



Kaley Olson: Well, hi friends. Thanks so much 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 today I'm joined by two very special guests. Two of my favorite people, Lysa TerKeurst, our President and Joel Muddamalle, actually Dr. Joel Muddamalle. Welcome guys.

Lysa TerKeurst: Hi, welcome. I know I feel so official now that I get to study theology with our Doctor of Theology.

Joel Muddamalle: Well thanks. Real good to be here.

KO: So good to be here. Joel, really quick, really quick. This is your first time being on the podcast as Dr. Muddamalle. So can you tell everybody what your doctorate is in?

JM: Yeah so I just earned a PhD in biblical theology. And so my area of study is a deep dive into Old Testament and New Testament and how they relate to each other. But my topic was on the Paul's household theme in Ephesians and how God has always desired for a beautiful household. And Jesus is the one who put it back together after it was broken.

KO: Sounds amazing. Well, I know we are recording this at the very end of the year and Joel, it's been a long couple of years for you and you deserve a nap after this. So will you do that for us and all of our listeners. But let's not talk about naps anymore let's talk about why we're here. And we've got a powerful episode ahead of us today with you guys and y'all are going to share some teaching from what you've been working on recently, your most recent project: *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*, which is such a fantastic study and I'm excited to dive into that a little bit more. But first I do want to take just a couple of minutes to pause and talk about the ministry we do here at Proverbs 31 and why it's so important. And so we received a review recently from a listener and I just have to read what she said. So I'm going to do that really quick and y'all listen up. She's says, "I've been looking to reconnect with my Christianity and was led to your podcast and now I'm reading your devotionals. I won't tell you all my background but Proverbs 31 is really inspiring me and helping me reignite my relationship with Jesus. Thank you." Lysa I know for me sometimes when I hear a review like that it helps make what we do here feel so real. But I would love for you as the president of Proverbs 31 Ministries to get your reaction about what she says and just hear what it means to you whenever you hear a review like that.

LT: Well first of all Kaley, I find it so incredible that... and we were instructed to go into all the world and share the good news of the gospel and to teach and train disciples. I think being able to do that through podcasting and through sending out email devotion and the many other things that we do at

Proverbs 31 Ministries with the unique female voice it's just incredible. I know what it feels like. I mean I remember 28 years ago when I knew facts about God but I didn't know how to connect with Him in a strong relationship.

I didn't know what it meant to truly experience God or to put connections together between studying His Word and the struggles that I had with my everyday life. I hear that, I think thank you Lord that I am reaching people who were just like me back then. And podcasting wasn't a thing all those... because I guess I'm old now but this is the kind of Bible teaching that would've drawn me back in. And I'm so grateful that we're doing this and we're fulfilling the great commission through modern technology.

KO: Yeah, I agree. And it's just crazy to me how God can use something like listening to this podcast to be the catalyst for action that leads her closer to Him and getting to be part of that on the inside here at Proverbs. I know Lysa and Joel I'm speaking for y'all too it's just an honor to get to be a part of that. And we say it all the time but we exist to help our listeners and everybody who participates in ministry with us to know the truth and live the truth because it changes everything. And as we talk more later about your new study, *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*, I can't even imagine but think how that's going to help reignite people's faith. And so there's so many exciting things going on that I know God is just going to use and get behind to help more people like this lady who sent in the review.

And so right now it's December, it's around Christmas time and we're in the middle of our annual fundraising campaign. And so maybe you guys listened to that review that I read a minute ago and you've had a similar experience with Proverbs where you've seen God move in your own life through maybe this podcast or another free resource like the First 5 mobile app, our online Bible studies or our devotions. And now is a time that we would love for you to give back with a donation to Proverbs 31 Ministry so that we can keep doing ministry and reaching women around the world. And so if you're like me, you're probably multitasking whenever you're listening to a podcast, I do laundry or go on walks when I do that. And it's not very often that I'm near my computer but we've made it easy for you to make a donation today at any time.

You can go to our show notes at Proverbs31.org and click the link to make a donation. All right, Lysa and Joel, I have talked a lot and I would like to listen now. So today you guys are here to address the question, how can I believe God protects me when tragedy strikes every day? And I know that this is a question that all of us have on some level and we're all wondering what the answer is to that. And so you guys have the floor and I can't wait to hear.

