



the
PROVERBS 31
M I N I S T R I E S
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith Brock: Well hey, friends. Welcome 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'm here with my friend and co-host Kaley Olson.
- Kaley Olson: Hi. Meredith, I'm not going to lie, I'm laughing right now because what I wrote down here was just, "Hi!" So here I am, joining you on the podcast. How are you today?
- Meredith Brock: Really glad that you're here, and that you're telling me hello. I am so excited to share with you who we have on the podcast today, guys. We actually have a very special guest with us, who I have to intro now. So let's welcome my gal, Kendra.
- Kendra: Hey, everybody. Hello, hello.
- Meredith Brock: Well, I am going to ask her to set up this teaching because it's a conversation between our Online Bible Studies team and Pastor Craig Groeschel. Can it get any better than that?
- Kendra: For real.
- Meredith Brock: I mean, Online Bible Studies.
- Kaley Olson: He's good, y'all.
- Meredith Brock: Pastor Craig. I mean, that's pretty amazing. So this is from our *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* Teaching Series earlier this year. Our teaching series is a way for us to package content for those participating in an Online Bible Study to dig deeper into the study. We invite guests to speak into a specific topic, and since *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* is on disappointment, and Pastor Craig's book *Hope in the Dark* was a great match, we had them pair up for the teaching series.
- Kendra: That's right.

Meredith Brock: So Kendra, talk to us a little bit about that.

Kendra: Yeah, so one of my favorite things about the teaching series is how every person is hand-selected and hand-picked, depending on what we're talking about. And Craig Groeschel was the perfect match. He's super real, super relatable, and I'm excited for y'all to hear from him and learn from him.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, absolutely.

Kendra: He's so great. So great, and you know what? I guarantee you there is no one on the other side of this podcast saying, "My life is 100% amazing and everything is supposed to be this way," right?

Kaley Olson: And if they are saying that, call us. Call in, please, we need to know.

Meredith Brock: What's your secret?

Kendra: Yes.

Kaley Olson: What's your secret?

Kendra: We also have a *Therapy and Theology* series that you should probably listen to. Okay, but if you've loved any of Lysa's messages on the podcast, or maybe even read her book, you're going to get a lot out of this conversation.

Meredith Brock: We'll tell you more about our Proverbs 31 Online Bible Study, and how you can get access to even more great content like this right after Pastor Craig's message. But here is Melissa, Kendra and Pastor Craig.

Pastor Craig G.: Hey, Melissa and Kendra. You guys are like over-the-top with your encouragement. Thank you. It's a tremendous honor to be with you. I am a massive, massive Proverbs 31 fan. Every woman in my life benefits from what you guys do, and I actually sneak in and kind of creep on a lot of the content a lot of the times. I love it, love Lysa, I love your whole team. And it's just a great honor to be with you guys today.

Melissa: Thank you.

Kendra: Thank you so much. All right, Craig, well, to start things off, we would love our audience to learn a little bit more about you from you, so if you could start by

telling us a little bit about your background, that would be wonderful.

Pastor Craig G.: Well, I grew up going to church, but I was not a Christian, if you can imagine that. We just kind of went to church. And it was in college that my life was radically transformed. I went from kind of party guy athlete, to weird Jesus follower overnight, and people made fun of me a lot. There was a girl that thought I was just ridiculous, and she knew another girl that was ridiculous for

Jesus like me, and so she said, "You guys are so weird; you need to meet." That's how I met my wife, Amy.

Melissa: I was going to say, let me guess, is her name Amy?

Pastor Craig G.: Her name is Amy, and it was a girl that completely was making fun of both of us. She said, "You both are overboard for God, so you should just be overboard for God together." So that's how I met Amy, and this May, we'll hit the 28-year mark in marriage.

Melissa: Wonderful.

Pastor Craig G.: We have six amazing kids. I've got two married daughters. I've got a third daughter getting married this summer. So I've got a son graduating, a daughter getting married, and another grandbaby coming, all in a six-week period.

Melissa: Wow.

Kendra: You're only a little busy, it sounds like.

Pastor Craig G.: We're having a blast.

Melissa: That's great.

