

the
PROVERBS 31
MINISTRIES
podcast

Biblical truth for any girl in any season.

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Nicki Koziarz: Thanks, guys. Well, I want to talk to both of you and everyone listening today about this idea of what are some of the questions that we really need to ask when faith feels impossible. And I have three questions because you know, I've got some Southern Baptist roots in me, and I just can't deliver a message without having three points. And so, we're going to walk you through just these three questions that I have found helpful in order to sort through some of my own doubt struggles that I've had in my own life. But you know, as I shared in the very beginning of this podcast, when I started to write the book *Flooded*, I was immediately hit with what I now consider one of the hardest circumstances that I've ever had to walk through.

Before I sat down to write the book, my mom had a six-month battle with a brain tumor, and it was a very painful process of watching her die this very slow death. And in the midst of that, my brother, my only brother had tried to commit suicide four different times during that process. So, I thought, "Okay, that was a hard season, this was the hard thing." But sadly, as soon as I started to pen the words of this book, I will never forget, I was sitting on my couch writing one morning and a doctor from a hospital in Seattle, Washington called me and he said, "Are you the sister of [my brother]?" He said his name. And I said, "Yes, I am." And he said, "Well, I'm so sorry to tell you this. But it is, I have your brother here in the ICU, he's on full life-support and he took an entire bottle of Tylenol PM, and we do not expect him to make it through today."

Now, when I was sitting there, I thought, we've been through this four other times with him. He's pulled through every time, I'm just going to pray, and I'm going to believe, and the Lord is going to be faithful through this because you guys, my brother had such a calling on his life, and he just had so much potential. And unfortunately, drugs and alcohol addiction and bipolar depression had gotten a hold of his mind and his body and his soul. And so, the doctor assured me, he said, "I don't even think you're going to make it; like even if you tried to get on a flight right now." And I said, "Oh, I'm going to make it."

And so, I jumped on a plane. Within three hours, I was flying to Seattle. I had so many people praying and just asking me to, like asking the Lord to get me there in time. Because even if my brother was dying, I didn't feel like anyone, no matter what they had done, should die alone. And so, I did everything that I could do to get there. And I did. And so, when I got there, I just started praying. And I just started asking God to come and do something miraculous, and to heal him. And I remember at one point, he, you know, he stayed pretty steady for several hours. And the nurse came in, and this was something kind of funny, I actually sent my husband a picture of me wearing a mask. I had to have a mask on. And this was before the pandemic hit and I was like, this is so weird to have to wear a mask. I had no idea what was coming in the next few months.

But she walked in and she said, “wow, well, this looks a little bit different.” His levels had changed. And I thought, well, okay, maybe he's starting to pull out of this. Well, then just a few hours later, every doctor, every nurse on the unit came rushing in. And they looked at me and they said, “he's going, he's dying.” And I said, “okay, okay.” Like, I felt like they were trying to convince me still because I had faith. And I believed that God could still step in, even at that 11th hour. And so, my brother did pass away that very cold day. And I was there all by myself, in a city where I had no friends, no family, no nothing. And I just remember standing there next to his bed and feeling like this was one of these situations that would forever define my faith.

And it's normally not what happens in the midst of the situation. But it's what happens after the situation is over, where we really start to question and wonder if God is really faithful. And so, these three questions that I'm about to walk you through, no matter what your life looks like today, whether you are walking through a family member battling an addiction, you just lost a job, your marriage is crumbling, your kids are making really bad decisions right now, or you are just full of doubt yourself about what God can do in and through you, I want you to know that I really believe that these three questions are going to help you get to a place where you're able to proclaim in your life again, God is faithful, no matter what my circumstances say.

So, the first question that I had to ask myself was this question of what is my “why God?” Okay. And every single one of us, including you, Meredith, including you Kaley, have a why God that we ask. The problem is I don't think we normally spend enough time asking, what is our “why God?” Okay, so, we're kind of just going through the motions, we're going through life, we're just trying to get through the next day. And we have all of these feelings of doubt and discouragement, but we don't know where they came from. And so, as you look at your circumstances, and you look at the pain, go back to that point, and what is that place where you're asking, why God? Why did you allow this to happen? Why didn't you come through in this way?