LT: Thanks, Kaley. I think feeling protected by God can seem so challenging because most of us can point to some kind of tragedy or some kind of extreme heartbreak or even rejection, abandonment or discouragement, disillusionment where you thought life was going to go this way and now it's going that way. And you're wondering, has God looked away. And maybe you've had a moment where you've laid on your couch or on your bed and stared up at the ceiling and just thought, God where are you? Or you've been sobbing in your pillow and you feel scared, you feel alone. You feel like you're not seeing evidence of God doing something and so you fear that God is doing nothing. And I just want to say I personally know these feelings in a really deep way. And for those who have been following along with my journey, the past seven years of my life have been really hard.

I never ever thought that some of the circumstances and tragedies and heartbreak and rejection, abandonment really, I never thought that any of this would be part of my story. I had such a vision for where my life was going to go, where the life of my family was going to go. And I just assumed if I did two plus two it would equal four. And I know that there are listeners listening today where you have

experienced some kind of tragedy and you're asking the question, how can I believe that God protects when this is happening? Maybe for you it is the death of a relationship. Maybe it is the death of a dream or maybe it is actually a death of someone that you loved. And I want to give you for those of you who are dealing with the death of someone that you loved, I want to start there. And I want to give you a Bible verse that I think will be very encouraging.

In Isaiah 57:1 it says, *"The righteous perish but no one takes it to heart; the devout are taken away and no one understands that the righteous are taken away to be spared from evil."* And then it goes on to say in verse two, *"Those who walk uprightly enter into peace; [and] they find rest as they lie in death."* And as I read that I start to realize again, God's ways are higher than our ways. His thoughts are higher than our thoughts. And sometimes His protection comes in packages that we would not call protection at all. It seems like if you're praying for a loved one and you think that to spare them would mean that they would need to heal and get better. And sometimes that is how God spares someone.

But according to the scripture, sometimes when someone is taken away and no one understands, God is sparing them from evil. And so that's why it's so important to get into the scriptures and just better understand this isn't stuff... the Bible verses that we read and the scriptures we get into, this isn't just stuff that we feel like we're checking a box, doing our Christian duty. God is giving us life and hope in these words. And I pray that that verse Isaiah 57 verse one and even verse two, I pray that that's a comfort to someone. And then I also want to say if you are walking through something else, perhaps it is something that you're walking through and it feels incredibly unfair. And like, God if you see this, how could you just stand by and watch it unfold this way and not intervene because that just feels like so incredibly hurtful.

I'm not just being hurt by the situation that I'm walking through but I'm being hurt that God hasn't thrown out a lightning bolt and like not enough to kill somebody but enough to shock them. It's like come on, where are you God? And so I'm going to let Joel talk in a minute but let me just get in one other thing. We have to remember that Jesus said in John 16:33, *"I have told you these things so that in me you may have peace. In this world you will have trouble. But take heart! I have overcome the world."* And when you have experienced deep hurt you very much understand the trouble that Jesus is referencing here. And you very much need to know that Jesus has overcome the world. But how do we see that in practical ways right now in this moment, in this situation?

So let me give you one of my favorite psalms that I find so very comforting, it's Psalm 91. Psalm 91 versus nine through 11 says this, *"Because you have made the LORD your dwelling place — the Most High, who is my refuge, no evil shall be allowed to befall you, no plague come near your tent. For he will command his angels concerning you to guard you in all of your ways."* And then it goes on in Psalm 91:2, actually before the versus I just read, it gives us a script to say to ourselves in moments where we get afraid and triggered. And this is the script that Psalm 91 verse two gives me, *"I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress, my God, in whom I trust.'"*

So this is the script, Lord you are my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. And I think it's interesting the Psalm has described God both as a refuge and a fortress. A refuge is a quick place to duck into to find shelter. A fortress is a place built intentionally for the purposes of exceptional security. The Hebrew word for fortress — and Joel, I'm going to let you say this. I think it's metsuda.

JM: Yeah, you nailed it.

LT: OK. Thank you. I think I have a memory of playing this on like some kind of recording you sent me and we practiced it.

JM: Yeah, you're doing an audio recording and I do the pronunciation back. So good job.

