

the  
**PROVERBS 31**  
MINISTRIES  
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith Brock: Hi friends, and welcome back to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast where we share biblical truths for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and I am here with my cohost, Kaley Olson.
- Kaley Olson: Hi Meredith. So glad to be here with you today. If you've been listening to the podcast for a while or are familiar with our ministry, you've probably heard us say the line, know the truth, live the truth, it changes everything. Mere, do you want to tell them a little bit about what that means?
- Meredith Brock: Yeah. Well we believe that when a woman knows the truth of God's Word, when she studies it, she reads it and she hides it in her heart, she'll apply and live that truth out in her everyday interactions. And, ultimately, it'll change everything for her. We expose women to the truth of God's Word through this very podcast you're listening to right now. Our Online Bible Studies, our First 5 mobile app, our *Encouragement for Today* devotions and we even do it a little bit on social media. One thing we wanted to do today though was bring in a special guest to help us spend more time on knowing the truth.
- Kaley Olson: Yeah, and I'm excited to introduce our guest, Joel Muddamalle who is giving our teaching today. Welcome Joel.
- Joel Muddamalle: Hey Kaley, hey Meredith, how you guys doing?
- Meredith Brock: Doing great. Joel is the Director of Theology at Proverbs 31 Ministries and we've always got him busy making sure what we say lines up correctly with God's Word. We're glad he made some time for us today. He's going to spend some time on the basics of how we can know the truth and give us some basic principles for how to study the Bible on our own.
- Joel Muddamalle: That's awesome. Well guys, first, thank you so much for having me.
- Meredith Brock: Absolutely.

Joel Muddamalle: This is fun. These are the highlights of my week for sure. When I get to pull my face out of books and commentaries and spend some time with people and friends.

Meredith Brock: We're flattered. That's so sweet.

Joel Muddamalle: One of things that I'm a PhD student right now. I'm studying theology and one of the things that the Lord has recently convicted me on, if you were to walk into my home study office area, I've got 10 different books that I've got to read in about three months. The other day I was in just reading a book and it kind of just dawned on me that I found myself spending more time reading books about God than actually reading God's Word. I began to think, man, that's such a struggle. How easy is it for me to open up a C.S. Lewis book or a book by your favorite Christian author and read their thoughts about God but God has been so good, He has been so gracious to give us His actual words in the form of the Bible that is so, we have never lived in an age and a time where the Scriptures are more accessible to us today. Literally, jump onto Google and you can find any Bible translation that you want and it's all available.

But I think one of the things as I've taught and as people have asked different questions, it can feel daunting on where do I start? Do I need to know Greek and Hebrew and what are all the techniques and strategies in order to study Scripture? And I think what can happen is the daunting questions almost lead us away from studying God's Word to, I'll just settle for what another person has to say about God's Word.

Maybe my goal for us today in this teaching time is to really show that with four very basic principles, we're not going to go through Greek or Hebrew or any of that. But just what God has given us, His common grace, His gifts that He's given us, we can literally look at a passage of Scripture and we can glean the depth and the beauty from God's Word. We're going to go through four basic principles of Bible study.

The very first one, and if you've got your Bibles or you're going to replay this at some point in time, we're going to find ourselves in Mark chapter 6. One of the very first things that we're going to ask of you is to simply observe the text. What does that mean, Joel? Observe the text? This is literally where you're going to sit down, you're going to read a section of Scripture and you're going to start to ask some specific questions. This is the who, the what, the when, the where, the why.

In my, if you guys were with me and Meredith and Kaley you can kind of see, my Bible in Mark chapter 6, you see the mark-ups that are taking place. I've got notes and I've got highlights and I've literally got question marks. What does that even mean? And so when I'm observing the text, I'm going through and I'm looking for specific locations. I'm looking for people that are named. I'm looking for words. Mark 6, verse 45, starts with, "Immediately." Why would that section

of Scripture start with the word like “immediately”? And I'm just trying to ask some questions about the text.