So, I go back to that 11th hour, standing next to my brother's bed, believing that God could step in at that moment and heal him and restore him. That's my moment of my “why God?” Okay. But your why God, there's a “why” that's in the way of your faith. And if you don't call out that, why God, you may never get to the place where you really experience the healing and wholeness that God has for you. See, having questions for God is not the problem. God is not threatened by our why God's. Why did you allow this? Why is this happening? It's the questioning of God that leads us to a place of disobedience in our own lives. It's that place where our faith really starts to feel what I call fake faith.

But what we have to remember is when we call out our why God, we have to remember that God has a habit of doing holy things in the midst of hard things. God has a habit of doing holy things in the midst of hard things. Okay. So, once you call out your why God, the second question that you can ask yourself is, instead of my taking that why God, instead of asking why God, try asking this: What does this mean God? What does this mean?

You know, one of my favorite Scriptures, is James 1:5. And it says, “*If any of you lacks wisdom, let him ask God, who gives generously to all without reproach, it will be given to him.*” And

we're going to talk about this in a second, but this is actually a promise that God has given us as people who are committed to the Gospel, committed to Jesus Christ, experiencing the Holy Spirit in our lives, that when we have these moments where nothing is making sense, can we, just can we pause there for a second? Because sometimes, I think in our faith, when we're walking through really hard circumstances, we try to make sense of God. And I get really frustrated, when myself and others, we try to explain God away. Like there are some things that will happen, on this side of eternity, that will never make sense to the human mind. It makes no sense to me why God would allow my brother, who has three beautiful children, who had such an incredible calling on his life, to not experience the fullness and healing and the power of Jesus Christ. It is like, that doesn't make sense to me.

I'm not going to sit here today and tell you that I have experienced some kind of like, "aha" light bulb and thing where I just go, it makes perfect sense. Now, it's not that way with the situation and there will be things that you walk through that will never make sense. And so, we have to allow ourselves to get to that place where we ask God, what does this mean? Okay, so, for me, walking through this really hard circumstance with my brother, there are some very meaningful things that God showed me in this this process. Okay, so, number one, guess what, when I got home, I had such an awareness of how incredibly fragile life is. It showed me a compassion and mercy for people who are experiencing mental illness like I've never experienced before. It allowed me to see that just because someone is experiencing something like mental illness, it doesn't mean that that was God's plan for their life. And so, I haven't made sense of a lot of that season. But I have found meaning in that season.

I also was really angry with God that as soon as I would sit down to write this book, He would allow such a painful thing to experience right off the bat. Like, God, could I not just get through at least half the book and then experience that. But now I look back, and I'm so grateful, because the meaning that came from those words, that pain point inside of me, I was able to step into a place that I was not able to step into with God's wisdom and His mercy in that. Okay, so, asking God, what is your why God? And then changing your why God to what does this mean?

But then, the third thing that I really believe we have to do, when we're walking through something that just feels impossible to believe God, is we've got to make sure we understand if God's promises that we're claiming for our lives are really for us. And this is not an easy conversation to ease into, because I want you to know that I recognize when we're walking through things that don't make any sense, sometimes we say things or we tweet things or put things on beautiful graphics, because it just sounds really good. And so, we take God's Word, and we use it in a way that's kind of like a place where we're just trying to soothe our souls. But here's the thing, all throughout the Scriptures, I see that Jesus healed the sick, He raised the dead, like He did all these miracles. Okay, and so, I can look at that and if I'm trying to put my own circumstance through that lens, it can leave me feeling very frustrated, because I can start to wonder, well, why wouldn't God do this for me? And why wouldn't that promise apply to this situation?