LT: Hebrew word for fortress when we cry out my refuge and my fortress, my God in whom I trust. The Hebrew word for fortress is metsuda with one of its definitions being an inaccessible place; to experience this level of peace we must be near to God. And it's that nearness described throughout Psalm 91 that we are reminded to abide in the shadow of the Almighty, that's verse one. And verse four, to take refuge under His wings. And verse nine, to make Him our dwelling place. So just like we would have to sit close enough to a tree to enjoy the benefits from its shade and the sun scorching heat, we must all also position ourselves to be near to God if we desire His comfort, His protection and His deliverance. It's not that bad things won't ever happen to us, life is very rarely tidy. And I think all three of us can say that for sure.

Relationships aren't easy. The constant stresses and strains of managing and navigating daily issues that are super hard on the human heart are not easy. But as children of God we are not supposed to live with fear taunting us and terrorizing us. So as we sit with these feelings we have to come to the conclusion that the goal of having the peace of Jesus referred to in John 16:33, it's not perfection it's progress. And what I want to do is every day when I say Psalm 91:2, *"I will say to the LORD, 'My refuge and my fortress my God, in whom I trust.'"* I want to say, Lord, you are the fortress. If I press into you and recognize today my job is to be obedient to God, God's job is everything else.

In other words, I can press into the Lord in that way and I can know what to do. I think part of the fear when we're walking through really hard times is having no idea what to do. But He's telling us here, if you want to be elevated like into a fortress where fear no longer has access to you, you let go of the weight of trying to control everything. You just be obedient with God in this step, in this step, in this step. And as we are obedient to God we can have faith that God is handling everything else. And that's where fear no longer has access to us.

KO: Wow.

JM: That's so good Lysa. I think for me as you talk about Psalm 91 and this script that you just say to yourself, I wish I had this, gosh this was probably six years ago. One of the most fearful anxiety written moments of my life and my wife Brittany's life is one of our youngest sons, Lucas was 11 months old and in the van driving to visit my mom, he had what's called a febrile seizure. And it was terrifying as a parent. You realize that you have no control over anything in that moment. And one of the passages of scripture that was just so incredibly comforting to me was Psalm 46. And I just want us to maybe read a few of these verses together. This is what the psalmist says starting in verse one, *"God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble. Therefore, we will not fear though the earth gives way, though the mountains be moved into the heart of the sea, though it's waters roar and foam, though the mountains tremble at its swelling. Selah."* (Psalm 46:1-3) And then verse seven is the pivot point. It's the main point of the Psalm. Verse seven, *"The LORD of hosts is with us; the God of Jacob is our fortress."* And then verse 10 the psalmist says, *"Be still and know that I am God."* You see that phrase, the Hebrew phrase therefore the Lord of hosts is such an important phrase. And I think this is a promise and an assurance that we can hold onto in the midst of our own tragedies, tragic days and anxieties and fears. The Lord of hosts, today when we have military terms, [crosstalk 00:17:29] a general kind of hides out in spot in the tent and lets all the troops go into battle.

But in the ancient world the king was a warrior king and the king would actually lead in the front lines of battle. You would see the king go down as the one who would be the first into the battle scene. This is exactly what is being described of Yahweh, the Lord of hosts that He is not a God who sits back and watches us in the middle of our plight and our pain. In fact, He is the type of warrior king that is present

even in the middle of it. It's really interesting because it also said that to be still and know that I'm God. In fact I actually think that this comes from Exodus 14. So what I actually think is happening is the psalmist is recalling the story of the Red Sea. And notice what Moses says to the Israelites in Exodus 14 verse 14, "*The LORD will fight for you and you have only to be silent.*"

I just love that thought. I love that idea that sometimes in the middle of our tragedy, in the middle of these moments where we just don't even know what to do, in the midst of our silence we can be assured that God's presence is with us. And how do we know who is the presence? How does that take place? Well we know that's Jesus. Jesus in the incarnation came down and He made His dwelling amongst humanity. And I know Lysa is going to go to one of her favorite passages instantly, Hebrews Chapter 2 and describe how this actually takes place.

