



Kaley: Hello friends. Welcome back to *The Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast* where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm Kaley Olson, and I'm here with my friend Meredith Brock. Today we're going to share our last installment of Therapy and Theology with you for 2019. What a series, right?

Meredith: Yes.

Kaley: I mean, my goodness, I have learned so much. We've heard about trust issues, narcissism, and today we'll hear a conversation about how to help a friend walking through betrayal.

Meredith: Whoa! That's a lot. It's pretty heavy stuff, but so helpful. I'll go ahead and warn our listeners that today's episode does talk a good bit about infidelity. So for some of you, it might be a little bit of a trigger due to circumstances in your past, so please use your own discretion in listening. Kaley, will you help our listeners know exactly what they're getting into today?

Kaley: Sure, I'd love to. Well, we knew we were recording this episode. It was actually a last minute addition to the series because Lysa had just recently processed this with a friend. So I think the topic of helping a friend walk through betrayal is crucial because we don't always know what to say when a tragedy like this happens.

Meredith: That's right.

Kaley: Does she need space, or what does she need as she's walking through this? Because it's not necessarily an illness or something. It's an internal ...

Meredith: No one teaches this stuff.

Kaley: Or like how long do I walk with her through this? Or what does she need? So when Lysa shared that she wanted to discuss this, I got really excited because it just means that when people listen to this episode that we're going to literally have thousands and thousands of women who are better equipped to care for and walk with their friends through hard seasons.

Meredith: Wow and what a picture of the body of Christ. Right? It's beautiful, beautiful, amazing. Well, I can't wait to listen. Here's Lysa, Jim and Joel.

Lysa: ... Great theologian, wonderful friend, and also Jim Cress, amazing counselor and just therapeutic extraordinaire, wisdom-bringer. How's that?

Jim: Wow, if I was a narcissist, I would love it.

Lysa: So Jim's making reference to two other shows that are part of Therapy and Theology that we unpacked around narcissism. Today I want to really turn to caring well for the heart of a friend who has found out their husband or their wife has had an affair or is having an affair. The reason that this is so personally relevant to me is I had some friends in my life that really cared for my heart well. I know not every person has that. So I want to speak today to knowing what is helpful and what is not helpful to say to a friend that has just discovered, or a family member that has just discovered, that the person they thought they could trust most in the world has betrayed them.

Lysa: It is excruciatingly painful. I want to say that it's not always men who have affairs. Sometimes it is a husband discovering that his wife has had an affair, but the one who has been betrayed in this way, their heart really needs to be cared for by their friends. So because I had some friends that really cared well for my heart, I spent some time writing some things down that were especially helpful, and I would love for you guys to speak to this, but I've also written some things down that were not at all helpful. Okay?

Jim: Uh-huh (affirmative). Yeah.

Lysa: Not that my friends said that anything that wasn't helpful, but other people in my life or because I'm a public figure, things that I would read posted on the internet that I just thought, *that's so utterly unhelpful and hurtful*. Because I can speak to this so personally. I can share my experience that when I found out that Art was being unfaithful, and Art has given me permission to speak about this, and I think he's so courageous in giving me permission to speak because we desperately want to help other people.

Lysa: So when I found out about this, I remember telling one of my friends, I feel as if I have been in a horrific car accident, and my arm has been severed, and I am bleeding out, but no one's taking me to the emergency room. I just remember having this feeling that if this was a physical trauma that was this significant, everybody knows how to respond. They know to call 911. They know to send an ambulance. The ambulance team knows exactly what to do. They need to stop the blood flow. There's a sense of urgency around everyone. They know to rush you to the hospital, and then there's a team at the ER. They may rush you into the OR. Then they put you in intensive care, or at least put you in the hospital, and here is a protocol of exactly what to do.

Jim: How to triage, where you go, exactly.

