

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith: Hi, everyone! Thanks so much for joining us on the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast where we share biblical truth for any girl at any age. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and I am here with my co-host and friend, Kaley Olsen.
- Kaley: Well, hey, Mere. I call you Mere, I don't know if people know that on the podcast, but your-
- Meredith: I'm into it.
- Kaley: -full name, Meredith. I call you Mere. You call me what?
- Meredith: Kales.
- Kaley: Yeah, there you go.
- Meredith: Kale chips.
- Kaley: Or kale chips.
- Meredith: Yeah.
- Kaley: That's kind of funny. Anyway, now that they know us, it's Mere and Kales.
- Meredith: Uh-huh.
- Kaley: It's so good to be here with you today. And you know I'm excited because I get to announce our teaching for today. This is going to be a good one. Our listeners know, sometimes we like to shake things up on the podcast, do things a little different. So what we're actually going to do is hear a conversation with Lysa TerKeurst and her three daughters.

Meredith: How fun. Well, this conversation came out of a discussion of Proverbs 22:6 which is about training up a child. Now I am right smack-dab in the thick of this parenthood thing. So I've got my notepad out and I am ready. And Kales,

Kaley: Yes?

Meredith: You're living the easy life, girl.

Kaley: I am.

Meredith: With no kids yet. So, you might want to take some notes now for your future reference. So, here's Lysa and her girls.

Lysa: Proverbs 22:6 says, "*Train a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it.*"

Lysa: Well, today I have a very special opportunity to invite some amazing guests into the studio that have certainly been the ones who have experienced the realities of this verse with me more than anyone else.

Lysa: I have five kids ,and today, three of them are joining me in the studio. I've got my oldest daughter, Hope, who is just about to turn 25. I've got my middle daughter, Ashley, who is 23. And I've got my beautiful youngest daughter, Brooke, who just in a couple of weeks is going to turn 20. I've also got two beautiful sons; they had to work today. But I'm so honored to have these three guests in the studio.

Lysa: You're going to hear from them some very raw, honest, family dynamic-filled conversation about training up children and their experience of being raised in the TerKeurst home.

Lysa: But first, I want to give you a little context for Proverbs 22:6. The word "train" is also translated as "dedicate," as in like if you would dedicate a house or dedicate a temple. So if you think about that, the training of our children, in a sense, is the visible representation of dedication to God. Also, the inverse of that is true, the lack of training is a failure to dedicate our children to the Lord.

Lysa: And this word dedicate, which I'm going to spell it for you, H-A-N-O-K, really implies a continuous training. In other words, this is an ongoing process. But, I think it's also really important to understand that this training is not about individualism. It's not training a child for their own self pleasure or need, but rather this training is to enable the child to best fit within the community.

Lysa: And so, keep all of that in mind as I want to unpack for you today three principles that were crucial, that we tried to always keep at the forefront of our mind when training our children. And I'm sure we had lots of principles that wove in and out of the everydayness of raising up kids, but were three things that were really important and as I look back now, emerged in those years of training our kids.

Lysa: First, keep them talking. We'll unpack that. Keep them connected, making sure they stayed connected with each other, connected with us as parents, and also connected to biblical principles. And then the third was keep them reminded about God.

Lysa: And I'll make a point here that in all of these things, there were plenty of moments of failure. I don't want to give anyone the impression that I somehow had the absolute perfect experience in raising my kids, but I always did preach to myself, bad moments don't make bad mommas. In other words, we're going to have bad moments as a family. I'm going to have bad moments as a mom, but I need to get back into the intentionality of raising these kids by telling myself that even if we have a few bad moments, that I'm not a bad mom and that our family can still be operating under biblical principles.

Lysa: So, with all that in mind, let's jump right in to keep them talking. As we were preparing for this podcast, Hope, you said something that really meant a lot to me. You said, "Mom, I think it was important that you created an environment where the kids loved to be." And I think part of creating that kind of environment was having an environment where everyone was safe to say what they needed to say, but also realizing that your words would also be guided along so that you were free to have all the feelings that you wanted to have about a certain situation, but you also knew we were going to come in and direct you with a biblical perspective no matter what your feelings were. Or, a truth-filled teaching, not that we would preach to you every second of every day, but that we would guide you with your thoughts and your words.

