Kaley Olson: Well, 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've got a really special cohost and dear friend with me, Melissa Taylor.

Melissa Taylor: Hello.

Kaley Olson: Many of you might remember Melissa from a few teachings we've done on the podcast, so she's really not a guest. She's family here, but she is the senior director of online Bible studies and First 5.

Melissa Taylor: Yes. Hey Kaley, I am so excited to be here with you today. It's always an honor to sit in with you. Okay. I know who's going to be with us today.

Kaley Olson: You do?

Melissa Taylor: I do. Can I just go ahead and let's just get it out right away.

Kaley Olson: I would love for you to spoil the surprise.

Melissa Taylor: Go ahead and spoil the surprise? Okay. All right, everyone, we have the incredible honor to have Max Lucado on the podcast with us today. Can you even.

Kaley Olson: I can't believe it.

Melissa Taylor: Right, right. When did you think you'd be sitting here with Max Lucado?

Kaley Olson: Never in wildest dreams.

Melissa Taylor: Right? Well, before we welcome Max to the show, let me just bring you up to speed about who Max is. Just in case there's two of you that don't know. Okay. Max is an author of many, many books including the bestselling “Anxious for Nothing” that we studied a couple of years ago with online Bible studies. One of my faves. He's also the pastor of Oak Hills Church in San Antonio, Texas, and I could go on, but honestly he's most of all famous to us here at Proverbs 31 Ministries. Max, we want to welcome you to the show.
Max Lucado: You guys are the best. Thank you, thank you, thank you. You’re really kind to let me on the program. I feel honored to have these few minutes with you today.

Kaley Olson: Oh, Max, we are so honored because, I mean, you're like family to us because we've done Bible studies together with you. You've been a part of the Proverbs 31 family for so long, so you're not a guest either, you're family.

Max Lucado: It's fun, and I love coming your way and being in the studio with you in person. I've got to meet just so many people on the team and walk through the offices there. It's an extraordinary ministry that you guys have.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, thank you. Well it's an honor to have you a part.

Melissa Taylor: Sure is.

Kaley Olson: Well, Max, word on the street is that you've got a new book out called “How Happiness Happens” that released in September, 2019, and that's why we have you on the show today. So I would love, before we let you dive into your teaching, can you tell us a little bit about your heart behind the book and what makes it so special to you?

Max Lucado: Well, the fact of the matter is most people are not happy. Even though we have more technological advances than we can possibly keep up with, we can travel more than ever our parents or grandparents imagined. Many people are enjoying some health benefits from medical advancements. Still, only one in three Americans, when asked if they were happy, if they were genuinely happy, only one in three had enough happiness to prompt them to check yes on the questionnaire. And this is the lowest it has ever been. It’s the lowest level of happiness that we’ve ever had. And that really surprised me. It surprised me. And I began to just think and process and wonder what caused this, and what can be done. So this book is basically a response to the low level of happiness that's in our society and hopefully some practical tools that we can put to use immediately to help us learn to discover the kind of happiness that we aspire to have. And I think God wants us to have.

Kaley Olson: Hmm. That is so good, Max. Well, I can't wait to hear you dive more into your teaching. So in true Proverbs 31 podcast fashion, we're going to let you go straight into that. So Max, go ahead and take it away.

Max Lucado: Well, that's a dangerous thing to say to a preacher.

Kaley Olson: Okay, here you go. Nice.

Melissa Taylor: We're ready.

Max Lucado: Give me a couple of hours and then I'll be finished. No, the big idea, the Bible has a lot to say about happiness, and the big idea in Scripture is that we really find happiness when we give happiness. If you want to make sure that you're happier tomorrow than you are today, then make other people happy. It is
really that simple. Jesus said it's better to give than receive. It's better to give than receive. You talk about a surprising flip on the head in our society that says it's better to receive than give. Jesus said no, if you want to really be happy then you become a giver. And the Bible has practical ways to make other people happy, and we call these the “one another” verses. There are 59 that I count in all. Fifty-nine “one another” verses. In the book, I clustered them into 10 chapters. And they read like, “Encourage one another, build one another up, greet one another, pray for one another, love one another.” And I want to talk for just a minute about what I think could be the most difficult of the “one another” verses. And I know that I could have gone two directions here.

