

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

Copyright 2018 Proverbs 31 Ministries. All rights reserved.

Meredith:

Hello, everyone. Welcome back to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast, where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and I am here with my cohost, Kaley Olson.

Kaley:

Hi, Meredith. It's great to be back with you today. I want to catch our listeners up on some fun things going on in the ministry so they can just get connected to what's going on here. Why don't you tell them something that you're excited about that's happening at Proverbs 31?

Meredith:

Well, that's an easy question to answer, Kaley. I am really excited because, right now, registration for our annual She Speaks conference is open.

Kaley:

Yay!

Meredith:

If you are an aspiring writer, speaker or have felt the Lord calling you to pursue ministry, this conference is for you, and this year, She Speaks conference is July 30th through August 1st and —

Kaley:

Yes?

Meredith:

I'm excited to tell everyone we have moved the conference from Concord, North Carolina to Uptown Charlotte.

Kaley:

That is so high class.

Meredith:

It really is. And the venue is just awesome.

Kaley:

I feel fancy already.

Meredith:

And it is so fun being Uptown with all the different amenities and restaurants and places, so it's really going to be a really good conference this year.

Kaley:

I'm excited. If you are interested in She Speaks, go ahead and set a reminder to check out shespeaksconference.com to find out more about what the conference has to offer. It's for sure one of my favorite times of the year, and another thing that I wanted our listeners to know about is just our daily devotions called *Encouragement for Today*.

Kaley:

Sometimes I think, because they're the heartbeat of the ministry, it's easy to look at the big things we do, like She Speaks, and then we're like, "Oh, but these *Encouragement for Today* devotions have been around for, I don't even know how many years, like forever," but they are a great way to get connected to the ministry and have emails delivered to you every weekday. I think five days a week.

Meredith:

That's right.

Kaley:

With encouragement on things like being a mom to anxiety or whatever, like what we do on the podcast. It's a short read but it's a great resource.

Meredith:

And it's a great thing to just open up midday. Maybe you're on your lunch break and that workday's been hard. It's a great place to just pause and connect with the Lord. And speaking of our devotions and She Speaks, I am excited to tell you that we have one of our longtime devotions writers and She Speaks presenters here with us today. She has written two books and — right — is down in the weeds on number three right now, folks, that will be released soon to come. But we have with us today, Nicki Koziarz.

Nicki:

Hey, guys.

Meredith:

Welcome to the show, Nicki.

Nicki:

This is so fun. I love being here with you guys.

Meredith:

We're so glad you're here.

Kaley:

Yes, we love getting to be here with people in person.

Nicki:

Yes, Amen. Me too. I'm not sitting on the fixer-upper farm. Praise God. [inaudible].

Kaley:

Although it would have been nice if you would have brought a little cow with you, George.

Nicki:

George. He wanted to come.

Meredith:

I would have taken Herman the dog. Even just Herman.

Nicki:

Do you want to trade Herman and [inaudible]?

Meredith:

I do. I do. Can we make that happen?

Kaley:

Oh my gosh, well, after the show, we'll have to tell you about how you can find out more about people, animals, like George and Herman. I call them people because I feel like they're people, anyway.

Nicki:

I do too. They're my people.

Kaley:

Well Nikki, we're glad you're here and on a little bit more of a serious note, we read one of your devotions that you released recently and I texted Meredith and I was like, "We have to have her on the podcast," to talk about this and unpack it, because I think what you wrote about is going to be really timely for our listeners. So I don't want to give any of your content away, and so I just want you to transition right into what you want to share with us.

Nicki:

Thank you, Kaley. It means so much that this opportunity is coming from that devotion because it came from such a deep place in my heart and I think we're going to have the link to the devotion somewhere.

Kaley:

Yes.

Meredith:

Yes.

Nicki:

So people can find it. But basically what we were talking about in the devotion was an opportunity that I had to go and do a prayer walk across my daughter's school campus. She attends UNC Charlotte, and last year there was something really tragic that happened on the campus at the end of the year. And so Wendy Blight, who is a part of Proverbs as well, her and I, we linked arms and we said, "You know what? We're going to go and we are going to declare God's protection over this campus."

