



Kaley Olson: Well, hello, everyone. Thanks for tuning into 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 friend and Proverbs 31 Executive Director and guest co-host, Lisa Allen.

Lisa Allen: Hey, Kaley. I am so excited to be with you today. I'm always excited to co-host with you. But today, I'm extra excited, because I get to make a very special announcement to our podcast audience —

KO: Yes, you do.

LA: About our latest Bible study. I don't even know if they're ready for this. Drum roll, please. Lysa TerKeurst and Joel Muddamalle have written a brand-new study, and it is called ... Ready? *Seeing Jesus in The Old Testament: He's Never Absent. We're Never Alone.*

KO: So good.

LA: Let that sink in for a second. It is available to purchase right now, exclusively at the P31 Bookstore at p31bookstore.com. And Kaley, can you tell us a little more about what we're going to learn in this study?

KO: Absolutely. Well, I'm excited for this study, because I saw the description and I'm going to read it right here. "We often think of Jesus as only being physically present in the New Testament, but it's important to understand how He was active in the Old Testament all along." And I think it's so cool. We're going to learn how Jesus makes His presence known in every part of the Bible. And this truth really impacts how we experience more of His presence in our day to day lives right now. He's never absent in the pages of scripture, and He's certainly not absent in the pages of our stories either.

LA: So true. And this study is beautifully designed, Kaley, with interactive charts, daily study questions, as well as a place for personal notes, takeaways and lots of bonus teaching and research by Joel and Lysa. There's so much more in it, so you really don't want to miss out on this resource available today at p31bookstore.com.

KO: Absolutely. And before I talk about who our teacher is today, I just want to say, when we talk about a resource, like *Seeing Jesus in The Old Testament*, and really learning the foundational truth that He's never absent in any of the pages of Scripture, it reminds me why we do what we do here at Proverbs. And that is equip women to know the truth and live the truth, because it changes everything. And knowing the truth that Jesus is never absent, not from Genesis or through Revelation, means that He's not absent in my life either. And so that's why this study is so important. And we're so excited for you guys to be able to

get that resource and dive in for yourselves. Lisa and I are going to do it. We're so excited, and I can't wait.

LA: Can't wait.

KO: I can't wait for my book to come in the mail. It's going to be great. Anyways guys, we are about to hear a really helpful teaching from our friend and fellow Proverbs 31 staff member, Amanda Bacon. Amanda taught on loving people without the expected benefit in return. Ouch, right? This teaching is so thought-provoking, so get ready to take notes and be challenged, and ultimately be reminded of the love that we can give because of Christ's sacrificial love for us. All right, friends, that's enough from us. Here's Amanda's teaching.

Well, today, we are so excited to be recording with our friend Amanda Bacon. Amanda is a mom of eight kids, not five, not six, not seven, but eight kids. Wow. Who she calls the Bacon Bits. And honestly, Amanda, that might be my favorite thing about you. I'm just kidding. There's lots of other things that I love about you, but I do love the nickname you have for your kids. But you have been serving on Lysa TerKeurst's content team for five years, which feels like a lifetime that you've been here. And on a personal note, you share quite a bit of your own journey with the Bacon Bits, and all that God is teaching you over on your Instagram at @amanda_bacon_. Right? Did I get that right?

Amanda Bacon: That's right.

KO: Awesome. Well... And today, Amanda's on the show and she's got a teaching prepared for us about loving others well. And I honestly can't think of a better time to hear this teaching than when we're all about to spend time together with family and friends around the table. The holiday season and time with loved ones is great. But you all know, I know too, that there's bound to be some unmet expectations along the way that makes loving others hard. And so Amanda, I'm so excited to be able to hear this teaching from you today, and I'm going to give you the floor to jump right in.

AB: Well, thanks, Kaley. Hi, everyone. It is so great to be back on the show and to be a guest again. And today, I'll begin with a question my therapist asked me. And she said, "Amanda, you are continually scanning the horizon to see how your actions might affect those around you, which is good. You deeply care about everyone being, quote, OK, and that they feel loved by God through you." And she looked at me and she said, "Would you agree with that?" And I said, "Well, yes, absolutely." For me, even when a conversation goes south or it's about to go south, or even if the topic at hand is not pleasant, even when this person possibly has frayed every last nerve in my body, I always want them to know that I care about them as a person and that God loves them. This is very true.