Kendra: That is wonderful. So today, we're talking about maybe a disappointment, or something that you have gone through to where you have really seen Jesus and hope in the midst of your disappointment. We thought it would be good for our audience to hear a little bit about what your family walked through, and is currently walking through, when it comes to your daughter, Mandy. Do you want to give a little background about that?

Pastor Craig G.: Yeah. So Mandy is my second daughter, and she's been married going on three years. Mandy was on staff at our church, and kind of like a little powerhouse. She had tremendous favor, was speaking, was chosen to speak at her campus, which was a really special deal, and having a real impact, just really, really a special, special girl.

Pastor Craig G.: And right before her wedding, she got mono. We were disappointed, knew it would impact the wedding, and the honeymoon and such, but we thought, "Well, just a little bump in the road." Well, she never seemed to recover from this, and it went from being mono to being much worse, to where here a 21 year-old girl couldn't go to church. She'd have to just stay in bed, non-stop. And if she could go out for an hour, she would pay for it the next three days.

Pastor Craig G.: It came out of the blue, and so in the first month or two, we thought, "Well, this is going to pass." Then several months went by, and it didn't pass, so we got really, really worried, "Is this a life-threatening situation?" So we pulled out all the stops, taking her everywhere trying to get a diagnosis and making sure, "Is this life-threatening? What's going on?"

Pastor Craig G.: We really couldn't find a diagnosis for quite some time. It shattered our world, seeing our daughter unable to function in any ... going from totally normal to barely able to care for herself.

Melissa: Right. And let me ask you something right here, because I think the hard part for me in listening to this is not getting the answers. It's like when you get the answers, no matter what they are, at least you know what you're dealing with and you can kind of formulate a plan. But when you don't know, and you so desperately want to, and it's your child, you see your daughter in this suffering, I mean, how do you continue to walk through that?

Pastor Craig G.: Well, you don't really have a choice, but you're right, the not knowing is agonizing. And I know there are a lot of people listening right now that either directly in their life or somebody that they love is in kind of that unknown season.

Pastor Craig G.: So interestingly enough, months and months into it, Mandy just really, even though physically was wasted, her faith seemed stronger than ours. And I told her, I said, "You know, I'm really proud of the way you're enduring this." And she stopped me, and she said, "Daddy, I don't mean to correct you or whatever, but what God has showed me is not just to endure this, but to embrace it."

Kendra: Wow.

Pastor Craig G.: "And He's doing something in my life through it," and she said, "I'm closer to Jesus than I ever have been before because of this."

- Pastor Craig G.: So what we try to do is, instead of just try to make it through it and say, "A better day is coming later," to embrace every moment. So relationally, I always hug all my kids, especially all my daughters. I just hold them, and hold them. It's ridiculous how obnoxious I am as a dad. And I just won't let go of her, and my others now, because we're going to embrace this moment, we're going to embrace the presence of God in the middle of our pain. We're going to try, when we don't see what we want to see, still embrace His goodness and recognize He is good in the middle of unanswered questions, of doubts, of insecurities, of fears, of our minds going wild with worry. He's still good.
- Pastor Craig G.: So from my hurting daughter, ministered to me, of saying, "Daddy, we're not just going to endure. We're going to embrace it." That's what we're trying to do.
- Melissa: Wow, that's great. That's great. Okay, so did you ever ... You're talking about how her faith is stronger, or was stronger, and her faith really inspired you. Which, wow, you're her father, you're the pastor of this big church, so that really says a lot about that.
- Melissa: Did you or anyone in your family ever doubt that God was really listening and working? Or was that faith pretty strong the whole time?
- Pastor Craig G.: I hate to say this and disappoint people, but doubt was kind of on the front of my mind a lot of times, and there still ... It's kind of like maybe a recovered alcoholic is vulnerable to going back to alcohol. I would say I feel like a recovering doubter, that there's still once a week, twice a week, this, "Is God still listening? Does He still care?"
- Pastor Craig G.: So I had kind of ... Blackaby, Henry Blackaby, years ago, in the book *Experiencing God*, he talked about what he called a crisis of belief. I would say that in the middle of standing up in front of our church and trying to preach faithfully God's Word, I kind of had a crisis of belief where I didn't stop believing in God, but I started questioning His involvement in this whole situation.
- Pastor Craig G.: The pinnacle of it was when Mandy was able to come to church, just come, she could not stand during worship. So she's sitting down right behind me, and had her hands lifted up toward God, and I was preaching on the power of God to heal, and my daughter wasn't healed. And I felt like a hypocrite, I felt like I didn't have faith. But just looking at her out there with her eyes closed, believing in the goodness of God, I just reached down to a place where I didn't feel it, but I just believed it in my soul, and tried to preach it and live it.

