



- Meredith: Hi friends. Welcome back to the Proverbs 31 Ministries podcast where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host Meredith Brock, and I am here with my cohost, Kaley Olson.
- Kaley: Hi Meredith. It's great to be back with you today. I've got some friends with me in the room for the podcast. You can see them, but our listeners can't, so welcome Lysa TerKeurst and Joel Muddamalle.
- Meredith: Yay!
- Joel: Yeah.
- Kaley: Thank you. So excited to have you here. All right, friends, today's episode is going to be a little different than our normal flow. Think of it kind of like a conversation rather than a teaching because we're going to talk about, drum roll please, how to disagree and be a Christian. Oof. Kind of a tough topic, right Mer?
- Meredith: That's right. Let's all just take a deep breath before we dive into our discussion, and let me just use this as an opportunity to say how grateful I am that we have a president and a theological director here at Proverbs 31 who are extremely passionate about biblical truth. Seriously, both of you lead us in the way in seeking biblical answers to the sticky topics that we face everyday and I'm really, really grateful for it. I know today, we're going to do exactly that. We're going to tackle a sticky topic in a biblical way.
- Kaley: Yeah, and I know a lot of times the first thing we can think about on how to disagree and be a Christian is our minds immediately go to politics, but this covers ...
- Meredith: That's right.
- Kaley: ... everything. This is how to disagree and be a Christian, like how to agree ...
- Meredith: [crosstalk 00:01:40] We were just disagreeing. I think that the word, the combination of "going to" should actually be "gonna," and my friends here in the room think that it should be "gonna."
- Kaley: Yes.
- Meredith: We're definitely in a disagreement. Maybe Joel and Lysa can help us untangle how to get out of this disagreement.

- Kaley: Or maybe the dictionary already settled it for us.
- Joel: AKA the Word of God?
- Meredith: No, it's supposed to be ...
- Kaley: G-O-N-N-A.
- Meredith: Gonnu. It's "gonnu."
- Kaley: No it's not, it's "gonna."
- Meredith: All my friends on social medial back me up ...
- Joel: Oh, here we go.
- Meredith: ... it's "gonnu" all day long.
- Lysa: @meredithbrock.
- Kaley: Or if you want to be correct, just look in the dictionary, it's "gonna," G-O-N-N-A.
- Meredith: Oh boy. Here we are disagreeing right at the beginning of our podcast all about how to disagree.
- Kaley: This is great. I already wrote that down in my notes ...
- Meredith: I love it.
- Kaley: ... just to start us off. But I'm actually going to pass it off to our friend Joel, and he's going to set up our conversation for today.
- Joel: Yeah, actually interesting, we were going to start in John 17 with Jesus' high priestly prayer, but Lysa and I were just talking, and I think one of the things I am just so grateful for, and I know as a team we often talk about is how good and gracious is God that He gives us His words for us so that when we're having to tackle something as difficult as ... I'll be honest, sometimes I think disagreement, is that even allowed if we're Christians? Are we allowed to even? Good news. The Scriptures give us so much insight both explicitly and implicitly. They both teach it with their words and also give us some pictures of actual disagreements that take place in the Bible to give us some insight on how to learn. But Lysa, you brought up, actually, that Jesus has not just one prayer — actually there are a couple prayers throughout the Gospels — and one of them is kind of a private, personal prayer that He's got.
- Lysa: That's right. And I think that Jesus really sets this up in Matthew Chapter 6 to be a daily prayer, and I'll show you why I think that, but if you look in Matthew Chapter 6 starting in verse nine — and we're going to go all the way through verse 15. If you look at this prayer, Jesus is teaching us this is then how you should pray: "Our Father in heaven,

hallowed be your name, your kingdom come, your will be done, on earth as it is in heaven."