Nicki:

And so we did and so in the devotion, I kind of walk you through some different things. If you want to actually do a prayer walk, I highly, highly, highly recommend it. It is so powerful to put your feet with your faith. There's something about that. But today, I want to talk about kind of one of the verses that was mentioned in the devotion, because there's a deeper teaching that I think we need to understand. So our friend, Joel, who is on the podcast all the time, he really introduced me to a concept when I was writing for First 5 about the difference between God's principles and His promises. And this was very eye opening for me and I want to walk us through what this really means according to Psalm 91.

Nicki:

So when we are studying the Bible, it's really easy sometimes just to kind of cherry pick verses and go, "This is for me today." Right?

Kaley:

Right.

Nicki:

And that's not necessarily a bad thing. I don't want you to hear me say that. But we do have to understand that typically with a promise that God gives us, there's also a principle that goes with it. Wow. So I was thinking today about what kind of our Christian culture has looked like since I've been alive. So I'm 39 years old, so I've walked through almost four decades of life. And back in the '80s, that was kind of the message of our culture — was very much like "Repent, repent, repent." It was very hellfire and brimstone type preaching and it was effective. I mean, people got saved and people came to know the Lord. Some people were scared into coming to know the Lord, but it still happened. So then we had that kind of generation.

Nicki:

Then in the '90s, we really began to see kind of this separation between Spirit-filled churches and Word-filled churches. So the conversation became, "Oh, we're a Spirit-filled church." And then the other conversation, "We just are the Word." And so there was this big division and maybe some of us got a little weirded out by the Spirit-filled churches and we kind of just turned away from that and just focused on the Word or the complete opposite. But can I tell you that I believe that we are living in a generation today where we are going to really see the fulfillment of both. It is both God's principles and His promises. It is both Spirit and Truth. It is both faith and works. It is all these things combined that really lead us to this place of being able to walk boldly before the throne of God in prayer.

Nicki:

And when I read Psalm 91 years and years and years ago, I mean, I remember this passage was preached on so many times in especially my early upbringing, but I want to start by reading the first verse because it's the one that really puzzled me when it came to this idea of God's principles and His promises. It says, *"He who dwells in the shelter of the most high will rest in the shadow of the almighty."* Now, I want to stop there, because I think sometimes we kind of have a picture in our heads of what God really looks like. For some of us, we think of God as this old man sitting on a throne and making all of these judgments and all these things, and then others of us picture the Jesus that we saw on the felt boards when we were growing up in Sunday school.

Nicki:

So when I say, "How do you picture God?", it's going to look different for everybody because we've kind of already built something in us about what we think God looks like. So when I was reading this and I was like, "He who dwells in the shelter of the most high, what does that mean?" And then it says He will rest in the shadow of the Almighty. I got a little bit tripped up by it because it wasn't connecting with everyday language that we use today. So I want to keep going because there's more parts I want to point out that we can kind of make some, I don't want to say false myths, representations of Jesus, but maybe, again, just going back to this is who I have perceived God to be.

Nicki:

So it says, *"I will say of the Lord, he is my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. Surely he will save me from the fowler's snare, and from deadly pestilence. He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and your rampart."* Okay, so stop right there. I never pictured God with feathers.

Meredith:

No.

Kaley:

Nope, not in my picture.

Nicki:

So I got a little tripped up when I was reading and I thought, "Okay, I think I need to take a little bit of time to unpack this." This is why it's so important when we're reading a verse to not just pick it out and just go, "Well, in my head this is what I picture it to be, so that's what it's going to be." So I did some studying on Psalm 91:4 and I found out that, most likely, David was referring back to something called the arc of the covenant.

Nicki:

Now if you're not familiar with arc of the covenant, it's okay. This is a safe place to learn and grow and develop. But basically, long story short, the 10 commandments were in the arc of the covenant and they were given to Moses by God. And so this arc of the covenant was at the tabernacle and it was a very Holy and sacred thing. And when David says He will cover you with His feathers and under His wings, you will find refuge, many Bible scholars believe that he was referring back to what is called the atonement cover. It was the lid that went on the arch of the covenant.

