

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith Brock: Hi, friends. We're back. Thanks for joining us on 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 co-host, Kaley Olson.
- Kaley Olson: Hey, Meredith. Hey, friends, if you're subscribed to the podcast, then you know we are back for the third installment of our *Therapy and Theology: How Do I Get Through This?* series, which has been so helpful and healing for so many of you. You know, we've heard from so many of you going through hard seasons and although this topic isn't always easy to discuss or hear, we do pray that it's helpful to you in whatever season you're facing today.
- Meredith Brock: Lysa TerKeurst has been hosting this series in an effort to answer some of the most common questions she's received through social media and email about how she walked through her own personal season of suffering. So, this series is her way of reaching out to our audience at large and bringing answers straight to your ears.
- Meredith Brock: Here at Proverbs 31, we're all about equipping you to know the Truth of God's Word and live that Truth out, because it truly changes everything. It's our prayer that this podcast helps you do just that.
- Kaley Olson: Absolutely. And before we transition into the conversation you're about to hear, we do want to preface with a little warning. This content touches on some sensitive subjects and may not be suitable for young children. We know many of you listen in the car and if you've got youngsters in the backseat, this might not be a good idea to listen to with them listening. So just pause it and do that at a later time.
- Kaley Olson: Additionally, this content could also serve as a trigger due to circumstances in your past. We ask that you use your own discretion in listening, but more importantly, we pray that this content helps you process whatever you're facing.
- Kaley Olson: Here's Lysa.

Lysa TerKeurst: During our last episode, we talked about the difference between reconciliation and redemption. I want to carry that over into this conversation today. Of course, I'm joined here again by Jim Cress, my personal counselor, but world-renown therapist. Can I say that?

Jim Cress: Well, you just did. I'll take it.

Lysa TerKeurst: Perfect. All right, awesome.

Jim Cress: Don't know what it means.

Lysa TerKeurst: Also, my dear friend and almost a doctorate in theology, a doctor of theology? Is that right?

Joel Muddamalle: Doctor of Theology, Ph.D.

Lysa TerKeurst: Ph.D.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah.

Lysa TerKeurst: Really smart dude when it comes to the Bible and many other things, Joel Muddamalle. Welcome, guys.

Joel Muddamalle: Awesome.

Jim Cress: Thank you.

Lysa TerKeurst: All right, so for the purpose of continuing our conversation from the last episode, but narrowing the focus a little bit, I want to talk about in this episode — what about redemption when reconciliation is not possible? Either because abandonment has happened in the relationship or divorce has happened in the relationship or the spouse has passed away or the person who you desire reconciliation with, they're not willing or maybe they're gone, for whatever reason.

Lysa TerKeurst: What do you do to pursue redemption and moving on in that specific scenario? And I will say that, I said this in the last episode, when I wrote my book, *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*, I wrote it from the vantage point of needing to seek redemption with God, not knowing at all if reconciliation was going to be really possible.

Lysa TerKeurst: Just to share a little bit more of our story, of what my experience has been, three years ago, almost three years right now, I discovered that my husband, best friend, life partner for over 20 years, was knee-deep in an affair. It shocked me and stunned me and rattled me to the very core. I didn't even know what to process, how to process this. I certainly didn't know how to move on. I kept

saying to people, I feel like my, emotionally, I feel like my right arm has been chopped off.

Lysa TerKeurst: And if that happened, like if I was in a severe car accident today and my right arm was taken off, people would know what to do. They would see the blood, they would call 911, an ambulance would come, they would take me to the hospital, the doctors are trained in physical trauma and they would have an immediate way to respond to me and they would tend to me with great care and great concern.

Lysa TerKeurst: However, that's for physical trauma. When you've experienced emotional trauma, which I certainly experienced upon discovering that things were not right in my marriage, far from it. I felt like emotionally my arm had been chopped off, I was bleeding out and there was no emotional emergency trauma center to go to. And I did not know what to do. I know sometimes when I tell the story, especially in a podcast interview or a radio interview, I'm not able to get into the depth of emotions that I was experiencing. The depth of pain and sorrow and suffering that I walked through.