Lysa: But you liked that we created an environment, and I would say we created an environment that had a gentle balance of grace and truth. We always wanted to make sure that there was plenty of truth that was woven into the conversations that we had, but done with a spirit of grace, recognizing we desperately needed grace so we would freely give grace.

Lysa: So, Hope, do you want to just comment about what you meant by create an environment where the kids longed to be?

Hope: Yeah, I think I just have a lot of friends that they think it's crazy that we all love to hang out so much. I think all five of us kids and all of our spouses, we all agree that family's a number one priority and we have family group texts, we call it Fam-Bam. And we have Monday night dinners and we're just always creating a space where we're celebrating each other and we're with each other on the bad days and the good days. I think that relationship has just blossomed over the years. As we've gotten older, I think it's helped a lot too because when we were younger, we used to bicker a lot more.

Hope: But we just love being around each other and so we know that we can expect to have good food and good fellowship and good times. And obviously it's not always good, I mean we do have some bad moments too. But yeah, we just love-

Lysa: We call those growth opportunities. Right?

Hope: But we do love to be around each other and I think that that is really special.

Lysa: Ashley, was there something about Monday night dinners that you really liked? Or maybe even start, like explain what were Monday night dinners?

Ashley: Yeah, I love Monday night dinners and I think some of my friends growing up came from families that had some hard situations going on. One of my favorite parts about Monday night dinners was I was able to bring my friends, who I loved and cared so much about, to our family dinners. And they were able to be there and connect with us and feel loved and get that family environment that they were craving so much. They knew that they could get great community, great food, laugh a little bit, be able to talk to my parents about something that they might not be able to talk to their parents about.

Ashley: To me, everyone wants the best for their friends, and so I just loved that I was able to give them that gift. But then I also love that on the times when it was just family that we could always count on that day. I think that life gets so busy and so we're always like, "Yeah, let's have family dinner," but if it's not, especially with a big family, if it's not on the calendar, we have sports, we have homework, we have friends, we have outings that we're all going to. But I loved that we set a plan and a set date every week that we knew this was Monday night dinner and so we could look forward to it. We could have our input of what food we wanted at dinner and then we also knew that that was the moment we were all going to get to be together.

Ashley: And so, no matter what the week looked like, or the month or whatever, we always knew we could count on that Monday night dinner to all be together. Which I loved.

Lysa: Yeah, there was a lot intentionality around that Monday night. And that just seemed to work because of our schedule and because of me being a speaker and gone on some weekends. But Monday night seemed to be a night where we really could set aside with intentionality that time.

Lysa: But we were also intentional about the conversations that were had around the dinner table. So, Brooke, do you want to talk about one of our favorites? Texting and driving. And you have a personal connection with this one, right?

Brooke: Yeah, so when I first got my license, I definitely struggled with texting and driving especially because I'm the youngest and so I would just be like my generation is a lot more into texting and Snapchatting and all of that kind of stuff.

Lysa: Even though we were really clear.

Brooke: Yeah.

Lysa: We had a driver's contract and in the driver's contract one of the major things was don't text and drive, right?

Brooke: Yep, yep. So mom and I went on a little movie date and this was when I had just gotten a new car and it was really exciting. I saved up my money to get it and everything. On

the way back from the movie date, I was driving behind my mom and I was texting and I crashed into mom's car.

Lysa: And totaled your car.

Brooke: And totaled my car and did definite damage to mom's car. Which now is actually my car, mom's old car. So I guess it's kind of like a full circle thing because, yeah. But no, definitely that was a fun thing to have family night dinners and have those intentional conversations there because we did do the whole texting and driving presentation and you said, "Everybody come ready this Monday night and have a presentation on why we can't text and drive and convince dad and I so that it would really actually convince us and then whoever won got a gift card. Ashley won.

Ashley: Yeah, I would just like to say I won.

Brooke: I definitely lost.

