

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Meredith: Hi everyone. It's Meredith, and I wanted to thank Dwell for supporting the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast. Visit dwellapp.io/proverbs to get a 20% discount and start using your ears to renew your mind. That's dwellapp.io/proverbs for 20% off an annual or lifetime subscription.

Now, onto the show.

Kaley: Hello friends, and thanks for tuning in 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 cohost Meredith Brock.

Meredith: Well, hi, Kaley. I am so glad to be here with you today. I am really glad it's fall.

Kaley: Yes.

Meredith: All things pumpkin spice and leaves in the air.

Kaley: Everything nice.

Meredith: I know, right? It's lovely and I'm excited because we have a lot of really fun things going on at Proverbs 31 right now.

I want to share a little bit with our listeners about an opportunity that maybe they haven't heard us talk about before, but maybe they have.

We have a program around here called the COMPEL Writers Training platform. If you're new, I want to fill you in on what to do—what you can do with COMPEL.

What it is—is really it's exactly that. It's an online platform for our friends who want to learn how to write words that move people.

Kaley: Yes.

Meredith: Maybe God has placed a message on your heart to just write out your story. Maybe just in a web, blog format. COMPEL Writers Training is for you. Maybe God has put a book in your heart, and you want to pursue publishing. This is also a fantastic way to get access

to literary industry professionals. That can help train you and teach you the ways of the literary industry. We wanted to let you know that registration for COMPEL Writers Training only opens a couple times a year.

Kaley: Yes.

Meredith: It is open right now until October 23rd. Don't miss out. If you are listening to this in real time, not after October 23rd, you better hustle over there and sign up to be a part of that program because it's really amazing professional training in a very doable way.

Kaley: Yeah. In a community format. Meredith, one of my favorite things about COMPEL is the access that members have to industry professionals.

Meredith: Right.

Kaley: As well as the...

Meredith: Community.

Kaley: Proverbs 31 staff. Yeah. Our special guest today has actually done a teaching on COMPEL.

Meredith: Oh, I didn't know that.

Kaley: If that's not incentive enough to join COMPEL, yes. But he's no stranger to the podcast—and yes, I did say he.

Meredith: That's right.

Kaley: Meredith, you and I were actually joking about this, but also very serious when we call him the Proverbs 31 staff pastor, because he's here every year.

Meredith: It's true.

Kaley: He pastors us once a year.

Meredith: It's true.

Kaley: Whether it's on the podcast or through OBS, because we've just had a relationship with him for so long. We're so excited to have him back with us on the podcast today. Everyone say hello to our friend, Mr. Max Lucado.

Max: Well, good morning. Good morning or good afternoon, whenever you're listening to this! May God's richest blessings be upon you all. It's a treat. I mean a treat beyond words to be back with you. I trust that all of you are doing well.

Kaley: Max. We're so excited to have you with us today. I wish that we were all in the same room together.

Max: Wouldn't that be true? Yeah.

Meredith: Yeah.

Kaley: Yeah.

Max: Typically we are, right?

Kaley: I know.

Max: Typically where we are. By now I would have spent the night in the hotel there not far from your offices and we'd be having a nice cup of coffee, but we're grateful that we can at least connect, even though it's virtually.

Meredith: That's true.

Kaley: Absolutely. Max is on the show today to share a teaching based on his new book, which just released, called *You Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence and Power*.

Max, random question for you. What book number is this? Do you know?

Max: Yeah, that's a good question.

Meredith: Pop quiz.

Max: I think I'm in the forties now.

Kaley: That's crazy.

Max: As far as these major trade releases go. That doesn't count the children's books, which I love to write. Also some special gift books. We do one or two of those a year. My philosophy is just go with quantity, not quality in [inaudible].

Meredith: That is not true. I will not let you say that. Only because I just know Max, your gift with words have blessed so, so, so many people. Keep writing. We need you to, we want to hear that message that God has given you.

Kaley: Yeah. Absolutely.

Max: I was really glad that you're offering your COMPEL Writers Training. I would have loved to have had some training. I mean, honestly I would have loved, I would have jumped. I'd have been the first to sign up back in 1984 when I was trying to write my first book. I

was clueless, I was clueless what to do. I'm so thankful that you guys offer this opportunity to prospective writers.

