

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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- Meredith Brock: Well hello friends, Meredith and Kaley here, just casually interrupting your listening experience to give you a little ministry update, if you will. Many of you are familiar with Proverbs 31 Ministries and why we do what we do. For those of you who are new here, what we do here is not just this podcast — it's an extension of a very thriving ministry.
- Kaley Olson: Yeah, absolutely, and if you're listening to this podcast in real time, as in May 2019, then we have an exciting announcement that we want to share with you. As a ministry right now, for the first time ever, we're trying to get 5,000 people to donate to the ministry during the month of May.
- Kaley Olson: We tell you guys all the time what we're about here at Proverbs 31 Ministries at the end of every episode and that's equipping women to know the Truth of God's Word, and live that Truth out because we believe it absolutely changes everything. As a ministry, we do that not just through this podcast, but through Online Bible Studies, the First 5 mobile app, daily devotions and even social media, all for free.
- Meredith Brock: Well, while we do sell some resources through our Proverbs 31 Ministries bookstore, to support our ministry, a huge way that we keep doing what we're doing is through the faithful support of financial donors and monthly partners. If you've ever given to Proverbs 31 Ministries, I just want to pause and say a huge thank you, thank you, thank you for helping us get more women connected to God's Word.
- Kaley Olson: Absolutely, and if you've never given to Proverbs 31 Ministries before, then now is a great time to link arms with us and give financially. All you need to do is go to Donate.proverbs31.org, and you'll find all the information you need to know about how to partner with us. Our prayer is that we'll exceed our goal of 5,000 donors to partner with us this month and that through your generosity, we'll reach even more.
- Meredith Brock: And if you're listening to this podcast in the future, I don't know, maybe it's like 2050 right now, you can still partner with us; just visit proverbs31.org and look

for the Donate button on the website, and you'll find everything you need to know to help support Proverbs 31 Ministries.

Meredith Brock: All right, all right, I think they've heard enough of us; let's get them back to today's teaching. Here is the podcast.

Kaley Olson: Hello friends, welcome back to *The Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast* where we share biblical Truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Kaley Olson, and I'm here with my friend and co-host, Meredith Brock.

Meredith Brock: Well hey Kaley, so glad to be back with you today. It's been a hot minute since we've recorded just a regular episode of the podcast, so I'm excited to be back here, even though, holy cow, can we pause for a moment and talk about *Therapy and Theology*?

Kaley Olson: Wow, what a series.

Meredith Brock: What a series. We heard a tremendous amount of positive feedback, just people being exposed to things in a safe environment that was biblically based to talk about things that a lot of people are afraid to talk about.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, I definitely think it was ... not think, I don't think it was, I know it was ... one of the deeper podcasts we've done and we just haven't ever gone there as a ministry before, and I feel like Lysa's book releasing and then our Online Bible Study for *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way*, had what, 128,000 women participate, so I feel like we were like, yeah, it's insane, like imagine 128,000 of your closest friends sitting together. There's not even a football stadium that fills up-

Meredith Brock: That's bananas.

Kaley Olson: I don't think there is.

Meredith Brock: That is bananas.

Kaley Olson: Somebody's probably fact checking me right now.

Meredith Brock: Probably.

Kaley Olson: Oh well.

Meredith Brock: I encourage that.

Kaley Olson: Just let me know, let me know.

Meredith Brock: Well, I'm excited to be back today. We've got a great teaching ahead of us, but before I do that, before we get into that, I want to talk about what we did last night.

Kaley Olson: What did we do last night? It sounds like we went out.

Meredith Brock: But we didn't.

Kaley Olson: No, we didn't, we stayed in.

Meredith Brock: We stayed in with our friends-

Kaley Olson: From our team.

Meredith Brock: ... and played Codenames.

Kaley Olson: We did.

Meredith Brock: I want to know somebody in the social media sphere, tell me if they've played Codenames — it might be the most fun game I've played in a really long time. I love it.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, I think it's equally fun and frustrating because I have this thought pattern in my mind of the words that I'm connecting together, and I just feel like it's so obviously clear, and Meredith is like, no, no, no I know how Kaley thinks, Kaley would never do that. In my mind, I'm dying because I'm like, yes I would, yes I would. Pick the names, [crosstalk 00:04:23], and we lost.

Meredith Brock: So if y'all are looking for a good game to play with your family, play with your friends, go out and get Codesnames, and then hit us up on social media and tell us if you had fun playing it, because we had so much fun playing it with our friends — it was awesome.

Kaley Olson: We did.

Meredith Brock: It was really, really, awesome.

Kaley Olson: Okay, I think we've talked about Codenames enough; maybe we should get back to the podcast now.

Meredith Brock: Okay.

Kaley Olson: That's our job. But, I'm really excited about our teacher that we have today. Many of our listeners are probably familiar with his voice now because they just listened to six weeks of him in the *Therapy and Theology* series, welcome back, Joel Muddamalle. So glad to have you here with us today. Joel, why don't you tell us what you do for Proverbs 31.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, I get to serve as a Director of Theology for the ministry and get to bring some oversight to some of the theological development and to the writing and just the biblical content I guess that we write and that we share from. So, I literally get to study the Bible and study teaching and study Scripture and navigate all of those worlds. It's fun.