Lysa: Exactly. But when I found out about the most emotionally devastating news of my life, everyone did the very best they could. But there wasn't an ambulance to call, and there wasn't a triage team, and there wasn't an ER that I could go to. Yet I was having this feeling like this is an emergency.

Jim: Yeah, of course.

Lysa: It was so disregulating, so shocking to me that I just had no idea what to do. I think my friends, to some extent, they knew to care for me. And I think because they are very mature people around me, they knew what to say. But looking back on it, I think, wow, if I didn't have that, maybe some of my friends who, if they didn't know what to say, they would say nothing. That would've been awful. I didn't have that. I had friends immediately stepping in.

Lysa: One of my dear friends, her name is Meredith, and you actually hear from her sometimes on Therapy and Theology as one of the hostesses. She was the first person I told, and she has her master's in counseling. She was not my counselor, but I was in a very fortunate position. Meredith instinctively knew what to say and what not to say. I have another good friend. Her name was Colette. She doesn't have a master's in counseling, but she has an amazing experience of helping couples through her church as someone who is a mentor and a shepherd in that way. So she had a lot of biblical insight that she brought, and I thought that is amazing, and I was very fortunate.

Lysa: But I've talked to other women who say things that were said to me were not helpful. In fact, they were incredibly hurtful. One other thing I will say, Jim, and you pointed this out to me because I also eventually made my way to your office, which was very helpful. Joel, you and I would spend a lot of hours with Leah, one of our major partners in theological research, right?

Joel: Absolutely.

Lysa: We would dig into the Scriptures, and the conversations were so helpful. And from all of that help, Therapy and Theology was birthed. So that's pretty amazing, but I remember, Jim, I told you I was about four and a half months into the discovery of what was going on. Very uncertain if life would ever return back to normal, very uncertain if Art's heart would ever come back to me. Very, very uncertain if we were going to be headed for divorce. Not by my choice, but or not, and so there was so much uncertainty. But I remember about four and a half months in, I had major surgery. My colon twisted, and I had to be rushed into surgery. And the surgeon that cut me open and fixed what needed to be fixed, he came into my hospital room afterwards when I was recovering, and he said, "Lysa, if I didn't know better, I would think that you had been in a traumatic accident. Like you'd been hit by a car or a bus." He said, "Have you experienced some kind of major trauma like that?"

Lysa: He had no idea what I was emotionally going through, and I didn't tell him, but that logged in my brain where I thought very few people have the opportunity to actually see what emotional trauma does to a person. But I had a surgeon that was able to see it inside of me.

Jim: And the body never lies.

Lysa: Right.

Jim: The body just told the truth.

Joel: Yeah.

Lysa: I mean he even said something about there were some of my major organs weren't even in the right place.

Joel: Gosh.

Lysa: So this emotional trauma that people can go through when they thought that things were one way in their life or in their marriage, and they find out it's not that way. It is excruciatingly painful. So here's some things that I have discovered that I think were really helpful that my friends did. One is, they prayed more words over me than they spoke to me or about me.

Jim: Love that.

Lysa: That was very significant because I knew that they were going to the Lord, and I had such confidence that they were presenting these requests to the Lord on my behalf. And our conversation was so sweet because they would often say, "Lysa, I don't think the Lord is going to speak to me for you, but I think that the Lord is going to speak to me to know how to care for you."

Jim: Love that.

Lysa: It was very significant. I also knew that they weren't praying what they wanted to see happen, and they believed the best that they wanted to see my relationship with Art restored, and they wanted for us to get healing and all of that. So maybe they did present that to the Lord, but they were not saying like, "Wow, Art is just a terrible person and Lord, you need to do this and this and this." They were just going to the Lord on my behalf. That was really a gift to me because then I knew that if we did make it, if Art and I did make it, and our marriage did survive, that they were not going to have words that sat out there about how awful Art was or about the choices that he made. They had just settled all of that with the Lord. I thought that was really, really powerful.

Jim: I love that, yeah.

