

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith Brock: Well, hello, friends, welcome back to *The Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast* where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and I am here with a very special co-host today and a very dear friend of mine, the lovely Lisa Allen.
- Lisa Allen: Hi, Meredith.
- Meredith Brock: It's so good to be with you and in this new kind of co-host with you for a little bit.
- Lisa Allen: I know, right?
- Meredith Brock: I'm loving that and I love ... I'm so excited to be on this side of the microphone and just the variety of guests and topics and everything, this is exciting.
- Lisa Allen: It's fun, right?
- Meredith Brock: It really is fun. Y'all might remember Lisa Allen from her teaching earlier that we did in the fall of 2018. All about clarifying your calling. And these lady right here is a walking example of what it looks to truly operate out of your calling to build teams and lead people. And for those of you who don't know her, Lisa Allen is the Executive Director of Ministry and Staff Development here at Proverbs 31, and she's also one of my very, very best friends, my office mate, we share an office together.
- Lisa Allen: We do. We have a lot of fun together.
- Meredith Brock: We really do. And we share some pretty fun text messages.
- Lisa Allen: Oh, especially at night.
- Meredith Brock: In the evening when we're both very tired.

Lisa Allen: Yes. And you're just such a dear friend of mine and it's just so fun to be able to lead the teams that I get to lead at Proverbs. It sounds like I lead a lot, I just lead a lot of really cool people on First 5, in my Bible study, She Speaks, Speaker team. So, thanks for letting me play around here a little bit.

Meredith Brock: Well thanks for hanging out with me. Kaley's out doing something fun.

Lisa Allen: She's always doing something fun.

Meredith Brock: I know. You got some big shoes to fill.

Lisa Allen: I'm nervous a little bit.

Meredith Brock: But I feel certain you can. So, anyway, it's really cool that we have Lisa on the show since she oversees our First 5 mobile app team and all the logistics and all the stuff that goes into that because we're actually going to be talking about one of our past studies.

Meredith Brock: Lisa, why don't you go ahead and welcome our teacher for today.

Lisa Allen: I am honored to. I am honored to welcome Katy McCown. And Katy and I literally just ... what was it? 48 hours ago, were sitting on the floor of an airport in Colorado eating a hamburger, watching a video of her daughter in a dance recital that she was unable to attend because she was fulfilling her calling. And I just love her to death. Katy's a wife and a mom of six children.

Meredith Brock: What?

Lisa Allen: I know! And one of our First 5 writers and joining us on the podcast. So welcome, Katy.

Katy McCown: Hi! It's so great to be here. I am currently sitting here with none of those six children, so it's quiet. But that's a great thing.

Meredith Brock: That's nice.

Katy McCown: That's a great thing.

Lisa Allen: It's got to be refreshing.

Katy McCown: You will hopefully be able to hear everything I say, at least for a short amount of time.

Lisa Allen: I love that. One of the things that I think I love the most about you, Katy, I'm going to quote something you said, I don't know if you remember saying this. But I heard somebody asked you a question once and say, "How did you become a Bible teacher?" And you said that you had to think about it, and you

realized you actually started teaching the Bible, when she did two minute teachings, to little kids sitting on the floor, who were three babies under the age of five, and that just warms my heart. Because that's such a basic way to really dig into the Bible. You can teach the Bible if you can teach it to kids under five.

Meredith Brock: That's the truth.

Katy McCown: That was when we had three kids ... You know what? We had four. The fourth one was so little, we would already have her in bed. Luke and I, my husband, we would go up there and sit on the floor with our three boys who had the attention span of nothing. So, we would open the Bible. And we would just give them as much as they could take before they started bouncing off the walls again, right before bedtime. And it's true, I had no idea. I had no idea in those days, that God would even call me to be a Bible teacher, that He was even laying the groundwork for that. But I trace it back to them and what sweet days, even though we would walk away some nights thinking we accomplished nothing. But we kept doing it because we thought if we put the Word in there, God can use it.

Meredith Brock: I love that.

Lisa Allen: So good.