And this is not a perfect science obviously, because I also, like everyone else on the planet, am a terribly flawed human being, and my motives are not always pure. But it's something that's really important to me, that people know that I love them, that God loves them. So to me, it only seems right and normal and fair that people know they're loved, even in light of what's going on between us.

So my counselor then said, "Amanda, this is such a good thing. It's a really good thing about you. But are you OK with the people in your life, maybe your kids, maybe other adults, family, or not family, are you OK with them not having the same level of care for you?" And that was a really poignant question for me, because I think that if I were to answer just really quickly, I might say, "Oh, of course. I love sacrificially. And it's OK with me if they don't love me back in the same way, with the same care."

But in my most honest moments, I would say it's hard. It's really hard. Because in my mind, in my sinful, flawed mind, I'm like, "Well, if I'm going to spend this much time being loving and really praying about the words I'm about to speak, and all of that, I would hope they would do the same thing, give me the

same honor and respect and love back." So sitting there listening to my counselor's words, it has gotten me thinking so much about the way I love, and the way I expect others to love me in return.

And so, I'm going to give a couple different scenarios here, and maybe this will hit you, the listener, in a different way. Maybe one of these are you, describe you. So here's the first one. Maybe you love big, like I feel I do. Maybe you love big too, and you have to get over yourself, like me, and love people without expecting a return on investment, because that's what Christ followers do. OK, that's the first scenario.

Number two, or maybe you're the person who is a recipient of big love from others. And they are disappointed in you, because you can't seem to love them back in the same way. OK, that's number two. Maybe you feel like you're the disappointment, because other people love you big, and you just don't know how, or maybe you have a tough relationship. Maybe there's a tough dynamic. Or maybe you think all of this is just a bunch of junk, over-sensitivity, and people just need to stop being so sensitive about love, or the lack of it, and just move on. So I know people like that in my life, and we're all so different.

So I thought what we would do here first is turn to 1 John 4:7-21. Now, it's a little chunk. I'm going to read it for us, but it's a famous passage on the topic of God's love. So here it goes. *"Beloved, let us love one another, for love is from God. And whoever loves has been born of God and knows God. Anyone who does not love, does not know God, because God is love. In this, the love of God was made manifest among us, that God sent his only son into the world, so that we might live through him. In this is love, not that we have loved God, but that he loved us and sent his son to be the propitiation for our sins. Beloved, if God so loved us, we also ought to love one another. No one has ever seen God; if we love one another, God abides in us and his love is perfected in us."*

Verse 13-16, *"By this we know that we abide in him and he in us, because he has given us of his Spirit. And we have seen and testified that the Father has sent his Son to be the Savior of the world. Whoever confesses that Jesus is the Son of God, God abides in him and he in God. So we have come to know and to believe the love that God has for us. God is love, and whoever abides in love, abides in God, and God abides in him."*

Verse 17, *"By this is love perfected in us, so that we may have confidence for the day of judgment, because as He is, so also are we in the world. There is no fear and love, but perfect love casts out fear, for fear has to do with punishment, and whoever fears has not been perfected in love."*

And then here's verse 19-21 that we all know so well, *"We love because he first loved us. If anyone says, 'I love God,' and hates his brother, he is a liar; for he who does not love his brother whom he has seen, cannot love God whom he has not seen. And this commandment we have from him: whoever loves God must also love his brother."*

So that's a huge chunk of scripture, and I don't know that in everyday conversations, or even in sermons, that we're used to hearing such a large chunk read to us. But I wanted to do that, because God's Word sheds so much light on how we are to live in this world, especially when love is hard. And just to be reminded of these things from 1 John are so important.

So I wanted to read that first to give us a context that we love others, because God first loved us. So that's why we love, not because others are going to love us in the exact way we need, or others are going to love us in a really pleasant or obvious way. But we love others, because He first loved us. So let's keep that in mind as we move through this.

