hm.

**Elisa:** I think there's maybe nine characters that I see. And you know what, Eryn? I'm gonna let you pick which ones we talk about for a few minutes.

**Eryn:** I'm very curious about Simeon...

**Elisa:** Okay. And Simeon's story is in Luke chapter 2, verses 22 down to 35. "When the time came for the purification rites required by the Law of Moses, Joseph and Mary took Jesus to the...Jerusalem to present him to the Lord (as it is written in the Law of the Lord, 'Every firstborn male is to be consecrated to the Lord'), and to offer a sacrifice in keeping with what is said in the Law of the Lord: 'a pair of doves or two young pigeons.'" Okay, so this is just what's required by the Law. Okay, now verse 25...

**Eryn:** "Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel, and the Holy Spirit was upon him."



**Elisa:** Mm. Verse 26: It had been revealed to him by the Holy Spirit that he would not die before he had seen the Lord's Messiah. Moved by the Spirit, he went into the temple courts. And when the parents brought in the child Jesus to do for him what the custom of the Law required, Simeon took him in his arms and praised God, saying..."

**Eryn:** "Lord, now you are letting your servant depart in peace according to your word. For my eyes have seen your salvation, that you have prepared in the presence of all peoples: a light for revelation to the Gentiles, and for glory to your people Israel."

**Elisa:** Verse 33: The child's father and mother marveled at what was said about him. And then Simeon blessed them and said to Mary, his mother: 'This child is destined to cause the falling and rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against, so that the thoughts of many hearts will be revealed. And a sword will pierce your own soul too.'" Okay, we don't normally read this story at Christmas ... [laughing]... It's kind of depressing! It's a little *whah, whah, whah*, you know, a little scary!

**Eryn:** I love that it says, "so that thoughts from many hearts may be revealed."

**Elisa:** Before we go into that...

**Eryn:** Yes, okay, okay...

**Elisa:** Let's...

**Eryn:** ...okay...

**Elisa:** ...let's dig down a little bit. He's an old man. Right? What else...

**Eryn:** Yes.

**Elisa:** ...do we know about Simeon?

**Eryn:** Well, the Holy Spirit is upon him.

**Elisa:** What does that mean, the Holy Spirit ... especially in that day. This is before Pentecost. This is before, you know, the Spirit has actually come, but we see the Spirit speaking to people all through the Bible. Right?



**Eryn:** So what does that mean? Does that mean just ... the Holy Spirit was just hanging out beside him? Just walking around with him? [Laughter]

**Elisa:** Yeah, yeah...

**Eryn:** Is that what that means?

**Elisa:** I think what it...it means... Usually in...in the Gospels it means that the Holy Spirit's revealing something to him, you know...

**Eryn:** Okay.

**Elisa:** ...even before the formal giving of it...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** We also know he was righteous and devout...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...That's kinda special. And then in verse 25 he was waiting. Waiting for what? ...eh... Anybody else out there ever been waiting for anything? ... [Laughter]...

**Eryn:** Goodness!

**Elisa:** Kinda, sorta, always... What was Simeon waiting for, verse 25?

**Eryn:** "Now there was a man in Jerusalem whose name was Simeon, and this man was righteous and devout, waiting for the consolation of Israel..."

**Elisa:** Good. That's weird!

**Eryn:** So what is the "consolation?" What does that mean? What is the "consolation of Israel?"

**Elisa:** I had to look it up, but it means...

**Eryn:** Okay.





**Elisa:** ...deliverance...

**Eryn:** Okay.

**Elisa:** ...And it's really ... This is the story of the Bible. You know, we...we tend to think in the Old Testament it's one thing. In the New Testament it's another thing. But the whole story of the Bible is about God's love for humankind, our struggles to believe it, our choosing to do things on our own rather than believe it, and God creating a deliverance for us in spite of ourselves. So...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...we know now... See we're interpreting Christmas through the eyes of Easter. We know that the death of the Messiah is really what's going to provide deliverance for us. Simeon probably didn't understand all of that then, although there was a lot of Old Testament prophecy that would point toward that.

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** But the Holy Spirit is on him in such a way to give him a kind of an understanding — a revelation if you will — that he's not going to die...

**Eryn:** Hm.

**Elisa:** ...until he sees what God's going to do to deliver Israel!

**Eryn:** Hmm.

**Elisa:** Okay. So he's moved by the Spirit to go to the temple's courts. And I think that's fascinating. This is one of those, you know, we struggle with waiting cause we think, *Where has God gone when I'm waiting?* Simeon's old...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...and Simeon's moved by the Holy Spirit to go where? To the temple courts. Which is where *who* is also coming?