Pastor Craig G.: So that's where we are. Sometimes we feel faith, other times we just hang on to it, and it feels like the smallest thread, but it's enough, it's there, His grace is real. It's not the ... When I wrote the book *Hope in the Dark*, what I totally planned to do was write at the end of the book, "Okay, now the book is written, and here is the last four pages, here's the end of the story, and here's the miracle." And the miracle's there; it's His grace, it's His presence with us, but it's not her healing yet. And it's not the miracle that I'd hoped for, although I do consider it a miracle.

Melissa: Right. Well, you know, one of the things I'm very thankful for about your book *Hope in the Dark*, and it's the same with Lysa's *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*, is you allow us into something that you're going through. And so often, we wait, and we read about it when the good news has come, or the victory has happened, what you consider the victory in your mind. So as a reader, it's easy to go, "Wow, I wish I could get there." But when you're not there, we see how you really are holding onto that hope as you walk through it. And I think that's important.

Kendra: I agree.

Pastor Craig G.: That's what I love about Lysa's book, too, is I mean, she did write it out of the rawness of her pain, and that's where most of us are living at some point. And the moment we do have a problem resolved, there's three other ones waiting on the other side of it. That's just life. So the longer you live, the more you realize that God's goodness isn't just based on us getting the result that we desire, but His goodness is His grace in the middle of the trials.

Melissa: Yes.

Pastor Craig G.: And I think, you know, one of the challenges, a little bit, of kind of the Western World of theology is sometimes we paint the goodness of God in, "He has to give us what we want or He doesn't care and He's not involved." And that's just not an accurate representation of God's Word. Jesus was pretty clear, He said, "You will have trouble in this world, but you take heart, He's with you and He does overcome."

Melissa: That's one of my favorite verses.

Kendra: Yes.

Melissa: I say it all the time because it's so true.

Kendra: It's good to [crosstalk 00:13:02]-

Melissa: It's like Jesus said it, this should be no surprise, right?

- Kendra: Yes, exactly. Pastor Craig, you mentioned how you struggled with doubt a lot, and you may to this day about this situation. For those listening that are also struggling with doubt, do you have any tips or practical ways that when you see yourself struggling with doubt you tend to put into practice?
- Pastor Craig G.: Yeah, I would say, this is a little bit counterintuitive, but a lot of times where in some church environments we would discourage doubt and say you're not a strong believer because you have doubts, and a couple of stories in the Bible that really minister to me.
- Pastor Craig G.: One of them is when Thomas doubted, Jesus didn't scold him and say, "You're pathetic," or whatever. Jesus actually let Thomas touch His side so that Thomas would see that it really was Jesus risen from the dead. In other words, Jesus gave Thomas a gift to build his faith. So that tells me God's not going to look down on my doubt and say I'm not in His family anymore. But often, He'll give me what I need to continue on.
- Pastor Craig G.: There's another powerful little story in Scripture about a dad, and I can relate because I'm hurting for a child, but a dad has a son that's afflicted, and Jesus is having a conversation with him, and essentially asked, "Do you believe I can help your son?" And the dad responds, "I do believe," and then he says, "but help me overcome my unbelief."
- Pastor Craig G.: That's a picture, probably of a lot of people who are listening right now that deep down, they do have faith that God can save their marriage, they do have faith that God can help a child get off drugs, they do have faith that God may heal somebody. But at the same time they have that little bit of mustard-seedsized faith, they might have a mountain of doubt that's saying, "But I don't see it, and I've prayed and nothing's happened. Where are You? I don't understand.
Do You still care? Do You know that I'm here?"
- Pastor Craig G.: And I love that. I honestly believe in the book *Hope in the Dark*, I built off of the Old Testament book of Habakkuk. Powerful, rich, rich book. Habakkuk just unloads on God. He tells God his frustration, his doubt, fears, why he doesn't think God is fair, and God is big enough to handle that. I'm convinced that God would rather have us scream at Him than to run away from Him.
- Pastor Craig G.: So if someone's doubting, if someone has questions, someone doesn't understand, take it to God. Don't feel like you have to make it religious and all, pretty up your theology before. Just unload. Tell Him where you hurt. And in the middle of your questions, then do what that father did and say, "And now,

please help me. Help me overcome this anger, these hurts, these doubts, these fears."