Nicki:

Now here's the most fascinating thing about this: When I was reading about the definition of the atonement cover, I was shocked because I'm going to tell you what it says. So it says, "The atonement cover was the lid for the arch. On top of it stood two cherub angels at two ends facing each other. The cherubs symbols of God's divine presence and power were facing downward toward the arc without stretched wings that covered the atonement cover. The whole structure was beaten out of one piece of pure gold. The atonement cover was God's dwelling place in the tabernacle. It was His throne flanked by angels."

Kaley:

Wow.

Nicki:

Okay, so what did I tell you was in the arc of the covenant?

Kaley:

The 10 commandments.

Nicki:

The 10 commandments. So we have this covering over God's commandments. And when I was studying this and reading this, I kept seeing that word "cover" again and again and again, and I thought, "What does that mean for us when it comes to this idea of principles and promises to be under the covering of God?" Because that's what David is referring to in this verse; he's referring to these two angels that were on top of the arch, and I'm holding my hands up right now. My fingers are pointing at each other. Basically, that's what they looked like, their wings were touching and they were covering. And it was this picture of this is God's presence over these commands. They were Holy; they were sacred.

Nicki:

They were to be taken very seriously. So when David said, "He will cover you with his feathers and under his wings, you will find refuge." Well, what was under the wings? The commands of God. And so this is where I think we get really tripped up as followers of Jesus because we want the promise, right? We want that promise. Oh, yeah. God's going to protect me, He's going to me. But when I came to understand that really the protection is found by coming under the covering of God and then standing upon his promises, that changed everything for me with my prayer life.

Nicki:

So here's the deal. Throughout Psalm 91, and I walk everyone through this in the devotion, there's many parts where we start to see principles and promises. And I'm not going to point them all out. I encourage you to go read Psalm 91 and see where you can see, okay, God says this and then this will happen. But what I want us to kind of camp out on for just a couple minutes today is this idea of standing under the covering and upon the commands of God.

Nicki:

Now, Kaley, Meredith, I don't know if you guys are like this, but I have to keep things really simple with my walk with the Lord. I love theology. I love studying the big words and all the things. But sometimes I just need somebody to say, "Just tell me how to do this in my life," right?

Meredith:

Yeah.

Kaley:

Yeah. For sure.

Nicki:

So I can stand in here all day long and tell you, "You need to stand under the wings and on the commands." But what does that really mean? Right? So what I did was I broke that word, "cover," down into a really powerful thing that has transformed my prayer life. So if we were to take the word "cover," C-O-V-E-R, and separate it and put the C to the left and put O-V-E-R to the right, it would say C, over. And so when I started to see the word "cover" again and again and again used to describe this atonement cover and used the covering over the commandments, I thought there's something to that word. C, over. Because really, when we are asking God to protect us in some way, what we're doing is we're asking God to see over us, right? We may not use that type of language like, "God see over me today," but I'm telling you take this and you apply it, it's going to change everything.

Nicki:

So here's what I do. I take every day that I feel like I just don't even know how to pray today. But I know that there is a lot of things that I need God's principles and His promises for. There's tons of resources where you can go search verses that you need and promises of God and principles of God. But I kind of pulled out some of the ones that I tend to go to on a regular basis. So one of the things that I am really praying for protection right now is over my marriage. And my marriage is not in a bad place, I don't want you to hear me say that, it's just kind of in like a "we're fine" place. And I think that "fine" is when you're just fine with God and you're fine with your walk and you're fine with your marriage is really a dangerous place to be.

Nicki:

You're not in the danger, but you're close to it. And so I have sensed the Lord calling me to pray His principles and His promises over my marriage in a see over type way. So here's what I do. God, I'll say, God, I know that your word says in Ephesians 4:23, "*To be completely gentle and humble with each other and to make every effort to live in peace.*" So today I'm bringing my marriage under Your cover. We are standing upon your commands and I'm asking that You would see over my marriage. Give me the strength to stay under Your covering so that I can live in peace and love Chris, my husband, the way that You love him.

Nicki:

And so it's not just coming before God going, "Oh, my marriage is just fine. I wish things were this way, or I wish things were that way," but it's bringing that principle and that promise from God into the covering and under His wings and asking Him to see over it. But I want to stop here because I think this is where it can get kind of tricky in our heads. So a lot of times we think that we are under the covering of God. We're going through the motions of life and we're doing our things and we're having all the

conversations, but I want to challenge you to really be intentional about being under the covering of God.