Meredith Brock: I love it so much. Planting seeds in their little hearts, but also in your heart as a Bible teacher. Today, Katy is going to give a teaching from one of our past studies on our First 5 mobile app, called *Opposition and Opportunity*. Now, what in the world is the First 5 mobile app, you ask? Well, First 5 is a totally free mobile app that Proverbs 31 developed that will help you spend the first five minutes of your day in God's Word. We are studying through the entire Bible, chapter by chapter in five-minute increments.

Meredith Brock: Now, obviously there is no book in the entire Bible called *Opposition and Opportunity*. There's no book called that. But it's actually a study of the books of Ezra and Nehemiah. But what we wanted to give you was a vision for what you might learn in those two books during that study. So really, really cool stuff.

Lisa Allen: And let's be honest, if it were titled Ezra and Nehemiah, you probably wouldn't be much interested in that. But are you kind of more intrigued with *Opposition and Opportunity*?

Meredith Brock: Absolutely.

Lisa Allen: Yes.

Meredith Brock: I love it. I'm really, really excited to hear from Katy today. But before we let Katy dive into our teaching, I want to preface by letting y'all know one more thing. And that is this type of teaching Katy is about to give is available in the app

every single weekend, during the weekdays. Like I said earlier, we focus on one chapter at a time with a short written teaching. But on the weekends, we dive deeper into God's Word, where we learned a little bit more about maybe some of the things that we learned during the week. It's typically an audio teaching. So if you're scooting around with the kids in the car, doing all the things that you do, it really is a great way to dig a little bit deeper into God's Word.

Lisa Allen: I literally just did it this weekend in a hotel room.

Meredith Brock: I love that.

Lisa Allen: Fixing my hair, I had my phone right there, listening to the audio teaching. I loved it.

Meredith Brock: I love it. I love it. So the moral of the story is, if you don't have the app, what should they do?

Lisa Allen: You should download that.

Meredith Brock: Go get that.

Lisa Allen: Go to the app store because it's free.

Meredith Brock: That's totally free.

Lisa Allen: As is that great teaching.

Meredith Brock: I know. Good stuff right there, folks. Well, alright, clearly, that's enough from me and Lisa Allen. Katy, I can't wait to hear your teaching. Let's dig in to Ezra and Nehemiah.

Katy McCown: Yes. These aren't the longest books in the Bible. If you're flipping pretty quickly, you might miss them every time you flip through the Bible. But I do love ... like you mentioned, I love the title, *Opposition and Opportunity*. Because while we might not like to think of it this way, just about every opportunity will include opposition. And so what happens if we are only looking for opportunities, and we're not expecting opposition with them, we're going to lose our endurance, we're going to run out, because we're going to become frustrated. Or worse, we may even think we've maybe misheard God, or we've taken a wrong step, and so we'll stop when we're faced with opposition.

Katy McCown: And so I love that this study combines these two words, because this is exactly what we're going to see in the books of Ezra and Nehemiah, pretty much a thread pulled all the way through. They're really exciting books for God's people, for the nation of Israel. They are standing on the doorstep of so much offered opportunity, so much expectancy, about what God is doing among His people and in their land, during the course of these two books.

Katy McCown: But what we will find ... and I'm going to focus today, specifically on Nehemiah ... there is this thread of opposition that pulls through with the opportunity. So I want to look today in the book of Nehemiah and we're going to start in Nehemiah chapter 2. And we're going to look at a literal enemy that Nehemiah faces. And we first hear about the enemy in Nehemiah chapter 2, and a couple of places. And so we're going to just, going to look at some things that we notice about this enemy. And then we'll talk a little bit about how it applies to us once we look at this enemy.

Katy McCown: So let's first talk about what the enemy was against. If we look in Nehemiah chapter 2:10, this is where we first meet the enemy. And I heard Lisa tell us one time, and she was reading a story from the Bible, and there was a bad guy in it. And she said that every time she heard that name, she would kind of hear that organ play. And so in my head, every time we say these names, I hear that 'gong tan tan.'

Meredith Brock: I love it.

Katy McCown: Play it in your head every time I say it, that's what it does here. So Nehemiah 2:10 is our first 'tan tan taaa' moment. And here's what we read. "But when Sanbalat the Horenite and Tobias the Ammonite servant heard this, it displeased them greatly, that someone had come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel." So what is the enemy against? In this verse, the enemy is against the person who has come to seek the welfare of the people of Israel.