Lysa: Now we get to verse 11. This is the first request which lends me to believe that this is supposed to be a daily prayer. It says, "Give us today our daily bread." To me, He's setting in the prayer up who God is and that we are bending our will to God's will, and then the request, "Give us today our daily bread," that teaches me that this is supposed to be something that we're doing each day. But, then He goes and takes a turn in the prayer that is surprising to me because if you were to write out, "Okay, Jesus, here's Your script." Meredith, obviously you're not Jesus nor are you ...

Meredith: Thank goodness.

Lysa: ... Jesus' script writer.

Meredith: Yeah, wow. We're all grateful for that.

Lysa: But, just think about this: If you were to write the rest of what is going to become known as The Lord's Prayer, what topics would you include? I think maybe I would say, "Jesus, teach us how to make requests of God," at which He did. Maybe I would say, "Establish that we need to bend our will to His will," and that certainly He did. But then He goes on and teaches about forgiveness and makes that such a big theme; confession and forgiveness becomes the major two themes of His prayer, and I don't know if I was writing out The Lord's Prayer that I would have made the bulk of the focus on confession and forgiveness. I find this very, very interesting because right after, "Give us today our daily bread," verse 12, "And forgive us our debts," which is basically confessing, "Lord, forgive me what I have done that has cost other people something."

Lysa: I think the word debt there is very specific and, Joel, you may know a little more information about that, but if you think about every time I do something to you, Meredith, or to you, Kaley, I'm costing you something because there's relationship equity that we have, so I like that phraseology, "Forgive when I have created a debt with someone else in a relationship sense. Forgive me of what I've cost other people. I confess this."

Lysa: But then He said, "And forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors." Do you see the language there? It makes an assumption that we are forgiving. It's supposed to be a daily practice, and for me, I have lost the art of daily confession and daily forgiveness which if I look at how much tension there is in this world ... Think if before anyone ever got on social media, if we made it our practice to forgive the ones that are going to offend us ... Gonna. See how I wove that in?

Kaley: Zing, folks! There it is.

Lysa: But just imagine how different life would look if every person made it their daily practice to before they interact with other humans via social media or online or even in person, if we spent time with the Lord confessing, which already then humbles us to a place that I think is a great relationship place to start. I'm so not perfect. I need grace so I'm going to freely give grace.

Lysa: And then, the very best time to forgive is before we're ever offended. What if we had that mantra going in? And then it, of course, doesn't stop there. It says, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one. For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." This makes me think even the, "And lead us not into temptation, but deliver us from the evil one." I almost wonder if Jesus is pointing here. Some of the biggest temptations that we're going to have, some of the ways that the enemy is going to try to come after you is in relationship with other people. And your temptation is going to be to not want to humble yourself, to not want to confess, to not want to give grace, and to not want to forgive, and instead be a collector of wrongs, be a prover of your stance, and to be the kind of person where your opinion is the truth. And you'll fight to the death to win the battle, but ultimately, maybe we're losing the war in relationships.

Lysa: I think this is a really important place to start. I think it's also interesting right before Matthew 6, in Matthew Chapter 5 there's a couple of very important instructions that are given. In Matthew 5:25, we are reminded to settle matters quickly. Of course, this is about taking people to court, but I think it's also, don't let things fester with people. That you want to be slow to anger, but I think we are supposed to settle matters quickly and just get to a more settled place. And then, of course we get down to verse 38 in Matthew Chapter 5, and it says, "You have heard that it was said, 'An eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. 'But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat also. And if anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you." And then right after that, it talks about in verse 43, "You've heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you."

Lysa: I'm not talking about abusive situations here. I'm talking about not being so quick to be so offended online. Yeah, if you get online and somebody posts something on your social media, and it costs you something. Maybe it costs you some of your emotional energy. I think maybe refer to some of these verses and go, "This is probably the greatest moment to shame Satan back to hell and to rise up and show the ...

Kaley: That's good.

Lysa: ... distinctive of what it looks like for someone to give love when opposition is present." I think in my mind, whenever I'm online especially, and someone is fighting against something or disagreeing or something or using harsh words or leaving an ugly comment or whatever, I think one of two things can happen; it can become like blood in the ocean where the enemy smells the potential for anger and bitterness and retaliation and an eye for an eye, a tooth for a tooth. I think the enemy comes close, and I think God is reminding us this is your moment. Defeat the enemy right here by returning love for something that was not so kind.

