

*the*  
**PROVERBS 31**  
MINISTRIES  
*podcast*

**Biblical truth for any girl in any season.**

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Meredith: Well today, we are so excited to welcome Anitha Abraham to the show. Welcome, Anitha.

Anitha: Hi, thank you. I'm so honored to be here. Thanks for having me.

Kaley: We are so excited that you're here, Anitha, and we want to let our audience know that she is part of our Encouragement for Today devotions writing team. And she's been on the team for two years now. So congratulations on that. But she's also a speaker and the founder of Whispers & Fringes, which is a group dedicated to empowering women to live out their faith. How cool is that? You do that on your end. We do that at Proverbs 31. We're just coming together as a family today on the podcast, but this is her first time being introduced to this audience.

And so naturally, Meredith and I do have a few questions for you.

Anitha: Okay.

Kaley: We want to get to know you. We want our audience to get to know you. So, first things first, now that we're friends, do you have a nickname that you go by that we can call you?

Anitha: So actually I do. So I'm Indian and a lot of people in my Indian community call me Anew.

Kaley: Anew?

Anitha: Yeah, you pronounce it kind of like a new car, a new house, so Anew.

Meredith: I love that. I'd [inaudible 00:03:23] to call me Anew, like that's a new woman.

Kaley: I like that. Yeah.

Anitha: There you go, that's biblical.

Meredith: Well, tell us maybe something other than your really great nickname, maybe what is something that our audience should know about you?

Anitha: Well, one thing that I think is pretty cool is that I actually have one sister and the audience may be familiar with her because she is also an Encouragement for Today writer. Yeah, her name is Binu Samuel. And from what I've heard, we're the first set of sisters that's actually been on the team together like that. So I thought that was pretty neat.

Meredith: I love that.

Kaley: That is really cool.

Meredith: That's cool. Two writing sisters? That's neat.

Anitha: Yeah, I thought so.

Kaley: Yeah. That's awesome. Okay. So I read your bio online and I did see that you like coffee, so great that we got that cleared up. We're all friends now, but I want to know if you're driving through Starbucks, what would you get?

Anitha: Okay. Y'all, I'm so boring with my coffee orders. Okay. So really I walk up to the counter. I'm like, could I have a grande brewed coffee with room for cream? And then, I don't even tell them how much sugar I want because I know they will judge me for it. So I just add my own sugar.

Meredith: I love that. I love simple women. There is no shame in that.

Anitha: Amen.

Meredith: Okay. Here's our last and final question. And that is after we got our Starbucks together. If we were in person and doing this together, we would grab Starbucks. And then when we go to lunch, where would we go to lunch?

Anitha: Okay. If y'all were in Texas with me, I would definitely take y'all to a Tex-Mex place because we can work our Tex-Mex here, for sure.

Kaley: Oh, yeah. That sounds great. Nothing like coffee combined with Tex-Mex [crosstalk 00:05:13]. And then, we would all wear our face masks and it would just smell great. All right. All right. All right. Now, we got to get serious now. Anitha has a great word for us today and we're excited to hear it. So Meredith and I are going to get ready to take notes and you can take it away, my friend.

Anitha: All right, thanks so much ladies. So the title of my teaching today is As a Woman Thinks. And you guys, I love talking about things that I can relate to on a personal level. And this is definitely one of those topics. So growing up, I would say that I was pretty confident and comfortable in my own skin. Then when I got to college, there was one particular conversation that changed that for me. So I was having with a friend and a guy who was a friend of hers, but not someone I necessarily knew very well, he was there. And at

some point in the conversation, he turned to me and said, "You know what? You talk too much."

And as trivial and insignificant as that may sound, that one remark took root in my thoughts. He only said it once. And really he didn't have to say it again because I did that for him. I began replaying it in my mind. And even now, anytime I open my mouth, I find his voice in my head. So in some way, that incident has impacted almost every area of my life. It is amazing what our thoughts can do to us. Romans 12:2 (NLT) says, "Let God transform you into a new person by changing the way you think." So, I compare it to a gumball machine. It starts out empty and it's up to us what we put in there. So obviously you can fill it with gumballs, but you've probably also seen it with peanuts or Skittles. And really you could even put dirt in there if you wanted to.

But there's one thing I can guarantee you, what you put in there determines what comes out. So we understand this with certain areas of our lives. For example, what I eat impacts how I look. If I eat chips and cookies all day, every day, which doesn't sound like a bad thing to me, I know it's going to impact how my clothes fit. And the number on the scale is probably going to be higher, but we have to understand that our thoughts take it even further. What I put in my mind impacts the person I am. Proverbs 23:7 (NASB) says, "For as he thinks within himself, so he is." The Hebrew word for think in this first means to calculate or reckon, to act as a gatekeeper. We have the responsibility to guard our minds. Our thoughts are powerful. So this begs the question, what are we thinking about? So for the time we have together today, we'll talk about how our thoughts impact us, then how we can impact our thoughts.