Katy McCown: In Nehemiah 4:7, the work is continuing, the work has begun, and here we have this enemy again. And it says in verse seven, "that the enemy heard that the repairing of the walls of Jerusalem was going forward, and that the breaches were beginning to be closed, and they were very angry." So what we're seeing here is that we see the enemy on the front end of Nehemiah leading the people to carry out the work that God had called them to carry out. We see the enemy at the beginning, but the enemy doesn't stop at the beginning, the enemy continues with the progress of the work. So it's not a one-time situation where we meet an enemy, we resist an enemy, we keep moving. No. Nehemiah met the enemy at the beginning, but Nehemiah also met the enemy as the work progressed.

Katy McCown: Okay, so now let's look at some tactics of the enemy. In Nehemiah chapter 2 again, we read in verse 19, here's the same characters again tan tan taa ... "But when Sanbalat the Horenite and Tobias the Ammonites servant and Geshon the Arab heard of it ... " Did you notice that the enemy had increased? " ... when they heard of it, they jeered at us and despised us and said, 'What is this thing that you are doing? Are you rebelling against the king?'"

Katy McCown: Okay, so let's break this down just a little bit. We read these words, "They jeered at us and despised us," I don't know, because we're not there hearing it or maybe because we think, "Well, it's just words," we might miss the severity

of what this is describing. And the Hebrew word that's translated jeered at us can be defined as 'to speak barbarously.' Well, that's not really a word that we use in our everyday language. So let's define barbarously.

Katy McCown: If you look that word up in the dictionary, one of the definitions is savagely cruel. So we can say that the words that were coming out of the enemy's mouth to Nehemiah and God's people were savagely cruel. So they jeered at them and despised them. And then we read this question at the end of the enemy response that says, 'Are you rebelling against the king?' Well go back and read the beginning of Nehemiah chapter 2. And you will clearly see that they are not rebelling against the king. Nehemiah had firsthand permission from the king to come do this work. But what is the enemy doing? Trying to create doubt. The enemy wants Nehemiah and God's people to be afraid because listen, to rebel against the king was a very serious accusation. It could cost you your life if word got back to the king that you were rebelling against him. So they have falsely accused them. They are jeering at them and despising them with the aim to create doubt in what they are carrying out for God's assignments.

Katy McCown: And we see them again, in Nehemiah chapter 4, the same word jeered is used in Nehemiah 4:1-3. It says that the enemy jeered at the Jews in verse one, and then it also goes on to say that they called the Jews feeble, and they also questioned their ability to complete the work well.

Katy McCown: Okay, so now, they have not only tried to create doubt, by false accusations, but now they're creating doubt by calling them feeble. They're trying to create doubt in their own ability to accomplish the work. "Look at you, you're feeble? How could you possibly do this?" That's my paraphrase of it.

Katy McCown: We should also mention in Nehemiah 4:8, that it specifically says that the enemy plotted together to cause confusion in the work. So now we have very clear enemy tactics of trying to create doubt, and also their desire to create confusion among them. So what happens when their enemy then deploys these tactics of creating doubt and causing confusion?

Katy McCown: And we read in Nehemiah 4: 10-14 that, "Unfortunately their desire to create doubt and cause confusion, their threats and accusations had deposited fear into the hearts of God's people." In verse 10, we read that, "In Judah, it was said, the strength of those who bear the burden is failing, there is too much rubble, by ourselves we will not be able to rebuild the wall."

Katy McCown: So where now are God's people looking? They're saying they're looking at themselves and saying, 'My strength is failing'. They're looking around at all that is to be done and saying, 'There's too much rubble.' And because of those two things, they're saying we can't do it.

Katy McCown: I liken it to, let's think about if we're driving down the road, and we're driving our car down a two lane road, and there's a car right next to us, and all of a

sudden, that car starts moving over into our lane. Where do our eyes naturally go? They naturally move to the car that's coming over on top of us, right? But in that moment, when something is threatening our ability to keep on going down the road, should we really be turning our head to look at the threat? Or should we really stay fixed on continuing on and getting on past this threat?