Meredith: That is so powerful.

- Lysa: Even just overlooking it.
- Meredith: I think that's so powerful, Lysa. I want to boil it down to a really simple thing, what you just said. All those words you just shared were Jesus' words Himself, and He made it very clear. You're gonna have disagreements.
- Lysa: Did y'all hear? She just said "gonna." I'm so proud of you. This is amazing.
- Meredith: She's just waiting, she's waiting to catch me. But —
- Lysa: But even if you said "gonna" or whatever, I'm going to give you grace ...
- Meredith: You see?
- Lysa: ... because look at what we're talking about today.
- Meredith: Look at that. And the bottom line is there will be disagreements, and nowhere in any of those words did Jesus say, "And keep talking, and keep arguing until you figure out who's right or who's wrong." Nowhere in that did He say any of that, and I think that's a really important — Instead, He focused on that person. What was the line? Confession in forgiveness. He focused there in His prayer. He could've used any of those, any other angle in that prayer, and what it came down to was the person's heart itself. So powerful. I think that's a great place for us to start understanding disagreements.
- Lysa: And, Meredith, I think sometimes as Christians we say, "Yeah, but don't I need to get in and defend the truth?"
- Meredith: Right.
- Lysa: And I say absolutely, you need to be confident of the truth, but if you are going to defend the truth and violate a bunch of truth in your defense of truth, are you really defending the truth? I can't really figure out why sometimes people are so eager to feel like they have to defend God Himself with their own opinion. I just think, state the Word of God and let it sit, but even more importantly, live the Word of God, and that's how you take a true stand.
- Meredith: I love that. I really, really love that. Joel, I know you had another prayer that you wanted to unpack with us a little bit. We've kind of talked through Jesus' daily prayer that He used as a model for us to follow. Talk to me a little bit about this other prayer that you have in mind.
- Joel: Building off of what Lysa had said, I think that if some of us are honest, that'll be me, I'm going to raise my hand. I'm going to say that's great because You're Jesus. You're the divine Son of God, so it's easy, Jesus, for You to be able to say these things about forgiveness. But I think it's really important to understand the context of what Jesus was actually walking into. Jesus is actually entering day by day, minute by minute, second by second, the crosses in front of Him. He's about to bear the entire burden of all of sin, not just sin present, but sin past, sin future, on His perfect, divine and 100% human body. Jesus is about to experience these things.

- Joel: That's kind of the context of John Chapter 17, Jesus' high priestly prayer. Right away in verse 1:17, when Jesus had spoken these words, He lifted up His eyes to heaven and said, "Father, the hour has come." This is that indication that the cross is coming up. If you have time, I just want to encourage you to read John 17. It's just a great chapter to meditate on.
- Joel: But I want to jump to verse 11 because I think what Jesus does for us in this priestly prayer is He gives us insight into His very unique and special relationship with the Father that gives us an indication of how we can live in relationship with people. In verse 11, Jesus says, "I'm no longer in the world, but they are in the world, and I'm coming to you. Holy Father, keep them in your name, would you have given me, that" —catch this—"they may be one, even as we are one." There is, I think, a timed assumption that in order to not have disagreement, you have to have unity and uniformity. It's just funny, we were even kind of getting there with the "gonna" or "gonnu." I just desperately want all of us to say this thing the same way, and have a uniformed approach.
- Joel: But is it possible that there are people in the Midwest that maybe did not pay attention to the dictionary?
- Kaley: Very good chance.
- Joel: Right? And they're running around saying "gonnu," and some of us are saying "gonna," and now we have this unity in the sense of we're all saying we're about to do something, but there's a diversity in the way we actually say it.
- Meredith: That's good.
- Joel: This is so important because it gets us into the doctrine of the Trinity. Namely that God the Father, God the Son, God the Spirit are one. They are one in essence, They are one God, yet in the way that They relate to humanity, They are diverse in Their function. God the Father sends the Son, God the Son obeys the Father, dies on the cross, raises from the dead. As God the Son leaves and enters into heaven, the Spirit of God indwells us. We see right away in the Godhead this beautiful implication that you can actually have true, beautiful unity yet experience diversity.
- Kaley: Hold on. I think we all need to pause. I think my brains just came out my ears. My mind is blown right now. I've never heard this before of the idea of ... I don't know how I haven't made the true connection, but what a beautiful thing to see unity between the triune God and all three different functions being so very different. And what a picture of it, what it should be for the body of Christ. What? Whoa. Keep talking.
- Joel: I think what that does for us is it now begs us to ask the question, "Joel, that sounds great in the sense of theology and 30,000 foot," but then what does happen when we get into quarrels, or we get into disagreements. And so maybe the first thing is I would suggest that there are close-handed and open-handed areas of our faith. Lysa, we talk about this often. These close-handed things are the things that we are going to die on the hill over. It is the deity of Jesus, that He is 100% God, 100% man. It is the Word of God that is inspired and true. There are a lot of secondhand issues. There are a lot of things that people have very great conversations around and even over the things that