So what I wanted to do next was talk about loving and receiving love from others, and the problems we can run into, because I think that this is what's on the forefront of our mind when we're thinking about loving people. It's not usually, how can we do this better and best? Sometimes it is. Sometimes we have really good motives. But usually it's like, how do we avoid the problems we always have? And how do I love that person who is so difficult?

So what I wanted to do was ask this question. Am I OK with being myself and loving in the way I like to love others, without others always having to reciprocate in the way I'd prefer? So that's a big question.

But am I OK with being myself and loving others in the way I prefer, and in the way they like that's pleasant to them, without others always reciprocating in our preferred way?

So here's three problems. This is so fun. Here's three problems we run into when we expect the same care we give to be given in return. So here's number one. One problem: Other people have preferences too. Other people have ways they show love and ways they like to receive love. We're all operating from different vents, abilities, different minds and experiences in our lives, that make this not feasible as much as we'd like it to be.

So for instance, my husband, we've been married for 22 years. His name is Jeremy. He loves to show love in a different way than I do, obviously. It's very common. But one way he likes to show love is by working in the kitchen to prepare dinner. We have a family of 10. We have kids ages nine to 20. Our two grown sons are 19 and 20. They both live at home, go to school and work. And so we just have this dynamic of all these ages and stages. And dinner is a huge deal, because we're feeding so many people on the regular every day. And it can be really tiring.

As much as we're grateful that we have food to feed our family, it is a lot of work. I feel like the perpetual lunch lady all the time, all year round. So one way my husband shows love to me and our family is he'll send a text during the day and say, "Hey, I got dinner covered. Just so you know." And he's honestly a way better cook than I am. I cook to keep people alive, not necessarily because I love standing in the kitchen for an hour at 4:00 PM.

He shows love to our family in that way. He lets me know dinner's covered, or if we're all home together, he's the one who cooks, because he loves it. And I love that about him. Another thing, he has certain needs or loves for physical touch and words of affirmation. Well, only one of those are important to me, and it's words of affirmation. So he loves in a different way. He will love me with those ways, but I don't necessarily need both of them. But I recognize it as a love, because that's his need.

So it's impossible for others to love us perfectly in the way we envision it, because of these things. They have preferences, ways they show love and ways they like to receive love. So it's just impossible for us to do it perfectly with all the different kinds of relationships we have. So that's one problem, and it's not really a problem, but it's a thing.

Other people have preferences. No other human being has the supernatural ability to love us how we most need and desire. It was never their job. And so repeat after me. I won't expect people to have a doctorate in loving me, because they have so many different relationships and their own preferences. So that's number one.

The second problem we run into when we expect the same care we give to be given in return, is what about those people in our lives who don't care to show love at all? So it's not about differences. It's just, they don't care to love. And when they profess to be Christians, we struggle with this even more, because it seems like they're presenting themselves as unchanged by the message of the Gospel.

And sometimes this is the hardest dynamic for us, because we're like, "If you are changed by the Gospel, if you love Jesus, how can you not love? How can you be so rude?" Things like that. 1 John 4:8 says, "Anyone who does not love, does not know God, because God is love." So we get tripped up on that. We're like, "What about these people? And how do we do this? This is so hard." These people stomp on our toes. They make us scratch our heads, because we just can't fathom how a person, who has received the grace of God through salvation, could not extend that same love to others.

Well, here's the thing. We could sit up on our high horse all day long, but we've all been this person, or maybe we're being this person currently. Maybe in the past, and for sure in the future at some point, we're going to not be loving. That's another problem we run into is, there's people who don't care to show love at all, for whatever reason.

The last problem we run into is if we're believers in Jesus, we want to attempt to love like Jesus. I think when we present our purest heart toward the Lord and others, but here's the thing, we want loving others to be easier and not quite so sacrificial. What is the point of sacrificial love, if it were easy for us to give

though? And that's a question I keep asking myself, because in my life personally, I've got eight children. Five I gave birth to. Three we adopted. And just between those eight children, there are so many different little hearts and souls for me to love, that's without adding in work, family, my role at our local church. That's not including marriage. It's not including relationships with my extended family. That's just my children.