Lysa TerKeurst: That's why, for me, it was really important to write *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* because I wanted someone else to know they're not alone. That may be the first step in helping someone not bleed out emotionally when they've experienced a trauma. That book, I wrote it in the middle of walking through this. It's not until the very end of the book that you find out that it's even possible. I wrote an epilogue right before the book went to print. And basically the epilogue was, I've decided to take the hand that's been offered to me. It's as surprising to me as anyone else. And I say, "Okay, Art, let's try."

Lysa TerKeurst: I didn't think the story was going to end that way. And Jim, I know you have to be careful because you were my therapist walking through this me. You counseled me at every twist and turn of the story and there were many twists and turns. I'm not sure, if you were brutally honest, that you would say you thought that reconciliation was going to be possible for us. You can comment if you want to, you don't have to. I don't know what all the laws are around what you can say and what not to say. But, you know for me, I'm going to push the envelope for the sake of our listeners.

Jim Cress: You can push the envelope. I said this and we did this on the book launch, the video that aired there, it's not a cop-out, call it optimistic or something, but I always believe there is a possibility that reconciliation could happen. What I saw with where you were and where you both were was it was going to take a lot of time and work. As we've talked about trust is rebuilt over time, plus provable behavior, plus experience. I always have a vision it could happen.

Jim Cress: Sometimes just as a therapist period, in a darker moment where it's like, boy this feels, not maybe like hell, but near hell, whatever that is like. This is dark in this moment, yeah, I can sit there and say, "I don't know, is there going to be much hope?"

Lysa TerKeurst: So take off your therapist hat and just comment to me as a friend observing the situation. How bad was it?

Jim Cress: It was bad. And I don't think, even just what you've made comments in this podcast here, yeah, I think it was bad. I don't know how to say it differently. Do I say — not that comparison's the point — it was the worst story I'd ever heard? No. I saw the, quite frankly, the trauma in you and you've eluded to it, but physically and just all that went on. It was watching a very bad movie, a very scary movie.

Jim Cress: I think it was really, really bad and every person that's ever been in an affair, every person, has to weigh are they really, really, really willing to get out of that? That's part one. That's just part one, the other part is, just 'cause they get out of an affair, do they really want to go back and are willing to do what it takes to reconcile. Because I have never seen, I have never seen where if a couple is living in a true one-fleshness, now it has to be a true in the moment, I've never seen one time an affair happen. Never heard of one happen.

Jim Cress: People think, if you let me autopsy it, a word I use, or post mortem it, I'll see that one partner began to move away a little bit. So if they moved away to get into the affair, I don't think they come back like that. They say, "I'm going to end the affair. Now I think I'm open to reconciling." Where there will be much work to do because where they entered the affair there was some breach. There was some separation which they felt experientially, "I don't know that I want to put everything in on this marriage. I have the right to, or I'm unhappy here."

Jim Cress: So they come back and want to reconcile, they've got to look at, "Can I reconcile? Do I really also want to come back?" So, I had hope. It was bad and proud of, in my opinion, for you both that you did the work.

Lysa TerKeurst: But there were seasons where it appeared as if reconciliation was not going to be possible because, I mean, we would get to a certain point and then things would fall apart again. And the details around that falling apart aren't really that important except that I will say the falling apart was so bad that after round and round and round and round and round and round and round of that, I got to the point where I said to Art, "I love you and I can forgive you, but I will not share you."

Lysa TerKeurst: At that point, two profound conversations happened. Number one, you and I had to do some deep work on me. It was no longer time to work on the marriage, it was time to work on me. And number two, I remember Joel, and I think you said it was one of our hardest study sessions ever, but I just said, "Joel, what do I do biblically at this point?" Having both of you in my sphere of influence was a tremendous gift, not everyone has that. For those of you, and there seems to be thousands of you that have reached out to me through social media, through sending emails, even I don't often get to look at the DMs, the direct messages on Instagram. Every now and then I'll pop over, but I'm

overwhelmed at the reality, this conversation has not yet been had in a way that's accessible to people that are desperate.