LT: Yeah Joel. And before I read the scripture, I want to say something just about how we've been talking about hey, the Lord is my fortress, the Lord. The Lord is my protector, the Lord. Be still and the Lord will fight for you. Here's where I think a listener could lean in and go, OK I hear you but what do I do right in this moment when I am so very afraid? I think there's three perspectives that we need to hold onto. Number one, it is impossible for God to do nothing. We don't serve a do nothing God. God is always doing something and that something is always pointed in the direction of good. And so that's number one. Just to say to ourselves, OK I don't see evidence of God working here and that's why I'm afraid and that's why I feel alone.

But I 100% can say with confidence we don't serve a do nothing God, and God is not going to be pointing His activity in an area of treacherous realities. God is good. God is good to us. And God is good at being God. So we have to trust that we don't serve a do nothing God. The second thing is just because you don't see it happening today doesn't mean it's not happening. And it doesn't mean it's not happening and you'll see it one day. So sometimes I think we think I have to see evidence of God working today in order for me to ever see God working in this at all one day. But that's the thing. Remember there's two realities that are always hovering around our life. There's a physical reality that we see. We see the heartbreak, we see the circumstances, we see the person, we see whatever it is that's hurting us or making us be so very afraid and stirring up anxiety.

At the same time, there as the physical reality, there is a spiritual reality that is happening. And we're reminded in Ephesians Chapter 6, "*For our struggle is not against flesh and blood. It's against the evil forces that hover in the heavenly realms.*" And so we have to remember that with God there's always a meanwhile. There is what we see and at the same in time there is something good that God is working out. And so I think it's very important for us to acknowledge that this feels scary, this seems scary, this doesn't seem good at all. But— and I love adding but God in any kind of processing I'm doing in my head. But God is a God who is working out something.

And then number three, just because I feel afraid doesn't mean I have to live afraid. In other words, or just because I feel angry doesn't mean I have to live angry. Or just because I feel uncertain doesn't mean I have to live as a person uncertain about God. And so feelings are great indicators but they should never be dictators of how we process life. Feelings can —let's press in and let's have some kind of comfort here but it should never dictate how we live. And what we think is true. I think we need to start with what we know is true. God is good, God is good to us. God is good at being God. And let that be the lens through which we process everything.

Now, let me read these verses in Hebrews 2 that Joel knew that I was going to go to. Hebrews 2 verse 14, "*Since the children have flesh and blood, he,*" meaning Jesus, "*shared in their humanity. So that by his death he might break the power of him who holds the power of death.*" That is the devil. Verse 15,

"... and free those all their lives who are held in slavery by their fear of death." And I know it can kind of seem like, OK, I am afraid because... and there's lots of different deaths. We already talked about that.

But now we can say I'm afraid that if the worst of the worst of the worst happens here and God doesn't come through in the way I thought that He would. And I'm afraid of this worst case scenario. And in this case, Jesus is saying look, I have stared down death and I have conquered death. So you don't need to live in fear of the devil because I have taken the power of him who holds the power of death, that is the devil and I have broken his hold. And I have freed you. If you've been held in slavery by your fear of death I have provided freedom because there is something on the other side of death. It is a pass through, it is not a destination.

KO: So good. So good. Guys, I think... and whenever I think about what y'all are talking about with God being a refuge and a fortress and drawing near to Him, I think one of the practical questions that I have is how are we doing this on a daily basis? I don't think it looks the same for everyone but for me one of the things that our team here at Proverbs has been reading is a book called *Emotionally Healthy Spirituality*, which is a great book. But in the book, he talks about the daily office and the Sabbath. And the daily office is this thing where you're making time for God throughout your day. And what I'm learning is when I think about the verse in James 4:8 that says, "*Draw near to God, and he will draw near to you.*" When I think about God being a fortress, I know that He's accessible there for me at all times but if I'm not making the effort to remember Him, I will not naturally feel at peace.

And so what I want to know for me and for our listeners Lysa and Joel, what's it look like for you guys to be mindful of God throughout your day? Because if you're like me, if you just do it once during your day and you're like, Lord, help me, help me remember you throughout my day. A lot of times it doesn't happen because I get so caught up in the busyness and then I don't feel at peace. So how do you make peace a part of your day and what does that look like for y'all?