Lysa: Well, but I think that was an example of a principle that we wanted to teach, but going back to one of our main themes in raising up our kids, keep them talking, it was good that they could participate in the teaching of why. The why behind the what. The what was don't text and drive. But when it became apparent that we needed more of a lesson than just the driving contract that you agreed not to text and drive, but we had everybody come to dinner that night and share the why. Why don't we text and drive? And the dangers of it.

Lysa: And, Ashley, the reason why your presentation won that night on Monday night dinner was because you brought some news story clips of how dangerous it was to text and drive and you really put a lot of heart and soul behind it's not about the principle of texting and driving, it's about the people that could be injured in the process.

Lysa: And so that was a major theme for our family is to keep the kids talking. Keep the kids sharing the why behind the what. Keep them coming with great intentionality to the Monday night dinners and bringing their friends and creating an environment of truth and grace that would make the kids all want to be together.

Ashley: Yeah, and like I remember just talking, when you're on the topic of keep kids talking, I remember growing up, so many of my friends would hide stuff from their parents and they would constantly try to go around and keep secrets and all that. But I think one of the things that made us so close was I always knew that I could count on coming to you with hard stuff.

Ashley: I knew that obviously some of my actions would need discipline and I was okay with that, but I was never scared to come to you as if that you were going to blow up on me or "I can't believe you did that," or that you were going to judge me for something I did. I think that you gave us an environment where it was okay not be perfect and it was okay to mess up.

Ashley: But we also knew you don't just dwell in that, you move on and how can we do better next time. And so one of my favorite things is I remember thinking I know I can always go to my mom and tell her anything and she's not going to yell at me, she's not going to be mad at me-

Brooke: Well, sometimes she would yell.

Ashley: Well, I mean, there's days where emotions get the best of us. But, you know what I'm saying, when I was struggling with something or when I would mess up or when something bad would happen or whatever it was, I was never afraid to go to my mom. I was never afraid to go to you because you were so intentional about giving us special one-on-one date time, you were so good about coming up to our room at night time and being like, "Hey, how was your day?" When you would pick us up from school, "No, don't just say good, really, how was your day?" You opened up the doors to where I truly felt like, yes, you're my mom, but you're also my friend and you wanted the best for me.

Ashley: I don't know, I just loved that you always gave me a safe environment where I actually could talk to you and not be scared of you.

Lysa: Thank you, Ash, that's awesome. And thank you, Brooke, for pointing out the obvious that there ... I'm so thankful that Ashley doesn't have memories of me yelling. But there were many nighttime prayers, there were many nighttime prayers when I would go to bed and I would feel like, "All I did today was yell at the kids," and I would just beg God to help me tomorrow.

Lysa: But again, just that notion of bad moments don't make bad mommas. I'm so thankful that what you took away in the collective experience of your childhood was not the moments where I struggled so much, but the moments where we deeply connected.

Lysa: The second principle, besides keep them talking is keep them connected. And with keeping you guys connected, that's something that as you've gotten older, we have had to do with great intentionality. We mentioned Monday night dinners, but we also have a great intentionality about being present in our everyday lives and making sure, Hope, you mentioned the Fam-Bam text thread.

Hope: Fam-Bam, yeah.

Lysa: And we call it Fam-Bam, I'm not even sure why, but that's just what the text thread-

Hope: I think I just named it that one day. I don't remember why.

Lysa: But that's what the text thread is. But every day we kind of have a rhythm in our family of staying in touch, updating, sending a video, sending a picture of something that we're doing. That's been part of the way that we have connected as a family for a very long time.

Lysa: It's so funny because Ashley moved to California last year and so we were all very determined to be very intentional about keeping her connected because that's always been a big priority for us. So much so that what, Ashley?

Ashley: Well, okay, I love you all so much, but there's times when you guys would FaceTime me, especially Hope because she just loves to be in the same room with you. You don't even have to really be talking, she just loves your presence.

Hope: Yeah, I just want the FaceTime on just so I feel like I'm with you.

Ashley: And I work from home. So she would call me and she would just want to FaceTime for like four hours.

