**Episode 6-22: Should We Assume the Best?**

## Resources:

Podcasts/Sermons
What Is Trust Biblically - Joyful Journey
Does Love Always Trust - Alistair Groves
Forgiveness Sermon Series - Milton Vincent
Judging vs. Judgementalism - Joyful Journey
When Someone Else is Sinning - Joyful Journey

Articles
Does Love Really Believe All Things? - Ed Welch
Assume the Best of Others - Greg Morse

Website
Restoration

## Transcript:

Jocelyn: I don't just need to feel better. I need the truth. And ultimately that will make me better.

Janet: I just want to make it as totally simple as possible for ladies to see that the Bible is really applicable to their everyday life.

Jocelyn: When they understand theology, the application flows out of it quickly with joy.

Janet: It is a journey, but even the journey itself is joyful when I'm doing it, holding the hand of my savior and trusting him all along the way. This is the joyful journey podcast, a podcast to inspire and equip women to passionately pursue beautiful biblical truth on their journey as women of God. When you choose truth, you're choosing joy.

Janet: Well, hello, listeners. Welcome back. This is Janet once again, here with my co-host, Leah.

Leah: Hello, everyone.

Janet: Say hello, Leah.

Leah: Hello.

Janet: Today, Leah's gonna be leading us in a conversation thinking about, a phrase that some of us have heard, assuming the best. What is that, and how should we even think about that?

Leah: Yeah, and some of our listeners might be familiar with that phrase. But some may not be, and even if you've heard it or used it before, they might be like me and think, "What does that really mean?" Am I supposed to trust everyone? Is assuming the best even biblical? And I think a common definition that most people mean when they use this phrase is to give someone the benefit of the doubt by assuming a good intention or meaning from their words or actions.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So basically, this phrase is used to counteract our tendency or our struggle to assume the worst- about the people that we're interacting with or talking to.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And I actually wanted to study and teach on this topic because assuming the worst is a personal struggle of mine, specifically in parenting.

Janet: I don't think you're alone.

Leah: Yeah. I'm sure I'm not. But I often doubt the motives behind my kids' actions or thoughts, and the more that I parent, the more I've seen this growing attitude in me to actually just assume the worst about their hearts rather than first show love and grace. So I felt convicted by this and thought, "But wait, shouldn't I be assuming the best? Haven't I heard that before?"

Janet: Yep.

Leah: Isn't that a biblical command? But if so, how do I train my heart and thoughts to practice that idea, especially with those closest to me?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So I decided I wanted to do a podcast episode on how to biblically assume the best.

Janet: I love that, that when we're passionate about learning something ourselves, we can turn it into then being able to help others.

Leah: Right, and just like our passion leads us to wanna teach others, I think sometimes when we study those things, many of you can relate to this, is that as I prepare to teach, the wisdom from scripture that I studied really led me away from that idea of assuming the best as the solution.

Janet: Interesting.

Leah: And instead, I found a lot of insight into how to not assume the worst without assuming anything at all.

Janet: I love that. I love that, that we can hear a phrase that can have some real help to it, but then when we take it out of context, then we feel like, "Okay, I've gotta follow that phrase." And to just find out I'm not stuck to any phrase or pithy saying, I get to look at all of them, look at the scriptures, and it's usually more nuanced, more complicated, more beautiful, and way better.

Leah: Mm-hmm, and the great thing is, you know, the truths from the Bible shouldn't be twisted, right?

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Because we know that they're truths.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Whereas that phrase might mean something to some person-

Janet: Yes ...

Leah: something different to another. So for me, it was helpful to start thinking about that idea, that phrase of assuming the best, but what really helped me was starting to think through the biblical ways that I can train my mind how to think about God and others instead.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And I think this topic is something a lot of people can relate to-

Janet: Yep

Leah: ... or may struggle with, like me, when maybe it's not in your parenting. Maybe you or those around you would describe yourself as a pessimist, always assuming the worst outcome.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: Or worrying about the many different bad scenarios that might come out of a circumstance or a conversation.

Janet: Yeah, I gotta prepare myself for the worst.

Leah: Exactly.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Maybe you struggle with believing your friends when they try to speak to you honestly.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Maybe you've been hurt, and trust has been betrayed over and over again.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: So how do we relate to others when our circumstances and relationships always seem to prove that maybe we shouldn't trust?

Janet: Yep.

Leah: So my goal is that this conversation just helps demonstrate ways to love and respond to others biblically without assuming the best or the worst. So I hope you walk away from this conversation encouraged in how to grow in loving more like Jesus loves.