**Eryn:** Mary and Joseph.

**Elisa:** Yeah, are bringing Jesus, so you've got this crossroads of a man who's been waiting all of his life to see the consolation of Israel, the deliverance, the promised Messiah. And Mary and Joseph, who are the parents of Jesus, bringing Jesus on the appointed day when the rites...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...would require them to put Him into this ceremony, and — *Boom!* — their paths cross in that moment!

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Elisa:** Now how can that not be the Holy Spirit working?

**Eryn:** [laughing] That's right, with both of them.

**Elisa:** And so then Simeon sees Him and says, *Oh my gosh! This Child is destined...this is the One!* And his words are scary to us because — this is in verse 34, “he’s destined to cause the falling and the rising of many in Israel, and to be a sign that will be spoken against.” And we know that’s wha...exactly what happened, “so that the thoughts of many hearts” — and this is what you were questioning, Eryn — “will be revealed.” You know Jesus reveals us. His presence in our lives ...

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Elisa:** ...reveals who we are, what we depend on, what we believe, our need for Him. He causes us to be revealed. And then that last phrase, “the thoughts and hearts of many will be revealed, and a sword will pierce” — he’s saying this to Mary — “your own soul.” What does that mean?

**Eryn:** Then what did “a sword” symbolize? Was that wisdom?

**Elisa:** Yeah, that’s such a good question...

**Eryn:** Protection?

**Elisa:** I think I take myself to raising Jesus, trying to imagine what it’s like...



**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...to raise Jesus — God Himself as a Child. My soul would be pierced many times over I think, thinking *I'm not cut out for this*. But maybe...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...most graphically, Mary was among the women who followed Jesus carrying the cross to Golgotha and watched Him nailed to the cross and saw Him die. And what ultimate torture would that be...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...to see your son... Christmas changes everything when it becomes Christmas. And for Simeon, seeing God fulfill his promise. He'd been given this promise, and he waited all his life...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...for that to be fulfilled. He was listening and walking with God, in just the right place at just the right time in just the right moment, attending to the Holy Spirit so that when Mary and Joseph and Jesus were at the temple, and he was at the temple, he would then receive that promise that God had given to him. And he spoke over Him. So Christmas changed Simeon. It changed him from trusting and waiting into really being a fulfilled believer who received the ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...evidence of it. If Simeon was changed by Christmas in his waiting, then what might God be having *me* wait for today?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** And how can *my* wait, and Christmas in my wait — Jesus coming — change me? Are you waiting for anything right now, Eryn, my love?

**Eryn:** Yes, and I pray to the Holy Spirit... [laughing] ... who is upon me... [laughing] ...

**Elisa:** Yeah.



**Eryn:** I never thought of the Christmas story in ... I've never thought it through the lens of Simeon, and being a man that has seen a lot in his life and is still waiting for a promise to be fulfilled after seeing everything...

**Elisa:** Yes.

**Eryn:** ...and being in that wait, and having the discernment to ... of acknowledging, you know? Like for him to say, "Behold this child is appointed..." I mean that had to have been such a beautiful, emotional moment for him. And...

**Elisa:** Yeah.

**Eryn:** ...I would imagine when we are in these seasons of waiting, and then an answer has been given that we have just been desperately desiring, I can resonate with the emotions...

**Elisa:** I know! Right? [Music starts] ... Whether you're waiting for a relationship to come to fruition, or maybe to become a parent, or for a specific job turn in your career, or for someone that you adore to come to know the God that you adore — the...these things that we're waiting for to be like Simeon, changed by Christmas, in the way that move from being a trusting waiter to a fulfilled follower.

[Theme music]

**Elisa:** When we come back, we'll take a look at another person in the Christmas story and how their life experience sets an example for how we can pursue a relationship with God, even after life pans out differently than we expected.

[Music change]

**Eryn:** Hey yall! *God Hears Her* recently celebrated its hundredth episode! If you haven't checked out the episode, you can find it on our website or anywhere you listen to your podcasts. As part of the celebration, we also want to offer you a special limited-edition *God Hears Her* tote filled with things that you'll love, including the three devotional books: *God Hears Her*, *God Sees Her*, and *God Loves Her*, with pens and stickers and a notebook and other great goodies too. You'll want to get your hands on this ASAP. Check it out on our *God Hears Her* website. That's [godhearsher.org/shop](http://godhearsher.org/shop). Again, that's [godhearsher.org/shop](http://godhearsher.org/shop). Now back to the show.



**Eryn:** I want to talk about Anna.

**Elisa:** She's the next character, actually, in the story...

**Eryn:** Oh!

**Elisa:** Anna was a prophet as well, so we're in the same timetable, again, at that same moment where Anna is right there with Simeon on the temple steps when Mary...