And so, as I've been studying the Scriptures in such a deep way, specifically the biblical account of Noah this past year, which is what the book *Flooded* is based on, God has really allowed me to see that I was —can I just be honest— I was taking some Scripture out of context and I was

claiming some promises for my brother, for myself, for my family, that were not actually promises from God. And so, maybe sometimes we're frustrated with God and we're frustrated with our own process because we have taken a Scripture, a promise that maybe wasn't even a promise to begin with, or a promise that was for someone else in the Scriptures, and we're trying to claim it for our lives.

And so, here's one of the promises that I think sometimes we take for granted. Okay, so in the Scriptures, in Genesis chapter 18, we see that there's this biblical account of Abraham and Sarah. And Sarah was given this promise from God that she was going to have this baby, okay. And so, it says in verse 13, "*Then the LORD said to Abraham, 'why did Sarah laugh?'*" Like she thought this was hysterical, that in her old age she was going to have this baby, okay? And it says, "*Why did she say, 'Can an old woman like me have a baby?' Is anything too hard for the LORD? I will return about this time next year, and Sarah will have a son.*" (NLT)

Now, sometimes when we read stuff like this, it's really easy to go well, if God said that to Sarah, then God is saying that to me, too. But this was a specific promise that God had given Sarah, it was not a promise that He had given you and I for today. But here's what we could take from that question, is anything too hard for the Lord? No. We can take that, and we can say that's part of God's character. But this promise that He would return and about this time next year and she would have a son. That's not something that we can say, is anything too hard for the Lord? About this time next year, I will have a son because that's not what that that Scripture means. And that's not a promise that God has given.

Okay, so, here's another one, and this can make somebody really mad. Philippians 4:13 says that, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me.*" Is this absolutely true? Yes. But if we go back and we study the context of Philippians chapter 4, we see that Paul, who's writing this verse, was in a really bad place in his life. He was actually being condemned and shamed because of his belief, and so, when he says, "*I can do all things through Christ, who strengthens me*", if we were to go back and study that entire passage, what it really means is I can walk through any voice of condemnation, hate towards me, because of the Gospel. It doesn't mean if I never practice basketball, and I decided that I'm going to enter a three-point contest that I can walk out, I can walk out onto the court –

Meredith Brock: Dreams are dashed.

NK: And say, "*I can do all things through Christ who strengthens me,*" and claim that as a promise, and say that I'm going to make this hoop. Okay, like, it's not, that's not how this works. And then, you know, another one. And again, this, this was really shocking to me when I found out, was Matthew 18:20. So, it says, "*Wherefore two or more gathered in my midst and my name, I'm there with him also.*" And this is true that God is in the midst of corporate worship, and when we gather in His presence, but guess what? You don't actually have to be with somebody else to experience God.

MB: That's right.

NK: What this verse means is that it was actually a verse that was being used for conflict, and it was one that was described as God really is for unity. And so, God is for us coming together and having hard conversations that bring us together rather than divide us. And so, I can't just, you know, walk into a prayer meeting, and say, you know, were two or more are gathered in His name, there, He's in my midst, and just believe that in that moment, you know that our prayers, because we gathered together and prayed those things together, that something's going to immediately change. And so, take the time to really understand it. Is this promise something that, that God really gave for me?

Now, here's what I want to say. I am a firm believer that there are times when we are studying the Word of God, and the Lord will show us something in the Scriptures, and the Holy Spirit will say, "that is for you." That is a verse that is for you. I want you to claim that over your life, I want you to experience that in your relationship with Me. And so, when I think about the promises that Noah received from the Lord, you know, he was given this really impossible assignment of faith. He was given something that would make no sense to the human mind. In fact, I am 100% confident that somebody in Noah's community looked at him and said, you are absolutely insane that you think that God told you to build an ark, that there's this massive flood coming, and that all of humanity is going to be destroyed. You're crazy. And so, there will be times where God says something to us that will not make sense to the rest of the world. And those are, that's what I call like, the secret sacred place where, you know, God gives us these assignments of faith to believe and trust that what the Holy Spirit has shown us through the Word of God, that has shown us through our own circumstance, our own places where we're called to believe will be fulfilled.