Lysa TerKeurst: I'm very determined to go there today in this episode, when it is not possible to reconcile. First, can I just say, for those of you who are not in that situation, I think it's very valuable that you listen to this episode today because there will be people in your sphere of influence that are walking through this and this episode will help you. It will help you know how to be a good friend or maybe a good pastor or good leader in this situation. And for those of you who are knee-deep in this situation, can I just say, I am so sorry. I know the depth of your pain. And we don't ever want to compare pain, you know, how bad was my situation? How bad was your situation? We need to just sort of sidestep all of that. If a relationship has caused you significant pain, it needs to be dealt with, and so let's go there today.

Lysa TerKeurst: Joel, I want to talk to you first about just the reality that some relationships will not reconcile. I don't know that I knew biblically what to do in my circumstance. At that point, it felt as if divorce was there. And you say divorce and all of a sudden it seems like Christian people scatter. They don't know what to do with it. It feels almost like, okay, here's how we'll do it then. On Tuesday night we'll have a divorce recovery group, let's put them in this classroom over here. And I get that, I'm not faulting anybody. I'm saying maybe divorce recovery groups are awesome.

Lysa TerKeurst: It's just, let's have an honest conversation today. Like, what does the Bible really say? And what do we do in those situations where reconciliation is not possible? And maybe it's because the other person has demanded a divorce, the other person has abandoned the relationship, or the other person has just simply said, "I found someone else." Whatever the situation is, reconciliation isn't possible, so now what?

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, gosh, a lot of different emotions go through. I think about when we had that conversation and when you said that was the hard, that was literally probably one of the hardest ministry assignments that I've ever had to do. I'm gathering a little bit of my thoughts because it was difficult to even be in a position where I had to search the Scriptures to really unpack it. Because it was about two people I really cared about.

Joel Muddamalle: I think the first thing that's important is for us to see, recap from the last episode, is that forgiveness is a biblical mandate. I just want to go to that. So regardless of if reconciliation is possible, which Scripture calls us to, is forgiveness. And if we can forgive the other person, we are left out of the bondage that we can put ourselves into. And I just think that's super important.

Joel Muddamalle: Secondly, redemption and reconciliation. Reconciliation is a fruit of the redemption. Right? In the New Testament, redemption has this imagery of somebody being bought or purchased. A slave often being bought or purchased. We just have to recognize those terms and how that those things are separated.

So if that purchase, if that exchange hasn't been bought, hasn't been accepted, and the two people come back together, well reconciliation is not possible.

Joel Muddamalle: So, it's interesting that often in the New Testament when we're talking about these things, it's talking about the relationship, the vertical relationship, Jimmy talked about it, that we have with God. Now we're in this position where we find ourselves unable to reconcile with another person, but we've forgiven them. And what does the Bible have to say about it?

Joel Muddamalle: First, I think it's my responsibility to point out that the Scriptures value marriage. The reality is that God's chosen imagery for the relationship between Jesus and the church is marriage. There's a reason for that. It's also important for us to realize that in the Old Testament, and even in the New Testament, there have been scenarios and situations when reconciliation was not possible, a divorce certificate would have been given.

Joel Muddamalle: I'm not punting on this, but I do think it's important to return to the Scriptures and to be a part of a local church, to seek counsel from some pastoral support because it's never anything lightly. Like Lysa, your situation and circumstance was years of work. You processed through it, you had Jim, you had pastors in your life, Art had pastors in his life. There was shepherding and counseling that was taking place for you. And you found yourself in that position where you were in a place of making a decision because you put in some very difficult work. Right? And God did something amazing in your life.

Joel Muddamalle: I guess in a round-about, what I'm saying is that the Bible does allow for divorce in some very difficult situations. Primarily in marital unfaithfulness. But, I feel it's my responsibility to say fight for your marriage. Now here's some just common sense stuff, and Jim, I want you to kind of maybe speak into this, I am not saying that, like of the best things, and Lysa maybe you can talk about, is separation. If you're in a position where you're being hurt emotionally, physically, any of those types of things, separate yourself from that situation and allow the time and the support that is needed to step in.

Joel Muddamalle: And so separation absolutely is a great first step in terms of figuring out all of these different dynamics.