JM: Yeah, I think Kaley, first when you talk about refuge and fortress, one of the things that instantly comes to my mind and as Lysa was teaching is that a refuge and a fortress especially that we don't actively walk into will do us no good. Imagine just sitting outside and having the enemy come in and the door is wide open. All you got to do is walk in and close the door and you have the protection of the fortress except you choose not to do it. And I do think there's this place of participation that the Lord is inviting us to. And that leads us to like well, how do we do this? For me, I just found out, learned a fun fact. I can't help myself so I'm just going to go ahead and share it now. And I've just been thinking about it this whole time that in Israel there's this place called the Southern Steps. And the Southern Steps would've been the stairway into the temple.

And on the Southern Steps, the rabbis would teach the disciples. It would be also a place where the Israelites sort of walked into going into the temple to worship. Here's something so interesting. The Southern Steps were intentionally built uneven basically. So some of the steps were longer and some of them were smaller and shorter. And why is this? It was to intentionally cause people to slow down in holy reverence to think about every step they're about to take so they don't take for granted the process of going into the temple and into worship.

And for me, one of the things that is the most important thing for me to do is to slow down and to try to train my eyes and tune my ears to the goodness and greatness of God all around me. It's the million moments that I'm aware of God's goodness. Right now I can look out on the trees and I can see the leaves that are going to fall, that are falling off. And to think that in just six months or so all those trees are going to be full and be green with leaves. I think that is evidence of God's grace. And if I don't slow myself down and make that connection, that this is [inaudible 00:28:21] in John Chapter one by Jesus

Himself who holds all creation together, I could find myself sitting outside of the fortress and not walking inside to experience protection of Jesus.

LT: That's so good. Joel. And I would say too, that I have to remember what is scaring me right now? What feels so, I guess making me so fearful, making me anxious, making me feel so threatened? Whatever it is that this is a part of my life but it is not sum total of life. In other words sometimes I can get so laser focused on what is bothering me or troubling me or causing sorrow that I forget that this isn't the whole world. And sometimes, and I think I've shared this before, sometimes to help bring that reality back into my world because I can get so laser focused on my stuff that it's almost my little issue. It's not little, but my issue can feel like it is magnified to the size of the whole world. And so my counselor taught me to go outside, take my shoes off, put my feet in the grass, look up into the sky and remind myself, the sky is not falling.

The sun is still shining. Even if the clouds are covering it, the sun is still shining and God is still on the throne. God is still working good even from this. And if I will just drink four ounces of water. Four ounces of water has been scientifically proven to reduce our level of anxiety. And it does something for our body. And I think that's pretty amazing too. And then also allow myself just 20 minutes. It takes 20 minutes when we get triggered in our pain for the limbic part of our brain and the amygdala, which is where we store our trauma to settle down. And so if we'll just give ourselves 20 minutes chances are drinking for ounces of water, giving ourself 20 minutes, walking outside, reminding ourselves that the sky is not falling. Suddenly our prefrontal cortex which is where our logical thought kicks back in and we can process this in a little bit better way.

We can pray for these scriptures. We can consider the goodness of God. We can be a notice of nature and God's revelation of Himself all around us. And so I think it's just being patient with ourselves, giving us that little time out. And it's OK if we need to step away from a phone call, hit the pause button on a conversation, then we need to do it. And in doing so we can reconnect with God and reconnect with just a settle down heart inside of a relationship with God.

KO: Yeah. That's so good. And at the very beginning you said when life doesn't go the way that we thought we immediately ask, where are you? And I think that answer is the question right there. If we ask the question where are you but immediately go into panic and never stop and pause to go back to Psalm 91 or to go outside and look up and remember the last verse that we read in our Bible or anything like that, we are not doing our part to intentionally connect with God to allow Him to be the fortress that we need, to allow Him to be our refuge and our safe space. And for Him to meet us right there. And remember that, like you said, Lysa at the end that it's impossible for God to be doing nothing. And if we just pause and remember that, it helps us process these tragedies and these heartbreaks and these rejections that come our way.

And I know you guys are so passionate about helping us understand where God is in the midst of that. And I know that this is so deeply related to what y'all have been studying with *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament*. And so I want to give you guys just a second to tell our listeners a little bit about what the study is. The title is *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament: He's Never Absent and We're Never Alone*. And that speaks to what you guys talked about today but I know there's so much more to this that we're all excited about. So I want y'all to share.