**Eryn:** Oh!

**Elisa:** ...and Joseph and Jesus walk up there. So we're in Luke chapter 2, just three verses, 36 to 38. I'll start it. "There was also" — and this is right after Simeon's words — "a prophet, Anna, the daughter of Penuel, of the tribe of Asher. She was very old; she had lived with her husband seven years after marriage, and then was a widow until she was eighty-four."

**Eryn:** "She did not depart from the temple worshipping, with fasting and prayer night and day. And coming up at that very hour, she began to give thanks to God and to speak to Him to all who were waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem."

**Elisa:** So how did Christmas change Anna? We're only given three verses. What do we know about her?

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** First off, she's a...

**Eryn:** She was a widow.

**Elisa:** Okay, she was a widow. And it's really interesting when you start taking that apart. It said she's been a widow for nearly all her life. That makes me feel like she's been alone for nearly all ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...her life. We know from...

**Eryn:** Right.



**Elisa:** ...from Mary's story that young girls married like around puberty, you know, around 12 to 13. And Anna has only ... had only lived with her husband for seven years, Luke tells us. So it indicates she was around 20 when he died.

**Eryn:** Oh, so sad!

**Elisa:** Yeah! And we meet her when she's like 84. That's more than 60 years as a widow, and some scholars actually translate the verses to mean that she lived 84 years as a widow, which would make her even older than that.

**Eryn:** Wow!

**Elisa:** But, whoa! Okay, now widows were not in a good position in the New Testament. The responsibility to provide for them went to their extended family, and when there were no extended family members, no children or whatever, as seems to be the case with Anna, they could be really vulnerable...

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Elisa:** ...to exploitation or...or neglect. But what else do we know about her? Where does she live, Eryn? And how does she spend her time?

**Eryn:** She was "of the tribe of Asher."

**Elisa:** Okay. And what...what is her job? She is a what?

**Eryn:** She's a prophet.

**Elisa:** Okay, that means like a seer. In general, it's someone who is a spokesperson for God. Okay?

**Eryn:** Okay, so she was a spokes ... How do you get that job? How does...how does one get that job back then?

**Elisa:** Yeah, yeah. It's...it's a...

**Eryn:** [laughing]



**Elisa:** ...it's kind of family role, you know...

**Eryn:** Okay.

**Elisa:** ...it's passed down in families or tribes, you might say. We do know there were not many women mentioned as prophetesses. Right? Like...

**Eryn:** Yeah. Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...there're only like four or five even mentioned in Scripture, so she was rare...

**Eryn:** Oh wow!

**Elisa:** So she's a prophetess, a person who's a spokesperson for God. But where does she live, and what does she do constantly? I think this is verse 37.

**Eryn:** "She never left the temple, worshiping and fasting in prayer night and day." So she lived in the temple.

**Elisa:** Maybe that's the only place she could live. Maybe she was allowed to live there because she was of this tribe, this propheting tribe, and so they allowed her to. But what is so radical is she worshiped, through prayer and fasting, day and night. You've got this 24/7, day and night, her whole life, 84 years, whatever ... [laughs] ...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...given over to God.

**Eryn:** What I also imagine in her story is that being in the temple — worshiping, fasting, and praying — that is so fulfilling to the spaces of loneliness ...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...and neglect, of how you fight against those emotions.



**Elisa:** So good, Eryn, cause you've lived several years of your life as a single woman. And we've had many conversations about how God husbands you, how He fathers you, how He brothers you, how He parents you, how He provides for you. Speak into that, as you relate...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...to Anna here, and how Christmas changed everything for her. She was already given over in this ongoing worship, this hopeful, expectant worship. And then, as she sees that Christ child, the Messiah, she pushes over, she becomes this woman who's a fulfilled worshiper, with experienced conviction. How have you seen that work in your life?

**Eryn:** Oh! I mean I resonate so much with ...eh... It's funny, I resonate with her so much, even though she's 84, and I'm 35. But what I resonate is the worshipping and the fasting and the praying day and night, night and day. When I think about her state of loneliness, I've...I've fought through feeling lonely and feeling neglected and feeling disposed of, with prayer and fasting and worshipping. It's what got me through the other side of wanting to fall into a state — not wanting to — but falling into a state of depression.

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...Falling into more anxiety that's just being piled up on me. Worship and prayer was the thing that I fought through, but what I love in that, it says, "She began to give thanks to God..."

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn** ... and to speak to Him, to all who are waiting for the redemption of Jerusalem." And still I resonate with is "speaking to Him in anticipation for redemption." How many of us that are listening have just prayed and fasted and worshiped? And probably she lamented, you know...

**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...lamented the days in which she hadn't seen redemption come yet.