Melissa: Do you know, I remember when I was very new to my faith. I grew up in church, but I really got on fire when I was in my early 20s, or started wanting, having that desire to know more about the Bible and grow closer to the Lord. And I remember when I heard that story where the father says, "I believe, but help me with my unbelief." That was so freeing to me.

Kendra: Yes.

Melissa: Because I was trying to kind of have that, "Oh, I have Jesus in my life now," and the lady on the TV who I accepted Christ through, true story, the lady on the TV told me how different my life would be, and that now there would be hope. And I kind of expected this instant change, so I did have this faith and this hope, so I wanted to act like I had this faith and this hope, and I remember doing a Bible study, when I started doing Bible studies is when I started learning I could be real with God.

Kendra: Right.

Melissa: Just because I believed in Jesus didn't mean I had to put on the front that everything was okay, that I could be real with God, I could talk to Him real.

Melissa: Then you also referred to Habakkuk, which I was not that familiar with Habakkuk, really, until this year when we did it with First 5. But I love Habakkuk. It's one of my favorite books of the Bible now.

Kendra: Do you?

Melissa: Yes, I do.

Kendra: I love that.

Melissa: I've got some great leadership lessons from Habakkuk, and I just think, yeah, there's where you see that realness with the Lord, and God made us this way. He made us. He created us. He already knows us. He knows what we're thinking. So let's just go ahead and talk to Him about it, you know?

- Kendra: Right. There's something beautiful that can happen when you're vulnerable. It's just getting to that point is difficult.
- Melissa: Yeah. So that was really good, thank you for sharing that.
- Pastor Craig G.: Well, the very name Habakkuk is so powerful. The origin of the name, it means both to wrestle and to embrace. I love that. So you've got a guy who is wrestling with God, going, "You're not fair. Why are you letting these people do this to us? I don't even know if you still care." He's wrestling. But yet, he doesn't let go. He continues to embrace in the middle of the wrestle.
- Pastor Craig G.: And that, that's so freeing to me because I grew up in a culture in the church that, you know, if you doubted, you know there was something wrong with you and maybe you'd lost your faith. And what I'm realizing is that you can have real faith with sincere questions at the same time, and God understand that. That's a part of the maturing process. Without those trials, we never really do get stronger.
- Melissa: Right.
- Pastor Craig G.: So we're embracing and we're wrestling, and we're wrestling and we're embracing.
- Melissa: Right, right. That's great. Yeah, like you described Mandy, not to endure, but embrace.
- Kendra: Mm-hmm (affirmative), I love that.
- Melissa: Yes, that was great. Okay, so let me ask you about the title, because I love the title of this book, and the subtitle. I know just from working with Lysa, sometimes she comes up with her own titles, and then sometimes the publisher comes up with one that ends up being better, or that she didn't think it would be but it ended up, and *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* is one of those.
- Melissa: So did you come up with this title? Because it's absolutely fabulous.
- Pastor Craig G.: Thank you. Yeah, I did. It was one of those things where we were kind of just talking with the family about Mandy's situation. And a little back story, before I tell you this, this was never going to be a book. The story behind the book that's really special to me is Adrienne, and who you may have been working with in my office, has been on my team for a long time, she was a relatively new believer when she and her husband Danny lost a child, and was really rattled from it for obvious reasons.

Pastor Craig G.: So I wrote her family a letter that was going to be a couple pages, and then I just kept writing, and writing, and writing, and gave it to them, and they cried all the way through it. That became the foundation of the book *Hope in the Dark*. She said, "You have to give this to other people to help get them through it."

Pastor Craig G.: And we were with our family, kind of talking about, "Do I want to do another book at this point?" And I just said the words out loud, "If we do it, what we want to do is we want to try to give people hope in the dark times." And it was that moment, like, "Okay, that's the book title. We want to offer hope when they're dark."

