

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Katy McCown: Okay, thank you so much. And you know, I'm going to start by telling you about a time in my life in the last year that wasn't so peaceful. Believe it or not, 2020 began for me in January with my dad getting sick.

He actually went to the hospital for the first time the last Sunday of December. So, we truly began 2020 with Dad sick. And he spent the next four to six weeks, after that first trip to the hospital, he spent the next four to six weeks in and out of the hospital. And they ran different tests. And they would think that they had identified the problem, and they would send him home because he got a little bit better. And then, within two, three, maybe even less time, two or three days, he would be back in the hospital again. So there was a whole lot of unknown. And there was a lot of continuing to be so sick that he had to be back in the hospital. And during that time, a few things happened in my personal life, as I was handling this with my dad and turning to the Lord.

But I noticed a few things. So, two things I noticed. First, what I really wanted was just to know what was going on. I found myself turning to God, not necessarily seeking God, but asking God to tell me what's going on. Not necessarily turning over control, but really wanting God to just let me in on what was going on, so that I can feel like I had control.

And I did a lot of walking during that time, as much as I could outside around my house. And I was walking one day, and I was having that familiar conversation with God. I mean, my soul was ... I was afraid. I was afraid. I was worried about what would happen in the future. I felt a little bit hurt because I didn't know what was going on, and I felt like God, I was wishing for more of an answer from Him.

But what I really felt like God was drawing me to do was not ask Him for answers, was not ask Him to tell me how to fix it. But I was sensing that God was asking me to simply trust in and rely on Him maybe just for the very next step, not the entire picture. And that was really the first part.

But I'll tell you what else I found myself doing, and we're going to talk a lot more about this in a minute. I found myself in every, almost every waking moment looking for answers specifically on my phone, or on my computer. I was googling every possible situation, searching symptoms, searching, honestly, you guys, I'm searching timelines. Like, if this is what dad has, how long? How much longer does he have? I honestly just want, I was searching and fixing my eyes on these websites, on what doctors said, on what people who might have experienced similar things said.

I was letting my eyes stay in those places all of the time, because I was looking for answers there. All the while God was saying, Katy, I want you to rely on Me, maybe not for the answer, maybe not for the full picture, but rely on Me right now in this moment.

And what I began to realize is that He was asking me to fix my eyes on Him, instead of all of those other websites, and all of those other search engines, and all of the other words from other people about my dad's situation.

And that's what I want to talk to you about. Because I mean, Meredith and Kaley just laid it out so well: the ups and the downs of life, the seasons of life. We know they're coming. And no matter what season, maybe you're there right now, you're in a season of uncertainty. I know so many of us having come through 2020, there's just a lot of carryover of those seasons. And what we do with our eyes, this is what I want to share with you today, what we do with our eyes can be a really practical way. During these seasons of uncertainty, or sadness, or just not knowing what the future holds, where we fix our eyes can be a very practical way that we can remain those peaceful women and those steady women during that time.

So, I want to read to you a verse in Hebrews, Chapter 12. It's actually the end of verse one and the beginning of verse two in Hebrews, Chapter 12. And this is what it says, *"let us run with endurance the race that is set before us, looking to Jesus, the founder and perfecter of our faith."* "Looking to Jesus," and some translations will say, we do this by *"fixing our eyes on Jesus,"* just laying it out there really playing: *"Let us run with endurance the race marked out for us."*

I think endurance is a word that we can all be a little familiar with right now. That's what we need for this leg of the race. And I know we're all facing different things. But I think endurance is something that is required of this race that is marked out for us. And so, how can we run this race with endurance no matter what we face? [and] Hebrews 12:2 tells us we do this by looking to Jesus.

So I want to talk a little bit more about that, because it can sound really simple. Okay great, we just need to look to Jesus.

But the fact of the matter is, when we think about looking to something, we think about taking our eyes and placing them on something physical, like I did with my dad. I placed my eyes on a physical news article or website or something like that. There was something literally in front of my eyes.

And so, when we talk about fixing our eyes on Jesus, it may bring up the question, "Well, how do we do that?" Because we do not have the physical body of Jesus in front of us in the ways that His disciples did when He was present on the earth with them. They could physically look to Jesus and His body, and see where He went, and follow Him there. So how can we do that if we don't have that physical body of Christ to fix our eyes on? And that's what I want us to look into a little deeper today.

And in order to do that, we're going to go to Psalm Chapter 119. And I want to read beginning with Psalm 119, verses 15 and 16. This is what it says, *"I will meditate on your precepts and fix my eyes on your ways. I will delight in your statutes. I will not forget your word."* And so, I love that, because the psalmist tells us where he

will fix his eyes. He said, "I will fix my eyes on your ways." And he on both sides of that phrase "on your ways." Just before it, he talks about meditating "on your precepts" and then following it "on your statutes" and finishing "with your word." So, in order to fix our eyes on Jesus, we need to fix our eyes on God's Word.