Meredith: Well, thank you so much. Thank you so much.

Kaley: Yeah, absolutely. Well, Max, we can't wait to hear what you're going to share with us today. Do you want to go ahead and dive into your teaching?

Max: I will. I will. This new book, excuse me, *You Are Never Alone*, invites all of us to invite Christ into the stormiest seasons of our lives. In it I look at the miracles of Christ as recorded in the Gospel of John.

I know we're all passing through a stormy time right now, and we need to anchor deep. We need to lay hold of the character of the compassion of our heavenly father. One way to do that is by exploring these miracles that occur or that are recorded by John in his Gospel.

When I think about a stormy season, I think about the stormiest season of my life. It happened when I was 12 years old. I was old enough for baseball, old enough for football, old enough for bike riding, old enough to have a crush on a girl, old enough to own a bottle of English Leather cologne. I was old enough to know the difference between a verb and an adverb, but I wasn't old enough to process what happened to me that year. Sexual molestation at the hands of an adult man.

He entered my world under the guise of a mentor. He befriended several families in our small west Texas town. I remember that he was a witty fella, charming, always had a joke. What we did not know, what none of us knew, is that he had an eye out for young boys. He would have us over for burgers. He'd take us on drives in his truck. He took us hunting. He took us fishing. He offered to answer all the questions that young men, young boys have. He owned the magazines that my father did not allow, and he would do it, and he made us do some things that I will never repeat, but I cannot forget.

One weekend camp out was especially perverse. He loaded five of us in a pickup truck and drove us to a campground. Now, please keep in mind that I'm an old man. These days I'm describing were way before cell phones. We had absolutely no way of calling to get somebody to come and help us. We realized that among his pack of tents and sleeping bags were a few bottles of whiskey. He drank his way through the weekend. He worked his way through the sleep...

He told us not to tell our parents, implying that we were to blame for his misbehavior and by swearing us to secrecy, he said he was keeping us from getting into trouble. What a louse, what a louse.

I came home on that Sunday afternoon feeling filthy and shame ridden. I'd missed a communion service at our church that Sunday morning. If ever I needed communion, it was that day. I staged my own Eucharist. I waited until mom and dad had gone to bed and I went into the kitchen. I couldn't find any crackers. I couldn't find any wine. My

parents didn't drink wine. I looked for grape juice. I couldn't find any grape juice. I found potatoes and I found milk and that would have to do. I put the potatoes on a saucer, poured the milk in a glass. I celebrated the crucifixion of Christ and the redemption of my soul.

To this day, I can see myself. I can see myself. Maybe you can conjure up the image of a pajama-clad, red-headed, just bathed, freckle-faced boy as he stands near the kitchen sink. He breaks the potato, and he sips the milk, and he receives the mercy of the Savior. Now what I lacked in liturgy that morning, or that evening, that moment was made up for in tenderness.

I want to say something. That is, Jesus met me in that moment. He met me in that moment. I sensed him. I sensed him. I sensed his kindness, I sensed his presence. Don't press me on how I know he was near, I just know he was, I knew he was. Here's what's key. He healed me. He healed me from that moment from that weekend. He just cleansed me.

He performed an act that I will never, ever forget. The storm was severe, but my Lord was near. I learned a lesson that I pray all of us can learn. That is that Christ comes to us in the middle of storms. All of us face storms. All of us do. No one gets through life scot-free. At one point or another, the sky is going to darken; the winds are going to rage. We're going to find ourselves in the modern-day version of a Galilean storm.

My Bible is open to John Chapter 6, reading about the most famous storm in the Bible, "*When evening came, his disciples went down to the lake, where they got into a boat and they set off across the Lake for Capernaum. By now, it was dark. Jesus had not yet joined them. A strong wind was blowing and the waters grew rough.*" I would imagine that the hearts of the followers that night began to sink as their boat was sure to do.

It was a long storm. They searched the sky for a break in the clouds. They gripped the boat for fear of the waves, they screamed their prayers for help, but they heard nothing. If only Jesus was here with them in the boat, if only Jesus had told them to stay on the shore, but he was not in the boat. He was the one who told him to cross the water. Consequently, this moment had all the elements of a crisis.