So, asking God, what is your why, like, what is your why God? What is the why that's in your way? Asking God, what does this mean, instead of asking Him why, and then asking Him to show you, is the promise that you've been claiming actually a promise for your life? Is there something that that maybe you've missed in your studying, in your proclaiming, and in your research? Because here's the thing, and this is the thing, this is something that I don't think those of us who walk with God are willing to admit enough. Can I tell you that there are times that I've been wrong? There have been times where I just knew that God had said, it's time to do this, it's time to do that, here's the process, here's the way, and I was wrong. And I think one of my greatest examples of that, that I can give you is this book *Flooded*, because six years ago, I just knew that the Lord had told me to write this book on Noah. Now it wasn't called *Flooded*, and it wasn't, you know, what it is today, but I knew it, and so, I went out to all these publishers – this was before Meredith Brock had her brilliance in my life – and I pitched this idea to everybody. I just knew it was what God had said. Guess what? They all said no. They said, No, no, no, we don't want this message. And I was so confused. But I laid that message down and I held my hands in a posture of surrender. And now here I am, six, seven years later, and I see the fulfillment of that promise that God gave me seven years ago. That there was a message He wanted me to write on.

But guess what, I had a lot of things that I had to learn. I had a lot of hard things that I had to walk through. I had a lot of doubts that I personally had to experience to get to this place. So, sometimes the promise is not being fulfilled because it's not time. But then, there's been other times where, you know, I was just so completely off with something the Lord had said. And it's

okay to be wrong. It's okay to say, I didn't have this one right, because God's not having this high standard that He holds in heaven above us of, if you get this wrong, I'm never going to give you a promise again, and if you don't believe and if you don't trust, and if you doubt, then this is this is not going to work. Because that's not, that's not who God is. That's not His character.

And so, I just want to encourage everyone who is listening to this today that no matter what the story of doubt is trying to write in your soul, that there is a way, there is a better way than to completely allow doubt to destroy this faith that God is stirring inside of us. You know, the past year and a half has been a really hard year I would say for pretty much everyone who is listening to this. We've all walked through really hard circumstances, but can I tell you that today is a day that I believe that God is asking us to raise up that banner of faith in our lives and to declare that despite what any of our circumstances say, despite what any of our doubts are trying to convince us, that God is still faithful, and we can stand firm until we see His faithfulness.

The last thing that I want to leave with you is this. There is a prayer that my husband and I have been praying very fervently over the past few months as we've been walking through a really hard assignment of faith. And it's this prayer that is so simple, but it's kept us humble. It's also kept us in the place of holiness, and here's the prayer, "God, if we have it wrong, show us the right way." There's that place of humility and honor before Him. "But God, if we have this right, help us to stand firm, until we see your faithfulness fulfilled." And I just encourage you to pray that prayer as many times as you need to today and pray it as often as you need to those days and those moments where doubt starts to try to write a story that is completely opposite of the faithfulness of God.

MB: I love that Nicki, that prayer. I hope somebody out there wrote that down because I feel like that is such a good place to land with our faith. We're not going to get it right all the time. We're really not, and that's okay. That's what Christ says, you know, and what a beautiful thing to be able to grab hold of grace every day. As you were, as you were teaching on your last point about God's promises and grab hold of the ones that are for you, I'm sure that like rattled some of our friends, right? Like, they're about to go take their bumper sticker off from Philippians 4:13. You know, they don't know what to do with this. But here I was, I couldn't help but think of this while you are teaching is that each one of those, each one of those stories that you pointed out is evidence that God does speak to us individually. Like it is evidence that each one of us can hear from God and we don't have to, we don't have to wait for the message through someone else. He will speak to you personally. So, sit down, get in His Word, get quiet, and He will speak to your heart. You don't have to hold on to somebody else's promise. He has one specifically for you.