Janet: I'm ready.

Leah: So let's start with the question of where does that phrase assuming the best even come from?

Leah: Come to find out it's not in the Bible.

Janet: No way.

Leah: I mean, I looked at several translations of 1 Corinthians 13:7, which comes from that great love chapter, and that's always the verse I've seen or heard referenced with that phrase, we should assume the best.

Janet: Yes, so why I should. Yep.

Leah: Right. But the closest thing I found was the, NASB version which says when speaking about what love is that it, "Keeps every confidence. It believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things."

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So, you know, Bible teachers and counselors have taken parts of that verse, specifically how love believes all things-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: hopes and endures all things, to kinda support that phrase or idea that we should assume the best. But let's look at a part of that famous love chapter to help us reflect on the ways that we're actually called to love rather than to assume. So Janet, could you read 1 Corinthians 13:4-8a?

Janet: Absolutely. "Love is patient, love is kind. It is not jealous. Love does not brag. It is not arrogant. It does not act disgracefully. It does not seek its own benefit. It's not provoked, does not keep an account of a wrong suffered. It does not rejoice in unrighteousness but rejoices with the truth. It keeps every confidence. It believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. Love never fails."

Leah: And those really are the key verses that people think of when we're trying to describe biblical love. And as a reminder, this biblical love is a perfect love because it describes God, His love.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: We don't do this perfectly- and God's the only one who can. But after being saved by Jesus and having His Holy Spirit living in us, we are able to grow in loving in these ways. So love as described in these verses should be one of the main distinguishing characteristics of a believer. Jesus told his disciples this in John 13:35, and the old song says, "They'll know we are Christians by our love."

Janet: That's right.

Leah: So, you know, I'd like to also point out some of the different ways that that verse seven is translated, 'cause I think that's helpful in where this assuming the best comes from. So the NIV says, "Love always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres." The NLT says, "Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance."

Leah: So if we group all three of these different translations and those key phrases together from verse seven, you kind of get this description about love. Love keeps every confidence and it always protects. Love believes all things, always trusts, and is always hopeful. Love endures all things and always perseveres through every circumstance. It never gives up or loses faith

Leah: So Janet, when you hear those descriptions of what our love should look like, do you pull out any connections to that idea behind assuming the best or that we should do that?

Janet: Well, it is so interesting. I mean, there's so many, always words in there. So it's like, okay, so assuming the best, I can see that. But it's funny that one of the first things I noticed in that description you just gave, it says love always trusts. And immediately my antenna go up. I mean, I actually did an episode here on biblical trust-

Leah: Yeah

Janet: ... where we are commanded to always trust God, but we're warned about any misplaced trust, trusting others.

Janet: So I don't think it can mean that if you love, I always trust that other person. I always know. I mean, I think about utter depravity.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: Do we believe in utter depravity? Why in the world would I say, "I don't believe anybody would ever sin against me"?

Leah: Right.

Janet: I don't believe I would ever sin. Like, ah.

Leah: It's foolish to think that.

Janet: Right. So that can't be that. I see the heart behind all of that's a hopeful stance, is what I see in there. And I absolutely see I have no right to assume the worst. And I can see how that would morph into you've just gotta believe the best.

Leah: Right. And I think that's so important, that piece of this topic to address about trusting, so I'm really glad you mentioned that, Janet. And in a little bit, I wanna talk about the difference between loving wisely-

Janet: Yeah ...

Leah: and literally trusting or believing everything that others say or do.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: But before we get there, I wanted to just share a few other scripture passages that focus on responding to others in love and wisdom. So Janet, could you read these verses for us?

Janet: Sure.

Janet: Proverbs 19:11, " A person's wisdom yields patience. It is to one's glory to overlook an offense."

Janet: Proverbs 10:12, "Hatred stirs up conflict, but love covers over all wrongs."

Janet: 1 Peter 4:8, "Above all, love each other deeply because love covers over a multitude of sins."

Janet: Ephesians 4:2, "Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love."

Leah: These passages demonstrate that overlooking wrongs is considered wisdom from God.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And when a wrong has actually been done, that is a way we can follow godly love.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: We can act in that way. These verses also explain how hatred stirs up conflict, while love covers over those wrongs and sins.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Now, this isn't a normal worldly love. It can only come from the heart of God because it's what God has done for us in Jesus.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Now, in our discussion today, we're really more focused on the tendency to assume others' motives and intentions. But if we apply this wisdom to our thoughts and assumptions about others, biblical love leads us to care more about others rather than being right.