**Elisa:** That is so good! But once she experiences ... I mean here's the thing. One of my *Discover The Word* cohorts, Bill, put it this way: He said, "you know, what if she had taken a day off?" ... [laughing] ... What if she had said, *Eh I'm not in the mood today*, you know? Just...





**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...you know, *I don't...I don't want to praise. I don't want to worship. I don't want to pray.* You know...eh... she might have missed that crossroads of her interception with Jesus. But she doesn't take a day off. In fact, the way Scripture says, "night and day," she was always living ongoingly there in the temple. "She never left the Temple but worshipped night and day, fasting and praying." Because she was there — like you were saying — verse 38, she "gives thanks to God and spoke about the child." It's like a *Yes!* And she turns...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...from an...a posture of her personally praying and prophesying and worshipping, to sharing the news with who? With "all who were looking forward."

**Eryn:** Mmm.

**Elisa:** She becomes an evangelist again. We see that over and over with people. When Christmas changes you, when you understand what Christmas is, when you recognize Jesus as the Christ child, it changes you. And you share with others, you know, so...so whether it Simeon...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...moving from this trusting, waiting posture to this fulfilled follower; or Anna moving from this daily worshiper to one who has an experienced, first-person conviction of God, Christmas changes us! I'm just bowled over by these real people — real people, every single one of them! Mary...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...moves from being an unwed mother in...into the...the woman who will give birth to God. And... and Joseph moves from this grief-stricken, betrothed, doubting, terrified, engaged man into the stepfather.

**Eryn:** I can't imagine in that space what Joseph was experiencing and feeling like as a stepfather. How would he understand what his role is? You know I think about parents that are listening that may be a stepparent, stepmom, who's trying to understand their role and their...and their space. And so I think, you know, currently, but then I think back then...



**Elisa:** Mm-hmm.

**Eryn:** ...what did...

**Elisa:** What did that look like?

**Eryn:** What did that look like for him?

**Elisa:** Yeah, an...and Scripture's so beautiful in Matthew and Luke, where his story is told, you know. He's shocked that she's pregnant. The Holy Spirit tells him. He makes a plan to be obedient and divorce her quietly, because that would mean he didn't disgrace her; because even being betrothed is the same as being married in that day. And then the Holy Spirit says, *no, no, you don't need to do that. This is of God.* And Joseph then chooses to stay with Mary, chooses to believe God and the Holy Spirit, yields to God's understanding of what his life is going to look like, which replaces his understanding and expectation of what his life is going to look like. *Hello, anybody ever been there?* And he...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...doesn't have sexual relations with Mary until *after* Jesus is born, and he obediently names this son Jesus, as he's been told to, and he then parents Him. Wow! I mean Christmas changed Joseph radically! And, again, we can go through all of these characters. And...and I think one of the penultimate characters is Herod, who refused the change of...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** ...Christmas...

**Eryn:** Yeah.

**Elisa:** And we all have that as an option.

**Eryn:** Mm.

**Elisa:** ...eh... Christmas changes us. ...eh... And so, as we enter the Christmas season each and every year, you know, I...I like to look at these nine characters and think — especially this year — what's the change point...



**Eryn:** Mm.

**Elisa:** ...in my life? Is it, like Mary, to accept God's invitation to become a part of His work? Is it, like Joseph, to yield in obedience to God's way, which is going to be better than mine, though I can't see it. [Laughing] ... Is...is it like Zechariah, to believe that what God has said is true? Or like Elizabeth, to rejoice that He's going to make me pregnant even as an old lady? Or...or like the shepherds, to share the Good News? Or...or like Simeon in ... [music starts] ... waiting or Anna in worshiping or like the Maji, to seek after? Or is it, unlike Herod, to learn — to learn from mistakes and yield to God's way? I don't know what it is for each of us, but I'll tell you what: I want to open up my heart and receive the real Gift of Christmas. Because when I do, Christmas changes everything.

[Theme music]

**Elisa:** Merry Christmas, *God Hears Her* Family! We hope and pray that you remember the Gift of Jesus this season and embrace the love He has for you.

**Eryn:** Yes. Let Christmas change everything for you.

**Elisa:** And, also, our team is taking a holiday break. Whoops! Stay tuned for more episodes coming in January. We'll miss you.

**Eryn:** Enjoy your Christmas, and we will see yall in the new year; but before we go, we want to remind you that the show notes are available in the podcast description. You can also find a link to purchase Elisa's book *Christmas Changes Everything*. Find all this and more when you visit our website at [godhearsher.org](http://godhearsher.org). That's [godhearsher.o.r.g](http://godhearsher.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, Jade Gustman, and Daniel Ryan Day. We also want to recognize Maggie and John for all their help and support. Thanks everyone!

[ODB theme]



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