So, I wanted to encourage our friends with that, but I also wanted to ask you a really hard question. Are you ready?

NK: I'm ready.

MB: Okay, this is real, like real time, okay. Last night, texting with a girlfriend, she's gone through some stuff. It's been hard. She texted me and the exact words were "I know God is good. But He is not good to me". And I was like, oh, that's heavy, because that's how, I think a lot of people are living there. Yeah. You know, and wrestling through that moment, sitting next to their

brother's hospital bed and saying, God, I know that you're good. Like I've read Your Word. And I've even experienced Your goodness in my life before, right? But You are not being good to me right now. What would you say to our friend who's sitting right there?

NK: So, in the book, Meredith, I talked about five decisions that we can make when life is hard and doubt is rising, and decision number five is to find the familiar faithfulness of God. And Noah had walked through a really hard situation of building the ark, then on the ark for over a year. And now he had come off of the ark, okay, and the reality of man. Is God good? Sure, doubt was wrestling with him in that moment because all of his friends were gone, all of his family except those that were with him on the ark, they were gone. I mean, think about it, his neighbor, his co-workers, his grocery clerk, his you know, bank. I don't know if they had banks back then, but you know, the people that he interacted with, they were all gone. Yeah. And so, here he had walked through such a season of radical obedience saying, okay, I know we're going to see God's faithfulness, and then he gets off the ark, and it's like, holy smokes, life as I knew it is completely different in that world. So, you know what Noah did, he immediately built an altar, and began to sacrifice and worship God.

MB: Wow.

NK: And so, in that moment he had a choice. He could freak out and he could completely, you know, go crazy – and we do see him go a little bit crazy in the next few verses – but he chose to worship God in that moment. And so, for each of us, we have a moment of finding the familiar faithfulness of God, and normally what we need to do is we need to go back to that place where His faithfulness feels familiar. So, for Noah, it was worship. That's where God felt familiar to him. God didn't command him to build that altar and sacrifice. He just knew that's what he was supposed to do.

And so, I would say to your friend that is experiencing that, first of all, it's totally normal, totally human, right? No, it was human, it was completely human to have thoughts like that. But to go back to that last time, where you felt God's faithfulness, and where you experienced and write it down. Like, every, I mean, every day write down, like I write in my journal, five ways that I saw God move the day before, every single day, because I struggle with this. Because it's really easy when our circumstances start stacking and day, hard day, after a hard day, after a hard day comes, it's really hard to see God's faithfulness in that situation. So, we have to train our brains to go back and find it again and again and again.

And I would also say, give yourself some time, give yourself some time. God, again, God is not mad at your question. He's not mad at your questions. And it's not our questions that threaten our faith, it's the questioning of God that leads us to that place of unbelief.

MB: That is so, good. Nicki. I want to say to our listeners today, maybe you're in that spot. Like maybe, like right now I'm thinking about ordering Nicki's book for my girlfriend's friend. Send it her way, because she needs to hear those five things, you know, because I know right now, she's she is 100% doubting God and saying, I don't know that I trust you anymore and I think I'm out, you know. So, if you're there, friends, if you're there, pick up a copy of this book, don't let go.

Don't let go of the goodness of God because He is there. So, Kaley, I think you might have had something that you wanted to interject here.

Kaley Olson: Yeah. Yeah, I did. Well, Nicki, I loved the thought of transitioning your questions from why into what does this mean because I think, like, whenever you go through hard things that are building your faith and I think whenever you're asking what, it's a way to build faith. But like you've expressed here, like losing your brother and losing your mom, that's grief, and grief is so often what got us, you know, to go through that. And so, Meredith, remind me what the five stages of grief are.

