



Kaley: Hi, friends. Welcome back to the *Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast*, where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season.

Kaley: I'm your host, Kaley Olson, and I'm here with my friend and co-host, Meredith Brock.

Meredith: Well, hi, Kaley! It's great to be back with you today for another great episode of the podcast, and I am so excited to introduce our guest today.

Kaley: Yes.

Meredith: We have the incredible Chrystal Evans Hurst with us. She has been a part of our writing team here at Proverbs for years. She has written, I don't know how many books she's written.

Kaley: A lot.

Meredith: A lot of books. She speaks at countless events every year and comes from an insanely cool family who loves Jesus. I think everybody, in order to be in her family, you have to be a preacher. I'm pretty sure that's a prerequisite.

Kaley: Yeah, probably.

Meredith: And Chrystal's here today to share a teaching that I know y'all are going to love. It's called, *Three Things I'd Tell My Teenage Self*. Oh boy.

Kaley: Isn't that exciting? I'm very excited about it. But, before we get into the teaching today, I would love to just start out by asking you, what's a fashion trend from your teenage years that you wish would never make a comeback again?

Meredith: Oh, you know, I was a teenager in the '90s.

Meredith: Chrystal, you're here with us, can I ask you this on air?

Kaley: Yes.

Meredith: Are you comfortable with this? When were you a teenager?

Chrystal: Well, first of all, I feel like I'm in good company because I was a teenager in the late '80s, so it's close enough to the '90s.

Meredith: Yeah, totally. Absolutely. Absolutely. So, for me, when I started thinking about fashion trends of my teenage years, I'm kind of freaked out that some of them are actually happening. They're really, like mom jeans right now? I appreciate the mom jeans. I'm kind of wearing mom jeans right now, so I don't want that to go away. I'm into the mom jeans. I don't appreciate the fashion trend, and I'm sorry if you're listening to this and you're wearing this right now, we can still be friends. I'm not judging you, but when I was in the '90s, everybody wore those crop tops and I'm seeing them come back Kaley and I'm like, "Nah, this momma who has had two children ain't wearing one of those." Not today, folks.

Kaley: Yeah. Well, we also work at a non-profit women's ministry, and I'm pretty sure if we showed up in a cropped top-

Meredith: They might send us home.

Kaley: Hello, Barb Spencer. Anyway, okay. Chrystal, tell us something that you wish would never come back from the '80s.

Chrystal: Oh my gosh. Well, in the early '80s, if I can reach back that far, culottes was a thing.

Meredith: Oh, culottes.

Chrystal: And everybody wore culottes.

Meredith: I forgot about culottes, Chrystal.

Chrystal: I don't even know if it was because I went to a private school, so I thought ... we had to wear... Can you imagine wearing culottes for your volleyball game? That's what we had to wear.

Meredith: No, stop it right now.

Chrystal: So, honey, full gear, full gear. Hot, sweaty in culottes to play volleyball.

Meredith: Y'all wearing culottes in your school and the girls in my school are sporting the crop top. I think we came from different sides of the track, Chrystal.

Kaley: I just had to Google what culottes are. How do you spell it? Okay, okay. Mine, on the other end of the spectrum, is low rise jeans because I-

Meredith: Y'all remember Kaley's the youngin here.

Kaley: I'm the youngin here, so I was in high school in '05 to '09 and-

Meredith: Oh my goodness.

Kaley: And low-rise jeans. I just think back to that and the fact that whenever you zip your pants, it literally takes .002 seconds because it was a one-inch zipper. And I'm like "Never again. Lord Jesus, please never again." It's just ... I don't want that to happen. I don't want that to happen.

Meredith: Yeah, real glad that the culottes, the low-rise jeans, and the crop tops-

Kaley: They can stay in the past.

Meredith: They can.

Kaley: I'm a fan of the big hair though, so here we go.

Meredith: Yeah, you are.

Kaley: Anyway, let's transition into some of our teaching, but now that we've all gotten to know each other a little bit here-

Meredith: Yeah, that's great.

Chrystal: I love it.

