



Meredith Brock: Well, hi friends. Welcome back to the Proverbs 31 Ministries Podcast where we share biblical truth for any girl in any season. I'm your host, Meredith Brock, and I am here with my co-host, Kaley Olson.

Kaley Olson: Well, hey Meredith and hey friends. Today we are back with our favorites, Rachel Elmore and Wendy Blight. You guys have gotten to know them over the last two weeks and now you know why they're our favorites because they bring the truth and help us see things a little differently than maybe the way that we're looking at them. And they're here today to wrap up our three-week mini-series on when motherhood involves disappointment, suffering and loss. The last two weeks, we've dug into some heavy stuff about what scripture says about infertility. That was week one. And then in week two, we discussed miscarriage and infant loss and really the whole grieving process of man.

Those are some really, really good episodes and I encourage you guys to go back and revisit them if you're just tuning in today because I think that they're going to tee up what we do talk about today. Whether or not this is a struggle you're actively facing, chances are someone who is, and we pray that this podcast can be a resource that helps you understand what someone is going through, or can be something you share with a woman going through this when you don't have the words to say.

MB: Well, today we're going to be talking about what happens after that baby is born. And you all, I know I talk about my kids all the time on the podcast. And even though I personally have a background in counseling myself, I still remember, I'll never forget. It's burned into my brain the experience that I went through after I had my first, and honestly, my second baby, I had the same experience. And so if this is a season that you're in and maybe you're about to have your first baby or you just had a baby or you just got pregnant, who knows where you're at in this journey of motherhood? Those first few months after you have a baby are wild you all and we need to talk about them. You are not alone in trying to navigate this season.

So, let's start. First, Rachel, I know that this is an area that you are really, really passionate about. And so I want you to start by helping us understand kind of the different categories that you might fall into after you've had a baby. I think I've heard postpartum depression thrown around, I've heard baby blues thrown around. I've heard all kinds of stuff. So help us understand what happens. What are some of those different categories and how often are women struggling with this?

Rachel Elmore: Yes, absolutely. And I always like to say that it's estimated 15% to 20% of women will experience postpartum depression. Doctors say and research says that virtually all new moms go through the baby blues. And the real difference between the two is severity in the symptoms. So a lot of the symptoms are pretty similar, but it's severity and how long the symptoms last, how long they persist. And I always say everybody, I am the 20%. I had with my first pregnancy, very, very knock you

off your feet postpartum depression. And when we talk about postpartum depression in that diagnosis, we're also considering postpartum anxiety. So we use them interchangeably, which can be confusing. So if you've experienced postpartum anxiety, we are also talking to you. If you've had the baby blues, we are talking to you.

And really, at least they're not in my friend group or in my circle, I've never met a mom that didn't at least have some baby blues. And they really say, all women do go through it. I read once that we never go through a bigger biological change than right after we give birth. And I would say that to be true. I mean, just those first, even those first few weeks, I don't have tons of memories. It was just such a whirlwind. Everything I felt was just all over the map. And just to encourage you, just from the cellular biological level, of course you're feeling this way. Of course, even if you process what you've gone through years and years ago, of course you went through this. It's a tremendous thing that your body has just done and it's natural that we're going to experience at least some of these symptoms are going to be expected.

And so with postpartum... Well, let me start with the baby blues, which really we would say everyone goes through. I would be bold enough to say that all women go through the baby blues. And they typically can last anywhere from a few days to a few weeks. And again, most all new moms experience it. And it has to do with mood swings, excessive crying, anxiety, fear, irritability, feeling completely overwhelmed, a lot of reduced concentration, your appetite changes, trouble sleeping, which I always laugh at that one because I'm like, "Aren't all new moms having trouble sleeping?" But those are some of, I guess, the hallmarks of the baby blues. And I haven't met a mom that wouldn't say she felt some of that. And again, there's been a massive change in the endocrine system of your body. Your hormones have just done a lot. And so that's the baby blues.