Lysa: So that was incredibly helpful. Here's something that I've seen happen in other situations where this has happened, and my friends did not do this to me, but I know other people that the significant people in their life will say to them, "Well you know, there's always two [crosstalk 00:12:33] sides to every story." That is not helpful at all.

Jim: Period. Period.

Lysa: Right. So Jim, what are your thoughts about this? This whole notion of, well there's always two sides to every story, because I have some definite thoughts, but I don't want to be the only one to talk here.

Jim: If I were sitting with you as a friend, and you've acknowledged publicly, I sat with you for a lot of hours, and this is just my style and let's say we're just friends, and I'm in crisis and in pain and you were to say, "Jim, I care about you. There's two sides to every story." My response I think probably would be, "I'm sure that's true, and right now the only thing that matters in this conversation is my side." I want to be heard, like the

Jewish concept we've shared before in the podcast of sitting Shiva with a person. In other words, right now I need you, basically three things that I see like the sitting Shiva. That means I'm going to sit and be present with you, not based on you giving me any advice. So just sit and be present. Second is I will let you know I hear you. Thirdly, is I believe you. Fourth, I added one, is there more?

Jim: I want you to get the entire narrative out. So sit Shiva first, quiet, just get the story out. I want you to know, I hear you, and I use this in counseling all the time. It seems simple, but it's deep. I hear you, and I want you to know I believe you. Don't worry about the other side of the story and is there more?

Jim: So we would all agree there's always two sides of every story, but when I'm in that conversation, that other side really experience doesn't matter. So that piece of letting you get the story because that's going to wire my brain. It's almost like gaslighting. I don't think it's real gaslighting. It's like I'm whipped around in that story to go, "Well, what do you mean? Are you discrediting what I'm saying?" Which I know some people did do that to you.

Lysa: Yeah. Well and here's what I would say. I understand why you're saying that, but that's not helpful because this is not a spectator sport. A spectator sport is where you have two sides, and you're watching something being played out in front of you.

Jim: That's right.

Lysa: That is not what this, this is the dismantling of a family. This is the most traumatizing thing that someone can possibly go through. This is not a spectator sport, so there are not sides here, so we don't even need to say there's two sides to every story, right? There is a story that is being played out right now, and to one person it is traumatizing, and so that person needs to be cared for.

Jim: And there are two sides in this way too, which I know you know, and Joel knows only too well. We must always ponder for a moment the person who's on the other end of that phone call, let alone blog or on social media making comments or who's alive in that conversation. There's another story going on because the two stories in that room are your story and my story. Am I triggered back into my spouse or my betrayal, and often it gets covered up like, there's two sides to every story. Yeah, I'm over here triggered, and it scares me. What if your husband really changes? What if your spouse really changes? When I'm over here, and my spouse hasn't. I've got my story red hot going on inside of me. I can't even connect to you because I'm over jacked up in my own story, post traumatic stress-wise.

Lysa: That's right. Joel. What does this make you think of? I know that you and I dug into Scripture a lot and me, you and Leah and even some of my other team members, we really got into God's Word and sometimes the very best place is to just let God's Word speak over you, especially when someone has said something really hurtful to you.

Joel: Well I think we have descriptively, we've talked about this before. Probably the closest thing to this experience is the story of Job, I think of. Talk about a guy who lost literally everything, and he's broken and he's devastated. In Job 2, he's got these three friends,

and these three friends come, and I just wish the story of the three friends ended in Job 2 verse 13, they actually starting in 12. They raised their voices and wept. They tore their robes. They sprinkled dust on their heads towards heaven. They sat with him on the ground seven days and seven nights. No one spoke a word to him for they saw, that's the perception, for they saw that his suffering was very great.

Joel: So there is this reality of proximity and presence, and theologically what we see often in the Bible is that this flushes itself out in three categories: physically, emotionally, and spiritually. So what you see with these three friends is they were physically present. They were emotionally present. They suffer with him; they weep with him. But then chapter 3 starts, right?