we might disagree firsthand, there's a way to do it with gentleness, with compassion, with grace. And we actually see Jesus and the Apostle Paul do it that way —

Meredith: And according to the daily prayer that Lysa was ...

Joel: According —

Meredith: ... just referencing.

Joel: Let's just read a couple verses that Paul — because I think we need to keep in mind the potential consequence of what happens if we actually enter into disagreement and quarrels. 2 Timothy 2:14 Paul says to Timothy, "Remind them of these things, and charge them before God" —what?— "not to quarrel about words, which does no good" —but I love this — "but only ruins the hearers." When we quarrel, when we get into disagreements, and I just think about the multiplied impact. Lysa, you brought up social media. We have no idea who's going to copy and share, who's going to comment, how the algorithm of Facebook and Instagram is going to say, because Kaley liked this post, now all of Kaley's friends are going to see this one comment. If that comment is destructive in nature, it has the potential of ruining those hearers.

Joel: In 2 Timothy 2:23 Paul says again, "Have nothing to do with foolish, ignorant controversies; you know that they breed quarrels." And then I love Romans 16:17, and this is Paul's appeal: "I appeal to you, brothers, to watch out for those who cause divisions and create obstacles contrary to the doctrine that you have been taught; avoid them."

Joel: And then we get to essentially where Paul says, "How do we live with disagreements? Do disagreements happen?" One favorite passage of mine is if we go to Acts Chapter 15, we've got Paul and Barnabas, and I'll do a quick summary. Basically, Paul and Barnabas are about to go out onto missionary journey. Barnabas says, "My cousin John Mark is awesome. He should come with us." Paul goes, "John Mark deserted us in a previous missionary journey. I don't want somebody who deserted us before to come with me." Barnabas says, "No, he's my cousin. I think we're not thinking about this rightly." The text says they have a sharp disagreement. This isn't just a side note. This is so significant that Paul, in fact, decides to take Silas, and he goes to a different place, and Barnabas takes John Mark, and he goes to a different place.

Joel: We see a disagreement, we see how they handle it, we see that they actually don't necessarily reconcile. There's no evidence in the text that says they came to a natural conclusion. But I thought this was really interesting. Think of the outcome of what happens when they dealt with it in a mature way. The Gospel multiplies. There's not one missionary journey; now there are two missionary journeys. The Gospel proclaims into different places. I just wonder if we took the high road, if we take an opportunity where we may say we disagree on these categories, but say, "Lord, you're calling me to this, and I want to be faithful to your Word," and we don't bicker about those things, but we actually triple down on where the Lord is calling us to, there is multiplied Gospel impact that will take place.