Here is the greatest challenge I think that we all have when it comes to studying God's Word. We want to jump right into answering all of our questions. We want to know the answer as quick. If we think about the information age that we're in right now, I walk around my house sometimes and I go, Alexa, what's the weather like? And Alexa pops up. And sometimes Alexa can understand my accent, I'm Indian so you know. But sometimes Alexa can't. But instantly I'm like, oh, what's the weather in Philadelphia and tell me exactly what the weather is. And we've become accustomed and really almost cultivated to expecting answers to our questions instantly.

But what I'm going to encourage you and what I encourage myself is, to pause. Slow down. Dwell in the text. Meditate in the text. Allow those questions to continue to grow and make those notes and try not to just jump right into answering what this might mean. Another acronym that I got in Bible college that I think is super helpful for me is an acronym, A-I-M, aim. That is called the author's intended meaning. Who is the author of this text, and what did they set out to say? What was their message to these people? And that leads us to our second point.

We've now observed the text. We've asked all these questions. We've looked at repetition of words. The next step is interpretation. This is exactly what everybody is trying to get to, but we don't want to bypass all of the details. Once we get to interpretation, we're just asking, okay, now what did the author actually mean by this passage of Scripture? What are we supposed to learn as a result of this? When we look at a passage like Mark 6, verses 45 through 52, it's this passage where Jesus, it's right after this miracle takes place. Jesus sends His disciples onto a boat, onto the Sea of Galilee. Jesus leaves. He separates Himself from them. He goes on top of a mountain to pray and then as He's walking back down, the disciples, they experience a pretty tremendous storm. This storm scares them like crazy.

Imagine, these are professional fishermen. They've spent their lives out on the sea. Why would they be so terrified? This must be something serious. And Scripture is so specific. It says that, in verse 48, "And He saw that they were making headway painfully for the wind was against them. And about the fourth watch of the night, He came to them walking on the sea. He meant to pass by them." 49, "But when He saw them, walking on the sea, they thought He was a ghost and He cries out for they all saw Him and were terrified but immediately He spoke to them and said, 'Take heart, it is I, do not be afraid.' And He got into the boat with them and the wind ceased and they were utterly astounded."

What does this passage mean? When Jesus is separated from the disciples, the disciples experience chaos on the sea. They are terrified. But I love what the Scriptures say, that as Jesus is walking by, He sees them. He observes their plight. He sees their chaos and instead of passing by them, He literally walks

onto the boat. He steps onto the boat and when He steps onto the boat, the chaos of this sea and the storm, it ceases. When Jesus is now present with them, their peace is returned.

I just think about what that means for our lives and the imagery of the storms that we have and we've experienced and by just looking at some observation of these details and seeing what the author intended to show was that, when Jesus is with us, when we are observant of who He is and when He enters into our lives — now, the storm may not cease miraculously every time, but what does change is the physical proximity of who He is to us and our confidence in the one who actually created the storm and the one who speaks life and breath into all of us. That's the second one.

The third one is application. It would be an absolute disaster if we just stopped at interpretation. How do the Scriptures now motivate and inform our very next steps of life? This isn't just head knowledge for us to learn but it actually is informing how we think about our life, our context, our marriages, our children, our parenting. You think about all of those different areas of life, Scripture is meant to inform that. When we think about application, this third part, we're thinking about the “so what?” What do I do next as a result of what I know to be true about Scripture?

When I think about Mark chapter 6, I think about, well, what are the behavioral patterns I'm going to create? How am I going to remember that Jesus is present in the midst of my chaos? How am I going to take my eyes off of the storm and place as the object of my affection, the person of Jesus? How am I going to do those things in my life in the midst of my chaos?

There's this fourth thought now, we've done observation, we've done interpretation, we've jumped into the application, the so what, and here's the fourth one, it's called correlation. All of Scripture from Genesis 1, all the way through the end of Revelation, is either pointing to Jesus or it's telling us that Jesus is coming back. It is this, the theological term is Christology. It is all about Jesus. And there's this really interesting phrase here in Mark chapter 6. It comes at the very end of 48. It says that, "He meant," He's Jesus. "He meant to pass by them." That phrase pass by is actually the exact phrase that's used of God when Moses is on Mount Sinai and we kind of know the story. Moses goes up to Mount Sinai. He gets the 10 Commandments. It's this incredible scene in the book of Exodus and all of a sudden God passes by Moses. The glory of God passes by Moses.