Jim: Uh oh, that sounds like Genesis chapter 3 when it all got bad, doesn't it?

Joel: What is it with these chapter threes?

Jim: Something about third time's the charm.

Joel: The friends begin to speak, and if only they could have spoken from God's eternal perspective, but they were speaking from their limited human perspective.

Joel: I want to turn to a different story in John as well, the Gospel of John. Lysa one of the things that you have taught me is in every instance of theology and divinity, never forget what? The human ...

Lysa: Voice.

Joel: Oh my goodness.

Lysa: It's just the humanity of the texts that these were real people with real emotions and real feelings and real experiences. They didn't have the opportunity to open up their story and read it beginning to end, so they couldn't fill in the gaps like we can.

Joel: Right, right.

Lysa: Just like, when I hear you tell the Job story, and then I hear you bring the friends up and I thought, "Oh no, I know what's coming." Because they did what so many of us want to do is they start saying, "Well I think there are some reasons why this happened," and that was going to be the very next thing I said. Not only is it not helpful to say there's two sides to every story, but it's also not helpful to try to draw lines of why this happened.

Lysa: That's what Joel's, I mean, not Joel, Job's friends did to him, and they started pointing at and almost nitpicking his life apart. When someone is already falling apart, you don't need to further pick them apart.

Joel: Absolutely.

Jim: Oh that's good.

Lysa: That's exactly what I feel like Job's friends were doing. I think what was happening, and Jim you can speak to this is I think they were maybe saying, "I don't ever want this to happen in my life, so I have to figure out why this happened in your life so that I can comfort myself that I've never done what he did."

Joel: Done those things.

Lysa: Therefore I'll never get this result or as a preventative measure, they are not wanting other people to find out something that they've already done. So they are projecting all of the spotlight on Job so that no bit of the spotlight can be on them because maybe they're actually hiding secrets. So I don't know ...

Joel: Lisa, you're such a theologian.

Jim: I agree.

Lysa: Which one it is.

Jim: I think they probably, don't you think he hit the spot after they'd apparently sat Shiva there for awhile doing it right, then you go to chapter 3. I think sometimes there's the pull of what you've said and a pull of, I don't know what to say here. You're probably looking for advice. We're sitting here twiddling our thumbs, and I probably ought to have some. So we just start talking, and I think it's based in our own inadequacy and uncomfortableness because I ought to be saying something here and maybe no, you ought to not be saying something.

Joel: Yeah.

Lysa: I think in that situation, Jim, the most helpful thing that people said to me is, "I don't know what to say."

Jim: There you go, which is truth, and it's empathy right there.

Lysa: That is fine. That is fine.

Joel: That's right.

Lysa: Because at that point, I wasn't looking for advice. I was looking for comfort. I was looking, like you said, presence. I've felt so utterly alone. So my brain wasn't even at a place. I wasn't in learning mode, I just wasn't. I just needed to know I wasn't utterly alone in this world.

Jim: Do you know enough to know about the brain stuff we've talked about your brain... It wasn't just, you were not just in learning mode. Your brain and that trauma response is offline in this prefrontal neocortex. You literally can't be in learning mode. Trauma doesn't understand words. So when I'm in that trauma spot, I can understand experience. But words are often the Charlie Brown teacher voice, wah, wah wah. It's not just, "I can't." My brain won't let me hear these words you're saying.

Joel: Yeah. And Jesus, I mean the passage that I just want to maybe just camp on for a second. This is John chapter 11. Jesus, one of His best friends, Lazarus dies. He hears the news, He's deeply emotionally moved. He gets to the tomb. He hasn't seen him yet. The shortest verse in all of Scripture is what? Jesus wept. I just think it's so telling, Jesus and there's all this theological debate. Well, why did Jesus weep? Was it, and I just go back to what you've taught us, Lysa, which taught me is, it's His friend, and He sees these people that are devastated, and He is devastated. Before Jesus says a word, He proximity, presence, emotional, physical, spiritual. He's there, and He's present. I just think it's something important that we can be ...