Kaley: I am actually very, very excited about what Chrystal has to share with us today. But, I do want to preface this by saying that you don't have to be a teenager to listen to what we're going to share today.

Chrystal: Absolutely.

Kaley: I feel like at Proverbs 31 Ministries, they always talk about biblical truth is biblical truth that can be applied to any season. And so, you guys, settle down and listen in to what Chrystal has to share because I guarantee you, you're going to be able to take something out of this. And don't think back and regret maybe what you didn't do, but think about what you can do with this information in whatever season of life you're in today. So, without any further ado, I want to give the reins over to Chrystal and let her give her teaching.

Chrystal: Listen, I'm so glad to be with you all today and this topic and conversation is near and dear to my heart because, because how many of us wish that there was something we either had known when we were teenagers or had believed when we were teenagers? Because it's not that we hadn't heard it, we'd heard it, the information was there, we just didn't act on it or act as if we believed that it was true.

Chrystal: So, the three things that I would tell my teenage self have a lot to do with stuff I knew that I'd either didn't internalize or I didn't act on. The first thing I would tell myself and try to beat into my head if I could was that it's true, Chrystal, you are loved as you are.

How many of us either in those years or past those years, 20s, 30s, and 40s, look at ourselves in the mirror and see something we don't like? Something we wish we could change? Something that we're frustrated with?

Chrystal: And in doing so, when we look at the mirror, instead of seeing what there is to love, we focus mostly on what we'd like to change. What we wish could be different. And in doing so, do not appreciate the gift that we are. The Bible says that we are fearfully and wonderfully made. That there is no one like us, we know this by the fingerprints on our fingers and a lot of ways that we're uniquely designed. Yet and still, knowing that there will never be, nor has there ever been, someone just like us, we still look in the mirror and find something that's wrong.

Chrystal: If we could instead rehearse the fact that just as we are, with our imperfections, God loves us. That would change the way we operate because even when you make a mistake, there would be such a high level of self-compassion. I'll learn. I can try again. There are some things I can change. There are some choices I can make.

Chrystal: When I was in college, I had the moment when I was 19, found out I was pregnant. Of course, I wasn't married and beyond the teenage years of the normal, I don't like my nose, I don't like my face, oh my gosh, why can't my hair do this certain thing I want it to do? Beyond what would come after that, which is "Man, I don't like my situation. I'm a single parent. And man, there's a lot of things I would like to change." In that moment, my double-blue line moment, you know the pregnancy test gives you those two blue lines, I just thought, "I don't feel very loved right now. I'm disappointed in myself. There are people who I love who are disappointed in me."

Chrystal: But, here's what I learned because that moment has almost now been a few years removed, 20, 30 years almost, just because you don't feel God's love in any particular moment doesn't make His love for you cease to be real and true. But, if you, for just one moment, decide that your feelings trump the fact of His love for you, it could very well play out in your life based on the decisions you make because you're not willing to act on it.

Chrystal: So, I want to challenge, first and foremost, listeners of any age to remember this truth, that Isaiah 43:4 says, "You are precious and honored in my sight and I love you." That is true. Jeremiah 31:3, "I have loved you with an everlasting love." John 15:16, "You didn't choose me, but I chose you." [inaudible 00:08:25] of who you are, where you are, what you see when you look in the mirror, what choices that you see in your life when you survey the landscape of what you've been living, you are precious and honored because He says so. You are loved with an everlasting love because He says so. And even when you're not choosing Him, He's still choosing you. And that is truth that exists apart from your feelings.

Chrystal: So, what does that mean? If you believe that you're loved as you are, you can choose to live loved. What would you do if you believed that you were loved? How would you respond? How would you act? What would you try? If you believed that the God who did not carelessly create the stars in the universe and who also knows how many hairs are on your head and sees every sparrow that falls in the field, if that same God knows

you and cares about you as you are, what would that change? It might change a dating relationship that you're in because if you believe that you're loved, is this what God who loves you wants you to be doing right now relationally? Would it change how you perceive your time in His Word because time in His Word isn't a chore; it's time to spend with someone you love? So, since God loves you, we can hasten to the throne and crack open our Bibles because that's what we do with people who love us and whom we love. How would it change the level of excellence at which you operate because somebody who loves you and sees the best in you wants you to operate as if you see the best in you too?