So first of all, our thoughts impact how we see ourselves. Now, I can remember a work situation I had a few years ago. I was supposed to meet with some people at a certain time. But when I arrived, they were meeting with someone else. Now, this particular room was surrounded by all glass. So they saw me coming, but didn't acknowledge me. I walked away, came back, did that a couple of times with no response. 20 minutes later, they finally met with me without any apology or explanation. So of course, I was completely annoyed, but what started out as just frustration with them turned into something else for me. All of a sudden I have these thoughts running around in my mind. Well, they must think the other-

Anitha: I have these thoughts running around in my mind, "Well, they must think the other person is more important than me. They have no respect for my time. They don't value me." Remember they hadn't even said a word, but that's where my mind had gone. Sure, they could have handled it better, but when someone being 20 minutes late jumps to me thinking that I have no value, there's a problem with me.

In Numbers 13 (NLT), you might remember the story when Moses sent spies to explore the promised land. And here's what they reported back to the people in verse 33, "we even saw giants there, the descendants of Anak. Next to them we felt like grasshoppers, and that's what they thought, too!" So interestingly, if you go back and read the entire passage, you will not see anything about a conversation happening between the spies and the people of Canaan.

How did the spies know what the people there were thinking? They didn't, it's really what the spies thought about themselves. Ecclesiastes 10:7(KJV) says, "I have seen slaves riding on horses and princes walking like slaves on the ground." The spies thought they were grasshoppers, the princess thought they were slaves, I thought I wasn't valued.

What do you think about yourself? Our thoughts impact how we see ourselves. Secondly, our thoughts impact how we see others. So just another quick, personal story. Years ago, it was a typical weeknight and my husband, Lance and I had just finished eating dinner so I started washing the dishes. Of course, I'm thinking that he's going to jump in at any time to help me, but that didn't happen.

Instead, he just kept staring his laptop and staring at his phone. So of course my mind starts working again, "These aren't just my dishes, he ate too. I can't believe he's not helping me." So progressively my dish washing is getting louder and louder and just when I'm ready to have a discussion with him, he says, "Baby, guess what? I just booked our flights for our vacation."

So I'll tell you guys there have been a lot of times I was glad I kept my mouth shut and that was definitely one of those times. I had built a case against him in my mind that was completely wrong. I thought my husband was being inconsiderate when he didn't help me with the housework, not realizing that he was helping me in a different way.

I never book our travel, he always does. I think a perfect example of this is also found in the book of Joshua. The Israelites had been busy fighting off enemies and claiming their territory. During this time, three of the tribes: Reuben, Gad and Manasseh were ready to settle down. Once they did, they built an altar.

But when the other nine tribes heard about that altar, they assumed the worst. Joshua 22:16(NLT) says, it describes the encounter by saying, "the whole community of the Lord demands to know why you are betraying the God of Israel. How could you turn away from the Lord and build an altar for yourselves in rebellion against him?" Those are strong words.

These nine tribes are accusing the other three tribes of betrayal and rebellion. Thankfully, there's a happy ending. They all talk things through and verse 30 says, when they heard what they had to say, they were pleased. It goes on to say in verse 33, "that they talked no more about going to war." (NLT) How many times have we been ready to go to war with someone because of what we told ourselves about them?

We didn't ask, we just assumed and came to our own conclusions. Our thoughts impact how we see others. And thirdly, our thoughts impact how we see God. So I tend to be forgetful in general. I'm one of those people who has actually looked for my phone while I was talking on it. I don't know if anybody else can relate to that. But even looking back over previous years, I've noticed a trend.

I tend to remember the hard things and have a hard time remembering the good things. The human mind can easily forget. We see this happen in scripture too with the disciples. In Matthew 14 (ESV), Jesus had been teaching a crowd and in verse 15 it says, "now when it was evening the disciples came to him and said, "This is a desolate place and the day is now over. Send the crowds away to go into the villages and buy food for themselves.""

But Jesus said, "They need not go away, you give them something to eat." So most of us know the end of that story. Jesus performs a miracle and there's food for everybody. But then we go to Matthew 15 (ESV), the next chapter, same situation. There's a crowd, Jesus wants to feed them. And the disciples say, "Where are we going to get enough bread in such a desolate place to feed so great a crowd?"