And then with postpartum depression and from a diagnostic criteria, medically, we say that postpartum typically shows up three weeks to six months after you've given birth. So again, three weeks to six months. So if we see those baby blues sticks around after a few weeks, clinically, we start to raise an eyebrow and say, "OK, let's look out for some of these symptoms." But again, the symptoms are similar, but they're worse. And I don't want to take away all your hope. There's a lot of hope in this episode too, but it's severe and the amount of hopelessness that I felt, it was something that was like none other.

And I just want to walk you guys through a little bit about what that was like for me, but I'm going to list a few of the symptoms too. Depressed mood, hopelessness, a lot of like what we call intrusive thoughts. You might have thoughts that are unwanted about harm coming to your baby. And I do want to say obviously, trigger warning. I'm going to be really cautious about talking about that on this podcast; changes in appetite, problems sleeping, days and days of feeling like you can't stop crying. If this kind of stuff persists for weeks on end, ladies, please call your doctor. Friends, please, please tell a friend. Let your pastor know. Reach out. Don't stay silent.

And especially it is very important for you to hear that if you're having recurring thoughts of harm for yourself or for your child, the next step, I'm not going to normally tell you to turn off Proverbs 31 Podcast. Your next step needs to be getting you some help. And we've got lots of great resources for that too. I know Proverbs 31 has a fantastic resources page for that too, but I do want to blanket this conversation with that as well. If you are there, mama, let's get you some help.

But with that, we have just more intense and a lot of just days of crying. For myself, it was three weeks from the day I gave birth, and all of a sudden, I just was afraid to pick up my son. And my older son was very colicky, and he had a dairy allergy that we did not know that he had, and most days he would cry for 16 hours. And the only reason I know that is my mom was here through some of it. Thank you Jesus for that. And she was able to tell me, "Did you know that Hunt cried for 16 hours?" There were two

weeks in a row that we were at the pediatrician's office or the ER getting tests done every single day of the week because we were like, "Something's wrong. Something's wrong."

And moms, if you're pregnant, Kaley, if you're out there, that's not everyone's experience. That was my experience. And I was not ready for what my body was going to do. And I just shut down. I couldn't stop crying. I was afraid to hold him. And again, I'm aware of triggers. I'm not going to trigger you. At least I'm going to try not to, but I was afraid that somehow I would inadvertently hurt my son, even though I definitely never wanted to. All of those kinds of thoughts point to postpartum depression and anxiety. And I just shut down. I absolutely shut down.

And luckily, and very thankful, I guess it wasn't luck, it was the Lord, I knew exactly what it was. I woke up one morning and I woke up my husband, touched him on the shoulder and I said, "I need to call my pastor and I need to call my doctor." And I did those exact things that day. I reached out immediately, which is something that maybe a fourth of women with postpartum depression do. They usually wait a year, six months before they let anyone know that they're feeling this way. And I had people that were well-meaning. The first people I reached out to just kind of didn't know how to help me. I even went to see a therapist that was supposed to specialize in dealing with postpartum issues that just kind of said, "I don't really know how to treat this."

And I very quickly saw that there's a deep need in our community to understand if it's 15% to 20% of all women, this is nothing that we should gloss over and ignore. We've got to hit this head-on and love these women well and learn that we don't have to walk in the shame of this. This is something that... I loved my son very much even though I couldn't be alone for about six weeks after I gave birth. I had women checking in on me every day and made sure I wasn't alone for nine hours at the time. I had help. I had to do this in community.

And so I would want to encourage anyone that's listening, if there's one thing I would want you to start with, it's just please know this therapist needed help and medicine for myself and I needed therapy. And here I was already a pretty established, I would like to say reasonably respected therapist, and here I was reaching out to my church saying, "Hey ladies, I need people to check in on me. I can't be alone because I'm afraid to pick up my son when he is screaming." And that, man, that was a humbling process and not fun. God used it, which I will talk about later, not today. But with that being said, just wanting to encourage you to not live in that shroud of shame. Please don't live in that shroud of shame because there are things we can do and there is hope.