Now, many of us are going through a crisis right now. Many listeners are concerned about their health, concerned about their income. Concerned about division in the country. They know well, you know well, you know well, what a storm is like. Boy the disciples did. In verse 19 of Chapter 6, they had rowed about three or four miles. I did a little calculation, and I found out that with a good current, a boat can cover a mile every 30 minutes, but against the waves and the winds, they set out at sunset and according to Mark Chapter 6 in verse 48, they were still rowing at 3:00 in the morning.

This was no carefree float trip on a lazy river. This was backbreaking, boat-bouncing, terrorist-stirring, push-and-pull of the oars. I can imagine. I can only imagine that they were crying out in the storm. I don't know if I can survive. I don't know how much longer I can last.

Matthew Chapter 14 says, "*They were in the middle of the sea, tossed by waves for the wind was contrary.*" I wonder if that describes your life right now? In the middle of the sea tossed by ways for the wind is contrary. Too far from the shore, too far from a solution, too long in this struggle, too long in the court system, too long in the hospital, too long without a good friend, too small against the waves—too small, and too alone.

The storm controlled the disciples that night. It was all they could think about. Stormy times, all we can think about is the storm. All we can think about is the divorce. All we can think about is the abuse. All we can think about is the economic crisis. In many ways, we don't have control over the storms that come. Sometimes we create our own, absolutely. But here's the case, the disciples just did what Jesus said. They still ended up in a storm.

Don't you know, they thought that storm would never end. But then the unimaginable happened. They saw Jesus approaching the boat, John 6 in verse 19, "*They saw Jesus approaching the boat, walking on the water and they were frightened.*" Now for my taste, I'd like a little more description. I'd like John to say, "Now tell me people don't walk on the water. What did Jesus look like? Was his hair blown back? Was he ankle deep? Was his robe wet?"

But Jesus doesn't give... John doesn't give any details. He just says, "*They saw Jesus walking on the water,*" and folks, that's all we need to know. That's all we need to know that Jesus can come to us in the middle of a storm. Before he stills the storm, he comes in the midst of the storm.

Now here's the punchline. Here's what Jesus said to the disciples, verse 20. He said, "*It is I, don't be afraid.*" That's all he said, "*It is I, don't be afraid.*" Now the literal translation of what Jesus said is, "I am. I am. Don't be afraid."

You remember, "I Am" is God's name. Ever since Moses saw the burning bush that refuse to burn up, God has called himself I am.

All Jesus did, all He did was walk in the middle of the storm and state His name. What a powerful moment. This was for them. What a powerful moment this is for us. When we wonder if God is coming, He answers with His name, "I am." When we wonder if He's able, He declares, "I am." When we see nothing but darkness, and feel nothing but doubt, and wonder if God is near or aware, the welcome answer from Jesus is, "I am."

I'd like for each and every one of you to pause for just a moment and let God tell you His name. Your greatest need is his presence. Yes, you want this storm to pass. Yes, you want the problem to be solved. Yes, you want the winds to be still, but yes, yes, yes, you need to know the name of God. You need to know that "I am" is near.

Meredith: Hey guys, we're going to get right back to Max's teaching in just a moment, but we couldn't let another second go by without mentioning the Dwell Bible app. One thing we can do to remind ourselves we're not alone is to spend time in Scripture with the one who will never leave us. What I really like about the Dwell app is that it's another way

for me to engage with God's Word through listening, because I'm a mom, and I really have to fight for time in God's Word. Dwell makes it easy to meditate on Scripture throughout my day, when I might not have had enough time in the morning.

Also, I love that I can make the Dwell app my own and that it keeps track of what I've recently listened to so that I can go back and listen again or pick up when I left off because maybe one of my kids needed something. Visit dwellapp.io/proverbs to get a 20% discount and start using your ears to renew your mind. That's dwellapp.io/proverbs for 20% off an annual or lifetime subscription.

Now back to Max.

Max: There's a promise in Isaiah Chapter 43 that is yours today. God says, "Don't be afraid. I've redeemed you. I've called your name, you're mine. When you're in over your head, I'll be there with you. When you're in rough waters, you won't go down. I am God, your personal God, the Holy of Israel, your savior, so don't be afraid. I am with you." That's Isaiah Chapter 43.