Nicki:

So what does that look like? It looks like being in fellowship with other people who believe the things that you believe. It is being around people who are willing to speak truth through the Word of God into your life. It's about being in environments where you are under a leadership, where they are under the authority of God, and you are allowing yourself to grow and develop in those ways.

Nicki:

The problem is when we come out from under the covering, out from under the wings that are covering those commands, out from, well, I know God's Word says this, but I'm just going to do this this one time and I don't know, my opinion is this, we start to step out from under the covering and it can become really messy in our walks with God. And this is not a message we like to talk about because we just want to say like, "I'm just going to declare it and believe it," but again, there's a principle with the promise.

Nicki:

So another one recently that the Lord has been given me when it comes to this idea of praying to see over prayer is I'll pray something like this. Okay, so God, when I'm having just a really hard day and anxiety is really high, I know that that is a real battle in our culture right now, I'll pray something like this, "God, in 1 Peter 5:6-7, You give me a promise that I can cast all my anxiety on You because You care for me. Today feels hard and I'm not sure I can stick everything out, but right now I'm coming under Your covering so that You will see over my every anxious thought today. I know that You're covering brings the promise that You care about everything I am facing today."

Nicki:

And so I hope two examples kind of see how you can bring your problem with a principle and a promise from God under the covering of God. Now I want to give you a little bit of a testimony because sometimes I think we need to hear how God really did this in somebody's life. And I want to be really careful about this because there have been times I have prayed "see over" prayers and I have not seen God answer those prayers the way that I thought they were going to go, so there's definitely been times. But can I just get excited that there was one time that I really saw it happen?

Nicki:

So I was in California at a speaking engagement, as far away from North Carolina as you can be. And I was doing some prep work to get ready for my message that night. And all of a sudden, I got one of these phone calls as a mom you never want to get. And all my husband said was, "Taylor's been in a really bad car accident. I'm on my way. I just wanted you to know," and he hung up. I was like, "What?" You know?

Kaley:

Terrified.

Nicki:

And so, I'm paranoid. And immediately, the Lord said, "Bring it under My covering right now." And so I got out my Bible and I started praying for protection. I prayed instantly. I didn't know the situation. I prayed for healing. I prayed for the right people to step in, that Chris would get there quickly, praying these "see over" prayers over my girl again and again and again. And it was almost 45 minutes later before I would finally get a phone call from her that I could barely even understand what she was saying.

Nicki:

But you guys, she was driving down a road and a semi truck hit her right in her car door. Her car flipped around. The car was totaled, glass was everywhere. There is no reason why that girl should have walked away from that car accident like she did other than the protection of God. Okay, so here's the crazy part of the story. So a couple hours later, I texted one of my friends, or I called one of my friends who lives down the road and I said, "Wendy, I just need you to go hug my girl. I can't get to her right now and I just need you to hug her."

Nicki:

And she said, "Okay, I'm going." So on her way to my house, she stopped at the scene of the accident. The car was still there because we were waiting for the tow truck to come later on. But Chris had taken Taylor home, everyone was gone, the ambulances, the police, everything. But my friend Wendy was just standing in front of, almost in astonishment like, "Thank you God that you did this in this moment." And so here's the crazy part, she looked down at the car door where the semi truck had hit her dead on and there, right next to the door was this big white feather. And she picked up the feather and she sent me a picture and I started bawling because it was the tangible evidence of what it means to pray a "see over" prayer for your family, for your kids, for God to do something.

Nicki:

Now where that feather came from, I don't know, but I know that my God put it there so that my faith could increase in that moment and I could show that to Taylor. I mean, that accident strengthened her faith in a way that I'm not sure anything else could have in that season of her life. And so I have the feather and it's framed in one of those little shadow boxes. And we have this verse, Psalm 91:4, that says, "*He will cover you with his feathers. And under his wings you will find refuge. His faithfulness will be your shield and rampart.*" So here's the bottom line. We've got to remember, it's about the principles and the promises when we're coming before God asking Him to pray or believing God for prayers of protection or boldness or courage, whatever it is.