MB: Thank you so much for sharing your experience, Rachel, and honestly, your expertise as a counselor as to what you've seen. I think it's so important to kind of go back to that first point of one, you had clinical postpartum depression. That's one case scenario. The other scenario is baby blues, which is what I had. I gave birth to my first child, a little boy, and you all, I had been around babies my whole life. I came from a family of six. I have been holding babies as long as I can remember. And I was not afraid of the care taking of my son at all, but after I had him, I could not stop crying.

And it was shocking for me because I'm a very emotionally stable person. And after a couple weeks, I kept having to walk out of the room when people would come into the house because I couldn't... And I wasn't crying because I was sad. It was like a biological response that I could not stop. And my husband was the one who finally said, "Hey babe, this is not normal for you. I think you need to talk to the doctor." And so I did and she was so kind and so gracious and saying, "This is normal. This is just the baby blues. Give it a little bit more time and I think you'll see that you'll be able to level out emotionally."

The reason I share this is because this is not an isolated case that me or Rachel experienced. It's every mom who has a baby. And so we're all finding our way through this new life. You kind of go from, OK,

I'm— especially if it's your first child— you go from this independent kind of in control of your circumstances to whoa, everything just changed overnight. My biology changed, my mental capacities changed, my physical capacities changed. And you all, you know what I would call that? I think I could kind of slap a little bit of a label on it and say, man, your identity changed just a little bit when that little baby came into the world.

And so, I want Wendy... us to pause a little bit and talk a little bit about what it looks like to establish what does scripture say about identity, right? Because we all go through these seasons you all of at one time we identify ourselves as like maybe you were the track star in high school and that's part of your identity and then you go away to college and maybe you're really academic or something and we attach our identity to all these different seasons when I think there's a bigger picture here. And Wendy, I'd love for you to dive in a little bit about what you see in scripture around this concept of identity.

WB: Yeah. Well, every change of season, every change of role, like you're talking about, brings on new pressures, right? Always no matter where we are in that. And this is... I don't know if any of you know this about me, but I was very academic. I wanted to go to law school and I actually wanted to be a judge and my dream was to be a Supreme Court justice one day. And that's what Wendy... I didn't even want to get married. That was what I wanted to do. And then I met my husband, Monty, in college and fell in love. And this sounds so silly, but I didn't really want to have kids and he did. And so when it came time to talk about marriage, he was like, "Well, I at least want one." So we negotiated. So, seriously, we negotiated for Lauren, my oldest. She always says, "Mom didn't really want me."

But here's the thing. Going into that, my role, my identity was always going to be in my work. And then I became a mom with Lauren and it was a complete flip on everything about what my identity was in. And what happens when you change roles like this in life is we always put all our sort of energy and our beliefs and everything in the role that we are in. And what I never knew until I became a mom was I had a much bigger overarching role in my life than being a student and a scholar and a lawyer and a Bible teacher and all those things. And when we are changing in these roles, we have an enemy of our soul and that's the devil, right? And he attacks in those new places with new pressures in most of our lives.

In 1 Peter 5:8, Peter writes, *"Be sober-minded and watchful. Your adversary, the devil, prowls around like a roaring lion seeking someone to devour."* And when you watch on Animal Planet or something or even at a zoo, you watch a lion how it prowls, it stays far away, but it waits for those weak places when they're alone or they're frightened or they're anxious and then attacks. And that's the picture that God gives us in the Bible. And in John 10:10, Jesus himself says when he defines our enemy, he says "he comes to steal, kill and destroy." That's John 10:10 a. The second half of that verse is the good news where Jesus says, *"I have come that they may have life and have it abundantly."*

So we need to know that as we enter into motherhood and this new role that some of us may have longed for our whole life or some of us may be terrified of, or maybe like me, I wasn't even sure I wanted to have a baby, but I did. We all come into motherhood from a different place, but all of us have this enemy who is there waiting to feed us the lies to invade our hearts and minds. And if we aren't careful, those lies, you all, reframe the truth of who we really are. And so who are we really? If we can walk in the truth of who we really are and all of the roles that we have then come underneath that, then we're going to walk in freedom in whatever role God has us in.