LT: Thanks Kaley. I am very excited about this study because I'm absolutely convinced if we can learn to see and notice Jesus and His activity in the Old Testament, we will be better equipped to see and notice His activity in our present-day life as well. The study is structured; its five weeks and we'll be digging into the Old Testament, but I know sometimes people can hear that and be like, oh no that sounds depth.

That sounds like it would be confusing to me. No, this is depth with clarity and we've intentionally written it with the average everyday Bible study gal in mind because I am one of those gals.

KO: Me too, me too.

LT: Y'all would love to go like real deep. And I'm raising my hand and saying, I probably should know this word but I don't really understand what it means. And so throughout the book you'll see a little note from Joel that defines maybe [inaudible 00:34:00] study or a little note from Lysa, me that would give some more clarity on that. But the study is structured over five weeks and we will cover seeing Jesus through portraits, prophecies, patterns, provisions and protections. Joel, what else do you want to say about it?

JM: Yeah. I just think that this is one of those studies that it will really help stir up in your heart's affections for the Old Testament that maybe we haven't had before. And I think part of the missing key to this is that there are seeds that are planted all throughout the Old Testament that become full blown trees in the New Testament. And we want to skip past that and jump right back in Matthew, Mark, Luke and John and see all this stuff. But what if by doing that we actually miss some of the journey that actually brings life and brings meaning and brings confidence to everything that's taking place in the New Testament. And this is exactly what this study will do for us. We will see in some of these places, promises, provisions, patterns, protections of Jesus Himself, who is never not working. He is always active. And we see this extensively throughout the Old Testament. So I'm super excited about it.

KO: Oh yeah, me too. And at Proverbs we are all about helping women know the truth and live the truth. In our everyday lives if we are just constantly dependent on other people telling us what the truth is but we're not actually getting into the Bible and understanding it as a whole, then when it comes time for us to go out and live our lives, that's shaky ground.

But if we are the ones who are digging in and really doing the hard work of understanding what it looked like for Jesus to be in the Old Testament and how it's so true that He was there, how richer would our lives and our faith be. And so I'm pumped for this study. So guys, thank you so much for coming on the show today. I truly cannot believe that this is our last episode of 2021. What a way to wrap it up. And I don't know about our listeners, but I do plan on diving into *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament* in 2022 when we do it together as a ministry. And I can't wait to see how it shapes our faith. So Joel, will you do me a favor and tell our listeners where they can purchase a copy and how they can study with us in the new year?

JM: Yeah. So this is super important. You can grab your copy of *Seeing Jesus in the Old Testament* exclusively through Proverbs 31 Ministries at p31bookstore.com. I just want to emphasize the exclusivity aspect of it.

KO: That's very true.

JM: So, if you go to Amazon, you're going to do the research and you're going to be a little confused. What happened? Exclusively means only at p31bookstore.com. And we'll start this study on January 10 of 2022. And you could walk through the entire study, I think this is going to be really cool with us at Proverbs through either our online Bible studies or our First 5 mobile app which you can download for free on all of your mobile devices. So if you want to find out more about how to join and what this all looks like, you can go to Proverbs31.org or you can just go straight to the bookstore and grab your copy.

JM: And I think this is an incredible, incredible study to do with your friends and with your family. In January everybody's trying to think about Bible reading plans and getting ready to start the Bible. And I actually think this could be a pretty compelling and just fun way to actually kind of go through the entire Old Testament through the lens of seeing Jesus. And I think it's a great accomplishment that we can kind of check off at the end of five weeks of our time together.

KO: Yeah, yeah. I love that, I love that. And as we close out this year I want to remind you guys to make a donation to Proverbs 31 Ministries today so we can continue to provide biblical truth just like the study that we're talking of about to any girl in any season. We would love for you to financially be a part of what we're doing here. And it's exciting. Like I said, at the beginning, just hearing about this study and knowing kind of the secret behind the scenes plans we've got for all of next year. We want you guys to be a part. And if you partner with us financially, you can help us do that and continue to offer so many resources for free for women to be able to know the truth and that the truth because it changes everything. So thank you guys for being with us this year and we'll see you in 2022.