Max Lucado: I almost went with the easiest of the “one another” verses, and that is greet one another. That's a fun topic. Maybe you'll have me back to talk about that, but I thought I'd go a little deeper because I think on the other end of the spectrum is the challenge to forgive one another. Forgive one another. Ephesians 4:32 says, "Forgive one another as quickly and as thoroughly as Christ has forgiven you." You know, researchers are finding direct links between happiness and forgiveness. If you want to be happy, in other words, begin giving forgiveness. Researchers from Duke University listed eight factors that promote emotional stability, and four of the eight related to forgiveness. Another piece of research I've found in which researchers related how they invited people to reflect on the person who had done them harm, and just the thought of that person created sweaty palms and facial muscle tension and a higher heart rate and increased blood pressure.

Max Lucado: And then, when asked to imagine forgiving that person, all those physiological issues were reversed. So in other words, health and happiness happen when forgiveness begins to flow. Now I'm a pastor, and so I think that has allowed me to come to appreciate how difficult forgiveness is for people. The fact of the matter is, we get hurt. We get hurt in life. And so at the outset, I want to say that I understand how difficult it is to forgive people. People are listening to me today who have been abused, who've had their hearts broken, who have been lied to, who have been betrayed. Somebody once said, “If hurts were hairs, we'd all look like grizzlies because we've all been hurt so much.” But some of you have been hurting deeply. And to you, I offer this prayer and this admonition. Open yourself up to the possibility of forgiving the person who hurts you, and consider the example that Jesus left us.

Max Lucado: Because when it comes to forgiving other people, He is our model. In fact, that's what Paul says: “Forgive one another, as God in Christ forgave you.” So if you want to think about forgiveness, you'd go to the story of Jesus. And when I think about Jesus forgiving other people, I think about Jesus in the upper room on the night that He was going to be betrayed. And that night, when He was enjoying His final meal with His supper, with His followers, a final supper with His followers. John Chapter 13 says that He rose from the supper. He laid aside His garments. He took a towel and girded Himself, and He poured water into a basin, and He began to wash the disciples' feet and wipe them with the towel with which He was girded. What a moment of drama.
Max Lucado: I would imagine nobody was speaking as Jesus hung His cloak on a hook, put the towel around His waist, poured the pitcher of water, and then emptied the water into a bowl. And the only sound was the splash, and then the next sound would have been the tap of the bowl as Jesus placed it on the floor. Then the shuffle of leather as He untied and removed the first of two dozen sandals. Then He began this process of splashing and washing and massaging and drying. Remember, this is the final night that Jesus will have with these followers before His crucifixion, and I would imagine that He is realizing that He is in His last opportunity to speak to them before He goes to the cross, and yet He takes that precious moment. He takes those precious minutes, and He dedicates them to washing the feet of these disciples. I'm thinking at least two or three minutes a foot, 24 feet. We're well into almost an hour, if not maybe a little longer, that this took.

Max Lucado: Imagine though that on the night before His crucifixion, Jesus took a full hour to wash the disciples' feet, and then He said, "What I have done for you, just as I have done for you, so now you also ought to wash one another's." We all know the story — at least I hope we do — that later that night, as Jesus was arrested in the Garden of Gethsemane, all of His followers ran away. They promised they would stay with Him, but none of them did. They ran, and they hid thinking that they would be arrested themselves. I wonder at what point did they look down at those feet and realize that Jesus had washed their feet? He had washed their feet in advance. He had served them. Basically, He had given them grace before they knew that they needed it. And Jesus said, "If I then your Lord and teacher have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet."

Max Lucado: I want to encourage the listeners today to think about washing people's feet in the basin of grace. "Let's be tenderhearted," the apostle says. Tenderhearted, forgiving one another, tenderhearted. You know, there's a lot of hard-hearted people. We need some tenderhearted people. Forgiveness is the act of allowing the forgiveness of God that we have received to be applied to someone else. Let me just give two or three practical ideas, and then I'll wrap it up. If you're willing, if you're willing to consider forgiving someone else, consider these three or four statements. First of all, decide what you need to forgive. Decide what you need to forgive. Get specific, narrow it down to the identifiable offense to just say, "Well, he's a jerk." That may make you feel good, but that doesn't help. What is it about his behavior that bothers you?