Jim: And He knew the outcome of the story.

Lysa: That's right [crosstalk 00:22:12].

Joel: In fact He said it earlier in John 11. He said, "So that the glory of God might be revealed."

Lysa: Here's another thing I'll say too. If you hear gossip being spread about this family, because sometimes when someone's life blows apart, it can suddenly become a topic of conversation under the guise of sharing. I wrote something this weekend, I said, "If you hear gossip being spread about this family, boldly remind whoever is sharing that we don't need to do the devil's work for him." See Ephesians 4:29-32 and remember James 3:16 and several passages after that call slander demonic activity. So I'm not trying to be rude there, and I'm not trying to be dramatic. I'm saying please know that that is never helpful. Why this happened doesn't really need to be debated anywhere except in the process of healing with a counselor between the two that are walking through it. So pray for them, do kind things for them, but don't slander them.

Lysa: That is just not ever going to be helpful. Then the last thing that I wrote, and again I was just making all of these notes because I just thought this is really important. Don't project someone else's outcome onto your friend's situation. The reason I think this is so important for me to share is because I know with the women that read my books and maybe some guys too, so many people were praying for me, and I'm so grateful for that, and God did redeem my marriage, and I'm so grateful for that. But I also know that that is not always the way that things turn out. I always say to people, forgiveness is a command by God, but reconciliation is not. Reconciliation is dependent on so many things. Reconciliation requires the other person to be willing.

Lysa: Reconciliation. Joel, you and I have talked about this before. It requires some discipleship. Jim, you would say doing the hard work.

Joel: Authentic repentance.

Lysa: Authentic repentance, all of that. If that is not there, it's not fair to take the outcome of my story and place it on someone else and say, "Well, you need to hang on for as long as Lysa hung on, and then you will get this outcome." Life is never a math equation, and God cannot be reduced to a formula. Sometimes God rescues people out. Sometimes God restores relationships back together. I don't know why. Sometimes with God it is

this, and sometimes it is that, but what I do know is no matter how the story goes, redemption with God is always possible.

Lysa: So speak to that redemption. God still loves you. God still has a plan for you.

Jim: Yes.

Lysa: God still cares very much about you. God will not leave you. He will not forsake you, and not one bit of God's redemption for you is dependent on the other person's actions. Right?

Jim: Amen, I love it.

Joel: Yeah.

Lysa: Anything last that you want to say?

Jim: Well, reconciliation does require some reciprocity. It takes two, and there's that great mystery, will we be able to be reconciled? Will this person really change? If they have changed, will they consistently change? We've talked back many times in the series of trust being built over time plus this provable experience, but living in the now is to say, am I also in the midst of my trauma? What's happened to me? Reconcile to myself. Do I believe that there is a core healthy me that can heal, no matter what the other person does as I go vertical. That I can heal no matter what the other person does. We've already talked about it here today, but to have an awareness, your story, they're going to be people who are going to rejoice with you, and there are other people going to be like in the book of Nehemiah, Sanballat and Tobiah who were naysayers, people... Nehemiah, they were just rebuilding home.

Jim: It was happening and Sanballat and Tobiah, you go read the story in Nehemiah, were like, this is not happening. This can't be right. Really they were mocking them, but then it progressed. They got greatly enraged and jeered and tried to sabotage and say, come over here outside the city and we'll... it's like, watch for progressions. Some people will not because of their own unhealed state, they will not want you to have a story with a better ending. Just be aware of that, and find the community of people like Nehemiah did, that sat next to him on the wall and next to him, we need a community that people to say we're walking with you, a safe community to help you heal and to have the back, if it's a spouse or a partner.