- Joel: My last verse, and I'm curious on what Lysa's about to say because I can see it. You guys can't see her eyes, but I can and she is ...
- Meredith: She's ready.
- Joel: ... ready.
- Meredith: Here it comes.
- Joel: This last one here is Philippians 3:16. This is Paul again, and I think this is good. He says this: "Let those of us who are mature think this way, and if anything you'd think otherwise, God will reveal that also to you." I'm basically going to do a quick summary of Philippians. In Philippians, Paul says there are three types of people. There are the people who hate the Gospel, they're the people who are actually doing all these things horribly, and they're actually, the words he uses are dogs. You can look at Philippians 3, 1-3, they're dogs, they're evildoers, they're mutilators of the flesh.
- Joel: But then in Philippians 1:15-18, he has this other category of people — those that preach Christ, some in pretense, but others of selfish heart and ambition. But then Paul says, "But praise God that Christ is still being preached." I think that when Paul gets to Philippians 3:16, we have to ask the question. "Who are these other people?" If anything, "you," who are those "you"? I think he's actually referring back to Philippians 1:15-18, these people who are preaching Christ. Great that they're preaching Christ, but there's something internally that might be sinful, that might be self-glorifying, that God is doing the sanctifying work in their lives.
- Joel: I'm going to be honest, I don't want Paul to say this, I really don't. What I want to say is, "Let those of us who are mature think this way. And if anything you'd think otherwise, well Joel, go ahead and pull out the commentaries and the dictionaries and prove your point to them to show that they're right." He doesn't say that. He says, "God will reveal that also to you." There's a sense here that the way that we handle disagreements is kind of leaving it up to God. And then the flip is also true. Again, I don't like this. What if we are the "you"? What if there's something here that God has to reveal to us? What if there's a heart revelation that the Lord needs to do inside of us? And so we're so quickly to disagree because we're so confident in our position, but there might be something more that's taking place.
- Lysa: Joel, I really like what you said, and I want to reiterate it by bookending the verse that you read from, 2 Timothy Chapter 2. You got straight into "and the Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome," but look what verses 22 of 2 Timothy Chapter 2 says and then verse 26. These verses bookend that instruction that you pointed out. It says, "Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness." In other words, just like you just said from the other verse you read, pursue maturity. Be mature about this. Don't get involved in arguments that are foolish and stupid. The Lord's servant must not be quarrelsome but must be kind to everyone. Wow. That is challenging. But then look really down at verse 25 now: "Opponents must be gently instructed, in the hope that God will grant them repentance leading them to a knowledge of truth, and that they will come to their senses and escape from the trap of the devil, who has taken them captive to do his will."

Lysa: I think we're getting at a couple of repetitive themes here. One is that remember the Gospel. Remember that we are to be people of multiplication, not people of division. We're to be people that go out and multiply evidence of Jesus' truth in the world, and we are to go out and be disciple makers. We are to go out and live this truth. We are to be mature people, but also we are to be aware that the enemy loves to be a divisive agent in the world. The enemy is the one who wants division in ...

Meredith: That's right.

Lysa: ... all throughout the world, and the Lord wants multiplication of goodness and kindness and gentleness. I think that these similar themes are following along. Be a mature person, don't get involved in stupid, foolish arguments. The Lord's servant must not be so eager to be so quarrelsome and remember, the enemy has a will, and it is all about divide.

Meredith: That's right, that's right. I'd love to get real practical with this because we're headed into the holiday season.

Lysa: Whoa.

Meredith: I know, and you're going to be sitting across the table from Uncle Jack, and he's going to want to talk politics, and you're both believers.

Lysa: Or religion.

Meredith: Or religion.

Lysa: And religious differences because just ...

Meredith: Oh my goodness.

Lysa: ... because you're both believers, there are some topics that are going to come up.

Meredith: He goes to this church, and you go to that church. Let's just talk practically. How do we do that, guys? How do I navigate those conversations with those people that I love but just have strongly different beliefs than I do?