Melissa: Right. Right. That's great. And I just want to say that you actually did talk about this on your podcast with Lysa TerKeurst, about you know, we don't want to compare our dark situations. If it's dark for you, or a disappointment for you, it's a disappointment. So you can always find someone who is going through a worse time with you, and you can also find someone who has it better than you. So I think it's important for us to acknowledge the dark places that we are in, and if we feel them, then they are dark. We don't need to compare them to anybody else's.

Kendra: Right. Yeah.

Pastor Craig G.: Right. Yeah, Lysa did such an amazing job. She talked about leading through brokenness and pain. And that particular episode is one that we've gotten probably as much feedback about her teaching as any other one that we've done.

Melissa: Wow, wow. I'm not really surprised by that, I'm going to say. Yeah, that was great. That was one I've listened to, that's why I know it so well, I've listened to it quite a few times.

Kendra: As you were talking with Lysa in the podcast, just in case somebody hasn't listened to it, how would you say, when you were going through all this with your family, through this disappointment, how did you continue to lead your church and lead your teams when you were going through this in your personal life?

Pastor Craig G.: I think one of the things we've learned to do, and in many ways I've watched Lysa model it, is that when you're transparent about what you're going through, it feels risky, but it actually creates trust and it gives you permission to not be perfect as a leader. There's kind of a saying that I talk about a lot, that you may impress people with your strengths, but you connect with people through your weaknesses. And we know that to be true because, from a distance, I'm impressed with Lysa TerKeurst's leadership, her teaching, her content. I'm impressed. Up close, when I see, "Oh my gosh, she's a human being with real trials," then I connect deeply with her as a person.

- Pastor Craig G.: So a lot of times as leaders, we feel like I've got to always be strong and always have the answers, and always know the direction. And we do have to have those qualities as a leader, but when we give ourselves permission to say, "I'm hurting at this point, and I don't have all the answers, and I'm not sure what quite to do next," that doesn't discredit us with people, it actually endears us to them, and it creates a bond that now we're not just doing some kind of mission together for an external win, but we're family. We love each other, we care about each other.
- Pastor Craig G.: And I know that you all feel that in Proverbs 31 because the emotional bond that you have. So we can do that. And I think that's part of the beauty of the body of Christ, is that when we're hurting, we don't want to hurt alone. And I see it all the time. We can see two families have the same type of a tragedy, and the one that has the support of other believers who have been actively engaged in their life, they have help carrying them through it. The other one, equally good family but without support, find themselves in real trouble.
- Pastor Craig G.: It's, I think, the difference between a personal relationship with Jesus and a shared relationship with Jesus. For years we said, "You got to have a personal relationship." I'm barely saying that phrase anymore, because I think that a better New Testament approach is that we have a shared relationship with Jesus, and we experience His presence better with people than we do on our own. There's strength in the presence of God as we experience Him with other parts of His family.
- Melissa: Right, right. And the Bible points to that as well. Oh my goodness. I think, 'cause there's sometimes that, for some reason, my mind shuts down, and I just can't see Jesus or I'm not, but then my best friend will come right along beside me, or my team will say, "We're going to pray right now," and point me right back, and it just renews my hope and my faith.
- Kendra: Yeah. It allows somebody to minister to you.
- Melissa: Yes, yes.
- Pastor Craig G.: If I can even share for Mandy, too, here's what's so special. So she's stuck at home, she can't go anywhere hardly at all, and yet she created a YouTube page. So here's a little kid that doesn't have much of a following at all, and in this amount of time, I think she has over 10,000 subscribers now, and she has created a ministry for people with chronic illness. She is doing an online class, and she is going to have her degree here in the next month or so to help people with nutrition.