And so Jesus and God have given us this most beautiful identity that I spent most of my young adult life not even knowing was mine. And once I learned my identity was in Christ and what it meant, it changed my life, it changed my career and it most of all changed me as a mama. And here's the words that I think we hear because I've talked about this with moms. If you hear or you're saying words like "I'm not good enough, I'm not connecting with my baby, so something's wrong with me." For me, I won't ever be a

good mom because I just didn't grow up in a great family experience or I made a mistake. This is a mistake or I can't do this. It's just too hard," which is kind of what I was saying when I had Lauren, but they're all lies. And that's what we have to know.

But once again, like I said in the last session, if we don't know the truth, we're not going to recognize the lies. We're not going to know how to confess them and we're not going to know how to fight them. So I want to share today three truths that we need to know about who we are in Christ. And each one I'm going to tell you, you need to know not just up here, but in your heart.

So first, we need to know, not just in our head, but in our heart, that we can trust God with a new season of motherhood because He entrusted us with it. God entrusted us with motherhood. He handpicked us. He chose us to be moms. Psalm 139— that Psalm just read through it, but especially sort of, I think it's like versus 10 through 14 or something right in there. He talks about that we are placed, a baby is placed in the mother's womb, right? It grows and forms and is shaped in that secret place. The scripture calls it a secret place. And it says that God sees every bit of that child's life, knows every day of that child's life, knits it together in its mother's womb before it breathes a single day. That to me is the most telling beautiful scripture that tells us that the baby that we're carrying that God placed inside of us and knew that we would be the mom that would best raise this child.

So we do it in partnership with God because part of this is knowing. Hebrews 13:20-21 says, "May the God of peace make you complete in every good work to do his will working in you what is well pleasing in his sight." And another translation says, "May the God of peace equip you." God equips us for the things He calls us to. Motherhood is a calling. It's a new role in our life that God has called us to. Hebrews 13:21 is telling us He equips those He calls. He works in partnership with us. So first know in your head, not in your heart, you've been entrusted with this child. God trusts you with it. So if He does, trust yourself.

Second, know not just in your head, but in your heart that it's a new role, but it's not the most important role in your life. We are first and foremost. And this is what I want you... if you leave with nothing else from me today that you are a beloved daughter of the ones you got. And not just beloved, but you have been bought with the blood of Jesus. And so I like to say we are beloved blood-bought daughters of the ones you got. We are, 1 John 3:1 says, lavishly loved daughters. We have been freely forgiven by what Jesus did on the cross. Remember no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus.

We are spirit and dwelled in spirit and power because when Jesus died, when He rose again, He sent His Spirit down. And every one of us when we invite Jesus into our lives, His Holy Spirit comes to live inside of us and it says we are sealed with God's Spirit. The very Spirit of the living God comes to live inside of us to do His work in us and to teach us and to give us wisdom and to empower us and to comfort us. So we are fully known by God. That Psalm 139, the whole Psalm just tells us He knows where we are when we sit, when we stand, where we go, what we're doing and we are accepted by God into His family.

If any of you have ever adopted a child, you understand what that means. They become a part of your family. They're no different than your natural born children. And this is where freedom comes. Then we aren't so tied to that role of being a mom when we know there's freedom that we're a child of God and we know He's chosen us for this. And we know it's just a role that is part of who He's created us to be.

And third, we have to know in our heart, not just in our head, but in our heart, that it's going to be hard. It's just going to be hard. It starts out hard and I have a 23 year old and a 27 year old and it's still hard. It just in different ways. It takes hard work, it takes sacrifice, it takes humility, it takes oodles and oodles and oodles of patience your whole life. But we don't do it alone. Philippians 1:6 is so beautiful, "*...be confident that this he who began a good work in you will carry it on until the day of completion and carry it to completion until the day of Christ Jesus.*"

So beginning a good work, motherhood is one of the good works He begins in us. So when it says He, that's God, began this good work in you. It's a good work. Being a mother is a calling from God. It's a good work. And He will be faithful to complete it. And you all, He doesn't complete it from up there. He lives in here. His spirit is in us. His very presence is living in us to work, to encourage, to guide, to lead, to comfort, to strengthen. And it enables us and it sustains us through those really hard first few months through the toddlers, through sending them off to kindergarten for the first day, sending them off to high school, sending them off to college, putting them in a car and letting them drive away. All of that, He's there.