I mean, it is so much of a sacrifice to love my children, just them and just some of the issues that it presents, and some of the hard things we're walking through as a family. It's hard, but what's the point of sacrificial love, if it were easy to give? Did Jesus love humans, expecting a return on His investment? No. And that's not a question we often look at. He loved, so that others would know the great love of God. Not because we could actually give Him anything.

We all know that Jesus loves sacrificially. We all know here, if you're a believer in Jesus, listening to this, we all know that Jesus wasn't waiting for humankind to give Him the equal benefit that He gave us. We couldn't. It was impossible. We could never match His sacrifice. And that's why it's called sacrificial love, because it's painful to give.

Hebrews 12:2 says, *"It was for the joy set before him, that he, Jesus, endured the cross despising the shame."* Yes, it was brutally difficult, to put it mildly, for Him. *"And is now seated at the right hand of the throne of God."* Jesus knew that He would end up at the right hand of God in eternity when it was over. And here's the thing. We will end up in eternity too. Is that enough joy set before us to live this life well? And that is a question that I've been wrestling with so much in my life lately. Is eternity enough joy set before me, set before you, for us to live this painful life well?

Am I OK with being my myself, with loving in a way I'd like to love, without others always reciprocating in the way I'd prefer? And for all of us, I'm sure this plays out in all the ways. Maybe you've got a sister, maybe she's taken a hard path, or maybe it's just always been difficult between you from the time you were three and five, or when you're adults now. And I think there can be those dynamics in sibling relationships.

We've got parents. And we think, "You're the parent. Even though I'm an adult, you're the parent. You should know how to love me well." That can be a difficult dynamic. Maybe you're in a marriage that's difficult. And you're saying, "You vowed to me, to love, cherish and honor me. And this doesn't look like that right now." Maybe you've got a relationship with a child, and you just want it to be pleasant and easy, and it's just not.

But here's the thing. For us, let's learn and let the Lord transform us, so that we can be OK with being ourselves and loving in the way we like to love and that feels good to others, without always demanding that others reciprocate in the way we prefer. Am I OK with sacrificial love feeling hard, because it's supposed to?

Well, I'm going to pray for us, as we end this portion. And just know that even after you listen, just know that I've been praying for you, as you listen, and as you move throughout your lives, because this is hard. It is hard. It's hard enough to love like Jesus, and it's equally as hard to not expect others to love us in the exact same way. So I pray that we would have so much grace for each other, for ourselves, for the people we're in relationship with, and just know I'm praying for you, as you listen and digest and move about your lives. So let's pray.

Father God, we just come to You, because love is tricky. We need Your help so much in our relationships. We need Your help so much in the way we speak, in the way we think, in the way we act toward others and in regard to others. God, we pray that You would transform our hearts to love like You, without expecting a return on investment. And if we're in difficult relationships, even if we're in abusive relationships, pray that we would get the help we need, because being abused is never OK with God.

And we just pray and ask, Lord, that You would show us, guide us, give us wisdom for relationships. Give us words to say. Help us to know that Your love should lead us, as we are talking to others and being in spaces with others. And we just love You so much. And we thank You for the ways that You

teach us through your Word. You guide us by Your Spirit and your presence, and giving us the example of your Son, Jesus. We are just so grateful and we love You so much. In Jesus's name we pray. Amen.

KO: Well, Amanda, thank you so much for this teaching and this word. I can't think of something more appropriate for the time of year. I know that I said that before you dove into your teaching, but I'm just thinking about all the families and the different relationships who are going to be spending all that intentional time together. And I think it's so important that they hear a message like this, to reorient themselves around what their expectations are for the people that they're related to, or inviting into their home. And so that they can love others sacrificially, the way that Jesus did. And so this was great.

I have a question for you, as a mom to the eight Bacon Bits. Lisa and Amanda, you guys know that I'm expecting my own here in January, and so I feel like I have my own mom questions, because I'm like, "Teach me all the mom things." And Amanda, surely you've got lots and lots of lessons as a mom of eight. But I was thinking about what's coming with my child, and knowing that when he is growing up, he's not going to be able to show me his gratitude for the things that I do for him as a mom.