- Pastor Craig G.: So she's a prisoner in some ways, but kind of like Paul, I'm going to turn this prison into a way to be a witness. So if there is somebody that Mandy Meehan, is her married name, Meehan, or you can even type in Mandy Groeschel and you'll find your way to her-
- Melissa: I'm doing that right now, that's so funny that you just said that.
- Pastor Craig G.: Yeah.
- Kendra: We're doing a little research!
- Pastor Craig G.: When I go different places, what's really special to me, the two things people talk about, they say, "Your podcast has helped, and your daughter has helped." I hear those things, more than my preaching, which is sad, but I do. All over, people tell me about how Mandy's faith is helping them get through really tough times.
- Pastor Craig G.: So if you know someone, or you are battling with some sort of physical ailment or challenge, check out her YouTube page and it will, I promise, her faith will inspire you.
- Melissa: Right. No, I just pulled up her YouTube page, and I'm just inspired by reading the titles of the different, I guess, episodes. Is that what you would call it?
- Kendra: Different, yeah, episodes I guess.
- Melissa: Different, yeah, YouTube things that she has on here. It's a great resource. That's fabulous. We'll definitely share this, yeah.
- Kendra: Yeah, I made a note to make sure we share that as well.
- Melissa: And she's just beautiful!
- Pastor Craig G.: Thank you, she is. All my girls took after my bride. They're all beautiful.
- Melissa: So beautiful. Okay, so if you could give a piece of advice to ... and you've done this the whole time, but, I don't know, if there is a particular maybe passage or something from the Bible that continues to give you strength, or if you could give a piece of advice to someone right now, because someone, in fact many ones, of people who are joining us right now, they are in this hopeless place, feeling shattered, feeling just disappointed, exhausted, overwhelmed, what would you say just as a friend or even as a pastor to them?
- Pastor Craig G.: You know, I know that the range of challenges would be really broad to people that are listening. Those who do face a chronic illness, what I've learned from Mandy is that oftentimes people don't believe them, and it's kind of invisible sickness; it's hard to diagnose. So to anyone who is in that lane, just know that

there are people out there that do believe you. And you may not get always immediate support, but look for communities like what Mandy has with others. And what she says all the time is, "I couldn't make it without the family of God. And with the family of God, I make it with strength." So find those people that do understand and believe, and we will stand with you. We'll stand together, we'll pray, we'll believe for miracles, and we'll embrace God along the way.

Pastor Craig G.: To a broader group that might be facing any number of different challenges, financial hardships, relational challenges, parenting issues, marriage and such, in the middle of the darkness, there's still hope. The verse that I go to over and over and over again through the time with Mandy, is from the book of Habakkuk, when Habakkuk comes to this conclusion that he's not going to see the blessings he wanted to see, and there's still going to be troubles. And he says, "Though the fig tree doesn't bud and there are no grapes on the vine, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the pen and no cattle in the stalls," in other words, though everything I've wanted and everything we've worked for is not going to happen, he says, "Yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God, my savior."

Pastor Craig G.: This is where we're trying to stand, is that we believe that God is going to heal Mandy. We believe that there are going to be marriage miracles like Lysa's seen. We believe that people are going to recovery from addictions. We believe they're going to have financial breakthroughs. But until that time, and even when we don't see it today, we will rejoice in the goodness of God. His grace is enough. His strength is there. If this just gives you enough faith to get through the day, realize God gave you a gift today. He gave you what you need for today, and He is good. There's hope in the dark, we can believe God is good even when life is not.

Melissa: Yes.

Kendra: That's such a good reminder.

Melissa: Ugh, so good. So good. And you know, I just want to tell all of you who are listening today, so many of our Online Bible Study participants say that they're signing up because they're not involved in their local church. And we love ... we always want you to come to our Bible studies. We will keep doing Bible studies, and we love having you. But we also feel very passionate about involvement in the local church. We just want to encourage you to start going. And if one doesn't seem to work out, go to another one, but don't quit, because that connection, that family of believers, family of God, that community is so important when you are going through-

Kendra: Absolutely.

Melissa: ... hardships. And even when you're not. You want people to celebrate with you as well. But we want you to try and find a community, a local church near you

where you can get involved. Because when you're down and out, we can give you a message, but we can't come over to your house and bring you a meal, or pray with you and hold your hand, or anything like that. So I really do want to say that.

Melissa: At Proverbs 31, our mission is to eradicate biblical poverty.

Kendra: That's right.

Melissa: So that's what we're going to keep doing. And Pastor Craig, I just want to thank you for joining us today. I want to thank you for the man of God that you are, and just sharing, running your church well, leading your family well, and it's just been an honor to have you with us today.

Kendra: I just love learning from Craig, and one of the things that he said over and over again was about transparency and connection. And he said this, "You may impress people with your strengths, but you connect with people through your weaknesses." And I think that's so important as you foster relationships.

Meredith Brock: Absolutely.

Kaley Olson: That's so good. Well, Kendra, you and I were talking about that before we recorded this episode.