Ephesians 2:10 helps even more. I think it says, *"We are God's handiwork..."* We are his masterpiece. We are..." This word is like when you think of a piece of art that's been just hand bloomed and created together, hand painted. It's this beautiful work. That's what we are. God created a masterpiece. And then it says, *"...to do good works which he prepared in advance for us to do."* God made us to be mamas for those of us that He gives that privilege to be a mom, and He's prepared us in advance to do everything that it takes to be a mom. Being a mom is just one of the roles.

And then finally, it says in Philippians 2:13, *"... God is working in you, giving you the desire and the power to do what pleases him."* God gives us the desire and the power. And I just want you to hear over and over that this is not something we do alone. God with us, God in us, God before us, God behind us, and enables us to do what we need for the children that He's given us. My friend has a Downs child. He's my godchild. And when I see how she has raised him and the beautiful... He's 23 now and he works and he actually goes and speaks to people about hiring Downs kids. There is a calling on every mom for the child the Lord has given her.

And so I pray that this encourages you to don't carry around the burden that you're not enough, that God chose the wrong person because He can't. He doesn't make wrong choices. So don't doubt your call as a mom because it's part of the role that God has given and entrusted you as a child of God. So when it's hard, when you don't understand, when you're struggling, surrender. Just surrender that burden to do everything right. We make mistakes. I made so many mistakes as a young mom. God redeems them when we put them in His hands. And so really I think our heart's desire for all of us as we do this is that we just leave this conversation grounded, equipped with hope and confidence and belief that we are more than able to do this. It isn't about perfection and it isn't about performance as a mom. It's just about walking in the call that God has given us and doing the very best we can, leaning on and leaning into Him and trusting Him and being in His Word.

MB: That's so good, Wendy. I think everyone needs to pause who's listening today and realize I think the most foundational issue that we have to come to a conclusion about as a human being is where we find our identity. And just how you began the teaching part of this is you said Satan is a lion and he is trying to kill and destroy us. And I think one of the fastest ways for those of us who do step into this role as mothers is for him to somehow trick us and say, "Now this is your identity. This is your identity. You are a mother." And so then you attach all these things to that thing that if I don't do this, I no longer have worth. If I don't do this, I'm not me anymore because I've ruined my motherhood identity because I didn't show up to my kids' play or whatever.

And so Satan's trying to take us out and make our foundation weak or shaky because our foundation is our identity. And if he can try to trick us into believing, well, your identity is a mom. Well, one day, you all, that mom identity is going to change because those sweet babies are going to leave the house and you're not going to be moming them every day like you did before. And so that identity will all of a sudden be shaken. And so I think that that teaching is so good.

But I want to circle back on another part of our conversation, and that is I think the other way. And there's a lot of ways that Satan comes after us because he is a predator. I think this postpartum depression and the baby blues thing, he loves to come after first time mamas that way and get them to start their motherhood journey off in a deficit. They feel like they're behind from day one and they have already screwed it up and they're never going to be able to get it back on track.

And so, Rachel, I want to go back and ask you a couple things. If you could give our moms right now... I love that you said, if you are in the middle of this postpartum depression thing, you need to pause this right now and go make a phone call. Who do they call? Like who do they call? What do they do? Give our friends who are struggling with postpartum depression right now some practical steps to take and then maybe give our friends who are struggling with the baby blues some practical steps to take. And here I'm going to give you a third category. Get ready, Rachel. I've got a lot for you to cover, a lot of ground to cover.

RE: OK.

MB: Our friend, Kaley, is sitting here and she's going to have a baby in not long. Kaley, how long do we have left?