What correlation does it draw to our mind, other stories, other pictures, other images throughout the entirety of Scripture, that help point us to Jesus? When we look a phrase, pass by, we think of the Old Testament. We think of somebody like Moses who never got to see Jesus. He never got to experience even when the glory of God passes by him, Moses has to turn his back or God has to turn His back because Moses can't even see the fullness of the glory of who God is.

But now I think about this passage. Here are the disciples who get to see the full manifestation of God's glory in the person of Jesus. And in this moment, Jesus doesn't just pass by the disciples, He pauses. He sees their plight and He steps into the boat with them to live alongside of them. I just think that's an incredible thought to know that Jesus accomplishes so much and all Scripture is really pointing to Him.

We've done, I don't even know how much time that was guys. That was ...

Meredith Brock: Like what? Eight minutes.

Joel Muddamalle: Okay. In eight ...

Meredith Brock: Maybe eight to 10 minutes.

Joel Muddamalle: Eight to 10 minutes we have jumped into Scripture. We've gone through four steps and we haven't gotten into Greek or Hebrew or I haven't opened up any commentary, you guys are watching me. I'm not cheating here, am I?

Meredith Brock: There's not a commentary in here.

Joel Muddamalle: There's no commentary. I didn't even open up my phone. But we were able to I think, glean so much from Scripture by asking these questions and just kind of going through that process. Those four steps, observation, interpretation, application and correlation. And here's just probably a last closing kind of just encouragement. Anything that we love, we put our time and our attention to. I love fantasy football. On my phone you will see an app that it will tell me all the things that take place and you know there's this new feature on the iPhone thing, it tells you your screen time. You all know about this thing?

Meredith Brock: Oh boy.

Kaley Olson: I don't even want to look.

Meredith Brock: I don't want that on my phone.

Joel Muddamalle: Listen, conviction. My wife's like, "Joel, your fantasy football screen time, I think you need to be studying or doing something else." But, the things that we love, the things that we enjoy, we can get lost in so simply and easily. It's binge watching the Netflix shows or whatever it might be. And my prayer, my hope, is that throughout this process, those eight minutes will turn into 10 minutes, will turn into 15 and we'll just get lost in Scripture. But don't get worried about the amount of time that you've spent in here. It's the quality of time and every moment, every second with the Lord are holy moments.

I think about my wife who is often in a car line waiting to pick up the boys from school and she will open up her First 5 app and in those minutes, she's got

carved out five minutes to be able to just jump into Scripture and for her, we always talk about this, those are the most holy moments for her. Now, she's got the fumes, if you're in a car line, please turn off your car. It's a real thing. But those are holy special moments that God uses to transform us and conform us into the likeness and image of Jesus.

Meredith Brock: So good Joel. I think where you kind of started out at in all of this is kind of talking about how I feel like people look at the Bible like it's some big mystery. Or that it's this weird, it's really strange, especially Americans have this very strange relationship with the Bible. Especially, I'm not from the South, especially Southerners because it's so deeply rooted in their culture and even like they have a family Bible. Where I grew up, we did not have a family Bible, guys. That was nowhere in my, not at all. Not in our house.

I think because of that, there's this, we create this barrier that the most simple things that you would do with any other book, you don't do with the Bible. And I think it's so good that you started out with saying, "Just observe. Just observe the text." You're not, I think a lot of us and I know I've gone through this in my own walk with the Lord and with my own time in the Word, is that sometimes I feel like, okay, I need to do, I need to spend some time in the Word and so I go to it and I'm like okay, I read a chapter. Check. And you almost have like this checklist rather than giving yourself permission, give yourself permission, read four verses. Just read four verses. Read five verses. Be aware. You would treat any other book like, let's pretend like we're all reading a leadership book together and you read one paragraph and that paragraph has grabbed you so strongly that you can't move beyond that paragraph. And you stop. And you write in the side of it and then you talk to your friend about it and you keep.

We have this barrier with the Word of God that we don't treat it like other books. Which I understand to a certain degree 'cause it is the words of God. That right there, wow. That should stop you in your tracks but don't let it stop you from actually digesting it in a personal, in a real way and letting God speak to you through it. I just think, I love that that's where you started with was observe and giving yourself permission to do that.