Lysa: One thing that I try to do — and this sounds very elementary — but it is extremely important. That we have even this saying posted up on the walls here at Proverbs 31 Ministries, that we must exchange whispers with God before shouts with the world.

Meredith: That's right.

Lysa: The Lord sees what we're about to face every single day, and as I get into His Word, I always remind myself, Lysa, there's a reason that the Lord has you reading these verses because He sees what's coming. Let Him prepare your heart. A really good wisdom preparation — get my heart really synced up with the Lord in wisdom — is to go to Proverbs and read just really wise sayings that you can find in the book of Proverbs, but

also remember the Lord's daily prayer, Matthew Chapter 6. I think one of the keys is preparation, really letting the Lord prepare your heart.

Meredith: That's good.

Lysa: But not only letting the Lord prepare your heart, but go ahead and prepare yourself with some very kind and gentle responses. If you have to write them on three by five cards, carry them in your purse, then before you respond, drop your fork at the kitchen table, reach in your purse ...

Kaley: Excuse me, let me grab my fork.

Lysa: ... excuse me, one moment.

Joel: One moment. I'm going to grab my —

Lysa: Or Meredith, I'm gonnau.

Meredith: I'm gonnau.

Lysa: Whatever that is. Yep, okay, perfect. But reach into your purse and just remind yourself [inaudible 00:28:16]. Here's some of my responses that I really try to say first off; thank you so much for caring enough about me that you'd want to have this conversation. I think something like that, first of all, if they were doing a jab just to see how you would respond. Because some people really like conflict, it's the thing that they look forward to.

Meredith: It's true. They want to argue.

Lysa: But I think you've got to diffuse and disarm it. Just say, "Wow, I can see that you are incredibly passionate about that Bible. I love that about you." Or, "Wow, I can see you're really passionate about America. I love that you are so invested in your political stance. Tell me more, help me understand. Help me understand why this is so important to you. I would imagine something happened in your life that made this issue incredibly important. Help me understand, show me a time in your life where this became really important." Do you see what's happening there is it's not side-stepping the issue, but it's caring for the heart of the person before we dig into the issue.

Meredith: Which I think is exactly what Jesus was referencing in that daily prayer, or that heart of humility, of confession and forgiveness, of recognizing and that brings your humanity into the picture so that you can see their humanity. So good, Lysa.

Lysa: But then I think also on the flip side, you have to have some really good boundaries too.

Meredith: That's right.

Lysa: If you know that you've talked about this with Uncle Bob 16 times, and all 16 times it's ended in a disaster, then you just can go ahead and say to Uncle Bob, "Hey, Uncle Bob, we've talked about this so many times. I know you're so passionate. The other 16 times

we've talked about it haven't gone real well, so I am actually drawing a boundary here. It is not to keep you away from me; it is to hold myself together, and when we talk about this, I have a hard time holding myself together. Thank you so much for respecting my boundary today at Christmas."

Meredith: I think somebody listening right now needs to write that whole sentence down because the idea of just saying, "We've had this conversation before, and I love you so much that I don't want to destroy our relationship by going back to unsettled battles." That's so good, so good, so good.

Kaley: Meredith, this goes back to what we ... not we. I wasn't in therapy and theology, but Lysa and Joel were in therapy and theology in our first series —

Lysa: We were in therapy, but then —

Kaley: But you were talking about theology.

Lysa: It just sounded funny there.

Kaley: You were in therapy and theology-

Lysa: When Joel and Lysa were in therapy. Well, separately.

Joel: Basically.

Lysa: You're welcome, everyone.

Kaley: In our recent episode this year —

Lysa: Thank you.

Joel: There we go.

Kaley: ... you guys talked about forgiveness and reconciliation regarding a relationship and marriage, but I also think that the forgiveness and reconciliation difference applies to this as well with what you just talked about with Uncle Bob — about I can forgive — maybe that he might not believe what I believe. I can set that aside in the morning when I pray. But I love, Joel, what you were talking about earlier about how God handles the rest, and I think a lot of times where the enemy tries to creep in is he wants to make us think that it's all up to us, that I've got to die on this hill or I'm never going to get over it. But at some point, there's got to be a letting go and continuing with the relationship but maybe not talk about the topic because the relationship is more important than ...