KO: Oh, we've got 12 and a half weeks left.

MB: OK. So she's marching. She's marching towards that due date. Rachel, how do we help those gals who are about to have babies or are hopeful to have babies? What do we wish they knew going into that first few months of motherhood just practically, biologically, mental health wise? What can they do to prepare for that season?

RE: Yeah, yeah, absolutely. Wow, Meredith, way to set me up with a lot of questions. No, I love them.

MB: — You never know what you're going to get from me.

RE: I love it. It's fantastic. And super passionate about this. And I would want to start this by saying something I wish someone had said to me, which is not always loving motherhood doesn't mean you don't love your baby. So struggling to love motherhood is absolutely not the same thing as not loving your baby. And for me, there was nothing the enemy wanted more than for me to believe that. You hate this, so you must hate your baby. What better way to strip me of the ability to raise warriors for Christ than to make us feel ineffectual as mothers? What better way, dear friend, Kaley, my friend with child, what better way for him to make you believe while you're holding your baby that you're not doing this right?

And this is going to sound very simplistic, but my friends who are about to have a baby or have babies, guys, at the end of the day, the goal is to feed them. The goal is that you're trying. Good moms try and they don't give up. Not being able to soothe our babies, that's just part of motherhood. We're not always going to be able to soothe our children. Right Wendy?

WB: Yes.

RE: We can't. She's done it and she's on the other side of it. Even with adult children, we can't always say something to make them feel better. I'm a therapist and I can't always say something to make my boys feel better. And just to let you know, if you are struggling, even with just baby blues or postpartum,

if you're struggling to feel like you're not loving this, that's OK. Most of us don't love sleep deprivation. Most of us don't love maybe our hair falling out for short period of time. It comes back. We don't love that process, but you guys, this is all labor. It's all labor.

I firmly believe that for me, that my postpartum for me was part of the labor process. And I wouldn't wish it on anyone and I do pray against it. And I did not have it with my second baby, I had it with my first, but I would want to encourage you guys starting with that fact of let's get ahead of that and just go ahead and declare that you have— because you were created in God's image — I believe that you have what it takes to be a mom.

And I believe as followers of Christ, this is a ministry. And what great way to enter this by declaring and believing that God's promises for us are true. And if we are created in His image, which we are, then I believe very much, even if you're struggling to love motherhood, that you can still love your baby well and you're not always going to not like this. It does get better. I promise, friends, it gets better. And just to go easy on yourself with all of the thoughts that come through your head of I can't do this, or I'm not loving this, or do I love my baby, or I don't deserve this baby. Those were the thoughts that went through my head.

So I'd want to start with that and just kind of blanket that conversation or this conversation with that. So Meredith, you'd asked, who do we call? Because it's like, OK, if we're really struggling and it's more than maybe some minor baby blues, who do we call? I think we call our pastor, I think we call our Bible study leader. We absolutely let our OB-GYN know. And again, if we're having thoughts of harming ourself or harming someone else, we go to the emergency department or we call a suicide hotline. I know that's hard to hear. For many of you, that's not the situation, but if you were having a lot of those thoughts, that's the next stop to take.

And just to say, how do we help our friends that are struggling? First of all, I think we just assume any first-time mom is going to go through some level of this. I know Meredith well and she is a tough cookie. She is a tough girl. I admire her to the ends of the earth. And to think when she shared this with me that she went through that, I'm like, "You're kidding me." And I know this to be true. This is textbook, that we all struggle. And to think of you crying like that, that's just hard because you're just...

MB: It was out of control you all. Out of control.

RE: You're just so tough. But you went through it. And we let our OB-GYN know, we let our Bible study leader know. I was at a new church and I reached out to a Bible study leader that I had never even met before that my pastor recommended. I reached out to anyone and anyone that would listen, and one of the first steps we take if we think we might be struggling with some bad baby blues or we're struggling is we speak. We speak. We don't stay silent. We don't stay silent. I stood up at a church meeting, a therapist, thinking I'm never getting another referral again. I have postpartum depression. I need women to gather around me, pray for me. I had women that... I had worship leaders that showed up at my house with chicken pot pie and would play songs and their guitar and hold my baby and loved on me while I struggled.