Katy McCown: And so this is exactly what has happened to God's people. They have encountered opposition, and where have their eyes and their hearts and their thoughts gone, but straight to the vastness of the work in front of them and their own ability. And again, I pointed out from verse 10 in chapter 2, to verse 19 in chapter 2, we saw the enemy kind of expand. Also in chapter four, verse seven will detail this enemy again, and it has expanded again. In verse seven, no longer we're getting names, we're getting entire countries, the Arabs, the Ammonites, the Ashdodites. So again, it looks like the enemy is growing and God's people are having a hard time keeping their eyes off of the opposition, and on the opportunity.

Katy McCown: I want us to look at how Nehemiah responded. We saw there in chapter 4, a very natural kind of fear response from the people who were doing the work from the nation of Israel. But if we go back to verse 2:19, on these very first accusations when they're trying to create this doubt, and they're trying to begin this confusion, Nehemiah answers this enemy. And I want to read what he says in right following verse 19, and verse 20. "Then I ... " this is Nehemiah, "Then I replied to them, 'The God of heaven will make us prosper, and we His servants will arise and build, you have no portion, or right, or claim in Jerusalem.'" Wow, man, I just love that. It makes me fired up through his response.

Katy McCown: And so really, what I want us to be able to do today is I want us to have a framework for a response, just like Nehemiah. So let's look at three pieces of his response. The first thing Nehemiah did, was put God in His rightful place, the first words out of his mouth to that enemy, 'The God of heaven will make us prosper.' In chapter 4, when the Israelites are back there going, "Our strength is failing, there's too much rubble.' Nehemiah looked at them and said, "Remember the Lord, who is great and awesome." A first step was to put God in His rightful place.

Katy McCown: The second step, the second thing that Nehemiah did was established their identity. And you know what he didn't do? He didn't tell to their own ability. He didn't talk about how great of a job he knew they would do. The only thing he said is, 'We His servants.' Okay, so we've got God in His rightful place, the God of heaven will make us prosper, and you know what we are, we are just His servants. That's all we are. And that's a great place to be.

Katy McCown: And then the last thing he does is answer with truth about his enemy. 'You know what you are? You have no portion or right or claim in Jerusalem.' And it's almost like he just kind of wiped his hands right then, "Okay, done. I have established everything that needs to be established here. The God of heaven

will make us prosper. We are His servants, and our enemy has no portion or right or claiming this." And then away they went. And had to go back, remember that, he still had to remind God's people about that. But that is what he chose to answer this enemy with.

Katy McCown: And so here we get to it, where we, too, are called to participate in God's purposes and build His Kingdom. We may not be building walls like Nehemiah, we may not even be leading a nation, like Nehemiah, but we are called to participate in God's purposes and build His Kingdom. And we, too, have an enemy. And it's like I said, on the front end, we have got to get that straight. Because if we don't, then every time we start out in the purposes that God has for us, we're going to be surprised by the opposition. So let's get a little familiar with our enemy.

Katy McCown: First Peter 5:8 says, "Be sober minded, be watchful, your adversary the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion, seeking someone to devour." Prowls around like a roaring lion. I have some boys in my house that love to watch National Geographic. So I haven't lived on the plains of Africa, where there are for real lions, but I've watched them. And when they prowl, you have to look for them. They don't just announce themselves, like, "Hey, I'm here to eat you." They're in a bush somewhere, they're in the tall grass, they are crouched, and they are waiting for just the right moment.

Katy McCown: And the animals who choose to be alert, even if they can't see that lion, those are the ones that don't get eaten. Okay, so for us, it is in our best interest to acknowledge that we have an enemy. And he is against, anytime we take an opportunity to participate in building God's Kingdom, we have an enemy that will push back on that.

Katy McCown: And our enemy uses the same tactics that we saw the enemy and Nehemiah use. He seeks to create doubt, and cause confusion specifically about who God is, and what God says. Go back to the Garden of Eden. Genesis 3:1, the serpent, the enemy says, "Did God actually say you shall not eat of any tree in the garden?" He's looking to create doubt and cause confusion. Jesus, when He walked on this earth, He was tempted by the devil in the wilderness. And two times the devil says to Jesus, "If you are the Son of God," in Matthew 4:3, 6. He is trying to create doubt in Jesus about who He is.