Lysa TerKeurst: Well, and I'll say regarding that, there are circumstances, I've had two in depth conversations just in the past couple weeks. One with a man who is fighting for his marriage and his wife has been the one to step outside of the marriage. And it is hard and heartbreaking to see him fighting for something, not only because he wants his family together, but also because he believes in the reality of those vows that he took with God and the covenant with God and the commitment to his wife. And it's heartbreaking, it is heartbreaking to watch someone fight so hard for their marriage and yet to still see things unraveling on the other side.

Lysa TerKeurst: Same thing, I've had a conversation with a gal that again fought so hard for her marriage and just was never given the choice because her husband was not willing to even consider counseling or consider ... So when we say working on the marriage, we very much acknowledge that it's two; you can always work on yourself, but working on the marriage is complicated when the other person is not also willing to work.

Lysa TerKeurst: So I think it's important to acknowledge that and when you mentioned separation, I think that's a good point. Certainly, we are not advocating at all to stay in an abusive situation. At all. I did not have any kind of physically abusive situation going on in my marriage. There were some other dynamics though that created the need and the necessity for separation. And Jim, you helped us walk through this and determine that separation in our circumstance was what needed to happen.

Lysa TerKeurst: So, talk to someone, since we brought this to the table, about the separation. When do you feel like that that is an apparent possible solution?

Jim Cress: Yeah, and I like that as a next step. I try to, if couples come or an individual comes and the D word comes up, or on divorce, is to take it and overtly set it aside. No need to go to that that fast. There is a piece that with the separation, what we typically call a therapeutic separation, which is to provide safety. And if a person is there and there is verbal, emotional abuse going on, the person continues to act out, just the idea of an STD or an STI, sexually transmitted infection, all these things.

Jim Cress: I got to stop. Can I pick up with that? The throat, I was trying to let it pass. I know where to start, which is right where Lysa pitched me that. Can I do that pick up? All right.

Jim Cress: Lysa, one of the things that I steer away from if someone comes into my office, either the couple or the individual, and they bring up the D word, divorce, is to just set it aside, to not go there right away. The separation piece, I primarily look at safety. Is the person, if there's infidelity, are they still acting out? The idea of, some people don't even think about, an STD or an STI, where there could be some sexually transmitted infection or disease going on and the spouse may say, "Still be sexual with me," and that's just a time bomb potentially.

Jim Cress: The issue of verbal and/or emotional abuse, that that's going on, which has its own impact on a person. The therapeutic, as we call it, back to the word therapy, healing, a therapeutic separation ought to be under guidance. If that's under a pastor, an older couple, or a therapist, to say, "We're going to be not just willy-nilly, let's separate. Here's the time and the space," is to get safety. The idea would be, in a marriage, is a husband and a wife would appropriately go to their two corners, do their individual work, come together and do some couples work, to find out for if the wife is there and she's been under the impact of infidelity for her husband, explore the impact. What it's done to you? Trust but verify. How do you verify if a guy is still acting out or not?

Jim Cress: So the therapeutic separation is to get someone safe over here because also, in my story that I haven't hidden, it's out there in books and radio shows and a lot of other places, I lived in infidelity with my wife for years in pornography. That is infidelity. If there is something not required of me, like a spouse, if she does not eventually have boundaries with me, the boundaries are actually to keep her safe, it can enable me to continue on. I actually need consequences to say, this is actually agape love, seeking my highest good to say, "I'm going to separate over here, under some pastoral help or therapy help. I'm going to be over here." Because if you let me just live around and go on as if there is no problem, it won't ever help me maybe come to my bottom line to go, "I could lose something here."

Jim Cress: So I think it's about safety. And then there, time plus experience, to look, I want to say this, I don't know how it's going to sound, but this is what I believe and I think some research backs it up. I want this to be descriptive, not prescriptive, what I'm about to say. It's not a prescription. If in a case if a husband is being unfaithful, what I've seen is if a wife separates, has support, does her own work, we believe typically healthy people to a degree are only going to bond with healthy, and unhealthy are only going to bond with unhealthy.