Hope: I would sit there working, you would sit there working. It was fine.

Ashley: But then she would come up and say a story or say, "Oh, my gosh, wait, what are you doing? Wait, where did you go, Ashley?" I'm like, "I ran to the bathroom, I'll be right back." And so finally, and especially when Ryser was born they wanted to FaceTime like eight times a day to see Ryser, who is my son, which I absolutely love and I adore and it really does make my day when they FaceTime with me. But I actually had to set boundaries at one point. I was like from this time to time-

Hope: From nine to five.

Ashley: No, okay that was-

Hope: It was nine to five.

Brooke: Nine to five, Monday through Friday. [crosstalk 00:16:56]

Ashley: Okay, well I got back on that. Anyways there was a time where I had to set a boundary 'cause they started calling a little too much. But, I mean, that's a good problem to have. I thank God for FaceTime because even when you live across the country or world, you can still ...

Lysa: That's awesome. So, Brooke, what has meant to you to have a family that places a high priority on staying connected? How has that helped you?

Brooke: Yeah, so I definitely think like, what you said in the beginning, creating an environment that you feel comfortable in is definitely something that's really big. Especially for me because I am a very emotional person. So if I don't feel comfortable in an environment, then I get very overwhelmed and all of that. I definitely think that when we were growing up, you always made sure that we would have intentional time one-on-one with you, but we would also have intentional time like one-on-one with Hope and one-on-one with Ashley and one-on-one with Mark and Jackson.

Brooke: I definitely think that you and dad together made an environment and our family closer by making those times very intentional. And when you were one-on-one, you wouldn't talk on your phone or any of that kind of thing. And I think that that's super important to create that environment for your kids to feel comfortable. Because if your kids are in an environment that can be overwhelming and with so many people in our family, it definitely could get overwhelming for some people. But if you create an environment where you have that intentionality with each and every individual, then you don't get overwhelmed and you feel comfortable too. Be 100% yourself.

Hope: Okay, my favorite thing growing up was that we always made a really big deal about even the little things and we always celebrated each other. Like Ashley just said, your pole vaulting.

Ashley: Yeah, when I hit the school record for pole vaulting.

Hope: Yeah, we threw you a party.

Ashley: And I felt so loved. Even though you all couldn't all come to my track meet, when I got home from my track meet, you all made posters and you had a cake and you all were all cheering me on. And for me, I'll remember that moment the rest of my life of my siblings cheering me on and loving me.

Hope: Yeah, and like our nieces and nephew now, their birthdays we make a big deal or even the little things like if Celina goes to the bathroom, I know that that's like a tiny thing to the other people, but we just celebrate it. And I think it just is creating that environment where we are celebrating each other and loving on each other and it's just a very good and positive environment. And that's always my favorite thing, our traditions for all the holidays and then like we talked about Monday night dinners. Just creating an atmosphere where we're just constantly uplifting each other and celebrating each other.

Ashley: Yeah, and real quick, I know we're on a tight time frame, but real quick I wanted to talk about when we were younger we had a treasure box. And so I remember we loved our daddy/daughter date nights. I remember sometimes we would miss a week and so then we would both go on the same date and it just hurt our feelings because we were like, "No, we want our one-on-one time."

Ashley: And so dad had the awesome idea where each month we would sit down and write our bucket list of what we would love to do on a daddy/daughter date night and we would put it in a treasure box. And then when it was time for our date night we each had a certain night of the week, we would go and pick a little square or paper from the treasure box and we would get to go on that date.

Ashley: I just remember like literally the highlight of our week. We just were thriving, we were so happy we got that one-on-one time. It was our dream date night and so I just, for parents who have younger kids, that was something that I absolutely loved and still remember.

Hope: And our mint parties. And we'll always remember our mint parties.

Brooke: Mom is allergic to mint. So it gives her headaches. Whenever mom's in town, we can't have mint. Every time that mom would go out of town to speak we would literally buy-

Ashley: Dad would go to the gas station and buy mint.

Hope: Yeah, we'd buy mint gum, Mentos.

Brooke: Yeah, ice cream, mint cookies. Everything.