Chrystal: The second thing that I would say, apart from believing that I'm loved as I am, is that I am precious cargo. There isn't anyone like me, but I have to participate in the process of my journey, in the process of the person I'm supposed to be. God doesn't just make me and then say, "Okay, you're loved. The end of the story." He says, "Because you're loved, because I've given you the gift of life, because I've given you gifts to steward and to manage, participate." Sharpen your brain by going to school. Learn how to love better by learning what it means to love sacrificially. Give. Grow. Change. And by partnering with God by doing my part to steward well what He's given me, that's my participation.

Chrystal: I was in a car and we were headed back, my husband and I with five kids, from Houston. We lived in Dallas about four hours away from Houston and my husband usually does most of the driving and I'm so grateful because then I can sit in the passenger seat and do whatever I want to. But, he was tired and about 30 minutes outside of our exit, he said, "Do you mind driving the rest of the way?" I said, "Sure, no problem."

Chrystal: So, I drove and about 20 minutes out, I had already taken the exit to get to our home and I had stopped at a light. I was so tired, that heavy feeling of your lids and they just want to close for a second. And so, I decided to do that, let them close for a second. It felt like a second, however, when the police officer was knocking on my driver's side door and woke me up, I was totally disoriented and confused. I wound down my window because I'm a good citizen. And he said, "Do you have any idea how long you've been here?" And I said, "No, just a moment." He said, "Well, I don't think that's correct and I actually don't know how long you've been here either. But, it's been long enough for more than a few people to call the police station and say, 'There's a lady who's at a stoplight and she's either drunk or dead. Y'all need to go check on her.'"

Kaley: Oh wow.

Meredith: Wow.

Chrystal: So, I apparently had fallen asleep at the stoplight with my foot resting on the brake. And he said, "Who's in your car with you?" and I said, "My family." And he said, "Have you been drinking?" And I was like, "No, I have not been drinking. I'm just sleepy and I just took a break." And he looked me in the eye and he said, "Ma'am, how far are you away from home?" because I had explained that we were on a road trip. I said, "I live 10 minutes away." He said, "Well, I'm going to need you to wake up because you're carrying precious cargo." He saw my family in the back. He said, "The only thing that is stopping you and them from being in a horrific situation is your decision to stay awake

in your life, to stay awake at the wheel." And for many of us, we fall asleep at the wheel of our lives.

Chrystal: There's nothing wrong with a routine and every day and rhythm, but for many of us, that routine rhythm in every day has lulled us to sleep and we are not paying attention to the time that's passing. We are not paying attention to the dreams that we are not grabbing ahold of. We're not paying attention to God's voice as He may move in our circumstances or in the people that we know to call us into something new or different. We're not listening and because we're not listening, being attentive, we're missing what He's asking us to do.

Chrystal: Many of us know that there are certain things we should do. We know, for example, that we're supposed to be a nurse and go back to school. But we've been lulled asleep by paying the bills and doing all the things that are required for daily life instead of getting out of that rhythm just a little bit to make a change. Many of us know in our marriages, we've been lulled to sleep because this is the way we've been acting for the last five years. We pass each other like we're roommates in the night. We get things done. We communicate. But, this is not what I've dreamed of marriage, but I've gotten used to it and anything else seems like a lot of work. We've gotten used to the clothes that we wear and we know that God has called us to take care of our temples, but it sure does take a lot more effort to push back the plate than it does to pull it close.

Chrystal: And because we don't see our lives, the different segments of our lives, as precious cargo, we just kind of sit there, waiting. But waiting on what? Because while you're waiting on whatever it is that God has already convicted you of or called you to do or to move forward in change or choose, your time is ticking. And the minutes that we have for the moments that we make are the most precious thing that we have. Because it's in these minutes that we live in time that we determine how we live out the moments of eternity.