Let's talk a little bit more about fixing our eyes on God's Word. So obviously, we can put God's physical Word in front of our eyes. We can look at it. We can read it. And that is the starting point. But I want to look a little deeper at that word in Psalm 119:15. Just before this phrase, "fix my eyes on your ways," it says, "I will meditate on your precepts."

So, I want to talk a little bit more about this word meditate because I think this is really what's going to help us keep looking to Jesus, on this race that we are running with endurance. Okay, so the Hebrew word here that was used for meditate is synonymous with another Hebrew word in a lot of the Old Testament that literally means to "chew the cud."

Now some of you feel like we just took a hard right turn — what just happened because I just said cud. And so, yes, we are talking, when we say chew the cud, we're referring to the digestive process of a cow. And so, you may have never desired to know anything about the digestive process of a cow. But I want us to, to think about it for just a minute, because I think it paints a really great picture of what we can do to fix our eyes on Jesus. So here, here we go, just for a minute, hang in here with me.

When a cow starts to eat, it chews the food only long enough to get it soft. And then the food moves to the first of the cow's stomach's four compartments. And that's where it becomes what we call cud, then the stomach muscles bring the cud back up to the mouth of the cow, where it is chewed again before swallowing it, and it moves further into the digestion process. So that is what I want us to think about when we consider fixing our eyes on Jesus by fixing them on God's Word. This implies something a little deeper than well, I read the Bible for a few minutes this morning. It implies the idea that we keep bringing it up. We keep bringing God's Word up in front of our eyes and into our thoughts throughout the day.

So, let's talk about a few ways, practically, that we can do this — because our lives may not offer us the opportunity to stop every half hour and spend another five or 10 minutes in the Word, right? So, let's just talk about some ideas of how we can keep bringing up God's Word, in front of our eyes, and into our thoughts throughout the day, so that we keep our eyes fixed on Jesus. I want to give you a few ideas of things I've done. And it may not work for you the way it's worked for me, but maybe it will trigger an idea for you of how you can do this in the rhythms of your everyday life.

So, one thing that I've done, especially when all of the kids are at home, is that I will read the Bible in the morning [and] read a group of scriptures. Oftentimes, it's not an entire chapter. But then what I will do is: I will leave my Bible open. And I will leave it out in a place where I'm going to see it throughout the day. So for me, this has been the counter in my kitchen, because I walk through my kitchen all the time throughout the day. And so, when I leave my Bible out to this portion of Scripture that I began my day with, it reminds me to pause and bring God's Word back up in front of my eyes and into my thoughts.

If you are someone who commutes for a long distance, or maybe you're just in the car a lot, maybe you can put this in the passenger seat of your car; or you know, maybe it's at your desk in a place that you know it's out of the way, but it'll be a place that you notice. Just kind of think of those, those places that you walk by or that you are around multiple times throughout the day. And is there a place that you can leave your Bible out and open so that you're reminded through the day to pause and go back to God's Word?

Another thing that I have done is I'll set an alarm on my phone because I have my phone with me, where if I, you know, run an errand, I have my phone. If I'm at home, my phone is somewhere in the house, (although I don't always know where) but it's somewhere. I'll set an alarm on my phone, and I will label it pray because, listen, if you're like me, you'll set that alarm and then when it goes off, you won't remember why you set that alarm. So, label it. There's a place on your phone to put a label, and I'll label it "pray." And I'll set that alarm to go off multiple times a day. And when the alarm goes off, that is my reminder to pause, take my mind off of everything that's swirling around me, and place my eyes on Jesus. And even if it's for less than a minute, I pause. If I can kneel where I am, I kneel, and I pray. And that's just another way to take our eyes off of what's happening around us and fix them on Jesus.

And then the last thing I want to offer you for a practical way to do this: we started doing this at my house during the pandemic, and what we'll do, what we've done, is we print out a Bible verse (just on a white piece of printer paper, nothing fancy over here); we'll print out that Bible verse and tape it to the wall next to the sinks, where we wash our hands.

So you know, we have a boy's bathroom, we have a girl's bathroom in the house, and they both get a Bible verse printed out by their sink. And then you know, there's that time that you're supposed to wash your hands and, when I was a kid, I would hear you have to sing "Happy Birthday" all the way through two times while you wash your hands and then you know you've washed long enough. And as well, what we've done is, instead of singing "Happy Birthday" all the way through twice, we'll read the verse. And I always encourage my kids to read it out loud, because then not only is it in front of your eyes, but you're also hearing it while you say it. And so, it's a really sweet way (1) to memorize Scripture and just store it in your heart, but (2) to keep God's Word in front of your eyes. And then, bonus, you have clean hands when you're finished with it.

So those are just a few practical ways that we can keep our eyes fixed on Jesus in the rhythms of every day and in the different seasons of life. And then I mentioned this just a minute ago, but I want to talk about one final thing when we consider how to fix our eyes on Jesus. But if we go back to Hebrews 12:2, and the phrase "fixing our eyes" or "looking to Jesus," the Greek word translated to that phrase implies the idea of turning our eyes away from something in order to fix them on something else. So, if we want to fix our eyes on Jesus, yes, we need to keep God's Word in front of our eyes, we need to practice fixing our eyes on God's Word and His ways. But it will also require us to turn our attention away from other things.