Max Lucado: It could be something like, "Well, he promised to leave his work at home and be attentive at dinner time." Well, now there. That's better. You've narrowed it down. Then number two, ask yourself, "Why does this hurt?" What is it about this offense that stings? What is it about that leaves you as wounded? Sometimes the activities of others trigger a hurt that they themselves did not cause, and we realized that we're holding others hostage or making them pay because of the mistreatment of someone else. Do your best to try to answer that question. Ask yourself why it hurts. And then this is important, step three, take it to Jesus. No one will ever love you more than He does. Let every wound
be an opportunity to draw near to your Savior. Just bring it to Him and say, Lord, it hurts. It just hurts.

Max Lucado: It hurts. Would you help me? And you can be sure that He will. And talk to Jesus, keep talking to Him until the anger subsides, and when the anger comes back, and it often does, just talk to Him again. And then, if it feels safe with a clear head and pure motives, file a complaint. Talk to your offender. Now, this may not be possible and some of you are carrying wounds from people that have passed on from this life. Some of you are wounded by people, and it's probably not best that you'd get back in contact with them. They're just not safe. And so think this through. You may need to get some counsel, but if it makes sense, go to the person and explain your offense. Now don't go to the person and say, “I'm going to forgive you.” That doesn't work. Go to the person and tell them how you feel because of the particular way they've treated you.

Max Lucado: It might be something like this: “We agreed to make our home a haven, yet after dinner, you always get lost in emails and projects. I'm sorry honey, but I feel lonely under my own roof.” Now, if you do this respectfully and honestly, it is a first step towards forgiveness. It may work, it may not. The fact of the matter is you cannot control someone else’s response. You can only control your response to them. Then lastly, I would encourage you to pray for your offender. Just pray for them. You can't force reconciliation, but you can also always offer intercession. And I encourage people to having prayed for the offender and done all they can do, I say conduct a funeral. Just bury that offense, not in your spirit, but I've had people — I tell him, “Take a shovel, go out in the backyard, dig a grave, write on a sheet of paper, the offense. Put it down there, and cover it with dirt and say, ‘Okay, I'm moving on with life.’ And the next time the devil brings it up, you just say, ‘Well, Jesus and I buried that, and we're moving on.’”

The fact of the matter is, the longer you harbor the grudge, the more happiness it's going to take out of your life. So happiness happens as we learn to do what Jesus did for us. As we learn to forgive one another.

Kaley Olson: Hmm. Wow. Max. That was so good, and I love the practicality of those simple steps that you gave us, but I have a thought as you were reading through John 13:3-5, and Jesus washing the disciples’ feet. Something that you pointed out was honestly something that I had missed because what I realized while you were reading through it is that it seemed like Jesus pre-decided to give grace, and He almost pre-forgave them for what they were going to do in denying Him. Am I right in thinking that?

Max Lucado: I like that word, no I like that. I think He was giving them grace for something they had yet to do. He knew they would not keep their promises. He knew that they would abandon Him. So He forgave them. He forgave them in advance. And really that's a picture of a healthy relationship. You know that when we make a covenant one with another, we make a commitment to offer grace even though we don't know how we're going to need to use it.
Kaley Olson: All right. It's a great thing to predecide in a relationship. Is that because you're going to need to forgive and need to be forgiven at some point?

Max Lucado: Yeah. Yeah. Forgiveness is that lubricant that makes the relationship work. Not perfection. Not perfection because we will all disappoint each other, but forgiveness, that's what makes it work.

Kaley Olson: Yeah. That's so good. Melissa, did you have something you were going to say?

Melissa Taylor: Yeah. I don't think I've ever ... if you were to ask me what makes a happy person ... I don't think I would have taken part of it to forgiveness, you know? But it's so true that it is a block to happiness, and when you carry a grudge against someone, I mean, I'm so glad that you have identified this and actually found the statistics even to back it up because when you can forgive someone, it sets you more free than it sets them.