Chrystal: It is your job to participate consistently and intentionally in your life. So, if you don't choose to be alert and attentive, it's easy to drift, to fall asleep, to let other people make decisions for you or even because you fall asleep cause or be affected by a collision. The process of starting your life starts right now. So, for that teenage girl, don't ... I mean the fashion is great and grades are important and your friends matter, but don't be lulled to sleep by all of the things that demand your attention right now. Because right now won't always be right now. Your journey, the person that you're going to be when you're 40 or 60 or 80, her life starts now.

Chrystal: And so, this idea that you've got to wait until you're grown to start your life, oh my, if that's not a lie of the enemy, I don't know what is. And that's why because if he can steal away your teenage years, he might just have stolen the next 10 to 15 years of your life. Your life started the day you were born and the season that you're in, it matters. And as you get older and become more responsible and as your parents begin to gradually release their grip, you are more and more having control of that steering wheel. They're turning it over to you, but I need you to understand that it doesn't start when you're 25 or 30, if you're 15, it starts now.

Chrystal: Living well is your responsibility to God and to yourself. God is not going to make you play a starring role in your life. You have to show up and do your part and that applies to all of us. We have to participate in the process of who we are becoming. The Bible says in 1 Corinthians 3:16, "Do you not know that you are God's temple and God's spirit dwells in you?" You know Jesus Christ. He's there right now and if He's there right now, then that means the Holy Spirit is talking to you or at least hoping that you'll listen. Ephesians 2:10, "We are his workmanship, created in Christ Jesus for good works, which God prepared beforehand, that we should walk in them." He's prepared the work, but you still have to do the walk. Just keep going. You're loved as you are. Yes, you have to participate in the process, but when life throws a curveball and because life is life, at some point it will, you just keep going.

Chrystal: My friend, [Michelle 00:17:22], for the first 20 years of her adult life had no idea what she wanted to do. She worked for a grocery store. She worked for a bank. She worked for a bakery. She did deliveries. She worked in a warehouse. The only thing that she knew is that she liked traveling; she liked helping people. That's all she knew. And she kept changing jobs, making another 50 cents an hour, just to keep things interesting.

Chrystal: In her mid-30s, she said, "You know what? I should go back to school." And she tried school and didn't do so well and decided that maybe she wasn't cut out for school. But she said, "I really believe that this is something God wants me to do." She got the quickest degree she could. I think she majored in Anthropology because she was just trying to get the piece of paper and cross the stage, the end. But in school, one of the jobs that she got was working in a doctor's office as a receptionist. And something about helping people appealed to her. So she said, "Well, maybe after I get this degree, I'll see about doing something in the medical profession."

Chrystal: Fast-forward. Michelle now, she's closing in on 50, she's been a traveling nurse for the last 10 years. She has always known she wanted to travel. She has always known she liked helping people. And God, in His timing, brought those things together for her. Sometimes, what we want to come together in our life doesn't come together when we want it to. But if I can just convince you, no matter what difficulty you're facing, no matter what questions you have, to just keep going. Doing the best with what you have right now. To do what you can with what you have right now until God shows you something else. And as my mother has always said, "Until you know what you do next, keep being faithful to do what God told you to do last."

Chrystal: The key to your journey, your life, is to start. Just do the next thing that's right in front of you. And then, keep going and trust that God, who created you, you no one like you, will be faithful to complete what He started, the Bible says. You just have to show up and do what you can with what you have and trust that He can make up the difference.

Chrystal: You are not the sum total of how you feel today or what you see today. You will be the sum total of what God puts together in your life and He loves to put together someone who's in motion. Every struggle you have, even the ones you have no idea how to make your way out of, it will help you develop the strength that you need. And here's the great thing about your strength — even when you're really weak, God's strength shows up best when we feel like we're at our weakest. So, maybe the fact that life is hard, no

matter what age you are, maybe the message of continuing to move forward is so that even when we feel weak, we see what happens when God shows up in His strength as we keep putting one step in front of the other. Every part of your journey is a process. The key is to start and then just keep going. Every journey takes time. So, to live fully you have to be willing to go with whatever light you have, to trust the process, and believe that God knows what He's doing with you.