Meredith Brock: Well, we're sure glad to have you here on staff. I'm also glad that Kaley had to say your last name because I have worked with you for how long, and I still can't say it.

Joel Muddamalle: A long time.

Meredith Brock: And I can't say it to save my life; I can't say your last name.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, just go and give it a try.

Meredith Brock: I can't. I'm embarrassed to do it.

Kaley Olson: Muddamalle.

Meredith Brock: Muddamalle.

Kaley Olson: There you go, you got it.

Meredith Brock: If you would not have said that beforehand, I'm certain that I would've said, I don't know. It just always comes out wrong. But y'all, okay you need to spell it. Spell it for everyone.

Joel Muddamalle: Okay, so it's M-U-D-D-A-M-A-L-L-E.

Meredith Brock: Whoa, that's a lot of double letters.

Joel Muddamalle: It is.

Meredith Brock: It's a whole lot, but I encourage you to go and find Joel on Instagram because he posts some of the ... I love it, I love the stuff that you post in your stories because he'll show what he's studying, and then he kind of unpacks it in little bite-size pieces that just in the middle of the day is really, I don't know, I just really, really, love it.

Meredith Brock: He spelled his last name for you. Go find him on the 'gram.

Kaley Olson: I think it's just @Muddamalle.

Meredith Brock: Yeah.

Kaley Olson: I mean, if you're-

Meredith Brock: You made that sound really simple.

Kaley Olson: Thanks.

Joel Muddamalle: She's showing off now.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, I know right. Well, we're sure glad to have you here.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, it's going to be a great teaching.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, thanks for taking a break from your regularly scheduled Starbucks study appointments and being with us today.

Joel Muddamalle: I was waiting for that.

Kaley Olson: Oh, we were talking about before the podcast started that Joel has a regularly scheduled membership — I feel like if Starbucks had memberships, Joel would be a member because there's this thing that we have on staff where if you go to that Starbucks and you find Joel, you do one of those Instagram zoom in things, and we found Joel in the wild. Here he is. Here he is.

Kaley Olson: But anyway, he took a break from his studying, and we're so glad you did. Thank you for being here with us today, first of all I know that this is a really big commitment for you. But, he's going to teach on the topic of fasting, which I'm really excited about, but not just fasting but on why we should fast. So, I'm actually really excited about this because even though I grew up a believer, I went to a really traditional Southern Baptist church. I don't remember hearing a lot about fasting that we talked about from either at my home or in church and it might be because I wasn't paying attention because maybe I was little, but I also just don't know that it was something that was just regularly talked about.

Kaley Olson: So I'm really excited because it's only been since college that I really started to learn more about it, and so Joel, I'm just so thankful for the way that you take these concepts that can kind of seem weird or tricky and unpack them in a way that makes it, I don't know, just relatable to me. I can't wait to hear what you have to share with us today. If you want to go ahead and give your teaching.

Joel Muddamalle: Well I am super excited. So here's the funny thing, I literally came here from that Starbucks and so-

Meredith Brock: Of course you did.

Kaley Olson: I knew it.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, yeah and so the chances are of you seeing some type of Instagram of somebody catching me in the Starbucks wild is very high. But, one of the things Kaley, when you had actually emailed me and said, hey I think this fasting thing might be an interesting topic to consider, it really got me going personally, because I don't know if you guys have ever done this, but whenever a word comes up, sometimes your brain goes back to, well how do I personally associate with this word in my life or in my story?

Joel Muddamalle: So, if you guys could see me right now, I'm Indian, like from India, and it's not super common to find Indians that are Christians, I mean, in India the population of Christianity is like less than a percent or something like that; it's pretty insane. So I grew up in a Christian family and maybe similar to some of your guys' experiences I heard about fasting a lot. Even partook of it, and kind of did it with my family. But in all honesty, and I think you mentioned it Kaley, I wasn't quite sure why I was doing this.

Joel Muddamalle: Again, so for me, the thought of being hangry is not a great thought. There's nothing inside of me that says, hmm, I think I'm just going to stop eating for a while. So, I wanted to start by maybe going behind fasting and first talk about well, what is fasting and how does it relate to the other parts of our spiritual life? So, really fasting, it starts with just one part of a larger category called spiritual disciplines.

Joel Muddamalle: So, what are our spiritual disciplines? Well, our spiritual disciplines are tied directly to this idea of spiritual formation. So if you've been in the Christian world for some time or a believer, and you've done Bible studies and different things, these words probably have some type of meaning to you. But you might be a brand-new believer and you might have just come to know Jesus and you're like, what is a spiritual discipline and why would I want to be spiritually transformed?