Kaley Olson: Yeah.

Melissa Taylor: And then you're able to go on. And Max, I really liked when you were talking about pray for your offender. Conduct a funeral. I had something happen to me when I was a young girl and needed to forgive as an adult, but the man, he's been dead a long time, and it took me a long time to realize I could forgive someone who wasn't here anymore and what it would do for me and how it was blocking my happiness.

Max Lucado: Yeah, it really does. It takes its toll on us. You know, I can recall opportunities in which I've held grudges, and I just feel like it's weighing me down. It pulls me under. My wife has a great picture of a person who offers forgiveness. Can I share just a time that she forgave me?

Kaley Olson: Absolutely.

Max Lucado: At the risk of being a bit vulnerable here, but it happened, it did. A few years ago, our staff, the church, we had an opportunity to everybody on the church staff to upgrade our smart phones. I'm not too smart, and I'm really not smart with this one phone, and in my practice, all my years that we've had access to social media and smart phones, smart devices, is I have filters. I don't want to ever be in a place where I could be just a click or two away from seeing a woman in a posture that I'm not supposed to.

Max Lucado: And so I've always had filters on my phone. My wife knows the code to those. When we got the new smart phones, they delivered them to our offices, and I was in my office like I was kind of out of circulation. My door was closed and I thought, “Oh, how cool. I can check email, I can do everything and get on the internet,” and then bam, just like that, that thought hit me. I thought, I wonder if this one has a filter on. What I should've done is walked down the hallway and had somebody check, but I did not, and I'm not happy about this, but I entered a link that caused a picture of an undressed woman to appear on my smartphone, and it stunned me. I felt terrible. I put the phone in the drawer and went down
the hallway and found the tech guy’s office, but he was gone for the day. And so I just felt terrible. Felt terrible. Am I going too long on this story? Tell me if I am.

Kaley Olson: No, no, keep going. Melissa and I are like, "Whoa, I can't believe that happened."

Melissa Taylor: We’re hanging on in suspense.

Max Lucado: It gets worse. It gets worse.

Kaley Olson: Oh no.

Max Lucado: I get home, and that phone is in my pocket and I don’t realize it, but the picture of that lady is still up. And I put the phone on the island, what we call it, island, and Denaly, my wife, is cooking dinner, and she looks over and she said, “Oh honey, you got a new phone?” And she reaches for the phone, and she looks it up, and guess what she sees?

Kaley Olson: Oh no.

Max Lucado: So, I mean, I died a thousand deaths. I mean, I died a thousand deaths, and she just looked horrified. She said, I don’t remember what she said, but if something like, “How could you, how could you?” And I tried to explain, but no explanation that works, you know. And the night was pretty icy. It was pretty icy. And we went to bed, and both of us slept fitfully. And I woke up early the next morning.

Max Lucado: It was still dark, and I couldn’t get back to sleep and stepped into the restroom only to realize that she was fit. She had already been up and on my mirror in the shape of a heart drawn with a lipstick were the words, “I still love you, I forgive you.” And I can see that. I can see that right now in my mind. I’ll never forget that moment. I’ll never forget it. It only made me love her more. It only made me resolve to never do that again more. It only deepened my commitment to her, and it made her happier. I mean, she chose to see it for what it was, a dumb mistake, a stupid thing. Now I don’t want to put this in the arena of those who are listening that are saying, “Now my husband, it wasn’t a dumb mistake.” It was extended.

Max Lucado: It was rebellious. I get that. But I would like to just make the point that when my wife chose to bring forgiveness into our home, it saved the moment. It saved the day. It created a deeper love. We have one friend up, we can all do that. Forgiveness is not easy, I think some people would rather memorize the book of Leviticus than try to forgive some people. I get that. But you know what? It’s going to suck the joy out of your life, so get on the pathway to forgiveness, and you never know. You never know what might happen.