Chrystal: Proverbs 3:6 says, "In all your ways, acknowledge him, and he will make your path straight." He's not depending on you to make your path straight. He just wants you to keep walking and He will straighten it out as you go.

Chrystal: There are three things I'd tell my teenage self. You're loved just as you are. Get busy, participate in the process, stay awake, you're precious cargo. And then, even if you don't know where you're headed, oh my goodness, keep being faithful. Keep letting Jesus love on you while you love on Him. Do your best to operate in excellence and to take the opportunities that life provides you. But, in the end, just keep going and trust that for every question mark that you have, He also has an exclamation point. That's what I'd tell my teenage self.

Meredith: Wow, Chrystal, so good.

Kaley: I mean, so good. I feel like for every point that you shared, it built on the previous one. And the one that just stuck out to me the most was you are loved as you are. And I feel like all of us have a different story from our past and how that plays that into what our teenage years were like. And so, I think childhood feeds into teenage years, just like your teenage self feeds into your 20-year-old self or whatever. And it's funny to go back and kind of pinpoint certain things in my life where maybe I stopped believing that I was loved as I was. Because I was a little kid who had a lot of freckles and I had auburn red hair and I wanted to change those things.

Kaley: But then, I also remember vividly in kindergarten, there was this time at recess where it was the first pang of rejection that I felt even in a small way. And it's the funniest little story. My friends and I were outside and were playing Pocahontas because that was the thing back in the '90s. And one of my friends was Pocahontas, the other one was Pocahontas's little friend who wore the cool one-shouldered outfit with the ponytail, and I was the raccoon. And, I just remember it was so sad in that moment to just feel like okay, I'm left out. And, I took that into my next thing, where I just felt like I had to prove myself and I had to prove that I was worth it, and I had to be friends or I tried to be friends with the people who I was so hungry for their acceptance that I just didn't believe that the people who loved me and their opinion of me was valuable enough.

Kaley: I don't think that I realized that whenever I was a kid and it spilled into my teenage years. Where it was, I didn't want to hear it from my mom that I was good enough. Or I didn't want to hear it from the people who I knew knew me best. I was still trying for the approval of others whenever I couldn't just be content with being loved as I was and letting myself feel loved and live from a place of being accepted rather than trying to be accepted from other people.

Kaley: And so, I feel like if I could go back, that's one thing that I would want to just tell myself is that "Kaley, you were just fine just the way that you were. You don't have to fight for the approval of other people. Or you don't have to try to be somebody that you're not, but you could have just been who you were and that would have been just fine." And, I don't know, that just really spoke to me because I think it was just something that I lived with for a long time. And then now, all through my teenage years, now that I'm in my 20s, it's something that when it snowballs like that, you kind of have to untangle it like a piece of yarn. And, it gets into your life where if you don't live loved now, then it's going to affect who you are later and how you love and lead those around you now from a place of approval.

Meredith: Yeah, totally. I mean I think that's what your whole teaching, Chrystal, it may be the things I wish I could tell my teenage self, but this is certainly, oh my word, 1,000% applicable to anybody at any age. Kaley, I wrote down here, one of my favorite things that you said, Chrystal, was "Just because you don't feel God's love doesn't mean you aren't loved." And I think, I look back on my own life and y'all know who have been with us a long time, I have a pretty traumatic childhood, and I certainly never felt loved.

Meredith: And when I first became a believer, that was probably one of the first things that I really tried to and it took years for me to wrestle to the ground of, isn't love supposed to be a feeling? Isn't it supposed to be a feeling that I've sensed somewhere in my emotions? And so, Chrystal, I don't know if you have any wisdom to impart to this because right now, I can almost guarantee you there is some sweet girl in Minnesota who knows where she's at and this is where she is. She is afraid. She is alone. She doesn't have someone in her life telling her, "You are so loved and you are so treasured." And first, I want her, if you're listening to this, please know that you are. But, how can she take that first step in really realizing that? And in really living that way where her feelings aren't matching up with what she sees in the Word, but how do you live that out?