Joel Muddamalle: So the idea of spiritual formation is really this idea of becoming more like Jesus. That's really the journey that I think we're all on. We love Jesus. We are captivated by who He is and what He's done and so we want to be like Him. Then spiritual disciplines are almost like the strategy or the tactics. Like, okay, let's get into the grind, and now what can we do to exercise the process of becoming more and more like Jesus?

Joel Muddamalle: In the list of categories as you read through Scripture, you may see things that are categorized as spiritual disciplines as prayer. Prayer is simply just talking to God. Reading Scripture, God's Word is a gracious gift that was given to us and so when we read Scripture we're actually engaging in the spiritual discipline of getting to know God through His Word.

Joel Muddamalle: Here's another one. Caring for others. Generosity. Hospitality. Just being kind. Those types of things are actually fostering in us this relationship to Jesus because Jesus was kind. He cared for us, He loved us, and He loved others. Here's another one. Evangelism. Sharing the good news. If you're passionate

about something, you don't keep it hidden. It's not going to take long for you when we hang out to find out that I really, really love Chicago-style deep dish pizza. I really love Michael Jordan. Michael Jordan is the greatest of all time, over Lebron James.

Joel Muddamalle: I had to say that Meredith's husband [crosstalk 00:11:59], I actually just tagged him the other day about the ... Anyways, just trust me on these. See, it exudes outside of me, what you're passionate about. And you guys could probably say different things of things that you're passionate about. But that's what happens when we love Jesus and we're passionate about Him.

Joel Muddamalle: Here're a couple other ones. Silence and solitude. We see often in Scripture this idea of going away to silent places to spend time with God. Jesus Himself goes into solitary places in silence to spend time with the Father. Often for us today, this can be done in connection with things like prayer and reading Scripture. And here's the one that's very often tied to prayer: fasting.

Joel Muddamalle: Prayer and fasting often go hand-in-hand. Fasting is such an intriguing aspect of the spiritual disciplines and I really want to jump into right here, like why would we want to go through the process of engaging with any of these disciplines, specifically fasting? When we do these things, we get closer to Jesus. When we do these things, we look more like Jesus, and right now I have no idea what your situation or your circumstances might have been. I don't know if you're listening in a podcast, in traffic and you're waiting. You may be experiencing the chaos of the world.

Joel Muddamalle: Here's what I love about the spiritual disciplines and here's what I love about fasting. When we engage in these things, we can mute the chaos as we meet with the Creator. We can mute the chaos as we meet with the Creator. That is the lifelong journey that we are on until Jesus comes back or we see Him on the other side of eternity.

Joel Muddamalle: Now, what is fasting? Fasting is typically, in the Old Testament, the absence of — or stopping of, doing of — something, typically food. It's saying I'm going to take a puritive time to no longer eat this type of food or engage in this type of activity, and so I know many of you are thinking right now how we started. There is no way I would naturally be inclined to want to even do this. And some of you theologians might be saying, wait a minute, Joel, I've got freedom in Christ, and if I've got freedom in Christ, why should I have to give up anything? I'm free to do whatever I want.

Joel Muddamalle: This I where we kind of need to see how fasting is used throughout the Old Testament and the New Testament. So, we're going to do a little bit of biblical work here, so if you've got your Bibles, you're taking notes or whatever, you can come back and replay this, here's some interesting aspects about fasting. Fasting in the Old and New Testament can be used as both a noun and verb in how it's described.

- Joel Muddamalle: It's mentioned in the Old Testament together over 34 times. Now, these instances are connected to these types of things. Celebrations, or observations, of feasts or things like the day of atonement. Fasting was connected to these monumental moments in the life of the Israelites. They just went hand-in-hand. Fasting was also done in response to repentance and confession. Things didn't go your way, and you feel a conviction of what has taken place, well, in the Old Testament people would fast as a visible sign of their repentance.
- Joel Muddamalle: The book of Jonah, Jonah Chapter 3 verses 4 through 9, there's a great example. You would fast in response to mourning. Both Job and David respond by fasting in their response of death, and they mourned a loss of a child or loved ones. Here's an interesting one: in anticipation of hope and victory.
- Joel Muddamalle: So, often the Israelites, as they're getting ready to fight against the Philistines, they would actually embark on a fast, and what they would do is they would anticipate the victory that they knew God was going to do. You could turn to 1 Samuel 7:6 and see that. They would also fast prior to major decisions that had to be made. So, they're going into something, particularly kings. There was a huge decision that had to be made, well, their tendency was to fast and to pray and to seek the Lord.
- Joel Muddamalle: Now in the New Testament, because we want to see this holistically, in the New Testament, both noun and verb show up over 28 times. You can see passages, like all throughout the book of Acts, you see fasting with people laying on of hands and commissioning in all these different things. When people are sent out to church plant, and you see a tradition of fasting in early church fathers. So, origin and Polycarp, these ancient guys that talked about the Bible back in the day, they would talk about fasting because it's really important.
- Joel Muddamalle: Here's what's super interesting in all of this. Once we get to the New Testament, fasting is never mandated. I'm going to say that one more time: fasting is never mandated, like you must do a fast on this time at this point in this week of this month, consecutively. What actually takes place here, is fasting is assumed as a practice that believers would do because it draws you closer to Jesus. It causes you to go through this process of looking more like Christ.
- Joel Muddamalle: This is where I just feel like we need to pause, and I just want to talk about being charitable. What does that mean? It means, different people have different convictions at different times, and this is what I love about Scripture. What the New Testament does for us, is it opens up this thing like fasting, and it says fasting isn't a close-handed convictional thing that if you don't do this, you're going to go to hell. Or you're sinning against God. It's also not something that you just ignore completely. There's plenty of biblical significance for it.
- Joel Muddamalle: What that means is that we have to be charitable to each other so that we can allow the Holy Spirit to bring conviction into our lives, so we navigate spiritual transformation. It looks different for different people. I want to encourage you, as you're going through your process of just navigating what does fasting look