Kaley Olson: Oh, that’s great. Max, I have one final question that I want to ask you, and then we can wrap up. So something that I’ve been thinking about is this process can seem like maybe it’s good for something that happens that might be a small offense. But in the Bible, you see it said, “How often should I forgive?” And
Jesus responds, “Seventy times seven,” and that seems like a really big thing to do. But what about for the gal who’s listening right now who says, “Well, that sounds nice, Max. I wish I could do that, but I can’t. I can’t stop forgetting it, and I feel like I have to keep forgiving.” So what does that look like lived out for somebody who needs to keep forgiving?

Max Lucado: Yeah. Yeah. Well two or three thoughts, and again, I’m sure not wanting to minimize at all what happened. Forgiveness. Forgiving is not endorsing. Forgiving is not endorsing. To forgive somebody, it’s not saying what they did was right. Forgiveness is not forgetting. I don’t know who came up with that phrase. Forgive and forget. But boy, if you've been hurt, you just can't forget. It's just going to be a part of your life. So don't beat yourself up by saying, “Well, I'm supposed to forget. That's not in the Bible. But forgiveness is simply the act of entrusting your perpetrator, your offender, into the hands of a just God. God said, “Vengeance is mine. I will repay.” One of the reasons that we find it hard to forgive is because we think, “Well that person needs to get their just deserts. They need to get it, and it’s just not right what they did.” And nobody agrees with you more than God does.

Max Lucado: And God is saying, “I’m going to do. Don't worry. I settle scores. I settle scores.” The fact of the matter is, if I try to settle the score, I either give too much or too little. It's out of our pay grade to settle scores. So don't think you're endorsing their behavior. Don't think you have to forget what you’re doing is you’re saying, “Lord, can You take over this please? Can You take over?” And it's going to be a process. That’s going to be a process. It could take the rest of your life. But you'll gradually move from cursing the person to at least not cursing them, then to maybe even having a nice thought about them. If you can’t have a nice thought, maybe you can even pray for them. It's these baby steps. But if you're trying to forgive, you're forgiving. If you're trying to forgive, you're forgiving. So it's probably never going to ... Yeah, odds are if you're not going to feel that ooey-gooey emotion toward the person, but at least you can get to the point where you're not sticking needles in a voodoo doll.

Kaley Olson: Sure, sure. Well, even in thinking about the title of your book, “How Happiness Happens,” it’s an active thing. And I love the way that you broke it down: Even though forgiveness can be so hard sometimes, it's going to be a process just like happiness is, and you can gradually get there. I love it, Max. Thank you.

Melissa Taylor: That was great.

Max Lucado: But all “one another” versus are not this heavy. There's “greet one another, encourage one another, build.” Those are a lot more fun. For some reason, I felt like we should talk about “forgive one another.”

Melissa Taylor: No, I think that's, that's a big one. That was great. Max, thank you so much for taking the time to be with us on the show today. I know this is going to be incredibly helpful, and I don’t know about you, Kaley. I can’t wait to go back and listen to this ...
Kaley Olson: Oh yeah.

Melissa Taylor: ... myself.

Kaley Olson: And read the rest of the book.

Melissa Taylor: Yes, yes. But before we let our listeners go, we want to leave you with a couple of announcements.

Kaley Olson: Okay, my turn first. We're sure that you want to know how you can purchase Max's book, “How Happiness Happens.” Well, we're here to tell you it's available at any major retailer as well as online, and we'll link to that in some of the show notes.

Melissa Taylor: Yes. And hey, if you guys are interested in going back and doing any of our older online Bible studies, like Max's “Anxious for Nothing” or “Because of Bethlehem,” well we have made it very easy for you.

Melissa Taylor: All you need to do is go to proverbs31.org and click “study” and then click “view past studies.” You can still access the same great teaching that we offer during the study when it's live. It's one of my favorite studies.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, me too. I remember we did a podcast recording on what we learned from “Anxious for Nothing,” and it's still one of our most popular episodes today, so we're going to link to that in the show notes as well.

Melissa Taylor: I love that. Yes.

Kaley Olson: Okay, well, friends, it's time that we say goodbye, so thank you again, Max. Thank you friends for joining us today. We pray that what you heard helps you know the truth of God's Word and live that truth out because when you do, it changes everything. Bye. Thanks. Bye.