Meredith: That topic.

Kaley: ... reconciliation on our beliefs on this.

- Lysa: And wouldn't the enemy just love for you and Uncle Bob to stay mad at each other the entire time at the Thanksgiving table and not talk to each other when you leave. Wouldn't the enemy love that?
- Kaley: Yeah.
- Joel: Yeah.
- Lysa: Let's take it one more step to another practical place. We're taking it from the dinner table to the cell phones. Social media. How do we handle these disagreements that we see on social media? Because I have seen my fair share of other believers coming after other believers and just throwing stones. How do we handle it in the arena of social media?
- Joel: I just think to start with — I think we need to pay wise counsel to these Scripture references that we've already looked at of what does this produce? And an awareness of on ... I mean literally potentially hundreds of thousands of eyeballs that the only representation of who Jesus is and what the goodness of the Gospel is the relationship exchange, comment exchanges on Twitter or on social media.
- Joel: Lysa talked about how good Proverbs is, Proverbs 26:21, "As charcoal to hot embers and wood to fire, so is a quarrelsome man." The Hebrew word there is person, humanity, "for kindling strife." Just pause and let's just think. This is what I need to do because my natural bent is let's crack this. And I have to think, one, do I have the relationship equity? Can I go directly to the person? Is this even my call that God has even given to me? And am I potentially going to throw a charcoal, a hot ember, into a wood fire that's going to cause this thing to explode and burn up and devastate, divide, and dis-unify the people of God and create a destructive barrier for those that desperately need the Gospel?
- Lysa: Joel, I really like that verse, and sticking with 2 Timothy, again, in 2 Timothy Chapter 2, it says in verse 14, "Keep reminding God's people of these things. Warn them before God against quarreling against words; that is of no value and it only ruins those who listen," which you already referenced that verse. But right behind it in verse 15, "Do your best to present yourself to God as one approved, a worker who does not need to be ashamed and who correctly handles the truth." Verse 16, "Avoid godless chatter, because those who indulge in it will become more and more ungodly."
- Lysa: I think the Bible is full of examples of what can happen if we don't keep a tight reign on our tongue, and it's not just our lips, but it's our flying ...
- Joel: Fingers.
- Lysa: ... fingertips too.
- Meredith: That's right, that's right.
- Lysa: ... typing out things. But I have two things that I have as a rule of thumb with my social media. Number one: I want to create an atmosphere with my social media. I can't go out

there and fix social media at large, but I can create an atmosphere of gentle responses on my social media. Sometimes when people say something, I won't respond because I don't want to bring attention and help them set fire to my little corner of the world. But if I do respond, I will again say, "Thank you so much for caring enough about me that you have looked into this or that you would ask me about this," or whatever. It's honoring the person even if there's nothing honorable about their statement. You can honor a person, you don't have to honor their statement.

Meredith: That's good.

Lysa: But, creating an atmosphere of gentle responses and good behavior on your own social media will attract those kind of people that like using social media for positive purposes. But then also, make good use of the delete button. Not everybody needs an answer. If somebody is just trying to stir up trouble or post something snarky, maybe they just had a really ugly argument with somebody that they love, maybe they're carrying some hurt and some burdens or whatever. Do them a favor by just deleting their comment. That might be one of the kindest things that anybody's done in a long time.

Lysa: But just realize that every single thing that we do here on earth, it creates a ripple effect through the earth. If you are willing to stop the negativity cycle, that somebody probably did something negative to that person who did something negative to this person who did something negative to this person. It causes this ripple effect of negativity, and you giving a gentle response or just deleting a comment and not perpetuating the negativity might be, when you get to heaven, one of the most epic things you do. I'm convinced of it.