Jim Cress: If she gets, not perfect, but healthier and healthier and healthier, he will either join her, it's almost like what fellowship hath light with darkness. I know I'm twisting a Scripture there, probably. He'll either join her and start getting healthier himself or the gap will widen. And what I've seen experientially descriptive, not prescriptive, is that that guy will go further into his sin. He will lie. He will act out. Or he'll realize, "I'm just not going to stay." He'll go full into sin or he'll file for a divorce himself.

Jim Cress: It is very practical if she says, "I'm going to work on me getting healthy." Nature hates a vacuum. So I think this middle ground of nothing happening is not going to last very long. I've watched it time after time. I don't know if that speaks to it directly, but that's what I see about separation. Letting that play out before the divorce word even comes up.

Lysa TerKeurst: And I would say there's a lot of good that can also come in a separation when the wife is doing work on her side of the street, the husband is doing work on his side of the street, and appropriately when it's time that the two paths converge again.

Jim Cress: And a team, whether it was a pastor you all worked with, Michael Cuzik, my dear friend who you guys did work with.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yes.

Jim Cress: Me, others, and you have a team that comes and says, "We're going to be a personal board of directors of your marriage. We're going to trust but verify." That team approach to come in, like a team of biblical elders, to borrow a term.

We're going to sit there and say, "Here are the performables, here is what we see. Here is what we see going on." Even discernment from God about what's going on, to have the team say, "Here's where we think you are to reconcile or not." That team approach, more than just one counselor, is huge.

Lysa TerKeurst: But let's go there now. Okay, it does not work. And now the relationship is no more and reconciliation is not possible. Like I said, it could be because of the loss of a spouse, it could be because of divorce. But whatever the case may be, now how do you move forward in redemption when reconciliation is not possible? We've said it, but how do you do it?

Jim Cress: Well, can I throw one out that's going to be real practical? And this is just a freebie add on. I really feel for people, even against good wise counsel, who will bop right into a new relationship. It looks like this relationship's done. If you only knew the Christians, and I'm not being judgmental here, who sit in my office and there's no divorce, forget the legality and biblical part for a moment, set that aside for a moment. They're not even really divorced yet and the person says, "But I'm already moved on to a new relationship." It's quite rampant, is what I see.

Jim Cress: So that's just an insert to say, don't move on, date yourself, be with yourself in a relationship. And I think if you give it time, the other part about time is, you know, even like a year is to go there's a sense that maybe God is going to move, but something could happen to your spouse in that one year.

Jim Cress: Now you come to the part and say, "But they've moved on." A classic one would be if the person's moved on with another relationship and they say, "I'm going to get a divorce," then I think face that reality that it's over. And I don't know how to say that more clearly, the divorce rate still seems to be 40 to 50% in the church, somewhere in that window. But to say, "My spouse has moved on with someone else." Even if they're not remarried but they're in an affair, I think to stay here and say, again, I think, too, and maybe it was in your case early on, the issue was, what does divorce mean?

Jim Cress: And I'd like to, can I punt to you for a minute?

Joel Muddamalle: Mm-hmm (affirmative).

Jim Cress: So I understand that there was part of Judaism that if a man was unfaithful, that at one level could actually equal the divorce. Divorce just means severing. So I think sometimes if a guy is perpetually acting out, isn't there almost a practical divorce already going on?

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, I mean, he's already divorced himself. The idea is one flesh. This has gone all the way back to Deuteronomy and to Exodus, and to Genesis when husband and wife become one, they become one flesh. And you had a brilliant example

of where you're talking about when unfaithfulness takes place, it's the backing away of the one flesh.

Joel Muddamalle: I don't want to get too deep into this, but in Jeremiah there's this phrase that's called in Hebrew *shuwb*. It's a double play on words; it could mean to turn to or to return. And so that word is often used about the Israelites or people of God of when they are being forced into idolatry or walking toward idolatry, they're actually turning away from God and Jeremiah is calling them to return to God.

Joel Muddamalle: The same thing is happening in the sense of a marriage context, I think, is when you start to do this thing, in pornography or adultery or these other sexual sins take place, you're pulling away from the one-fleshness that God had intended for you to do. And what God's calling us to, to the offender, is to return back to your marriage. To the faithfulness, to the covenant that was established between the two.