Jim: It's very easy when someone's been... Back to the earlier series on narcissists or someone who's hurt or betrayed, male or female. It's easy to just see them as the problem and just basically rally and try to pull someone away from healing. So just be aware to have a safe group. You said it earlier, I think off our podcast, it can happen in a church setting. I've seen it happen in counseling setting, counseling groups, friendships or even in family where people say no. They just don't want a story of redemption, I think it's because they're in their own unhealed story.

Lysa: Well, thank you for sharing that Jim. As we wrap up today, I just want to say one more thing. That is if you are the spouse that had the affair, if you happen to be listening

today, and you are the affair partner, and you are currently having an affair with someone who is married, I want to remind you of this beautiful story in the book of John where there's a woman who is caught in adultery, and what Jesus does with her and the compassion that he has for her is astonishing, and it's beautiful. So I want to say to you, you are not condemned, you are not.

Lysa: But while Jesus does not condemn her, He is so clear: "Go and leave your life of sin." I think it's such a beautiful picture of the compassion that we need because everyone in a situation like this is bringing their own hurt into the situation.

Jim: That is so true, yes.

Lysa: And feelings are involved, and it's entangled, and it's messy, and it's so very chaotic, but there is sin here. So it is never God's best plan for you. It is not God's gift to you to be in a relationship with someone if you're married, who is not your spouse. It is never God's gift to you. A married man is never God's gift to you if you're a single woman. A married woman is never God's gift to you if you are a single man. So I didn't want to end today without just clearly stating there is compassion, but then there is also instruction.

Lysa: Leave this sin, and I know from statistics of reading, will these relationships that begin in an affair, will they last? Statistics say the vast majority of them won't. I read one statistic that said only one to three out of a hundred relationships that begin with an affair will last even five years. I know that's not always true, and certainly God can redeem even that, but what I am saying is what begins in deceit cannot possibly build the very best situation where trust can be established because trust is dependent on truth. Joel, why don't you tell us the Scripture reference.

Joel: It was John 8, and I just thought it was really interesting, maybe we can just end with Jesus' words.

Lysa: That would be great.

Joel: Jesus answers them. He's talking to all these Pharisees, the entire section of Scripture is this woman caught in adultery, Lysa that you're talking about and listen to the compassion of Jesus. Yet the straight call to action that He gives us. "Jesus answers them. Truly, truly, I say to you, everyone who practices sin is a slave to sin. The slave does not remain in the house forever. The son/daughter remains forever, so if the son sets you free, you will be free indeed."

Lysa: Amen. Amen.

Jim: Amen.

Lysa: Amen.

Kaley: Well guys, thank you so much for listening to today's episode as we wrap up Therapy and Theology for 2019. Before we let you go, we do want to point you to a couple of resources.

Meredith: The first is something we mentioned at the top of this episode, and that's Lysa's latest Bible study called *Trustworthy: Overcoming our Greatest Struggles to Trust God*. If we can't trust God, then I promise you will have a really hard time trusting people in your life. This study is a six-week long study, and it was filmed in the Holy Land in Israel. It is amazing and beautiful, and it takes a really deep look at the books of First and Second Kings. So if the topic of trust issues resonated at all with you, this study is packed full of transformational material that'll help you grow in your relationship with the Lord as you learn to trust Him. Really. So go check it out. It's at p31bookstore.com to find out how you can get your copy.

Kaley: Yep, that's right. We also want to take one last opportunity to point you to a Christian counselor if you need to process maybe what you're going on in your own life or process with a counselor or how to help a friend who's going through with something specific. I'm a huge fan of talking things out with a counselor, and they're really, really helpful. So at Proverbs 31 we always like to point people to the American Association of Christian Counseling as a resource to find a counselor that you can trust in your area.

Meredith: That's right.

Kaley: You can visit aacc.org for more information on how to find one.

Meredith: Thank you all so much for listening today. We pray that what you heard helps you know the truth of God's Word and live that truth out because when you do, it really will change everything. We'll see you next week.