Kendra: Yes.

Kaley Olson: And I think one thing that I want to point out is that you don't have to be going through something really difficult to be able to be transparent with someone. You can just be transparent with somebody over anything, right?

Kendra: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Meredith Brock: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Kaley Olson: For example, Kendra and I are both managers at Proverbs 31, and so something that we have recently started is just meeting with each other once a month, where we just are like, "Hey, I'm learning this right now. What do you think about this certain thing?" We've just been able to talk with each other about everything, and what it's like to kind of learn along the bumpy road of leading in your 20s, which is all sorts of awkward, you know?

Kendra: And fun.

Kaley Olson: And fun! And awkward. But you know, it's allowed us to foster this relationship where now we don't just talk about that; we talk about other stuff too. And we're really close now. [crosstalk 00:31:40]

- Meredith Brock: And had you not taken the risk of transparency, you wouldn't feel nearly connected as you do. You know?
- Kaley Olson: Yes.
- Meredith Brock: And I know for me, y'all, transparency is like one of my ... not transparency from like, I don't want to paint the picture that I'm kind of a sneaky person.
- Kendra: Behind a closed door.
- Meredith Brock: Like I'm trying to do super sneaky stuff, it's maybe more like I would use the word vulnerable.
- Kendra: Yes, vulnerable is a great word.
- Meredith Brock: I don't have a hard time being transparent, and I really am an open book. I think sometimes my husband gets really nervous that ... Like, there are people that we barely know that have keys to our house, and it really doesn't bother me, because I'm like, "Whatever, I have nothing to hide," in terms of that.
- Meredith Brock: But when it comes to being vulnerable, for me, that's like the next step of risk, because I'm really afraid that if I show you what's really on the inside of me, will you still like me? Will you still want to be close to me?
- Kendra: Because there's that possibility of rejection.
- Meredith Brock: Oh gosh, that's terrifying.
- Kendra: And no one wants to be rejected.
- Meredith Brock: Right?
- Kendra: Yeah.
- Kaley Olson: Mm-hmm (affirmative).
- Meredith Brock: It's terrifying. It's a scary thing. But if you don't take that risk, what happens?
- Kaley Olson: There isn't really connection, I'll tell you that.
- Meredith Brock: There's no growth. There's no connection. There's no growth. And you live alone in a cave of just yourself, you know?
- Kaley Olson: Yeah.
- Kendra: Yeah.

- Meredith Brock: So wow, I mean, what a message.
- Kendra: He's great, right?
- Meredith Brock: Pastor Craig, thank you for investing into the community here at Proverbs 31. And before our time ends, I want to point our listeners to a few resources like we promised at the beginning of the episode.
- Meredith Brock: The first resource is simply our Online Bible Studies program. You got to hear an inside peak into what Melissa and Kendra from that team do, and I just want to encourage you to get involved in that community if you're not. You can find out more about our current upcoming study by visiting proverbs31.org/study/onlinebiblestudies. We would love, love, love to have you there.
- Meredith Brock: These studies are completely free and are based on topics that apply to a season of life that maybe you're experiencing, and we hope that you will find encouragement and biblical community there.
- Kaley Olson: Yeah. Well, let me just also say something too. Kendra and I were talking about this before, and it's like what we do here at Proverbs 31 is ministry through transparency.
- Meredith Brock: That's right.
- Kaley Olson: We don't do ministry for perfect people, we do ministry for imperfect people who come to Proverbs looking for an answer to an everyday life issue that they're having.
- Meredith Brock: Right.
- Kaley Olson: Which is exactly what we do in Online Bible Studies, which is why I think our community is so great. So definitely go check that out.
- Kaley Olson: The second thing that I want to point out are two books mentioned, Lysa's latest release, *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*, and Craig Groeschel's book, *Hope in the Dark*. We're thankful that Craig was gracious to join us, and want to point you to those resources so you can dig deeper if you feel led to do so. *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* can be purchased from the Proverbs 31 Bookstore, and you can find *Hope in the Dark* anywhere books are sold.
- Meredith Brock: Well, that's about all the time we have for today, folks. Thank you all for joining us, and we pray this podcast helps you know the Truth and live the Truth of God's Word. Because when you do, it really will change everything. We'll see you guys next time.