Katy McCown: So look, we have the same options before us. We can respond in fear, the same way we saw the nation respond, we can take our eyes and we can put them on the opposition and be afraid of it. Or, we can respond by placing God in His rightful position, and answering the enemy with the Truth of God's Word. So what does that look like for us to put God in His rightful place?

Katy McCown: I love Hebrews 12:1-2, that says, "Therefore since we are surrounded by so great a crowd of witnesses, let us also lay aside every weight, and sin which clings so closely, and let us run with endurance, the race that is set before us,

looking to Jesus the founder and perfecter of our faith, who for the joy that was set before Him endured the cross, despising the shame, and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God."

Katy McCown: You know what I love? Is that Hebrews 12:2 uses the same word for what Jesus did on the cross, as the word that Nehemiah 2 uses for what the enemy did. Jesus despised, didn't He? But Jesus despised the shame of the cross. And so here we are. And Jesus despised the shame of the cross, and in doing so, He also despised our enemy. Because after Jesus despised the shame of the cross, it says that He is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. And He is seated, because when a King went out to war and won the victory, He came home and sat down on His throne because there was nothing left to do. Jesus isn't standing as though there is still a battle to be won because He conquered debt, and He conquered sin, and He conquered our enemy for us by despising the shame of the cross, and then He sat down.

Katy McCown: When we place God in His rightful place, there is absolutely no opposition that can stop us because it couldn't stop Jesus, and we are victors in Christ Jesus. And as if there would be anything left to say. We put God His rightful place. And when we do that, it establishes an identity for us that we have been saved by grace. It is not of ourselves lest any man should boast. Ephesians 2:8-10, "We have been saved by grace." This victory doesn't depend on me. It depends on the grace that was purchased for me by the blood of Jesus on the cross. So in believing in Him, and confessing Him with my mouth, and repenting of my sins, and turning to Him, I'm saved. And that's it, that's all I have to do; I am saved by grace.

Katy McCown: And then it goes on in verse 10, to say, "That we are God's workmanship." Again, my ability does not depend on me; I'm God's workmanship; I have been shaped by Him for this. And then finally, at the end of verse 10, "Created for good works, prepared by God." So I have been shaped by God, and what I am doing has been prepared by God. Do you see how none of this depends on me? It goes right back to what Nehemiah said, "Our identity is that ... " hey, I'm His servant. And that's all I need to be. It's not up to me.

Katy McCown: And then finally, answer with truth. And the truth is, 1 John 4:4 says, "He who is in you is greater than he who is in the world." He is Jesus, he who is in you, is greater than he who is in the world. Romans 11:36 says, "For from Him and through Him into Him are all things." None of this depends on me. All of it depends on Him, and it has been done. Jesus said on the cross, "It is finished," and it is.

Katy McCown: So when we encounter our opposition, we do not have to shrink back in fear; we can answer our enemy with the same way Nehemiah did. We can put God in His rightful place, establish our identity as God's servants and answer the enemy with the truth that Jesus Christ is a victor and in Christ, I am too.

Meredith Brock: Wow.

Katy McCown: Oh, so good.

Meredith Brock: Good stuff, my word, what clear steps for how to deal with opposition. But what I love even more, because I think we could all sit here right now and be like, "Okay, are you facing opposition?" And you could probably run down a list of opposition's that you're currently facing. Or I could, any one of us could. But one of the things that I really love about your teaching here, Katy, is that you made it very clear what opposition is and some of the tactics that sometimes I think are a little bit sneakier to identify that eventually, kind of compound on top of themselves and create a major opposition in your life.

Meredith Brock: And so, I want to recap these because I thought they were so powerful. For the Israelites, the way the enemy really came at them was he created doubt. So that's doubt in God, maybe? Like, is God really going to show up? Is He going to do what He said He was going to do?

Lisa Allen: Because there's a lot of rubble around you.