Meredith: I love that. I want to end our time with a final question because, Joel, your idea of, and what you taught from, is that what Jesus wants from us as a body of believers is unity. If we're supposed to reflect our Creator, and He's in perfect unity as the triune God, I would love for both of you to answer this question in your own way and that is, how do we make steps towards unity as a body of believers?

Lysa: I'll jump in first. I would say I think one of the greatest things we could do is to not react but to really go before the Lord and say, "Lord, what do I need to do? In my flesh I want to have a stellar comeback right now."

Meredith: That's right.

Lysa: Because I have the tying blood in me which means ...

Meredith: Here it comes.

Lysa: ... in me my firecracker's flowing through all this right here. And I have the courage of the comeback which means I can think of just stellar zingers that feel so good in the moment but later, when I'm laying on my bed, and I'm thinking, "Was that really necessary? Did that really do anything good?" I think a pause and not reacting so quickly but really asking the Lord. "Help me have a gentle response here." If you're not sure if it's gentle, then show it to a friend who you have often thought they really know how to

use their words in kind ways, and get a friend to help you respond. Ask if it even needs a response.

Lysa: I remember one time my friend Angela Thomas, she told me that to some of the ugly emails that she gets ... She's a Bible teacher too, and she just says in response back to them, "You might be right. We'll sort it out in heaven." That's it.

Meredith: That's right.

Lysa: Just sometimes do we need to respond and if we do, can we pause? And if we can't figure it out, let's get a friend to help us, and let's really understand that we don't want today's reaction to become tomorrow's regret.

Meredith: That's good, Lysa. Joel?

Joel: That's great. I would just say that often when we fight and we triple down on these disagreements, it's because underneath the scenes there might be this understanding or this desire to control. Control the issue, control the outcome, control the scenario, the situations —

Lysa: Control the conversation.

Joel: Control the conversation. And I think one of the things that we continuously see throughout Scripture is that we have to be reminded that in order to work towards unity, we need to fully embrace God's sovereignty. When we look back at Barnabas and Paul, it's really ... Again, I'm so thankful for Scripture. In 2 Timothy 4:11, this is years and years later. They had this sharp disagreement, they all ... Things don't seem like they're ever going to work themselves out. Lysa has a great saying. There's always a what, Lysa?

Lysa: There's always a meanwhile.

Joel: Check out 2 Timothy 4:11. This is Paul saying, "Luke alone is with me. Get Mark and bring him with you, for he is very useful to me for ministry." Somehow, in God's sovereignty and His authority, there was a meanwhile. And He's working out this relationship to produce even unity that I don't know that Paul and Barnabas would've even seen in that time period.

Meredith: That's right.

Joel: I think this works against our natural fleshly response. We want to be in control, and that's even maybe one of the reasons why we get into these bitter disagreements. But when we can release and allow God to do what He wants to do, we're perfectly positioned to walk out the calm that God has for us.

Meredith: So good.

Kaley: That's so good. I think this is a good thing to close on is Lysa, what you said. One of the greatest things that we can do is to not react. And that's what I want to leave our listeners with today. Maybe the best thing that you can do right now if you're listening is

to just stop this in your car or on your bed — wherever you're listening right now — and just pray about whatever's on your mind. Because I know when I hear something like this, the Lord always leads me to take action in some way, and it might be forgiveness or it might be just releasing it to the Lord. Do whatever He's leading you to do and be obedient to His call.

Meredith: So good. And as we wrap up this episode, I really just want to thank Lysa and Joel for your willingness to step into a sticky conversation that's hard. It's hard to navigate. How do we disagree as believers? I'm just grateful that our conversation is always founded on Scriptural truth and that we can trust the words in our Bible wholeheartedly.

Meredith: For our listeners today, I really hope that this episode has encouraged you and has helped move you forward in your faith. If it has, we would love to hear all about it. Hit us up on iTunes. Give us a review because it encourages us to keep on going as you let us know how it's changing your life. That's about all we have time for today. We pray this conversation has helped you know the truth of God's Word and live out that truth, because when you do, it really will change everything.