Oh dear friend, I know you'd rather not have this storm. Or if the storm comes, you want it to be mild and your deliverance quick. Let the strife turn quickly to romance. Let the confusion turn quickly to clarity. Sometimes it does, but when it doesn't, when it doesn't, when we are four acts deep in the turbulence of life, Jesus wants us to hear His name. He wants us to hear Him say, "I am. I am coming."

Such was the experience of the disciples. The moment they invited Jesus into their boat was the moment they reached their destination. John Chapter 6 in verse 21, "*They gladly took him aboard and at once the boat reached the shore they were making for.*"

I just encourage us all to follow the example of the disciples. Welcome Jesus into the midst of this turbulent moment in which you find yourself. Don't let this storm turn you inward. Let the storm turn you upward.

I close with this story from my friend, Katherine Wolf. Katherine on April 21st, 2008, suffered a massive stroke. She didn't lose her life, but she lost her ability to walk, to talk clearly and care for herself. She went from being a California model to a wheelchair-bound patient. Since that day, she's endured 11 surgeries and daily fights to regain her strength. More than once, she has felt like giving up. On one of those occasions, the day before Thanksgiving, she was seven months into her ordeal.

In her book. Here's how she describes it. She says, "Despair washed over me as I watched Jay," her husband, "And his sisters playing with James," their baby, "Lifting him in the air and running around in circles, laughing out loud while I could barely hold my head up because my neck wasn't strong enough yet. I found myself wondering: has God made a mistake? I've gone from making lasagna in my kitchen to being fed all my meals through a tube in my stomach. I've gone from wearing a cute outfit every day to wearing adult diapers and hospital gowns. I should be in heaven right now. Then at least every one's pain would eventually come to an end."

I can only imagine how difficult that was for her from one moment to the next her world was flipped upside down, yet as her heart began to sink, look what happened. She describes that God met her in the storm.

I'm reading again, "Then suddenly before those thoughts had even fully landed in my head, before they had landed in my heart, I felt a deep awakening of the word of God, which I had known since I was a little girl. I could almost hear this rapid fire succession of truths in Scripture, like a dispatch from God himself. He said to me, 'Katherine, you are not a mistake. I don't make mistakes. I know better than you, I'm God and you are not. Remember you were fearfully and wonderfully made in your mother's womb. There's a purpose in all of this. Trust me, I'm working everything out for your good. Don't doubt this truth just because you are in the darkness now. What's true in the light is true in the dark. I have chosen you. Live a life worthy of the special calling you have received.'"

Then she states this, "Something supernatural occurred in those moments. As those truths hit me hard. God met me in the midst of the messiness of my life, and I felt fresh. I felt fresh determination to press on and persevere. I suddenly felt extraordinary in spite of my terrible pain. That moment changed me forever. It was the epiphany of my hope. I knew deep inside that my earth suit, my body, was only temporary, but I would never lose my heart in this situation because my soul was not what was wasting away. My body didn't work and that was all."

I close my message today to you precious listeners with this invitation: don't try to weather this storm alone. Keep rowing, bale the water, but above all, invite Jesus to enter your boat. Believe that you're never alone. That our miracle-working God sees you, that he cares about you, that He will come to your aid. For all you know, He may perform an immediate deliverance. You may reach your destination before you have a chance to wipe the rain off your face. He's still the great I am. when we find ourselves in the midst of Galilean waters with no shore in sight, He will come to us. The next time you pray, "Is anyone coming to help me?" You just listen for the response of Jesus, "I am with you in the storm."

Kaley: Wow, Max, that was so good.

Meredith: Gosh, what a word for our listeners today.

Kaley: What a refreshing way to hear that story and think about the concept of I am. I feel the story of Jesus walking on water is so familiar that we think about the miracle of Him walking on water and Max, whenever you were talking about this story and you said, "When we wonder if He's able, He says, 'I am,'" and you talked about the phrase when Jesus said, "I'm here," it was "I am."

I've never heard about it in that type of context. It just made me think about how much more personal this makes Jesus in the midst of everything that we're going through and how much this would change my prayer life. Because when I am going through something really difficult am I asking Jesus for something? Or I am I fully inviting His

presence in and inviting Him to be the solution to my problem? Yes, He is the healer. Yes, He is provider. Yes, He is, but yes He is I am.