Meredith Brock: Yeah. It was around. Yeah, I don't know. I don't know. I don't know. And you start doubting God. And then you start doubting God Himself. And then you start doubting, "Well, maybe I didn't hear Him right. I probably heard Him wrong. He probably actually said to go left, and I went right." And the enemy's creating that moment of doubt. So then, like you said, Katy, where does it lead to from there? Confusion. Because then you're like, "Wait a minute, where am I? I don't know, I don't know what's happening, I don't know where to go." And then you start talking to lots of people trying to get all the advice and all the things.

Katy McCown: And then what do you do? You stop, you stop the project. The very calling that God had for you.

Meredith Brock: And then that last step that I thought, "Man, this is powerful." Is that after you've gone through those moments of doubt and confusion, then the enemy sees that perfect open door to deposit fear, and you're locked in. You're locked into that place of, "I can't finish the job. I can't do this. I can't keep moving forward." And so I think that's just such a clear picture that I think sometimes, I know for myself, I miss because it feels so sneaky and settle. So settle, those doubts, that can be kind of honest. Like, "Did I hear God right? Am I hearing God right?"

Meredith Brock: I want to go there for a second. How do you know? How do we know? Sometimes it's a real opposition. It's the enemy. And sometimes, it's God saying, "No girl, don't go there. Don't do it."

Lisa Allen: Hang on.

Meredith Brock: Don't do it, girlfriend, don't go there. Let's get real practical here. How do you know what's the difference between an opposition ... the enemy's coming at you trying to stop the call of God on your life, or simply God saying, "Girlfriend, ease up, slow your roll."

Lisa Allen: One of the things that has one of these answers, Meredith, is what Katy said when she said, "Expect opposition." So one of the things that I might not be as thrown in the next time that the enemy approaches me, Katy, is you reminded me, "Don't be afraid of this. You have your tools." So at least that way, it will keep me from getting thrown off. If I know I've heard God and I'm responding in obedience to what He's asked me to do, then I don't have to look at that opposition immediately. I can prepare for it a little bit.

Meredith Brock: Anticipate.

Lisa Allen: Yes. I think about it, like when I walk to my car at night, that's way off in the corner of the parking lot, and it's really dark, don't you, as a woman, walk a little differently? You're paying more attention, right?

Meredith Brock: Exactly.

Lisa Allen: And that's where I feel like that you gave us the ability to make sure that we don't let our guard down, but don't be surprised by it. When that opposition happens, you don't have to stop.

Lisa Allen: The other thing I always think is it's two things. It's the importance of God's Word, is getting in God's Word. Does this project or this direction that God is sending you line up with God's Word? So that's the first thing. And the second thing is trusted community, biblical community. Where I can come to you, Katy, I could call you in the morning, I could come into our office, anything I could think of. "Meredith, help me work through this. Here's where I am. This is what I think God's Word is saying to me." It's biblical accountability, trusted community.

Meredith Brock: That's good. So let's draw a little picture about that really quick, because I think ... Let's make it so practical for our listeners. So let's say you feel called to go into ministry. You've been working in who knows what, maybe you've been working at the Gap. Say we've been working together, they have lovely clothing. I'm actually wearing Gap jeans right now. But let's say you've been working at the Gap, and you really feel a calling into ministry, and you start applying like crazy to different ministry positions. And it's just closed door after closed door after closed door.

Meredith Brock: And then you are really wondering, "Did I hear God right? Did I really hear God right?" Lisa Allen, what would you tell them to do?

Lisa Allen: I would tell them they were in school for their calling. Because God ... If you believe, if you have a heart and a passion for ministry, it's a matter of obedience at that point. So what I would do is, I will put myself in some degree of development, whether it's literally going to seminary, whether that's what you would do, or whether you would begin to get a mentor in ministry, go serve at a church where you could rock babies in a nursery, or ... there's a lot of nonprofit ministries. So I would begin to put feet on it and let God show me how it's going to play out.

Meredith Brock: Wow, that's so good. Now, let me give you another scenario. I'm totally putting Lisa Allen on the spot here.

Lisa Allen: I'm terrified.

Meredith Brock: It's her debut as a co-host.

Lisa Allen: Yes.