I don't know time-wise how far apart those stories were, but in my Bible, it's the next page. Talk about a bad memory. So instead of responding with faith, the disciples react with fear to the exact same situation. Our thoughts impact how we see God. So now that we know how our thoughts impact us, let's talk about how we can impact our thoughts.

Now, I've just got a quick acronym for you and it's the word THINK. The T stands for take every thought captive. Second Corinthians 10:5 (ESV) says, "we destroy arguments and every lofty opinion raised against the knowledge of God, and take every thought captive to obey Christ." Maybe you've heard that verse before, but what does it really mean?

Think about it like a wild animal, we need to trap it and stop letting it run around. We can examine it without it being a threat. Taking our thoughts captive is not a passive process. We do this in physical situations that look dangerous. I actually used to go to work really early in the morning when it was still dark.

And one day when I was going to my office, I saw someone who looks suspicious to me. I'll tell you that I sure didn't go over there and start a conversation with him, I kept walking the other way and I started walking faster. I even got on my phone and called a coworker. I got out of there like my life depended on it because maybe it did.

We're flippant about our thoughts because they aren't tangible, but we need to be as vigilant with our minds as we are in a dark parking lot. How can we do that? I think it's stuff you already know. Turn on worship music, read scripture, pray with a friend. Paul said it best in Philippians 4:8 (MSG), "by filling your minds and meditating on things true, noble, reputable, authentic, compelling, gracious, the best, not the worst, the beautiful, not the ugly things to praise, not things to curse."

All right. So the H in THINK stands for helmet of salvation. You might remember that this is a part of the spiritual armor, but why a helmet? I love how Bill Johnson put it. He said, "we need to think like we're saved." Our thoughts should be different from our unsaved friends. Ask yourself, am I worried and fearful like they are? We shouldn't be.

The I stands for inquire. We need to ask and not just assume. Ask your friend to clarify their text, ask your coworker to explain their email, ask your husband to help you with the dishes if you need help. That may just be me again. It may be uncomfortable initially and of course, there's a way we should ask, but it might prevent a war too.

The N in THINK stands for note to self. Do you ever notice how you talk to yourself? Honestly, I would never talk to anyone the way I talk to myself, I can be my own worst enemy. Jesus said that the greatest commandment is to love the Lord your God. The second greatest commandment is to love your neighbor, but what's the rest of that? To love your neighbor as yourself.

We either forget the end part of that scripture, or just say them flippantly. The Greek definition of love here includes to wish well and esteem. When is the last time you wished yourself well? Not in a proud way, but just with an understanding that says I'm not a grasshopper, I am not a slave, I have value. And the last letter for THINK is...

Anitha: ... have value. And the last letter for THINK is K, keep God in mind. Repeatedly, God tells his children to remember. He instituted the Passover and the Ark of the Covenant, the people built altars and repeated stories to their children of what God had done. Deuteronomy 4:9 (NLT) says, "But watch out! Be careful never to forget what you yourselves have seen. Do not let these memories escape from your mind as long as you live!" Think about those spies again. If they had remembered the plagues, the Red Sea and the manna, maybe then they would have been willing to go after what God had promised them. This isn't a denial of reality, it's a realization of deity.

I want to encourage you to have things around that help you keep God in mind. For me, I have pictures and cards that people have given us. I even have an altar jar, which is something that I previously talked about in a Proverbs 31 devotional. Basically, anything that reminds you of what God has done in your life. Just to wrap things up, I want to take you back to that gumball machine and I'm going to ask you, what are you going to put in your mind? It's up to you, but just remember whatever you put in there will come out because as a woman thinks, so she is.

Kaley: Wow, thank you, Anitha. That was such a practical and helpful teaching. I actually have a question for both of you. So Meredith I'm putting you on the spot too. Get ready for it. One of the things that you said at the very end, it was about the acronym and the letter N in the note to self, and how you think about yourself is often what you wouldn't say to someone else. That kind of got me thinking, and I know as a one on the Enneagram, sometimes I'm hard on myself, but I think that all three of us are in different seasons of life. I spend a lot of my time working in ministry and Meredith has a balance of working in ministry, but she's also a mom. And then Anitha, you have your own ministry outside of what you do for Proverbs.

I know that there has to be a balance between how much do I push myself whenever I know that I could do something better versus how do I give myself grace? I think at the end of the day, how do I make peace in my mind with what I have done today is good enough, because I think that there are people who struggle with that, who have this thought in their head like I could have done more, I should have done better. And so I

would love to hear from both of you, what does that look like for you at the end of the day? What thought do you tell yourself at the end of the day so you can have peace with what you have accomplished today?