Hope: But just little moments like that where they really do, even if it seems silly or not that important in the moment, they really do make a huge difference.

Lysa: Yeah, that's awesome. All right, keep them talking, keep them connected, and the last principle, keep them reminded about God. And in this one, I wanted to talk about the Christmas where we, and this was a Christmas tradition that we had for so many years, every Christmas morning before we opened up our gifts, we would give a gift from our heart to Jesus.

Lysa: And I remember one year dad went first and he said, "The gift that I'm going to give this year is that every day for the next 365 days, I'm going to give somebody a little bit of my time, a little bit of my money, or a little bit of my encouragement so that by next Christmas I'll know that 365 people have been encouraged in the name of the Jesus." He gave that gift to Jesus from his heart.

Lysa: I remember that year, I was originally going to give no more yelling at the kids, which is appropriate based on our discussion today. I think Brooke for years had given-

Brooke: For like 15 years.

Ashley: Number 15.

Brooke: I gave up no whining.

Hope: No whining.

Lysa: No whining. But once we heard dad's gift, we all decided that we couldn't possibly give-

Hope: Top it.

Ashley: We are also a very competitive family.

Lysa: -our gifts. Right? Yes. And so I said, "Wow! Me, too! I'm giving that to Jesus this year too." And then everybody went around-

Ashley: What a coincidence.

Lysa: -and everybody gave that gift. But what it did that year, that was in December, and every day we would then talk about who did we give a little bit of our time, a little bit of our money, a little bit of our encouragement to that day. It started our family really getting intentional about looking to bless people in Jesus' name every day. And expecting to experience God.

Lysa: And so this last point, keep them reminded about God, I wanted you guys to comment about the incredible thing that happened in August of that year. We went to a concert because Ashley's Brownie troop was studying the country of Liberia. So we just expected it to be a simple concert. But that night God spoke to my heart and then I think also spoke to each of your hearts that we were supposed to be more involved than just coming to listen to this orphan choir.

Lysa: And while I was sitting in that audience that night, God clearly spoke to me and said, "Two of those boys are yours." And it was something where we all had been in such a pattern of expecting to experience God that when this big opportunity came, I don't think it caught us as off-guard as it would have if we wouldn't have had the experience of giving that gift from our heart to Jesus and every day intentionally looking for other people who needed our help. Now, obviously this was on a much bigger scale.

Lysa: But I remember getting in the car that night and each of you guys just begged me to continue to pursue staying connected with Mark and Jackson, who we met that night at the concern.

Brooke: I remember the morning after and many mornings after, me, Hope, and Ashley would all sit in the closet or sit in your bathroom while you guys were getting ready and just beg you to bring the boys home because we truly felt that stir in our heart from the Lord. And obviously since dad didn't meet them at first, he was a little hesitant. He was like, "Guys, this is a really serious thing. We are going to be bringing home two boys into our house for the rest of our lives and that's a big decision. We need to really pray and think about it."

Brooke: But I just remember instantly from that night, just knowing that we were all a family with them.

Lysa: And I think part of the beauty of what God took our family through is that we were already pursuing God collectively together. Now, Hope, speak about the experience we've, this was so many years ago, you were nine years old when we adopted the boys. And now you're almost 25, so what has it meant to you to have your brothers that we adopted?

Hope: Well, I can't imagine life without my brothers. I feel like I don't remember life before them, to be honest. And since then I've had such a passion for missions trips. I went on several missions trips in high school and college and even a couple of years ago I went to India. Both Michael and I, which is my husband, we both really want to adopt. My two nieces, Lena and Susan, they are from my brother Mark and I feel like they are practically my daughters. I get questions all the time about it.

Hope: But, yeah, I can't remember life before them and I'm so thankful that we have them as part of our family. All of that wouldn't have happened if we didn't set aside that time on Christmas morning, giving a gift to Jesus and start that year with the intentionality of giving a little bit of our time, a little bit of our money, and a little bit of our resources.

Lysa: Yeah, and so I think for us, I tried to do the traditional sit down and do family devotions, and it just never worked out. But our reminders of God were much more daily, much more woven into the DNA of just loving God and loving people.