Leah: So there may not have been any actual wrongs said or done to us, but we might be tempted to perceive that a situation or conversation is negative-

Janet: Yeah

Leah: ... or is against us. So cultivating godly love in our hearts will grow us in patience and in making allowances for each other's faults, covering things that we might perceive as wrongs done or said.

Janet: And it's so interesting, in these verses, this applies because there is an offense. It's not even a matter of assuming the worst. The worst, or bad at least, happened.

Leah: Right.

Janet: So in the verses we just read, it's a heart of caring more about love than being right even when they were wrong.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: But those verses aren't necessarily believing the best. We may be seeing that the phrase assume the best or believe the best just might not be the best phrase. Maybe it's even not assuming the worst or not assuming at all, and instead changing that from, "I need to assume the best, I shouldn't assume the worst," to, "I just need to love."

Leah: Yeah, and, I mean, if we've experienced God's love, we're called to love others.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: You know, that's what we're commanded to do, and it's not in ways that are easy or convenient for us, but they are sacrificial. So choosing not to assume the worst about someone can be similar to forgiving others in the sense that it could cost us.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Right?

Janet: Yes. It's vulnerable.

Leah: It is, but in the end, obeying God's command to love as He has loved is worth the price. And that's something we've been commanded to do, not assume.

Janet: Yeah, and when I think about the vulnerability, I just recently had the opportunity to teach on hesed at another place. And the picture has just stayed with me 'cause I needed to hear it. If I remember the reality that I am standing under the waterfall of His hesed. Yes, not assuming the worst and finding out later the worst was true is a level of vulnerability that will hurt, but I'm totally secure, because I'm standing under the waterfall of His hesed. Now I'm free to take that risk.

Leah: Yeah, and it's so interesting, I think, of that idea of love covers. You know, we're commanded, or we're, told in scripture that wisdom, love covers, and that's what Christ's love does.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: It covers us. It protects us.

Janet: It doesn't ignore it.

Leah: Right.

Janet: It just covers it. Yeah.

Leah: So I hope, you know, this introduction and what we've talked about so far has been helpful when thinking about this phrase.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Because looking to the Bible for wisdom on how to love others without assuming the worst really has been an encouragement to me.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So that's what I wanna spend the rest of today's episode sharing, is just a few practical ways that we can train our hearts and minds against that tendency to assume what others think or mean.

Janet: I love that.

Leah: First, we have to focus on trusting God, not people. And really everything in the Christian life comes back to this.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: If someone struggles with always assuming the worst about others, it could be revealing an area where there's a lack of trust in God.

Janet: Which is so interesting, 'cause I think many would say, "No, I trust God. I just don't trust others."

Leah: Right.

Janet: And you're saying the need to even think about who do I trust, who do I not trust, that that's my focus, can be revealing a vertical concern.

Leah: Yeah, I mean, think through these questions. Am I believing that God's good and working all things for my good, even if the other person's intentions are wrong or evil?

Leah: Do I trust God to protect me and keep me, to guide me and lead me, even if someone takes something I say or do the wrong way?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So, you know, fear of man may not always be the heart struggle, right? When someone's-

Janet: Right

Leah: ... assuming the worst.

Janet: That's right.

Leah: But I do find Matthew 10:28 helpful when thinking about how trusting God really fits into this topic. It says, "Don't be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul. Rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in hell."

Janet: A very different focus.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Yeah. And then there's also Romans 8:31-32. I love these verses-

Janet: Yes

Leah: ... that say, "What then shall we say in response to these things? If God is for us, who can be against us? He who did not spare His own Son but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?"

Janet: I love that passage. If God is for us, who can be against us? No one can read that and go, "Oh, because God's for me, no one ever will be against me."

Leah: Right.

Janet: Like, that's not the point. You know? That can't be the point.

Leah: Right.

Janet: 'Cause he's gonna go on and talk about all these ways, but it's like, you know, in comparison-

Leah: Yeah ...

Janet: it doesn't matter.

Leah: Yeah, and I love the context of Romans 8 there, because these things that he's responding to in these verses, it's the sufferings that followers-

Janet: Yes

Leah: of Christ are going to experience.

Janet: The things against them.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: But also the future hope in joining in Christ's glory that he shares at the beginning of chapter eight.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So these truths should increase our trust in God's goodness and protection. So if He's the one who's got us, who's holding us, who goes before and behind us, then any truly bad intention someone may have when speaking to or acting towards me really can't hurt me.

Leah: Of course, relational hurt in this world does hurt.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And I don't wanna downplay that. But the hope we find as believers in places like Romans 8 really helps us trust what God may be doing even in the middle of mistreatment or misunderstandings.