Anitha: Yeah, I think... Oh, go ahead, Meredith.

Meredith: Oh, I'll let you speak first. Please go ahead.

Anitha: Yeah. That's such a great question because I am also an Enneagram one, so I can completely relate to what you're asking Kaley. And some days it's hard. You do look back at the day and you're like, my goodness, what did I accomplish? What did I do? But honestly I have to... It's like what we talked about. I have to like take that thought captive and replace it with the truth of the fact that God's mercies are new every morning. I get a do over tomorrow. If I wasn't happy with what happened in the day, then there's always tomorrow. And a lot of times I think we can think that we didn't accomplish enough or whatever, but we also know when we've given it our best too. And we have to be at peace with that, like we are human. And so just knowing that too, that if I gave it my best, that's all God expects from me.

Meredith: Yeah, that's really good, Anitha. I think where I have wrestled with this in my past is I am naturally a very driven person. I love to get everything done and done well. I have had to come to this place where I realize I am made to be a human being, not a human doing, and that at the center of it all, what I do physically with my life doesn't matter nearly as much as who I am in my connection and my intimacy with the Lord. And so for my friends, I think I definitely struggle with this. Kaley, you and I have talked through this. My to do list is endlessly long. I never get to the end of a day and go, wow, I got it all done. I don't believe that that has ever actually happened since I was probably like 10 years old.

This has been an ongoing struggle where that inner critic wants to tell me you're not good enough, you should keep going, there's more to be done. And that you lay down in bed at night and your thoughts, like you're saying Anitha, your thoughts will go and go and go and go, and tell you this whole narrative. And I think for me, I've had to bring it back to this place of saying, it doesn't matter if I don't do anything else today. I don't have to do anything else. I am fully accepted and fully loved right now exactly how I am, whether this is done excellently or if it's done not at all. And so I think, I don't know if that's helpful for you, Kaley, is it?

Kaley: Yes. That's so helpful. I just know there are probably other people who are on the other side too, who lay in bed at night and they wrestle with that because there has to be a balance of knowing that you did your best, but also having grace. And so thank you guys for sharing. Meredith, what thoughts did you have?

Meredith: Well, one of those, Anitha, I loved the THINK acronym I thought was so helpful. The one that really stands out to me is the inquire. Ask and just not assume. I think your example was so spot on. I mean, how many times for all of us married friends listening right now, how many times have we assumed that our husband was being lazy or not doing what

they said they were doing? And then you find out on the other side, oh gosh, he really was. And so I have a question for you or a thought maybe we can discuss is that I think for me, oftentimes I definitely do struggle with this. I assume that people are receiving or perceiving a certain situation the same way as me.

Sometimes I'll pull back, like that's my tendency is let's say someone says something to me that maybe hurt my feelings a little bit or made me think, oh gosh, they actually don't really like me. When I thought all along they did like me and they say a little slight thing and I go, "Oh man, I guess they don't really like me," and I will relationally retreat because I think, well, man, they said that thing, they don't really like me. Here's the big question. How do we filter through what is discernment in a relationship where you actually are discerning someone's behavior and how do you filter out what's false? And so let's unpack that a little bit where how do you determine, is this really, am I discerning this properly, or is this situation, I'm actually just making up crazy thoughts in my head?

Kaley: Yeah. I think for me the first thing that I thought of was make sure you have your facts straight because that's something like, I can remember thinking something about a particular person. But then I went back through my text messages that we had and I was like, you know what, I was really painting a different picture. I was not remembering accurately. I was focusing on the times where they didn't say something or they said this and I perceived it like that instead of looking at the big picture of, what's our history for real? So there's that. But then also if that's for me, and I'd love to hear your thoughts too, if it's still lingering and I'm still questioning, I kind of gauge it by the relationship. Like who is this person in my life? Is it something that's worth pursuing more of a conversation...

Anitha: Is it something that's worth pursuing more of a conversation? And coming at them not in that attacking mode, like, "I can't believe you treat me like this," but really, and my husband has really taught me this very well, I think, is you approach them humbly and you say, "You know what? This is what I'm seeing and what I'm feeling. Help me understand. Am I missing something?" And so then that gives them the opportunity to say, "Oh my goodness, that's not what I meant at all" or, "Yeah, it was what I meant," and then you can have another conversation about that. So that's my take on that. I hope that brought some clarity to what you were asking.