Joel Muddamalle: When that does not take place in the Old Testament, Moses gives a decree basically that says, "Hey, you can actually give a marriage certificate in this instance."

Lysa TerKeurst: A divorce certificate.

Joel Muddamalle: A divorce, yes, a divorce certificate in this instance. This gets into a lot, if there is one theologically debated kind of just challenging topic, it's this. It's kind of outside of even our scope to even be able to dig in, I mean, we went through this for a long, long time. Maybe I'll give three positions, and again I want to request that you kind of do some homework. Go to the Scriptures, go to trusted pastors to navigate through where the interpretation lies.

Joel Muddamalle: The position is, one, divorce is not possible. I don't think we see that in Scripture because of all the things we just talked about. The second position is that a divorce is possible, but remarriage after the divorce is not possible. The third one is divorce is possible and remarriage is possible.

Joel Muddamalle: So those are just very practical, kind of application points that you'll probably need to just go back to the Scriptures and to your trusted counselors to navigate through that. All that points to, and again I just want to take us back to, this is not a thing to take lightly. If you think about the amount of scholarly theological pastoral counseling work that's been put into this, it's because this was never God's intention in the first place. And so, because of that we should do everything that we can as is permissible and as is safe to try to restore or to reconcile if possible.

Joel Muddamalle: But if that other person isn't able to do it, you should not be held in bondage to that person. Separation is a great option and then also trying to navigate through that.

Lysa TerKeurst: So, let's talk about redemption though, not redemption as in a new relationship. Because like we've said, do it too quickly — it can be disastrous. There are some theological camps that don't even entertain that idea, some that do. But let's set all of that aside. Let's talk about redemption with God. Moving on when you have faced the end of your marriage and it is devastating. It is just devastating. The emotions are complicated, the trauma is deep. It's really like a death of the expectation of-

Jim Cress: It is. I call divorce or the long separation that cannot be healed, I call it the death of a marriage. And in psychology there's a thing that's been used for years, the Holmes and Rahe test. Top two things, death of a spouse only seconded by what? Divorce of a spouse. The top two stressors, it's a classic stress test that has been used.

Lysa TerKeurst: And in both of those circumstances, there is a significant loss.

Jim Cress: Absolutely.

Lysa TerKeurst: And the thing is though, with the death of a spouse, if you're in a loving relationship and you lose your spouse, at least you are comforted by, if there is comfort and trust me, that is devastating. But at least there is the comfort of knowing the other person didn't want to walk away.

Jim Cress: There's closure.

Lysa TerKeurst: There's closure. The closure is more obvious, I think. In the divorce, what can be so complicated is the rejection factor that's added on to the loss that not only did the other person willingly walk away, but they may have been happy to do so.

Jim Cress: That's when it gets really hard. They were actually happy. It wasn't like, oops. They were like, "I'm outta here." That's hard.

Lysa TerKeurst: And so both lead to a deep grief. So, Jim, talk to us from a therapeutic standpoint. I know we can quickly check in with the grief cycle and see all the phases and all of that. And to me, sometimes I want grief to be as tidy as a checklist and that is not it.

Jim Cress: Me too.

Lysa TerKeurst: But what would you say is the number one first thing for someone facing this? What do I do?

Jim Cress: I'm going to go to Elizabeth Kubler Ross' stages of grief and not to just parrot them out. Shock and denial up first. And I would say give yourself permission. At a later stage, like we now think this marriage is not going to be reconciled. Maybe the divorce hasn't happened. To allow yourself the freedom, yeah it

sounds weird, doesn't it, to say freedom. To say I'm in shock right now. I'm in denial. This is like somebody's t-boned me in an intersection yet again. So allow myself.

Jim Cress: And then to look at too, I'm going to use the words again, allow myself to go through a stage of anger turned outward. I want to blast my spouse, God, whatever. Wait, I then go to anger turned inward. Which is often what we call depression; I want to shame myself. I want to look, you idiot, you spent all these years. All the time you've invested, time's the one commodity we never get back. Okay?