Nicki:

We've got to remember that it is both Spirit and Truth when we are approaching the Word of God. There are very tangible things that we need to hold onto and then there are things that the Holy Spirit needs to reveal. Like when I read this and I was like, "I didn't know God had feathers," He didn't. But it allows the Holy Spirit to go, "Lean into this more, study this more, unpack this more." And remember that there will always be some type of evidence. You may not find a feather at the car door every single time, but if you stay in this place of coming under the covering of God and standing upon the commands of God, you will see the tangible evidence of God's protection. Because that's the promise that He gives us in Psalm 91.

Meredith:

Wow. Nikki, that is, first of all, an amazing story. Praise God that your daughter is okay, but what a beautiful gift that the Lord gave you. To be able to hold on to, I mean, I'm just so touched and amazed and the teaching, gosh, "see over" prayers. So good for us, an easy way to remember something. But I have a question for you.

Nicki:

Absolutely.

Meredith:

So as I was listening and I was just trying to kind of apply this to my own self, I guess you would say, as you were talking, I was recognizing that a "see over" prayer really requires a certain level of humility and a willingness to say, "God, I want to come under Your authority and I believe that Your authority is good for me." And if I'm honest, I'm a pretty stiff-necked gal. And sometimes that's really hard for me.

Nicki:

Absolutely.

Meredith:

Really, really hard for me to trust. I have a lot of trust wounds, I would say, from my lifetime and childhood. And so it's really hard for me to really come underneath the authority of God and believe that He's going to do what He says He's going to.

Nicki:

Absolutely.

Meredith:

So what would you say to the gal who's like, "I want to believe this, I want to do these 'see over' prayers, but I'm having a hard time getting from here to here"?

Nicki:

Yeah. So thank you for sharing that because I don't think a lot of people are willing to admit that. But honestly, if we were all going to get down to it, we all have trust issues with God. Nobody wants to say that in the church. I trust God all the time. No. We all do. But here's what I would say: Just try it. Don't try it from a place like, "I'm going to test you, God, on this," because the Bible says the only thing that we should ever test God is with our finances and our giving.

Nicki:

So we can't approach God like with this, "Well, I'm just going to test this out and see." But I would say go at it one or two times. You may not land on it 100% the first time, but when these types of ... You don't even have to call them a "see over" prayer, you can call it whatever you want. But when this becomes part of your, I would say, your reactive process to the problems that are presented. So one of the things that I'm really working on right now is retraining my mind because I, as an [inaudible], I tend to go to worst-case scenario, But God is not a God of worst-case scenario, that's not who He is.

Nicki:

And so I will pray these prayers of “God, I’m bringing my mind under Your covering right now and I’m standing upon Your commands that say that we need to have thoughts like Yours. And so God, I need You to see over my thoughts right now.” And just try it. Give it just a little bit of faith, that mustard seed faith. Just try it once.

Meredith:

That’s good Nicki.

Nicki:

And see what God does through it. I have a feeling God honors a heart like yours more than He honors a heart that’s like, “Oh, yeah. My God’s got all this under control.” And He doesn’t question our question. And He’s not questioning spirits that come before Him, like, “Okay God, this is really hard for me to trust you in this, but I’m going to try.”

Meredith:

There have definitely been seasons in my life where the only prayer I could really get out of my mouth was, “God, I want to want to do what you want me to do. I don’t have the ‘want’ to want to do it. So can you help me want to do it?” And He has consistently met me there. So for the girl who’s listening right now who just says, “Man, I don’t know if He’s going to come through. I don’t even want to pray that because I’m afraid to pray it because what if I do? It just makes me too vulnerable. He’s not going to show up and then my heart is going to hurt,” and all of that. Just take one honest step towards God.

Kaley:

Yes. I love that. An honest step.

Meredith:

It’s just one honest step towards Him. Even if that’s you saying, “God, I don’t want to pray to You. I don’t want to because I’m afraid You won’t show up.” He hears that and is going to meet you right in that moment the way that you specifically need to be met. So good. So good. Kales, I want to know what’s on your mind.