MB: It's denial and anger. And there's a lot of things that we're going through. But back in the day, when I actually did my master's degree, I could have days off, it's been a hot minute. But I know I mean, after going through my own grief, and I'm sure everybody is kind of processing this on their own, they're probably wondering, well, what do I do with it when God does show me what, you know, you said that you gained an awareness of mental illness and how it affects more people than you realized? What like, what did you do with that whenever God showed you that this is a "what" that I want you to pay attention to or the fragility of life? What do you do with that then in the process of healing?

NK: Yeah, that's a great question. So, I think it's when the next hard situation comes our way, it's what, what did we grow? And what did we learn? And what did we gain from that really hard situation? Because that's what growth is.

KO: Yes. Right.

NK: Like nowhere in the Scriptures does it say your growth is going to be easy. It's going to be hard and so you will continue to face a hard situation after a hard situation. So, for me with my brother, I mean, I've always had a compassion for people who are mentally ill, and you know, my brother was also homeless at the time, and so that compassion that I felt from walking through that hard situation, like after he died, it was like putting together a puzzle of his life. Where were they? Where were his things? Where's the last place he was? I mean, I felt like I was a little bit like a detective for a little bit, because I had to find some answers. Not for anyone but for me. But walking through that allowed me to see like what homeless people who face addiction and mental illness go through. So, guess what? You better believe, like, I'm advocating for that now with where I can use my voice.

And so, I'm inviting you now, my readers in that process, through the book *Flooded*, like, let's have compassion, let's have mercy for people who are experiencing mental illness. Let's not just walk-through hard things and go, oh, that was just really hard. Let's let it let us change us so that the next time the hard thing comes, or someone else walks (don't know what belongs here). Can I tell you after my mom died, it was like, all of a sudden, I had all of these friends who are losing their moms. And now like, just the other day, a friend invited me to go to lunch with her and she's older than me, she's well I would consider her wiser than me, but she looked at me, she goes, the Lord told me my mom's dying, and I knew I needed to come talk to you. And oh my gosh, not me, you know, but that's what God will do when you allow Him to use your heart situations for His glory eventually. Now, we've got to go through some healing on our own first

before we help other people, and you need to give yourself time and permission to do that as long as possible, but I think that the best thing that can come from the heart things is when God starts to use it for His good.

KO: So, good. Yeah, I agree. Well, so, good Nicki. Thank you for coming on the show today and just giving such a good and healing teaching for people who I know don't want to ask the hard things. But everybody right now under the sound of our voice is going through something hard, and we want to recognize that and just say like Lysa T says all the time, we believe you. We believe that you're going through something hard, and we're here for you at Proverbs. But I do want to point you to Nicki's book. We've mentioned it a lot and we believe this is going to be a great resource for you. It's called *Flooded*, and Nicki give us the tagline again.

NK: *The 5 Best Decisions to Make When Life Is Hard and Doubt Is Rising.*

KO: There you go. You've said that a couple of times by now, right? Okay, well, the book is available at P31bookstore.com. And we know that you can shop anywhere, but we really do appreciate when you choose to shop with us. And when you purchase from us, you'll also have access to a free download from Nicki called *Process to Promise: Three Things to do to Get from Here to There*. And you can only get that through our bookstore.

MB: That's right. And after you grab Nicki's book, why don't you head on over to the main page at Proverbs 31 and sign up for the free, *Flooded* Online Bible Study. Now more than ever, it's so important to get connected to a community like Online Bible Study so you don't have to do life on your own and go through these hard things on your own. But you can grow with like-minded women from all around the world who want to learn and grow in the same areas as you. It's really a beautiful, wonderful community that we love here at Proverbs 31. So, get signed up today at Proverbs31/study. The study starts April 12.

KO: Yes, it does. And if you're new to the podcast and want some recommendations on what to listen to next, maybe you got a lot of Nicki's teaching and just want to go deeper, you can check out the show notes. For today's episode we've listed a couple episodes that are great next step for you to take and remember, everything we share with you on the podcast, like all of these things and links and things like that are available in the show notes at Proverbs31.org/listen. Alright, thanks so much for joining us today friends. 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.