Jim Cress: And then you keep working through this. There's this idea then of facing the rawness of the true grief. The debt, as we've called it. And then there's acceptance of just I accept. And I think it absolutely, the grief research shows it, takes time. To give myself permission, get a guided friend, counselor, read a book. To go, "Where am I in the stages of grief?" Because the end of a marriage is the death of a marriage and all that goes with that. And to allow myself the time. That's why I said again, to bop right into a new relationship, you're going to be paying for that later.

Jim Cress: Give yourself the permission and time. Have someone walk with you to grieve.

Lysa TerKeurst: And are there more stages to grief? Or is that pretty much it?

Jim Cress: They're usually the five. And people can Google this, five to some people do seven stages of grief. It used to be taught that maybe in nine months you're around, and think no, for the rest of your life that there's a sense that this can circle back in an anniversary. You did it earlier in the podcast. It was right about this week. And people will have what we call the "versaries." You know what an anniversary is, there are these moments, the body keeps the score. Without knowing it, the body will go, "Why have I been feeling ick in my office? Why I have been feeling this?" We try to find it out and say, "Oh yeah, and by the way, I just realized today it was two years ago that this D-day happened." I went, "Yeah, your body remembers it."

Jim Cress: So, that piece, the stage is mainly the five stages of grief were pretty much covered. But you may go through those again and again. And you may not. I can't predict it.

Lysa TerKeurst: Is there this sense, though, if we're cycling around in this grief and then all of a sudden we're back at shock and denial, are we healing? Are we not healing? Are we moving forward or are we not moving forward?

Jim Cress: Well, my thought goes to both/and. If someone comes in my office I would say, let's look at for a moment, we've certainly, as therapists, look at a lot of the painful stuff, let's look at how are you different? I have a scar in my body where

I went through a pane of glass. Is it healed? Yes. Can it still be tender at times? Yes. Both/and.

Jim Cress: So, are we healing? I'll say, well how do you think? Let's look at some, what are some things that are different? "You know what, Jim? Normally a show would come on TV on adultery or a friend would be in adultery and it would trigger me, it would knock me into next week. What's the difference? It knocked me only into yesterday." I said, "Ah, sounds like a level of healing." That's that assessment to go, okay.

Jim Cress: If you want to be healed, H-E-A-L-E-D, you've got to go to heaven, healing.

Joel Muddamalle: And Jim, would you say celebrate that victory?

Jim Cress: I do celebrate it. And some people just need an Ebenezer or they need a remembrance to say, "You've just told me it would knock you this far back and now it's only knocked you this, hey, look at the progress." We call it progress, not perfection. We'll get lost in our trauma story, "I haven't moved any at all." It's like, no, we see the evidence that you're healing. There's more to go.

Lysa TerKeurst: Here's just one practical thing I'll say and then we need to wrap up this episode today. But, every time I experience a trigger, it carries me back to the depth of that pain.

Jim Cress: Of course.

Lysa TerKeurst: And it is, like you said, I remembered right about this time is when things fell apart three years ago. So there are triggers that happen and I used to see the triggers as a setback. I would just get so frustrated and I would say, "I don't think I'm moving forward, the pain is still deep. I still cry, I still ask why. It's messy." And all of that.

Lysa TerKeurst: But now, I don't see those triggers as setbacks. I see them as God's unfolding grace. It's time to deal with another layer. It's time to deal with another layer. It's time to deal with another layer. And each time something pops in my brain, sometimes I think I'm too eager to attribute that to the enemy attacking me. But, what if, whether it's the enemy attacking me or not, what if placed in the hands of God and trusting the redemption with God.

Lysa TerKeurst: And Joel, I'd love for you, before we end today, to give a pure definition of redemption. So hang on to that. But what if it's part of the process of redemption with God is memories unfolding slow enough for us to address the layers. And it's not taking us back, it's not setbacks, it's actually set ups for moving forward. And it's almost like stairs, let's take another step, and another step, and another step, and another step.

Lysa TerKeurst: So the triggers don't just have to be, "Take the thought captive! Remove it! It's from the enemy!" What if it could be a gentle prodding of God to say, "Here's another, what could feel like a setback, but it's actually a set up. Address this with me, move forward with me. Press into me, give this to me, walk through this with me and I will help you heal, step by step by step."