KO: And I know I've never experienced that before, but I can only imagine how hard it is to be in that season, where I feel like all I'm doing is giving, and it's especially not being appreciated by the one that I'm sacrificing so much for. And I'm trying to develop this relationship with him and learn, how does my son want to be loved one day?

And so, as a mom of eight, I'm sure all eight of your kids look different in terms of how they appreciate your relationship and want to be loved. And so let's talk to the moms for a second. If they're in the trenches right now, how have you taken what you've learned, and translated it into your relationships with your kids, especially in those moments when you feel like it's not being reciprocated or appreciated on that side of things?

AB: Yeah. That's such a good question. Because as children come into the world, they aren't able to say, "Thanks, mom. Man, you really keep me clean and dry and fed. And I just appreciate you so much." And you learn as they grow, and as you keep yourself rooted in the Word of God, that just like we talked about earlier, we love because He first loved us.

And loving those who are the most vulnerable, children, anyone who's vulnerable in the world, we are asked to love them. And I think that with children, what we do is at the beginning, we are like, "Yeah, I don't expect anything from you." But eventually, they start to smile and that's rewarding. And we learn so much about sacrificial love, as a parent of little people who can't yet do anything for themselves.

And I think what I had to make sure to do when my children couldn't do anything for themselves, nor could they say thank you, it was just to make sure that I kept myself rooted and grounded in prayer, and keeping God's Word at the forefront of my mind. A lot of times, what I would do, I would keep my Bible open. I still do this. I've been a mom for 21 years.

I would keep my Bible open, and I do this from time to time, open to a certain passage. Maybe the Psalms. Philippians four is one that I love to keep my Bible open to. And when I'm struggling throughout the day, I walk back to it, put my hands on it, read again. I'm going to read that Psalm again. I'm going to read Philippians four again, because my heart struggles to stay steady, even when dealing with a helpless baby, or infant, or toddler.

We're human. We need love. Humans can't survive without love and interaction, and things like that. And I think just keeping our minds reminded that we get to show sacrificial love in this season, without gaining anything in return. And I think that's almost one of the biggest lessons in my life. Even now with older kids who can dress themselves, and feed themselves, and bathe themselves, and walk and they can do all the things. They can help with chores. There's just so much.

But even then, it requires a lot of me. And I think it's just an over and over again, even having conversations with friends who are in the same season is helpful. I think listening to podcasts like this, reading books that are going to help you in your exact season. And I think that is probably what is the most helpful when you're in a season where everybody needs you, and you have needs yourself.

KO: That's great. Lisa, I'd love to know what you think too.

LA: Yeah, that's so good. I was thinking when you were talking about that, I have older children. But this is also really good for those of us that have spouses as well, because my husband and I are wired very differently. And I remember probably the first decade of our marriage, I had expectations of his reactions to be similar to mine. And this podcast is titled *Loving People Without Expecting to Benefit*. And so to me, it helped so much.

One of the things I tell myself about Bill is, fine is as good as it's ever going to get. I'm very demonstrative. I'm going to have a lot of words and a lot of adjectives, and he's a bottom line kind of guy. So that helps me not only with kids, but also with my husband, to adjust those expectations. But Amanda, another thing that you brought out, that it made me say, "Ouch," is the eternal perspective with the question, is that enough joy set before me? Like what Jesus endured, the shame of the cross, because of the joy set before Him. And that just makes me think of having an eternal perspective when it comes to the relationships we're in.

And I just wonder if you have some practical steps or practices, how do you do that practically? How do you live it out? I know Kaley, you and I have had loss in our life. And that gives me a deep, rich, eternal perspective, like nothing else in my life has given me. But I'm wondering practically, Amanda, how do you walk this out?

AB: Yeah, I think it's one of the, probably most prominent struggles on my mind every single day. And I'm actually reading this book by Dr. Larry Crabb. I don't know if you're familiar with him. He passed away several months ago, and I'm reading his book called *Shattered Dreams*. And it talks about this very thing. The fact that God could, He could change our circumstances. He absolutely has the power to do that. But in some circumstances, he doesn't. And it's basically our disappointment with God.