Meredith Brock: So I got to do it. So let's say same scenario, and the doors start opening. And you're seriously considering, "I got to make this happen. God called me to this. And so I am just going to do whatever it takes, I'm going to quit my job at the Gap, and I'm just going to trust God, I'm going to move to this city ... I don't have any openings there, but I'm going to move to this city." How would you make that decision process?

Lisa Allen: Well, first of all, I wouldn't take one step further until I'd heard from God. You know what I mean? I would say ... I'm a big believer in 'Stay where you are until God sends you somewhere else,' to you very clearly, "Here."

Meredith Brock: So, go on the last one.

Lisa Allen: So go, yes. And so if God has not called you from the Gap, that would be my first question, is to make sure that I'm not being called from the Gap. I think it's Nikki Koziarz who says, "Do the next thing"? And so we think our next thing is to have a pulpit or to have a career in ministry.

Meredith Brock: Right, maybe you're just supposed to work at the Gap?

Lisa Allen: Maybe you're supposed to pray for the people that you're checking out and put your antennas up for when you can have spiritual conversations for the people. Or maybe just develop a love for the people.

Katy McCown: Lisa, let me jump in. Because I love what you just said about that. Because that's exactly what Nehemiah did. You go back to Nehemiah chapter 1, he spent four months praying for that. He wasn't there. He wasn't in Israel; he was off in another kingdom.

Meredith Brock: He wasn't even in Israel. Y'all, everybody let that sit on you for a minute. Shh. Wow!

Katy McCown: And so he spent four months in another place, praying about what was happening in Israel, and brokenhearted about what was happening there, four months praying, and then God opened the door. And he got through it, and then the rest of the book happens.

Lisa Allen: Well, and remember, Katy, if I'm remembering the book of Nehemiah correctly, he had the king's permission and authority as well. And so he was under biblical covering. He was under spiritual covering, which is that importance of that community.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, and not trying to make decisions in a closet, with closed door.

Lisa Allen: For sure.

Meredith Brock: But letting in those people around you to really determine, is this opposition? Or is this God saying, "you need to stop here, girl"? So really, really good stuff. What stood out to you, Lisa?

Lisa Allen: Well, one of the things you said, Katy, that I really loved is in Nehemiah 4:7, it was the rebuilding of the walls, and how the enemy ... So we've started the work, the work is halfway done, and they're starting to get tired, they're starting to feel overwhelmed. Can we just say that applies to everything that we face in our everyday, right?

Meredith Brock: That's the truth.

Lisa Allen: But I wrote down too ... I wonder who's listening to this right now. And I have some of these that are for myself. So what is your rebuilding? And so it could be the rebuilding of a family relationship, that you're just feeling overwhelmed. You're like, "I thought you asked me to forgive this person and pursue this relationship. But oh, my goodness, this is feeling like a lot of rubble around me." Or you're married. I wonder who's fighting for their marriage and that rebuilding? I mean, let's face it, if you've been married for more than 18 months, you're rebuilding some marriage stuff. It's just hard. Or whatever that relationship is, it just really encouraged me, Katy, when you talked about that the enemy comes in midway through the work.

Meredith Brock: He's not one and done.

Lisa Allen: So if he can get at the beginning, what do you do? You just don't start? You just don't get married?

Meredith Brock: Yeah. Right.

Lisa Allen: You know what I mean?

Meredith Brock: Right.

Lisa Allen: When he comes in, in the middle of that project that you're pursuing, that really encouraged me a lot.

Meredith Brock: I want to recap those last three, the practical steps. So make sure ... One, let's just make sure you're really hearing from God. Like, is this opposition? Or is this God saying, "Lisa, this is a closed door." But when you know like, "No, this is opposition." The first thing Katy said, so clear in Nehemiah, put God in His place. Put Him there.

Meredith Brock: Second, establish your identity. So put you back in your place, girl. Let's put you there. And then that last step is to look the enemy in the face with confidence and, and put him in his place. Speak truth to him, what the Word of God says to him.

Meredith Brock: Such good stuff, my word, Katy, fantastic teaching. I feel confident. I feel like this word, somebody needed to hear this today.

Lisa Allen: I agree.