Jim Cress: Look where you, by your own analogy and your truth, where were you three years ago? You've already said that, and just look where we're sitting right now.

Lysa TerKeurst: Yeah, I was in the fetal-

Jim Cress: Three years later, you talk about active redemption right now. You were-

Lysa TerKeurst: I was in the fetal position in your office. Could not even process how to lift my head up. How to even walk out of your office. I think one time I even had to have a friend come with me, 'cause I knew she was literally going to physically have to carry me out of the office. So the redemption of God, it's not only possible, but let me be a representation of what is possible. I love deep, so I hurt deep.

Jim Cress: That's good. I like that.

Lysa TerKeurst: Because I love deep and I hurt deep, I can also heal deep with God.

Jim Cress: And one thing I always told you, I would tell you again today and for the next million years, I believed and believe it now, you were on a path of redemption with, and this isn't some pipe dream or a bumper sticker, with or without your husband. You were on a path, I believe we'd still be sitting at this table, doing these podcasts. I believe we'd still be with or without, it might have sounded different, there could have been a different narrative. I think you'd have still wrote a book on this. You talked about the epilogue that came in at the end. You would have been on your ... that's the hope I want to give people is you want reconciliation and redemption corporately or in your coupleship and one thing for sure, you can always be redeemed and reconciled with yourself and with God. That's a promise.

Jim Cress: With or without the spouse, I believe you'd have been still on the path. Might have looked differently, we're on a different path, thank God, all that you all have been through. But three years ago, all that trauma, and look where we are. And that's hope for anyone watching or listening today, they can have it too.

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you. Okay, we're going to wrap up today. But, Joel, give us that purest definition that you can think of of redemption with God, so that people can really sink their teeth into what their pursuit is.

Joel Muddamalle: I think the words that echo in my head are C.S. Lewis' great exchange. Redemption is a great exchange. The debt has been paid. We have Colossians

1:13, we have been transferred from the domain of darkness into the kingdom of light. And that is really what redemption is.

Joel Muddamalle: I want to end us with Ephesians 1:7, as we talk about divine reconciliation. I just love this verse that Paul writes, "in him." If you have your Bibles and you're just doing some Bible study, I just want to encourage you, highlight, if you highlight, or circle every time you see "in him," "in Christ," just that phrase. It's so powerful.

Jim Cress: There's a lot of that in Ephesians, isn't there?

Joel Muddamalle: There's a tremendous amount. "In him we have redemption through," there's your preposition, "through his blood, the forgiveness of our trespasses according to the riches of his grace."

Lysa TerKeurst: Thank you, Joel. Thank you, Jim. Thank you so much for listening today.

Meredith Brock: Thanks for listening to this episode of the *Therapy and Theology: How Do I Get Through This?* podcast series. Before we let you go, we wanted to point you to a few resources that could be helpful if you want to dig deeper into this subject.

Kaley Olson: The first resource is Lysa TerKeurst's latest book, *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*. You all, this book has been on *The New York Times'* best-selling list for weeks and for a very good reason. Lysa is so real and raw with her struggle over the past three years and helps you learn to wrestle well between your fate and your feelings in whatever circumstance you're going through. You can purchase your copy today at p31bookstore.com

Meredith Brock: Now before we let you go, we want to tell you about two other resources that we think might be helpful after listening to this episode. The first is the American Association of Christian Counselors. You can go to aacc.net if you're considering engaging with a counselor. And we really highly recommend it if you're wrestling through some of these really, really hard subjects as you heard today. It's a fantastic resource to have a counselor walk alongside you. So we would really encourage you to do that.

Meredith Brock: The second is our Prayer Wall at proverbs31.org. We'd love to encourage you to go there, scroll to the bottom of the page of proverbs31.org and you'll see prayer requests. You can click that, you can add in your prayer request there, and we really would, our staff really does pray for you on a daily basis. So go there; we would be honored to pray for you.

Meredith Brock: Well, thanks again for listening to today's episode. We pray it helps you know the Truth of God's Word and live that Truth out because I promise that when you do, it really will change everything.

Meredith Brock: We'll see you next week.