Lysa: So I think that's a good place to end our discussion today on train up a child in the way he should go, and when he is old he will not turn from it. We're not talking about doing it all perfectly, but we are talking about doing it with great intentionality. And for us that meant keep them talking, keep them connected, and keep them reminded about God.

Lysa: And last, I'll just say this, for me as a mom, I have always tried to remind myself, don't take too much credit for their good, don't take too much credit for their not so good. And don't try to raise a good child, raise a God-following adult.

Meredith: Wow, that was awesome. I'm not going to lie, hearing Lysa mention that bad moments don't make bad mommas helps me give a little grace to myself because I know I'm not the perfect mom for my little boy or my little girl.

Meredith: I also want to touch on something that I know our listeners might also be thinking about right now. Maybe you didn't have the best upbringing or you're thinking, "If my mom only did this or only did that, or didn't do this or didn't do that." You know, we don't want to brush over hard stuff or leave you out. I come from a very broken family and I'm learning this momming thing, I guess that's what you call it? I'm momming from a pretty messy place. So, lean into Scripture. I think that's probably one of the most important things I've learned.

Meredith: And reach out to moms who have gone before you. I've talked to Lysa, I mean her kids are much older than mine and I've talked to Lysa a lot about, "Oh my word, how did you handle this?" Or, "I'm really struggling with this," and she's helped me tremendously. But I also have mom friends that are right there in the trenches with me, that are helping me process everyday life through the lens of momming. And just give yourself some grace. The same grace that God gives you, and know that He really does love those sweet babies far more than you do and He really will write their stories.

Kaley: Yeah, that's so good, Mer. Well, maybe you're like me and you're listening to this and you're not a mom yet. And maybe somebody is coming into your mind who you could just put your arm around and speak life into.

Meredith: So good.

Kaley: I know that Lysa mentioned Monday night dinners, and so for me, just thinking along that vein right there, I think my middle school girls group that I lead at church, I think about them. A lot of those girls come from really strong, amazing families who I love.

But sometimes whenever you're like 13, there can be this disconnect between you and your middle-aged parent. And so there's this gap there. And so I insert my totally uncool 27-year-old self-

Meredith: Sure you're cool.

Kaley: -who still uses terms like-

Meredith: You're kind of cool.

Kaley: I'm kind of cool.

Meredith: I mean, when you're 27, you're still in that range.

Kaley: Still kind of cool, but in a previous episode, you and I did use the term YOLO, which I have been informed by 13-year-old girls-

Meredith: Not cool?

Kaley: That is not cool anymore.

Meredith: Oh, man.

Kaley: I don't think I'm cool. But I just insert myself right into their conversations because I know I'm a generation older than them. I have something that I can say that can just be a sounding board for them and help give them practical advice in whatever they might be facing at school.

Kaley: And so, I think doing what Lysa did for Monday night dinners, like I said earlier. And just having those intentional conversations is a model that we can really all carry out in some way.

Meredith: That's so good. That's right, Kaley. There were so many great points in that teaching that I know in whatever season of life our listeners are in, it'll help in some way.

Meredith: Let's give some practical resources for those of you who want to take a step a little bit deeper.

Kaley: Yeah, totally. So first things first, sign up for our free *Encouragement For Today* devotions. They are filled with wisdom from, in my opinion, some of the best writers and moms out there. So, for moms, this is totally a great resource that will help you feel a little bit more normal in raising up those kiddos.

Meredith: Yeah, and another really great resource is the book, *Am I Messing Up My Kids?*, by Lysa TerKeurst. The title alone-

Kaley: I know, it's hilarious.

Meredith: -makes me feel okay. It makes me feel like I'm doing all right. Lysa wrote this book in the thick of raising her five kids and it's full of practical ideas, encouragement, and inspiration for moms who want to have a little peace of mind while raising their sweet little kiddos. We'll link both of these resources in the show notes.

Meredith: Thanks so much for listening today. We pray this conversation spoke to you in whatever capacity you needed it most.

Meredith: We'll see you next time.