And God very much let me go through that struggle for hopefully a mighty purpose as He works everything together for His good, but with His mighty works, this was one of them. And just to say, this is how we help our friends. We encourage them to speak and we respond. And I think we assume that they're having... Like Kaley, you're going to get text messages from me. I'm not going to blow your phone up, but I'm going to be like, "Hey, how are you doing girl?" Like not being your counselor —

KO: I'll appreciate that.

RE: Not trying to bug you, but I'm definitely going to be like, "Hey, how are you doing? Have you eaten today?" Like I will be that annoying friend and maybe be that a little bit pesky friend. I've never met a mom that thinks, "oh gosh, it was just so annoying that someone checked on me." I think I had a lot of people that thought, "oh, Rachel's tough. She's got this." And you guys, I didn't have it. I didn't. I needed that help. So, what I had to do was speak and I had to let people know, "hey, I need help." And I don't really know exactly what it is that I need, but what I needed was community and I needed other women who did rally around me, some of which were moms, some of them weren't moms that rallied around me.

Let me say that again. Some of them weren't moms that rallied around me and loved on me and prayed for me and brought me pizza and DVDs. And they loved on me. And their love and prayers, it was so healing what they did for me. Some of those women were going through infertility treatments at the time and they came and just were with me. And so I think when we are not alone, because let me promise everybody, you are not alone. At least I am the 20%. I myself, I'm the 20% and you are not alone, but you've got to speak, which is hard when you're so weary.

So I would want for women to speak out and I'd want... We've got to check on each other. And that might seem overly simplistic, but you're not bothering that friend by sending a message or a DM. You're not bugging her. You're not bothering her. I had members of my Bible study that when my dear friend, Lauren, at the time literally like came to my house because I wasn't answering my phone one day because I was just too overwhelmed, and she just like came to my door and knocked on the door until I answered it. And she's like, "I knew you weren't OK. I'm here with you." And she showed up with like really good food and she said, "Hey, take a walk really quick. I'm going to hold Hunt for you."

And I mean, holding my baby, my arms were so tired. And whether if you have the baby blues or whether you have full postpartum depression and anxiety, your arms are tired. So let's help each other and hold their baby and let her take a walk. Let her take a shower and show her maybe how you would hold their baby. Or maybe I had women that taught me how to soothe my son. I needed that discipleship. And love was what healed me. And God did a mighty work through that season. So that would be a few of my first suggestions for what we do during that season.

WB: And something came to me as you were talking, Rachel. And when Lauren was really little, I just struggled with being a mom. I heard those words. I don't know how to be a mom because I had a difficult mom. But I just wanted to tell you, we were on a vacation a few years ago and just she and I were sitting together laying out in the sun and she looked over at me and she said, "Mom, I know that being a mom was really hard for you when I was little. I've heard your testimony." And she goes, "But I want you to know that I know no one on this earth loves me more than you do and you are always there for me. And so don't remember all of that. Remember."

It was just so beautiful. And I want you to... For some reason, I felt I had to share that to somebody who needs to hear that she doesn't remember that. She doesn't remember the first couple years when I was just an angry, impatient. I didn't even know if I loved her. And I know I loved her, but I didn't act like it and I didn't feel like I was doing it right. But we are so close now. And those words from her, I'll treasure for the rest of my life. And I think God knew I needed that to just sort of heal that place that until I was 53 years old thought I messed her up. And it was just special. So please know that there's always hope and God always works and He will always redeem.

KO: Yeah, Wendy, that was such a good last comment to kind of wrap this up. And what you just said about that reminds me that as I'm about to walk into this new season, honestly, listening to this has been a little hard. And I think it's OK to admit that because as believers, we know we can't shy away from reality and pretend that just because my identity is in Christ, doesn't mean that I'm exempt from the reality of being a human and walking through what every other human has walked through. But the hope that I have is that I know that Jesus also walked the same life that I'm walking right now. He didn't necessarily have the same experiences that I did, but He did it. And I now have Him who helps me walk through this.