So, as we close, I want you to consider the other things that you will need to turn your eyes away from in order to fix them on Jesus. There are so many things that vie for the attention of our eyes. It could be a newsfeed, or a television channel. It could be that ticker that scrolls across the bottom of a screen. For me and my dad, it was those websites; it was searching the internet, and I had to turn my eyes away from that in order to fix

them on Jesus. And I want to close and tell you this, my dad did end up, I like to say it, is that he moved to Heaven. And dad spent four to six weeks in and out of the hospital and then he left life on earth and moved to Heaven.

But what God taught me during the days that dad was sick leading up to the day that he died, what God taught me about turning my eyes away from other things and fixing them on Him, sustained me during the days after my dad passed and moved to Heaven. So, I don't tell you all of this to tell you that when we fix our eyes on Jesus, everything is going to be great, and all of our earthly circumstances will present themselves so that we have peace. That's not the point. The point is that no matter what we face, we can fix our eyes on Jesus, and that will be enough to sustain us, no matter what we face.

Meredith Brock: Hmm. So good, Katy. I think all of us can, you know, look to a time or remember a time when we just felt like our circumstances were out of control. And we were afraid, and everything felt uncertain. And I know I can look at my past and say there were times when I didn't handle it well, and you know, I went into unhealthier places in my life. And then there's times when I did exactly what you said, which was turning my eyes to Jesus; and I was able to find that peace in my soul even when circumstances were out of control. I think it's so good.

As you were talking, I was reflecting on how I am naturally, when people say meditate, I'm like, okay, that sounds boring. Because I, it just feels, first there's something inside of me that is like, well, that feels so ineffective, right? Just sitting there thinking about something; like, I'm a girl who likes to take action. I'm not just going to sit here and think about something. I'm going to figure out a way to fix this problem.

And I was reflecting on when I was getting my master's degree in counseling, there is a counseling theory called cognitive behavioral therapy. And I remember when I learned this I was like, wow, meditating is actually very, very action oriented. Because what you're doing is you're taking your ineffective thoughts, which for us is lies that we've probably believed about ourselves or circumstance, or who God is, or what's happening around us. We take those thoughts captive, like it says in Scripture, and we replace them with the truth of God's Word. And that is cognitive behavioral therapy. And so, as you were talking, I just wanted to speak to our friends who are listening right now. When things feel out of control, you will naturally, we all naturally, grapple for control; we reach for it; we try to grab hold of it and take control back. But by meditating on God's Word, you are actually taking true action towards changing your thoughts, which will then change that sense of peace inside of you.

So, so good. Kaley, you and I were kind of glancing back and forth. I think you have a really great pointer that maybe you've used in your own life to help find peace in places.

Kaley Olson: Yeah, sure. Well, I love what Meredith just said about cognitive behavior therapy and the idea of taking a thought captive and replacing it with truth. You know, it's biblical. And it's exactly what Katy was talking about whenever, she mentioned earlier about, when she and her dad were googling answers instead of going to God's Word.

And I know that there's so much unrest that can bring up, and maybe there's a situation in your life right now, where you are looking at Google for the answers, and you're not going to God's Word. I've been there. And I know that those times are so hard. And so, I just want to encourage you guys and say that the longing that you feel deep inside, when there is an unrest in your soul, that longing is a longing for connection with God. And like Katy said earlier, the best way we can fix our eyes on Jesus is to go to His Word.

And my husband and I, at the very beginning of this year, started doing something. And we literally started reading the Bible from page one. And it's really exciting, glad that we started doing it. But what I noticed, even in the first week of us doing that, there were times where I didn't want to read about all the laws and the commandments. But even in those moments, where I felt this tug in my heart to go to the Word, to go into Scripture, when I opened my Bible, and when I fixed my eyes on the Word, even passages in Exodus helped me feel at peace and helped me feel just flooded with God's presence.

And so, what Katy was sharing about in her teaching today, about fixing your eyes on Jesus, that brings so much peace. And so, I don't know what that looks like for you. But maybe, maybe one thing that you can do today is open your Bible. Find a passage like Psalm 91. And get your journal out and just start writing verse by verse, meditate on those words, and see how it brings you peace in your day.

Meredith Brock: And if today's teaching resonated with you, Katy recently released a Bible study called *She Smiles Without Fear: Proverbs 31 for Every Woman*. It's a five-week study that dives into none other than our favorite passage, Proverbs 31. And it will help you overcome that fear and anxiety by studying God's Word. We have linked to it in our show notes. So make sure you go there and check it out.

Kaley Olson: Yep. And then lastly, Katy is a First 5 writer. And so, of course, we couldn't go without mentioning our free First 5 mobile app. Right now, we are in the book of Ephesians, but you can download the app and jump in anytime to spend the first five minutes of your day in God's Word with us and keep meditating on His Word like we talked about. Well friends, thank you so much for joining us today. We pray that today's message helps you know the truth and live the truth of God's Word because we believe when you do, it changes everything.