But the promises that God has for us, there are some that are only for eternity. And that is that our life is pleasant. We have no sadness, no fears, no tears. That is meant for eternity. There are certain things that are meant for earth. But the things we desire so badly for life right now, as hard as it is to say, it makes me really sad to even say it, but it's so true that some of the things that we want and whine for, and desire so deeply here on earth, that we think should be possible, are held for us in eternity. And that's sure.

And I think that I have to often, as hard as it is... We don't ever know how long our life will be. We don't ever know how long it will be, until we get there. My practical step, Lisa, is to always keep my mind on that joy set before me. And when I don't, oh man, I despair. I have this prayer journal that I write in every morning, after I read scripture. And almost every day, there's a little spot where you can write a confession, something you're struggling with, that's maybe a sin issue. Confessions are sin issues.

But I write hopeless and despair quite a bit, due to some certain circumstances in my life. And those help me. Just me being honest with myself before God, that helps me remember that I have got to keep my thoughts and my vision toward eternity, and point my people there too, because they're going to come across this. And I'd love for the people around me to... I tend to be pretty transparent about maybe not all the details of my struggle, but that I'm struggling. It depends on the person and the audience.

But I think just keeping that in the forefront, that not everything I desire right now is for right now, but it will all come true in heaven. And that is the best thing for me to keep my mind on, because I think a lot of our despair is because we are so badly wanting what's meant only for heaven, right now. Some of that can be, but some of it can't.

LA: That's so good. Meant for earth versus meant for eternity, meant for heaven. That is a good thing to put in my head. Thanks, Amanda.

KO: Yeah. Yeah. I agree. And I'll say one more thing before we wrap up here. Whenever you were talking about the sacrificial love of Jesus, and how He endured the cross for us, I think we, of course, talk about His sacrificial love, and Him giving His life was the greatest example of love for us. But I also think the compassion that He showed us while on the cross, knowing that we could never reciprocate that kind of love, shows me that I can also have compassion for the people in my life who aren't able to love me in the way that I want to be loved in return, or maybe that's just not the way they love.

Maybe I need to lower my own expectations, and think about where they are in their life. And maybe things like what they've been through, that make them the way that they are right now, or maybe the way that they are in the season that they're currently in. What are they going through? And our president, Lysa TerKeurst, talks a lot about having compassion for the other person, and just thinking through what might they be going through that I'm missing, so that I can take the focus off of myself.

Again, it's like that sacrificial love right there. I'm taking the focus off myself. I'm thinking about the other person. And even though they're really hard to love right now, I can have compassion on them, because of these couple of things that I know they're going through, or I can assume that they're going through. And that makes it a little bit easier to love that person in return.

And so she recorded a podcast episode a couple months back, called *What The Humanity of Jesus Means For Us*. And she dove into things like expectations. And I think it was a teaching on Hebrews, but we've got it linked for you guys in the show notes. I'll tag it there. That way, you guys can listen to that, because I think it would be a good follow-up to your teaching, Amanda, which was so great, so thought-provoking and challenging. So thank you so much for coming on the show today.

And we do want to connect our listeners with your little corner of the world. You guys can find Amanda on Instagram, where she shares what God is teaching her, a sneak peek of what her family is up to and more, at @amanda_bacon_. Also, Amanda has a really cool podcast. Speaking of podcasts. We love podcasts around here called *At Night: Prayers and Meditations for Peaceful Rest*. And so I don't know about you guys, but sometimes I can't shut my brain off. Lisa, Amanda, do you do this too?

LA: Yes.

KO: I can't shut it off.

AB: For sure.

KO: But when it's time to go to bed, and what better way to do that and listen to this podcast. So check out *At Night* on Apple Podcasts.

LA: Oh, so true. And just as a reminder about Lysa TerKeurst and Joel Muddamalle's newest study, *Seeing Jesus in The Old Testament: He's Never Absent. We're Never Alone*. It is available now at the Proverbs 31 Bookstore, p31bookstore.com. Now, trust me, you're going to want to get a copy of this study for yourself and your friends. As Kaley said, we've linked everything we just mentioned in the show notes on our website, just in case you forget.

KO: All right. That's all for today, friends. Thank you so much for joining us at Proverbs 31 Ministries. We believe when you know the truth and love the truth, it changes everything.