like for my spiritual life, be charitable with your loved ones and others and don't assume or expect that your fasting has to look like their fasting. That's going to set up everybody for disappointment.

Joel Muddamalle: Now, how do I know, you're probably sitting there thinking, like really, how do you know that this is kind of assumed in the New Testament. Well, it's a really interesting thing, that Jesus Himself actually described the importance of fasting. So if you've got your Bibles, in Matthew 6:16, you can go there, I'm turning right over there right now. Jesus begins to talk about fasting and notice this, it says this, "and when you fast," so I'm going to pause, what does it say? When you fast.

Joel Muddamalle: Jesus is looking at His disciples and He's getting ready to teach them, and He's making the assumption that fasting is going to be a part of your natural rhythm of life. But notice, Jesus doesn't say the who, what, when, where, or why behind the fasting, He's just making that assumption like, I know you're going to fast and again, the charity component here, I just want to read what Jesus' words are, "and when you fast do not look gloomy like the hypocrite, for they disfigure their faces" He's talking about like, if you got to the theater, have you all ever gone to the theater?

Kaley Olson: Like, movie theater?

Joel Muddamalle: No, no, opera, play, I would say like *Wicked*, think *Hamilton*, different things like that.

Kaley Olson: [crosstalk 00:19:39] Yes.

Joel Muddamalle: So, when you go there, and you see them, do you notice their makeup? What do they look like?

Kaley Olson: They're done up. They got some stuff on.

Joel Muddamalle: Right, I think it's kind of interesting they have to look that way because of the way the lights kind of hit them and it's offset by the darkness so they've got all this extra makeup that's going on. So, back around Jesus' time, these dudes are doing this out there. The actual Greek word for these actors is the hypocrites. So, what Jesus is doing, He's making a cultural connection for them. He's saying, "When you fast, don't look like them for they disfigure their faces. That they're fasting may be seen by others, truly I say to you that they will receive their reward. But when you fast, anoint your head and wash your face. That you're fasting may not be seen by others, but by your Father who is in secret and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

Joel Muddamalle: This idea of charity. This idea is that the fasting is not for the world to see, fasting is this internal reality that's taking place, and its spiritual transformation. It's something between you and God. So, another thing, Jesus just doesn't

describe fasting, but Jesus does fasting. So this is where we're going to get into our primary text again, we're going to go to Matthew Chapter 4. I just have to set up this scene.

Joel Muddamalle: Jesus has just been baptized; this is probably one of the most glorious scenes in Scripture maybe. I feel like I say that a lot.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, that's okay.

Joel Muddamalle: But I mean, this one I think is-

Meredith Brock: There's a lot of glorious scenes.

Joel Muddamalle: There's a lot of glorious scenes. So in this scene particularly, in the baptism of Jesus, we see the Trinitarian God-head, the trinity is mainly God the Father, God the Son, and God the Holy Spirit. So God the Father is audibly saying, "Look at my son whom I'm well pleased." God the Son is getting baptized and the Spirit in the form of a dove lands on him. This is absolutely epic.

Joel Muddamalle: After an epic moment for you guys, what would you all do?

Meredith Brock: I would probably take a nap. Because I'm just like whoa, that was a lot, I'm going to take a nap now. Seriously.

Kaley Olson: Text my best friend.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, yeah, yeah, I might tell someone.

Kaley Olson: Yeah.

Meredith Brock: I'd probably call my husband like babe, that was crazy, I'm going home to take a nap.

Kaley Olson: Yeah.

Joel Muddamalle: So, check out what Jesus does when he's done.

Kaley Olson: Yeah.

Joel Muddamalle: Chapter 4, "then Jesus was led up by the Spirit." So, the scene happens and then the word *then* connects us directly to what just took place. So as soon as this baptism is done, I'm sure some time passed but directly connecting it, Jesus is led by the Spirit, so you see Jesus' obedience by being led by the Spirit and He goes into the wilderness, for what reason? To be tempted by the devil.