If I changed that, that's really the miracle that I need. Is to recognize His presence in my life and operate out of fully trusting and fully believing that He is everything that I need.

This is so good, Max.

Meredith: So good. So good. I want to drill down into that thought a little bit Max, because I'd love some practical pointers for our friends, our listeners. Because you said a line that I thought was so profound. You said, "Before He stills the storm, he comes in the midst of the storm."

Sometimes it's really hard. I know in my life, when I've been in the midst of a storm, the pain can scream so loud. It's hard to even hear anything other than the pain and the confusion that maybe I'm in the midst of. I think it's so interesting that you said that they don't describe Jesus walking on the water. I'd like to know. I also would like to know what he looked like. Was his hair wet or was it totally dry?

Was he—but that led me to think sometimes when we're in pain, it's hard to recognize Jesus and it's hard. Max, maybe you could give our listeners some practical pointers or when you are in that place of pain and that place of chaos, what can they do to recognize Jesus, practically speaking?

Max: I appreciate that question because that's really important. I think two ideas are helpful. Number one, don't interpret the presence of pain as the absence of God. There's nothing in the Bible that would lead us to believe that God said you're not going to have pain in your life. There's absolutely nothing. If you were taught that, somebody taught you erroneously. It's just not in there.

From the table of contents in the Bible to the maps in the back, there's struggles, there's struggles. There's absolutely no indication that if you are walking with Christ, you're not going to have any pain. You might even say it's quite the contrary because when you're walking with Christ, you suddenly get on Satan's hit list.

Meredith: That's right.

Max: He wants to bring you down. just expect it. The Apostle Paul expected it.

Peter expected it. Mary expected it. Nobody said, "Oh good. Finally. I'm a follower of Christ, there's never going to be any struggles." Just kind of acknowledge, "Okay, the fact that I'm in a difficult moment..." Doesn't mean that at all.

Then the second thing don't depend on your feelings, depend on the promise.

Meredith: That's good.

Max: We don't feel like God is near. I know I shared that story earlier of a childhood moment and once I sensed the presence of God. There have been other occasions in which the challenge was every bit as severe, but I did not sense His presence. It was dry. I felt dry. I felt bland. I felt flat-lined.

In those moments, you've just got to trust the promise of God. The promise of Jesus is, "Never will I leave you. Never will I forsake you. I am with you always, to the end of the age. Be anxious for nothing, but in everything by prayer and supplication, let your request be made known to God because He is here." He is here.

These promises that we have in Scripture, that's our go-to place. Our feelings can come and go. Sometimes they're dependable, many times they're not. Many times they're simply moods. They're just emotions that we're feeling as a result of the storm. When you feel God's presence, wonderful—God bless you. But when you don't, don't trust your feelings. Trust the promise of Scripture.

Meredith: I love that. I love that you actually opened up at—this is the another quote I wrote down. It's just so perfect, I think for our listeners to walk away with, to close this episode out with. You said, "Lay hold of the character and compassion of Christ."

Lay hold, sweet listener who's listening right now—grab hold of who God is in His Word and who He has proven Himself to be and the compassion that He shows over and over and over again for those of us who are walking through crisis and may be in pain right now. So good.

Kaley: Mm-hmm. Absolutely. Well, Max, thank you so much for coming on the show with us and sharing this teaching today. It was so, so powerful. I want to let everybody know about your new book, because I know that whoever is listening probably wants a copy right now.

Meredith: I know I do.

Kaley: To learn more on this stuff ... I know I want one too. If you're listening to this, you can get Max's new book anywhere books are sold. Again, it's called *You Are Never Alone: Trust in the Miracle of God's Presence and Power*.

Meredith: Also, let's not forget about what we talked about at the top of the episode, and that is our COMPEL Writers Training. We really want to encourage you, if you have a message in your heart that you're ready to share through the written word, please join us at compelwriterstraining.com, where you can get registered to be a part of that program.

Kaley: Absolutely. Well, everyone, we're so glad that you guys tuned in today, and we pray this episode helps you know the truth of God's Word and live out that truth because we believe when you do, it changes everything. See you next time.