And Wendy, something that you said earlier about God does not make wrong choices. This means He didn't choose the wrong mom for this child is something that I just want to repeat again for our listeners, whether you're maybe like me and you're about to walk into motherhood and you have no idea what you're getting yourself into and you're going to call your friend, Rachel, for help all the time, or if you're someone who's questioning if you even did it right. God didn't make a mistake in choosing you to be the mom of the child that you are the mom of and that your identity is in Christ.

And so thank you guys so much for helping us establish again who we are in Christ as well as just learn some of the practical things that we can do when we do face the struggles that we're facing that the enemy wants to use against us. I'm just so grateful that we have got the tools that we need and a lot of us recognize that we need to be the community for other people who are walking through that. And so I think it kind of circles us back to what we talked about in episode one about how we can minister to others in our seasons of waiting. Maybe this is a way that you need to minister to a mom right now who's in the thick of it. So thank you guys so much for sharing all of this with us today. I want to ask Wendy really quick to read Psalm 139 over us to kind of close us out and then we'll get into some final announcements.

WB: Hear the word of the Lord. *"Oh LORD, you have searched me and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise. You perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out, my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue, you know it completely, oh Lord. You hem me in behind and before. You have laid your hand upon me. Such knowledge is too wonderful for me, too lofty for me to attain. Where can I go from your spirit? Where can I flee from your presence? If I go to the heavens, you are there. If I make my bed in the depths, you are there. If I rise on the wings of the dawn, I settle on the far side of the sea, even there your hand will guide me. Your right hand will hold me fast.*

If I say surely darkness will hide me and the light become night around me, even the darkness will not be dark to you. The night will shine like the day for darkness is as light to you. For you created my inmost being. You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you for I'm fearfully and wonderfully made and your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body and all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be." (Psalm 139:1-16)

MB: I love that. Such hope in knowing that we are fully known, that His hand is upon us and He goes before us and behind us, and that we may feel afraid, but we have nothing to fear because He is with us. Thank you for closing us with that, Wendy. The last three weeks we've talked about some really heavy things, but I think I can honestly and confidently say that we've ended each episode with hope you guys, because there is hope. We do not need to despair. As believers, hope is what we have and that's what helps us walk through seasons of suffering well, whether it's waiting, grieving, or suffering in the form of feeling we've been stripped of who we once were before we had a child. I'm just so thankful that

Proverbs 31 Ministries can be a safe space to process these messy and hard things of life through the truth that we find in God's Word alongside biblical help and even mental health professionals. It's good to have both. So Wendy and Rachel, thank you so much for helping us do that over these last three weeks.

KO: Absolutely. And one of the things we learned from Rachel was if you are not currently in community and surrounded by women who you can trust and who can build you up, do that. Get in church, get a group of friends around you who you can confide in and let them know that you need help. But also if you need to talk to a professional, Proverbs 31 Ministries stands behind that. You guys know that we have mentioned this every single time, we have a counselor on this podcast with us. And so if you need to talk to somebody, please do it. We recommend starting with the American Association of Christian Counselors, and you can find them at aacc.net.

MB: We've also pulled together a free PDF download for you available at proverbs31.org/listen in the show notes for today's episode, that includes scriptures and key points from what we've been discussing today. You can download it for free and use it on your own time.

KO: Absolutely. And if you're listening to this and know a friend who needs a resource to guide her through a season of going through the postpartum struggle or the baby blues and just struggling with her identity, *It's Not Supposed to Be This Way* by Lysa TerKeurst is a great resource to kind of put you back to scripture and give some practical examples about things that you can do when you're feeling like your life is not supposed to be this way. Well, guys, thanks so much for tuning in. Wendy and Rachel, thank you guys again for your time and your expertise. I've enjoyed this mini-series so much. At Proverbs 31 Ministries, we believe and we know the truth and live the truth. It changes everything.