Joel Muddamalle: So, okay, if you have been around me and if you've done any of the First 5 teachings you know one of the things that I absolutely love is the concept of

reversals. There's often in Scripture that'll you'll just see these different reversals, and so if you turn to 1 Kings 19, you'll see the prophet Elijah. Now, this dude has these crazy battles with Ahab and this evil Queen Jezebel. He's running for his life often. He's just in a real dangerous predicament.

Joel Muddamalle: But in 1 Kings 19, starting in verse three, it says this, "Then he was afraid and he rose and he ran for his life and came to [Presheebo 00:23:02] which belongs to Judah and left his servant there." But now catch this, verse four, "but he himself went a day's journey into the wilderness and came and sat down under a broom tree," this is also a scene of Jonah, Jonah is in a similar scenario. He sits underneath a broom tree.

Meredith Brock: Oh my goodness, I forgot that.

Joel Muddamalle: "And he ask that he might die." I just, my oldest son Liam, he's a little bit of a drama king, everything is broken, if his brother doesn't look at him the right way, the world is ending. He's crying, it is just unbelievable. I see a little bit of my son Liam right here. So, and then he said that he might die saying, "it is enough now oh Lord, take away my life for I'm no better than my fathers." And then he laid down and slept underneath a broom tree. Because that's what you do after-

Meredith Brock: He took his nap.

Joel Muddamalle: He took his nap, "and behold an angel touched him and said to him, "arise and eat," and he looked and behold there was at his head a cake baked on hot stones and a jar of water. He ate and he drank and he laid down again. The angel of the Lord came again a second time and touched him and said, "hey arise and eat for the journey is too great for you" and he arose and he ate and he drank and he went in the strength of that food 40 days and 40 nights to [inaudible 00:24:24] the Mount of God."

Joel Muddamalle: Super intriguing to me that one, he honestly has a huge temper tantrum and starts pouting. If I'm God, which I think we should all be glad that I'm not God. Because if I'm God, I'm like, yo homey, you're going to starve now and you brought yourself into the wilderness, okay go ahead, live your best life now in the wilderness.

Joel Muddamalle: But notice God is so gracious. He sends an angel, He takes care of him, He gives him food, He gives him cake, He gives him water, and it says that it was because of that strength of that food that lasted him for the next 40 days and 40 nights.

Meredith Brock: So, wait, I need to pause you here, so angel brings the supplies, and then he legit goes out into the wilderness, like you just described Jesus doing, he fasted for 40 days?

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah.

Meredith Brock: And 40 nights. Okay. Was just trying to make sure I was making the right connections.

Joel Muddamalle: Yeah, and we're going to jump back into the Jesus story but here's the, oh man, we could teach just on this, but verse nine, the scene right after the 40 days and 40 nights, is God speaking to Elijah in a gentle whisper. If you haven't read this passage, jump in, read the passage, it's unbelievable. I want to jump now back to Matthew 4 and you're drawing the connections already Meredith. I already see it happening.

Meredith Brock: My wheels are turning.

Joel Muddamalle: Your wheels are turning. So, now in Matthew 4, Jesus was led by the Spirit into the wilderness for what reason? To be tempted by the devil. Now watch the nature of the events that happen in comparison to Elijah. He goes into the wilderness. Elijah, when he goes into the wilderness, he's fed, and on the strength of his feeding he's able to survive the 40 days.

Joel Muddamalle: What happens with Jesus? And after fasting 40 days and 40 nights, He was hungry. You see, what Jesus does is He proves Himself to be the better Elijah. What Jesus does is He says, yo, Elijah might have had to have some food to sustain him, but I don't want anybody to doubt My humanity. You see, when Jesus comes down to earth, it's called incarnation; He becomes 100% God and He is 100% man. He lays down His divinity so He can take up His humanity so that in Hebrews it can say that Jesus is our faithful and empathetic high priest who was tempted in every way that we were. Here is an example.

Joel Muddamalle: Jesus is hungry; His humanity is starving for food. I just think it's so interesting here, that He's tempted in the wilderness but the tempter, watch what happens here, verse three, "and the tempter came and said to him" the tempter chooses to come to Jesus after He's fasted for 40 days and in the midst of His hunger. I just want to point out what's taking place right here. This is a battle. This isn't just any battle; this is a spiritual battle.

Joel Muddamalle: We think of battles with swords and there's plenty of that in Scripture; we can see that. But the very first battle recorded in Scripture in Genesis is a very similar battle. With the tempter and with Adam and with Eve. The first battle took place within the context of their minds. Within the walls and it questioned and it doubted God. And you'll see as you read through this that that's the exact same tactic of the enemy, but notice what happens with Jesus' fasting. Why would He fast? Well, in Jesus' fasting, He can relate to humanity's weakness.

Joel Muddamalle: He can be a faithful, true high priest who's empathetic. You see, there's really something at risk I think in this moment, and Jesus shows how He's superior. Jesus, He shows us how He's faithful. And He shows us how He relies on God. This to me is the classic text on why we should fast because Jesus is modeling to us how to prepare for spiritual warfare. How do we prepare for these things?