Kaley Olson: I think too on another side of the spectrum, you talked about reading a leadership book and letting the Bible be that leadership lesson that you need.

Meredith Brock: Absolutely.

Kaley Olson: But I think I'm the kind of girl that who, nine months before I was born, I was in church. You hear a lot of Southern people say things like ...

Meredith Brock: She was born in Mississippi.

Kaley Olson: I was and it's like, I heard hymns before I was on the other side of my mom's belly. For me, I remember being a kid and sitting in Sunday school, Joel, you remember felt boards?

Joel Muddamalle: Oh yeah, absolutely.

Kaley Olson: Okay, okay.

Joel Muddamalle: Like Joseph and his colored robes and all that.

Kaley Olson: As a kid you go to Sunday school and they tell you Bible stories. As a kid, Meredith you're a mom, Harvey loves stories I'm sure.

Meredith Brock: He does. Loves them.

Kaley Olson: He loves telling them because you can get so into them. But I think as an adult, we go to the Bible and we think of it, oh let me learn what I need. How I need to grow as a leader and all of a sudden, it seems like sometimes the magic of the Bible stories are lost but they're true stories. I have found myself lately going back and just reading and being like, this is crazy. The other day, Meredith, we were with our team offsite and you talked about the story of the four guys lowers the paralytic through the roof and just how crazy that was.

Meredith Brock: The most bizarre thing.

Kaley Olson: And how we can so easily miss those details or letting ourselves just think, this is real thing that happened but if we just blaze through it, and just read it one time and go to interpretation, then we miss the whole, how did they get him up there? Did they throw him up there? Did they flop the ladder? Did someone pull him up? Did he flop up there?

Meredith Brock: What was that like?

Joel Muddamalle: What was everybody else thinking when these pieces of, they didn't just happen instantly.

Meredith Brock: No, it takes a minutes. And then you know they were on that roof, how're we going to dig the hole. Wait, don't dig it right there, you're going to fall in. Stop, stop, stop.

Joel Muddamalle: Do you have insurance or not for this thing 'cause how we going to fix this thing?

Kaley Olson: There's so many things that I feel like, it just going to interpretation takes the I don't want to say fun-ness because I think that that's not a real word that I should use here. Sometimes we think of God as like this holy God who's sitting up high and He's orchestrating it all out for our good but He sent Jesus to be a

real person, to experience real things and He's there with us and He wrote this in here to help us understand how Rahab the prostitute can be used. People with pasts can be used.

Joel Muddamalle: In the line of Jesus.

Kaley Olson: What was that like? Or, the emotions that Ruth and Naomi felt leaving. Having that happen. There's emotions and there's crazy stuff like the sun staying up all day long. Things like that, that I just feel like as adults, we automatically, we go to the movies to see action movies. I love a good action movie. Romance, give me an action movie. Anything. Anything. War, all that kind of stuff, I want it. But I don't let myself do that in the Bible. And I just feel like that's where we can experience what it was like and whenever we can put ourselves in their shoes, going back to the paralytic man and thinking how crazy that must have been and did they have a shovel? Did they dig with their hands, I don't know. But then, that's where you can put yourself in their shoes and not just think about what it means for this lesson that I'm going to tell someone else. Or reading the Bible for immediate, how do I build myself up? And how I give charge to my team?

Meredith Brock: And how does this apply to my parenting?

Kaley Olson: Yes. But, what does it mean for me? Like you said, if I were in the boat and I were being rocked by the waves, how would I have felt? How crazy would it have been? What does it mean for me? I just think we lose that.

Meredith Brock: So good. We do.

Joel Muddamalle: I think too, and Meredith you taught the paralytic in a meeting the other day that we were in. Now listen, I've studied that passage of Scripture often. Your observations of that text blessed me so much 'cause I never thought to ask those types of questions about that text. What were these guys feeling? I didn't even get into this part of it, but this is the beauty of when the people of God come together to read Scripture together, because God has given us each gifts to be able to inform. Here I am, I'm like, writing down, this is amazing and it's because we've been faithful to ask those questions and make those observations.

The last thing Kaley, that you had said, this is exactly why in my personal, on my nightstand right now I've got all the big jumbo copy book of *The Lord of the Rings*. I have Tolkien.