Meredith Brock: Somebody was on the brink of making a decision, and they didn't know which way to turn, and I think that this spoke to them. So I'm excited to hear the response from our listeners. Thank you so much for being here. I bet somebody listening today is like, "Holy cow. I've never studied Nehemiah before. I want to study Nehemiah." Well, I'm happy to be able to tell you, you can. Jump into our First 5 mobile app; the study is there, *Opposition and Opportunity*. But they can also if they want to take it a little bit deeper, they can get an Experience Guide. How do they do that Lisa?

Lisa Allen: Oh, it's so easy. So to purchase the *Opposition and Opportunity* Experience Guide, all you have to do is visit p31bookstore.com and then click "Study." And all of our Experience Guides are available for purchase there. And to study *Opposition and Opportunity* on your own, first you have to download the free First 5 app on your mobile device. So that's easy, you do that kind of stuff all the time. Free mobile device app, and then when you get your profile set up ... you're going to want to set up your profile. It only takes a minute to do that. Then once you do that, you'll find plans, there's a button that says "Plans" in the bottom right. So it's super easy, you click that button, it'll take you into an archive of all of our past studies and you can start *Opposition and Opportunity* and you can go at your own pace.

Meredith Brock: It's awesome. You know what? Another super cool feature of our mobile app is what? You can have your own group. Oh my goodness, come on. So like me and you, instead of text messaging late at night, we can study the Bible. We can say,

"Nehemiah, what's happening?" I love it so much, so cool, y'all, you'll see it down at the bottom, you just got to click on groups, you can sign up there, really amazing feature for you to consider for maybe just your girlfriends. Or maybe as a family, you want to study Nehemiah together and you can do that together.

Meredith Brock: Maybe your daughter's away at college-

Lisa Allen: College, I was just going to say that.

Meredith Brock: ... so cool.

Lisa Allen: Your sister is in California. Your aunt Bessie is in Minnesota or something.

Meredith Brock: Such a neat way to stay connected around the Word of God and not just talk about like, I don't know, *The Bachelor*.

Lisa Allen: Yeah. That's interesting.

Meredith Brock: I mean, that's fun too, but you know, Nehemiah.

Lisa Allen: Let's start with that, let's end with *The Bachelor*, but let's start with God's Word. Okay.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, I think that's a better plan.

Lisa Allen: And last but not least, we want to remind you guys about the audio teachings that we mentioned at the top of this podcast. Oh my goodness, Meredith, I cannot say enough good things about the content that the First 5 writers teach on the weekends like what Katy just delivered to us. If you like that, if you crave deeper, straight-up Bible teaching to help you understand more about God's Word, these audio teachings are an incredible resource. They're available for free in our First 5 apps, so make sure you have it downloaded. And please join us every weekend in the app.

Meredith Brock: Well, guys. I think our time has come to a close. I'm sad. I'm sad to say goodbye, Katy.

Lisa Allen: Me, too.

Meredith Brock: Lisa Allen. Y'all know why I call Lisa Allen, Lisa Allen? I just need to clarify this because I'm sure you're all-

Lisa Allen: [inaudible 00:39:00].

Meredith Brock: ... Yes. I have too many Lisa Allen's in my life. There was a period of time where I had a Lisa A, a Lisa B, a Lisa C and a Lysa T. And so I naturally started calling her Lisa Allen.

Lisa Allen: And I think you still have three of those four.

Meredith Brock: I do.

Lisa Allen: They are still in your life.

Meredith Brock: I basically do. So it's just natural to call her Lisa Allen. So I invite you to call Lisa Allen, Lisa Allen as well.

Lisa Allen: Please do so.

Meredith Brock: Thank you for joining us today, Lisa Allen.

Lisa Allen: Thanks for having me. This was a lot of fun with Katy. [crosstalk 00:39:22].

Meredith Brock: Katy, thank you so much. This was really tremendous.

Katy McCown: Appreciate it, guys.

Meredith Brock: We pray that this podcast helps each one of you know the truth of God's Word so you can live that truth out because we know that when you do, it will change everything.

Lisa Allen: Amen.

Meredith Brock: Thanks so much for joining us today. Bye, friends.