It's the spiritual disciplines. It's when we fast and in our weakness that we find ourselves having to rely on the strength of God. Because here's what going to happen — if we go into a spiritual battle and we fight the enemy on our own strength, I'm just going to let you all know, we're getting knocked out. You can't do it. We cannot fight the enemy on our own strength; we have to fight the enemy with the strength of God that He's given us through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Joel Muddamalle: So why should you and I fast? Again, I want you to process this with the help of the Spirit to pray through these things, but one of the benefits of fasting, and this is what Jesus models for us here in this passage — fasting makes us utterly aware of our mortality. In other words, it positions us in a place of humility so that we can rightly view King Jesus. When I fast, or when I'm just without something for a while, I realize how small I am and how big God is. It makes me utterly aware of how frail I am. And my frailty makes me realize I need rescue. I need Jesus.

Joel Muddamalle: The other thing about fasting is it allows us to experience the goodness of Jesus and the goodness of God in unique ways. I don't know that I can explain this other than I've used this in different illustrations, but I'm playing basketball right now a lot, so I'm going out and I'm playing with some guys that used to play D1 ball and they're running me like crazy and I just feel like I'm going to die every time I get off that court. I'm like, guys, God did not design me for this. But, it's amazing because I always have water that's waiting for me and after we get done running sprints or you have to shoot a free throw and if you miss a free throw you ... I'm missing like 15 free throws.

Joel Muddamalle: So I'm running like 15 sprints and I go man, when you grab that first glass of water and you drink it, it is like you're drinking water for the first time all over again. It's just this unique experience. When we fast and we experience our mortality, our humanity, we get to experience the goodness of God in this fresh, unique way. It's good for our souls, it's good for our spirits to then rely on Jesus. And I think the last thing, and you'll notice all these things are really connected to each other, but fasting ultimately produces humility.

Joel Muddamalle: It's very hard to be high enough to think much of yourself when you realize how hungry you are. Just a couple, maybe housekeeping things about this. Some of you are thinking well, you know what Joel, I've got some real actual medical ailments. I don't think that I could fast from food because I ... well here's the good news, you don't have to be stuck, you can fast from almost anything. You can pick different things that ... And here's what I would do, I would identify the things that I find a sense of comfort, a sense of strength, a sense of belonging to, and I would sacrifice those things. I would fast from those things because those things, if we're not careful, they could be very good things, but very good things can become very adulterous things quickly.

Joel Muddamalle: That act of fasting from those, giving those things up willfully, it reminds us that the better thing is God.

Meredith Brock: Wow. So good, Joel. I love it. There's so many things going through my mind right now that I want to talk about. Just because I think there's so much to learn from this. I want to tell you guys a little bit about my background in fasting, because I think it might help some of our listeners.

Meredith Brock: So, I did not grow up in church at all, I mean I went on and off as a little kid, but I didn't really, I was not a church kid. So, I came to know the Lord later in life, and I came from a very dysfunctional background, and I went away to Bible college, and I remember for the first time, there was a guy name Dave Burdett introducing the idea of fasting to me, and it was very peculiar to me, but I remember him kind of painting it in a picture of this, like you just said Joel, will help you enter into a place of weakness, of awareness of your mortality so that you can have a heightened experience with God. So that He can show up in your weakness, and I remember being, I was in my early 20s and I remember being in such a place of looking at who I was in my life as a 20-something, not knowing where I was going to go in life.

Meredith Brock: But, being desperate to peel back some of the layers of dysfunction in my life, I knew I came from such a broken family, but I didn't know how to get out of it, I didn't know how to break free from some of the chains that had really kind of wrapped themselves around me. I remember after hearing this teaching, I was like, you know what, I want freedom so bad, that I'm going to do this and I'm going to pray that the Lord would bring, I didn't even know what I was praying for, I was just saying, I'm going to stop what I'm doing and I'm going to deprive myself from food so that in those moments of hunger, I'll stop and say "God help me break the bondage in my life from all these years of dysfunction and fix my mind, fix my heart because this is way bigger than me and I can't figure out how to fix me, because I'm really messed up."

Meredith Brock: I developed a, I don't want to shine my halo, it wasn't like I did this every month or something, but there are significant points in my life that I can look back that I developed kind of this discipline in my life at an early age — in terms of early spiritual age — where I would just kind of become a believer, and it just became a pattern for me where it was like any time I had a significant, where I felt stuck, where I was like, I keep having this same, maybe it was a sin pattern, and I can't break free.

Meredith Brock: Or I've got to make this big decision, and I really don't know what to do. I would go to fasting in order to — not like it was some crystal ball, it's not, it's not like you can walk up to it and rub it and be like, okay tell me what to do, but what it would do would create this heightened awareness of God's presence in my life, and a heightened awareness of my mortality and inability to fix it, so I had to be fully reliant and fully surrendered to God.