Meredith: I love that. I think that's really great insight. I also love, I think you said something very subtle there that is really helpful and that is maybe an interaction that happens, and we internalize it, whatever that interaction is, and you walked away from the situation, gathered the data, but even in the space between the initial interaction happening and you gathering the facts, there's a moment to let your emotions come into check. And as you were saying that, I was remembering, and Kaley knows I have this rule for myself, and maybe this will help our friends who are listening, I tend to be a very passionate individual, and so I go to anger first right away. I get super angry about things when you cross me, or make me feel small, or anything like that.

And I have had to teach myself to not respond within the first 24 hours, because I know in that first 24 hours, I am actually very illogical. My thoughts are crazy. I assume the

worst about ... I assume they're trying to attack me, or they don't like me, or they're trying to control me and all these things, but if I can get 24 hours between me and the incident, all those emotions typically, unless it's a really difficult situation, the dust settles a little bit, and then I am able to look at the facts more clearly. So I think that's really, really great advice, Anitha. Thank you.

Anitha: Can I add one more thought to that? Because I think especially in the world that we're in right now with social distancing and even just we communicate so much through social media or through text and all of that, the perception of people, it's affected by that. If we just get these random texts from people, I think again we're building almost a case in our mind, but there's something so different. Then when you see them again in person, you're like oh, this is the same person I remembered, but because I wasn't interacting with them the same way, it just felt different. I've had that happen recently. So just seeing the people again, I think, is also helpful.

Meredith: Absolutely. I've said to my team multiple times here at Proverbs 31, during this social distancing season, the relational, I guess you would say padding has been removed.

Anitha: Exactly.

Meredith: And so before, when you would have bumped into your coworker in the lunch room and you would have chatted about the new puppy she just got, all of that is gone. And so now our interactions can feel like metal on metal, and so just having the grace for other people and remembering that's a person with their own set of insecurities, and their own set of fears, and their own set of thoughts rambling around in their head, right Anitha?

Anitha: Right, exactly.

Kaley: Just so many thoughts.

Anitha: So many.

Meredith: Yes.

Kaley: Meredith, can I share a Jim Cress nugget that I heard the other day and I thought was so good? Okay.

Meredith: Yes.

Kaley: Jim, if you're listening to this, I might have this slightly wrong, so you can come back and correct me, but the overall gist, he was talking about conversations that we have with people and how truly complicated they are, and I think it's so fitting. He said that there are six things happening in any conversation at all times. If I'm speaking, there's what I said, what I thought I said, and what I intended to say, and then you are hearing what you heard, what you thought you heard, and then the intent that you hear behind what I said. And I think that it's so helpful to consider all of these things.

As Anitha and Meredith, you guys were talking about how it's so hard to discern what somebody is saying, there is so much going on behind just the words that come out of somebody's mouth, and I think that that's helpful to consider is just there's always more to the picture than what we see in a text, or what we hear in a meeting, or something like that. There's so much that probably didn't get communicated, and I think that that helps us give other people grace, whereas we might not always find it easy to give people grace whenever we're angry or upset. I just thought that was helpful.

Anitha: Yeah.

Meredith: So helpful. I think that's great, Kaley. I love it so much. Well, Anitha, thank you so much for coming on the show today. I feel like we just have so many good nuggets in there that our listeners can walk away with. And as we wrap up today, we want to share a few things that you can get connected to. First, we want to encourage our listeners, connect with Anitha on her Facebook page, Whispers & Fringes. She does ministry there every day and connects with women just like you who are listening to encourage and empower them on their faith journey. You can also get devotions from writers like Anitha and her sister every weekday by signing up for our free Encouragement for Today devotions at [proverbs31.org](http://proverbs31.org).

Kaley: Yes, and we also want to take a couple minutes and tell you about a free resource that you can download today called 3 Bible Study Basics You Must Know by Lysa TerKeurst. At Proverbs 31, you guys know, we take getting into God's word seriously, and our desire is to help equip you in your own study, and this is a free download we'll link to in the show notes. Again, it's called 3 Bible Study Basics You Must Know, and you guys are going to want to get your hands on that.

Meredith: And lastly, have you guys checked out our online bookstore at Proverbs 31? It is [p31bookstore.com](http://p31bookstore.com) and honestly, it's more than a bookstore. It's so cute. It's a little online boutique with so many good resources, like different books to help you in your Christian walk, Bible studies, Lysa TerKeurst's collection, and my very favorite are all the fun things that you can give as gifts. You never know what fun you might find or new thing you might find at our bookstore, so hop on over there and do some shopping, and when you purchase, you're helping us fund the ministry that we do here every day, just like this podcast. Well friends, that's it for today.

Thank you so much for joining us. We pray today's teaching helps you know the truth of God's word and live out that truth because we believe that when you do, it really will change everything.