Chrystal: Oh yeah. Well, two things. One is, the Bible says in Romans 12 that we are transformed by the renewing of our minds. So, while we think that the feelings are the drivers, really the feelings are responders to how we think. And, if we can change the way we think, then you might be surprised that you feel different too. So, I would say to her, "Listen, get some Scriptures. Google is a great source in what does God say about how He loves me? Okay. Find some Scriptures that speak God's love to you and put them, save them on your phone, take pictures of them, screenshots, write them on 3x5 cards, use an Expo marker or lipstick and put it on your mirror and surround yourself with the truth of what God says about you."

Chrystal: The second thing is, the Bible says in Proverbs 18 that the power of life and death is in the tongue. Often what we feel is because of what we say. And when we talk, the main person who hears us is us.

Meredith: That's right.

Chrystal: So, in line with renewing your mind, I would say to that point of the power of life and death being in the tongue, speak life. Don't just think about what God's Word says about you, rehearse it with your mouth because if you can change what you say, you'll

change what you'll hear. If you can change what you hear, you might change what you think. And if you can change what you think, then you might be surprised that you change how you feel.

Meredith: Wow. That is a good word right there, Chrystal.

Kaley: That is a good word.

Meredith: It's funny that you said that because I had kind of forgotten about something that I did during that very formative years of my life when I first became a believer. And I knew, wow, I had a past because I hadn't felt loved, I had made some very poor decisions with men. There was all kinds of stuff there that I wish that I could erase, but as I came to really learn that okay, they say God loves me. I started and I just remembered this, I used to write Scripture on my hand or on the inside of my wrist and I would try to train myself when I had those thoughts. I had a terrible habit of saying, and I would say it out loud, I would say it when I was driving. I don't know where I picked it up along the way, but I would literally say out loud, "Meredith, you're so stupid" or "You're so stupid." And I had to train myself to catch myself in those moments where I would say that and I would look at the Scripture on my hand to say "Nope, that's not true. The Bible says that I am fearfully and wonderfully made." All the different Scriptures that I had memorized during that season to try to retrain my thoughts. So, wow! Sweet girl in Minnesota, I hope you write that Scripture down, memorize it, store it away in your heart. So good.

Kaley: Yes, so good. And, find people in your life who love you for who you are and let them be the ones to speak life over you. But, most importantly, let God be the one to reinforce how much you are loved.

Kaley: Chrystal, thank you so much for sharing this teaching with us and for the fresh perspective that you gave us and anyone who's listening that we can apply to our life in any season.

Kaley: So, as we wrap up today, we want to share a couple things that might be helpful for you first. Like we mentioned earlier, Chrystal is one of our writers at Proverbs 31 Ministries and she shares biblical truth on our *Encouragement For Today Daily Devotions*. And so, if you go, and you can go to our website and subscribe today at Proverbs31.org and click "Read" and then "Devotions." Chrystal always drops some truth bombs on the devotions. And so, I feel like that's a really great resource if you're looking for some encouragement in your life right now.

Kaley: The second thing I want to point people to is our website "Resource Library." And so, we have several downloadable things that you can print and save to your phone or either, I don't know, share with a friend who might be going through something. But, we've got resources like *Untangling Hurt From Your Heart*, *Five Days of Believing God Can Use You*, *Overcoming The Lies That Are Making You Feel Left Out and Lonely*. All those things are available at Proverbs31.org if you just search our Resource Library. They're free. And I just want to equip people with something that they can use if they definitely need a next step to take with what they've learned today.

Meredith: Absolutely. And if you want to hear more from Chrystal, you guys, she has a book out called *She's Still There*. Incredible book. Great resource that I think would bolster this message in your heart if that's the right word to use. I don't know if that's the right word, but I'm going to go with it. Also, if you-

Chrystal: That's a good word.

Meredith: If you have a teenager and you want a resource to help them navigate these tricky years. My word, they're so tricky and so fragile; Chrystal has another book, *Show Up For Your Life*. Both of them are available at the P31 Bookstore, go to P31BookStore.com to pick those up. And thank you all for joining us today. We prayed today's message helps you know the truth of God's Word and live that truth out because we know that when you do, it really will change everything. We'll see you guys next time.