Meredith Brock: It developed a pattern I can look back and say wow, each time I did this, God really showed up in a, sometimes in a totally unexpected way, sometimes it happened the way that I wanted it to and it was amazing. But I took that in and not knowing my husband, at the same time was kind of developing some same

patterns in his life and we have been able to do that as a family, and it has been, we just a couple days ago had a conversation with a friend not even realizing how it really has become a monumental part of our relationship both separate and individually.

- Meredith Brock: One of the things I faced, and I would love for you to kind of help us unpack here, is when I started fasting, I felt really clumsy, meaning not like physically clumsy, okay so, not going to eat food, now what. So how do you really use, practically speaking, how do you really use those times that maybe you would've had lunch, or how can you enter into the experience of fasting when you're ... maybe it's not food, maybe it's social media. Maybe it's Netflix at nighttime. How do you use those moments that you would've filled to actually enter into this experience of fasting? Because you could just deprive and whatever.
- Joel Muddamalle: Right, no that's so good. I'm super tactical, this is what has been helpful for me for our family, is this idea of replacement. You know that you have this thing that tells you how often you're on different apps-
- Kaley Olson: Yeah, I don't look at that.
- Joel Muddamalle: Oh my goodness, right.
- Kaley Olson: [crosstalk 00:36:47].
- Joel Muddamalle: Yeah exactly. So if you're actually just looking for what to fast, you may just want to see what's the top app.
- Meredith Brock: That is a great pointer, practical folks.
- Joel Muddamalle: Very practical. But I would say, you know what, there are some tremendous ... One is replace these moments that you would, and I find myself doing this all the time, it's almost like this phantom, like I got to look for my phone. So in those moments, what I want to do is reorient my heart, my attention, my mind, my spirit, toward God's Word, and be really intentional. So, I wouldn't say I'm going to read the entire Bible in the next seven days. Be super practical and say you know what, I'm going to read Matthew Chapter 4, I'm going to read Jesus' temptations over, and over, and over again for the next three days while I fast this thing.
- Joel Muddamalle: I'm going to be encouraged by Jesus' faithfulness and be reminded that I don't have to do because Jesus has done. I think another thing is good books, I just picked up *New Morning Mercies* by a guy named Paul David Tripp and it has been a tremendous devotional for me. So, I normally do it in the morning, but when I'm going to go to fasting, I may go and pick up *New Morning Mercies*, and I may read ahead, or I've got Tim Keller's *Prayers to the Psalms*. Those types of things are just great resources.

Joel Muddamalle: Heres another one, *Contemplative Worship*, and I'm not saying this just because Meredith's here, but in all honestly, my youngest, Lucas, we call him Lukey-Bear, Luke loves Mac Brock, those are the songs that he wants to listen to, so in our time as a family, there are often times when we will just sit, and we will say a truth about who God is. A characteristic, like God is good, and He loves us. And He loves us like a dad, I'm always like, how I love you, God loves you. And we'll just sit there, and we'll listen to a worship song, and we'll just contemplate on those things, and we'll allow these biblical truths that are being sung by these people who have thought deeply about God to inform these other truths.

Joel Muddamalle: So, we can just meditate in those moments.

Meredith Brock: That's so good, it's so good, because I think that idea of replacement like you could, let's say, you're just fasting from lunch, maybe you can't do all three meals, it's just not, I went through a season, we did a little bit of, my husband was going through some stuff when I was pregnant and he was fasting, well obviously I'm not going to fast when I'm pregnant. That's not an option for me, but I did cut out all desserts and sugar or whatever. Well what I could've done during that time is just decided to eat a bag of potato chips instead, right.

Joel Muddamalle: Right.

Meredith Brock: But I had to intentionally, I didn't want to replace it with something else that wasn't Christ-focused, so using that time that you would've used for something else, to focus on Christ, the other thing, you're not going to get it perfect, and giving yourself grace. I remember early on feeling like, okay, I'm kind of an ambitious person, so I was like, I'm going to fast for a week. And then I got two days in and I was like, I think I might die. I really, really, think I was throwing an Elijah fit. Where I was like, I'm going to lay under this broom tree and just die. I gave up, and God wasn't mad at me for that, He wasn't mad at me that I only made it two days.

Meredith Brock: He was proud of me for saying, God, I'm trying to prioritize You. I remember feeling like, other times where it was like, I couldn't sit and read my Bible for all of lunch, or all of dinner, all of breakfast, but just letting my heart drift back to Him, and saying Lord, I need You. I need You more than I need food. I need You more than I need social media. I need You, I need Your wisdom, I need Your presence, and letting your heart drift back there but giving yourself the grace that God doesn't expect perfection — He just wants your heart.

Kaley Olson: Meredith, I love that you just said something that you just said out loud — God wants your heart. So, I keep thinking about where those things are in the Bible, trust in the Lord with all your heart, or God wants your whole heart and I've been just convicted in this teaching and really just convicted a lot lately of like, if I say that I'm a believer, and if I say that I love Jesus and that I'm saved and that I'm His child, I can't pick and choose the things that make me like Him, and leave some that don't make me like Him. I can't choose, I'm going back to this list that you said earlier, you said, reading Scripture, caring for others, evangelism, silent

solitude, I can't choose prayer and reading Scripture and solitude, but leave off fasting and caring for others or even being that ... I can't leave those things and only hope that half of those things will make me like Him.