Kaley:

Yeah, well I was just thinking about for the people who might not have grown up in church and memorizing Scripture. Like I did the felt boards, I did Bible drill, but I still don’t know all the verses there are to know about specific situations. When you talked about anxiety, not everybody knows to go to a specific verse in the Bible and I just thought, the back of the Bible where it lists out anxiety and there’s 10 Scriptures. I just think for me that’s what I’m taking away from this is instead of just opening up my Bible and trying to find a verse on my own, utilize the resource that’s available for me and then don’t just read the verse, like you said, read the context around it so I’m not taking the promise out of context.

Nicki:

God has feathers, yep.

Kaley:

Yes. Yes. It's all how we picture Him, but take that and then apply it to my life and start reading and learning what the truth is so that I can begin to live that.

Nicki:

Actually come under.

Kaley:

I mean, that's what we do at Proverbs all the time. We preach, "Know the Truth, then live the Truth." That kind of changes everything, but you can't live what you don't know. And so I think one way to just educate yourself is you don't have to be a Bible scholar. There are so many resources online. Even our devotions right now, I know that you can do a word search on our website for anxiety or marriage or whatever it is and there will be something that pops up that allows you to then take that into your own personal journey and bring that to the Lord. So that was really helpful for me.

Nicki:

So that's old school. How we used to do it back in the day was we would just go to the back of the Bible and go, "Hey, what's my issue today?" And I mean, I encourage you to get a good study Bible because it will have all of these words. But I mean, I'm just looking at mine right now, but everything from searching, what are you searching for in your heart right now? And God's satisfying you and just, I mean, everything, rumors, right here. I mean, it's all in here. I think sometimes we're looking for someone to be our mentor and our guide through life. This is it right here.

Meredith:

Yeah. The Word of God.

Nicki:

All the answers are in there and the principal and the promise is in there too. You might have to dig for it, but it's in there.

Meredith:

Man, and when you dig though, I will add, when you dig and you find it and the Lord meets you there, that little —

Nicki:

Changes everything.

Meredith:

— And that little nugget that you dug for and the Lord met you, it's just like gold. It's such a gift. It's such — you. Well Nicki, thank you so much for being here today. I want to tell our friends who are listening, one, the examples that you gave, those prayer examples that you gave, is there anywhere they can get those? Because those were super good.

Nicki:

Yes.

Meredith:

Okay.

Nicki:

Yes.

Meredith:

Okay. Can you point them in the direction of where they can find those? Because I think there are some girls listening who said, "I need to pray that exact prayer over my marriage."

Nicki:

Yes. Absolutely.

Meredith:

Okay, so help them find it.

Nicki:

You can go to nickikoziarz.com and click on "freebies" and the concept is from the book, *Five Habits of a Woman Who Doesn't Quit*. And so we have the expanded version from the book as a freebie on my website. Just got to pop your email in there, I promise I won't annoy you. And you'll get it right into your inbox. It's a beautiful PDF.

Meredith:

Wonderful. That's great. And just for the daily, they can find you on Instagram, Facebook?

Nicki:

They can find me and George and Fred and [inaudible].

Meredith:

Y'all want to look at Herman; he's the cutest pug you've ever seen.

Nicki:

He is cute, yes.

Meredith:

He's so cute. And every once in a while, Nicki will bring him onto the social media.

Nicki:

I do; he hasn't made an appearance in a while. Maybe he needs to come.

Meredith:

He needs to come back.

Nicki:

Yeah.

Kaley:

I need him in my life.

Nicki:

George has stolen all the thunder.

Meredith:

George. That's great. Well, thank you so much for being here.

Nicki:

Thank you.

Meredith:

Yes, absolutely. Well maybe if you're listening to this, you want somebody to come alongside you and join you in prayer and at Proverbs 31, we have a great resource for you to be able to tell us what you want us to pray for you for, and you can find that on our website at proverbs31.org. When you scroll all the way down to the bottom, there's a link that says "prayer request." One thing that I love that our staff does is we have a little sign-up sheet that's a little Excel sheet and we all go in and put an X next to the day that we're going to pray over the things on the prayer wall for.

Meredith:

And so just know whenever you submit something that is on your heart, maybe it's something that you really need God's protection over, we want to join you in that and so we would love to pray with you. So just check it out at proverbs31.org.

Kaley:

Well, that's about all we have for today. Thank you for listening friends. And we pray that Nikki's message will really help you know the truth of God's Word and live out that Truth because we know that when you do, it really will change everything.