Meredith Brock: I'm not surprised by that.

Kaley Olson: Me neither.



Joel Muddamalle: I've got notes in there but what I found myself, and this is what I do to counteract the challenge of this holy book turning into some academic or informational, what helps me is to look at somebody like Tolkien who wrote *The Lord of the Rings*, that is saturated with biblical truth, but he pulls the mystery and he's pulling the awe and majesty and I'm reading about these different like Aragorn who's a type of Jesus. And then I go back into the Scriptures and I'm like, oh that's exactly where Tolkien got this idea. And now there's this mystery and there's this majesty and I'm always trying to remind myself, God has that in store for us.

Meredith Brock: Right. That's so good.

Joel Muddamalle: This is exciting.

Meredith Brock: It's really amazing. I want us to park there for just one second 'cause I think that there is this tension that we walk in when it comes to the word of God where it's what has created the barriers. Which is, oh my gosh, these are the words of God. Whoa, just sit there for a second. That blows your mind. Also, that it's totally normal. People like any other book, walk in that. Be confident that you can understand it and that you can make correlations like anyone else.

I was thinking when you said that last point, you all, we make correlations in every other relationship and book. We do it all the time. How many of you have gone to pick up your kids from school and thought, saw a lady walking in the hallway and you're like, oh, isn't that the girl from? That's all you're doing in the Word of God is just opening up and saying, "Wait a minute. Isn't that the girl that I read about from," and then you go try to make that correlation with that. Just really stripping that barrier between us and what God really wants to say to us through His Word. So good.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, that's really great. Joel, earlier you mentioned, your wife Brittany sitting in the car line and reading First 5 and so I want to talk a little bit about our First 5 app, because Joel, you do a lot for it in regards to theology. But Lysa TerKeurst had this idea, what almost four years ago. Crazy. Crazy. In 2015, to start an app that allows women to spend the first five minutes of their day in the Bible, reading chapter by chapter, verse by verse, not necessarily drawing conclusions about the text but really challenging women to spend time in the Word of God. I think as a Christian growing up in church, do I really need that? Haven't I already done this? Do I need another app that's just that simple? But yes, you need an app that's just that simple.

If you're looking for a practical way to take what we've talked about today and start in a random book. We are coming up on our study of Jeremiah and that's not just a book that I would open up to for some light reading.

Meredith Brock: That's intimidating. It's super intimidating.

Kaley Olson: What in Jeremiah does God want me to see that applies to me right now? How can the stories be unfolded before my eyes in a fresh way? If you're looking for a practical way to study the Bible on a chapter by chapter basis, the First 5 app is free. Each morning you'll read a quick, five-minute devotion based on the book we're studying and guys, join us for Jeremiah. It's going to be great.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, I just got done writing the Experience Guide for it and you all, I am so excited about what I think we're going to journey through and see how an ancient person like Jeremiah can so practically relate to situations and circumstances that you and I have on an everyday level. To me, that is a miracle. Only God could do something like that where this ancient text could apply to every part of our lives today. But I can't give away too much, so you'll definitely need to grab the Experience Guide and then download the app.

Meredith Brock: That makes me so excited about that study. I can't wait. Joel said something really important, you all, and that is, an Experience Guide. Let me tell you a little bit about that. Within our First 5 mobile app, you have daily content. You don't pay anything to access that daily content. We just encourage you, bring your Bible. We actually have the Scripture in the app if you need it but bring your Bible so you get your hands on that Word of God. Read that daily content. That's all you need to engage with the app. But, we also have Experience Guides that are going to help you take your study just a little bit further. They are written by Joel and his incredible team of writers on the First 5 team. They have additional maps. They have charts. They have all kinds of different study information that you really can't get anywhere else. This is created right here in-house at Proverbs 31. Anytime you purchase something from our bookstore, what's really amazing is you're financially helping us continue to do what we do here at Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Kaley Olson: Yep. That's right. And to download the First 5 app, visit the app store or Google Play on your mobile device and to purchase an Experience Guide, go to [p31bookstore.com](http://p31bookstore.com).

All right, thanks so much for joining us, everyone. We pray this teaching helps you know the truth of God's Word and live that truth out because it'll change everything. Have a great day.