Kaley Olson: So, as I'm growing more toward Jesus, or as I'm growing more like Him, am I being halfhearted about something? Am I saying I want to do all of this but not this because I'm just not comfortable with that? Or I'm afraid that I'm not going to do it right — Mere I love that you just asked Joel, how do I do this practically? [crosstalk 00:42:03] God's not going to be mad at you, but I think seeing God as not this God who's sitting up there in a big chair looking down and being angry at me for not doing these things, He's saying, no, do these because I want you to see Me. I want you to be more like Me.

Meredith Brock: And I want your heart.

Kaley Olson: And I want your heart and I'm not going to be upset with you for not getting it right. I just want you to try, and trying over and over again gets us to be more like Him.

Joel Muddamalle: Think about every moment, every epic fail throughout Scripture where God had every opportunity to just be like, forget it, I'm done. So sometimes I think we have to go, theology of remembrance, we need to go back and remind ourselves of what the character nature of God is, and Kaley, what you just said, I think often we may have this view of God that's like, finger-pointing God and not like I think God is loving-embrace God.

Joel Muddamalle: Liam, great job, you threw that football pass, and it got intercepted but that's okay. You'll get it next time. He's not like, I can't believe you did that. We just need to see God in the way that He truly sees us based off of what Scripture has taught us and embrace that.

Joel Muddamalle: Same thing like what you were talking, Meredith, with Bible reading. I think one of the biggest reasons people fail in their Bible reading is because they go gung-ho, they go I'm going to hit this, they hit Leviticus and they're like, I'm outie, I cannot do this.

Meredith Brock: I just had that experience. We're reading through the Bible and y'all, Leviticus is whoa, Nelly. We started Numbers today, and I this morning said to my husband, woo, I'm glad to be out of Leviticus, how about you?

Joel Muddamalle: Right, so for me, one of the things is like, okay, you didn't hit one of the check marks, that's okay. God has enough grace to cover that missing check mark. Just keep going, pick up where you left off and I would say the same thing with fasting. Just because you missed a day or you didn't do, don't give up on it.

Meredith Brock: Good stuff.

Kaley Olson: That was great.

Meredith Brock: Lots to be learned here.

Kaley Olson: Thank you so much. Yeah, absolutely. I definitely am going to go back to listen to this one, but Joel, thank you so much again for taking time out of your day to just be with us and teach us about fasting and why we should fast. I'm really excited for our listeners to hear this.

Kaley Olson: Meredith, will you point them to a resource that'll help them?

Meredith Brock: Absolutely.

Kaley Olson: Thank you.

Meredith Brock: The first resource, is our free resource library on Proverbs31.org. This is one of my absolute favorite things that we have and that we offer. We often mention things like Online Bible Studies, First 5, our devotions, all the different things we can offer here at Proverbs, but we wanted to make sure and let you know about this incredible, really highly stocked online library, full of free tools to help you in your faith.

Meredith Brock: All you need to do is go to Proverbs31.org and click read, and then scroll right over to the resource library. From there you can find topical and study resources to download and even share with your friends if you maybe have a friend in need. There's prayers for your sons, for your daughters, there's some different, like how to study the Bible, there's all kind of amazing tools in there.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, and they're pretty. Our designers make them really pretty.

Meredith Brock: Yeah, they've been designed really nice. I think we even have a calendar in there or something.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, we have some "for fun" resources that are just for you to download.

Meredith Brock: Good stuff.

Kaley Olson: Anyway, okay, on the pretty train, here we go. The second thing we want to be sure and always point you to is our prayer wall. We did this a lot during our *Therapy and Theology* series and we wanted to do that again; as a ministry we prayer over every prayer request that's submitted. We all have certain days of the week that we're supposed to do that and we know that with the nature of today's podcast episode, you might want us to come alongside you in prayer over something specific that you're praying for while you're fasting.

Kaley Olson: So you can leave us an anonymous prayer request and then just visit our prayer wall. All you have to do is go to Proverbs31.org scroll all the way down to the bottom under Get Connected and click Prayer Requests.

Meredith Brock: Also, my goodness, can we be honest, there's a lot of verbal instructions on these podcasts; it's hard to remember all of them, so please feel free to visit our show notes. All you got to do once again, visit that Proverbs31.org, click Listen, and then Podcast, and you're going to find all the links to all the stuff and all the good things right down there.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, we do that for every episode so you can always go back and find some really cool things that you might not know were there.

Meredith Brock: Yes. Do it.

Kaley Olson: Awesome. Well thanks guys, thanks for joining us on today's episode. We pray that it helps you know the Truth of God's Word and live that Truth out because we know when you do, it changes everything. Have a great week.