Janet: And it gives such hope there because then I'm not just a victim of someone who's hurt me, though that may be true that someone really did.

Leah: Right.

Janet: But I can't be devastated. I'm still covered in Christ, and my God is so big. He takes even evil and turns it on its head and uses it for good in my life. Like, there's such hope there.

Leah: Yeah, there really is. Ed Welch, in an article titled Does Love Really Believe All Things?, paraphrases the 1 Corinthians 13 passage on love, and this helped me think through what trusting God while loving others might look like. So, Janet, would you mind reading that from Ed Welch's article?

Janet: Oh, not at all. "Love is not for the faint of heart. It's a very hard road. Whenever you hear the call to patience from verse four, you know it will be hard, but love's a very good road. So let me say it again. You will bear with and endure relationships in which you feel unloved. Expect this to happen in the church. Expect this to happen even in the home. And when it does, you will be tempted to be angry and resentful, but the way of Christ and him crucified is best. He bore with us and endured with us when he was rejected, and his good plan is that we be given the same opportunity.

Janet: How will you bear and endure? You will do so by believing and hoping in Jesus alone. If you're believing and hoping in the other person, love will fall flat. But if your trust is sequestered in Jesus Christ, you will have power to love that you never anticipated was possible."

Leah: Isn't that powerful?

Janet: Oh, I love that quote. I've actually already sent that to another friend that's-

Leah: Wow

Janet: ... in a very difficult situation 'cause I love the depth of that. It's not saying, "Just believe they didn't mean it." it's saying so much deeper and richer-

Leah: Yes

Janet: ... than that.

Leah: Yes, because if our hope is in Christ alone, and we put our full trust in him We can love patiently and endure the disappointment that comes with loving other people.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Loving like Christ loves will always be what's best for us because His love is what has secured us.

Janet: And I think it even allows us to see that's how others are going to have to interact with me too, because I'm going to disappoint them. And when it goes that direction, of course, I want grace. but to realize this is all we can do for each other, but we're safe, you know?

Janet: And I think it may be why the solution to assuming the worst, which we're all agreeing is not good, is not equal to assume the best. Because it doesn't really matter what someone else's motives are. I can still choose to love first, and I don't need to feel better about their motives.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Because of Christ's love, I can just choose to love anyway, regardless of the heart of the other person.

Leah: Yeah. I think it's important to mention here something that we're not saying about trusting God and loving others.

Janet: Okay.

Leah: So training our minds to love biblically does not mean that we try to trust or believe everything that people say or do is good.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Right? We've kind of mentioned that before.

Janet: That's right.

Leah: So wait, you might say, "Didn't 1 Corinthians 7 tell us that love always trusts?" Well, Alistair Groves, in a podcast titled "Does Love Always Trust?" talks about the difference between trusting people and trusting God.

Janet: Interesting.

Leah: So he said, "Only the Lord is deserving of full, utter trust to always be good, to always be the same, the same yesterday, today, and forever. We have a God we can trust 100% in every situation to be who He says He will be. And in fact, who He says He will be is utterly

trustworthy and good. That means we can perfectly, truly, fully, always, in every situation, trust and believe whatever He is up to in another person."

Janet: Yes.

Leah: "We can believe that God is up to good in the people around us. Does that mean everything they do is good? No, of course not. And the real trick here, the place where I think Paul, in 1 Corinthians, is especially pushing us, is that we need to trust the Lord for what He's up to."

Janet: Interesting.

Leah: So when we're thinking through what it means for love to always trust, I like the way he points this out here. It means we're to always trust and believe that God can and is working for our ultimate good-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: and His glory, even through the people around us.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So instead of blindly trusting others' intentions, we can choose to trust that no matter their intention, our trustworthy God is still good and still in control.

Leah: And in that podcast, he went on to say this: "What is especially difficult is there is a temptation to withhold trust and to try to keep ourselves safe by not trusting things that are actually trustworthy."

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: "By not giving trust to what God has done, by not giving someone the opportunity to demonstrate growth, to demonstrate a new and deeper maturity, not giving a chance to demonstrate repentance.

Leah: There's gonna be a temptation for us to hold back, to seize control of the world by saying, 'Yes, I won't trust anyone.' But just because you have struggled through to forgive somebody does not mean that you are wise to trust them or that you are commanded to trust them. Rebuilding of trust is looking at, what has God been up to?"

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: "What have I seen? Where is the track record giving credence to the fact that the Lord has actually helped this person, who's badly broken trust with me, move in a different way? So especially where a break of trust has been grievous, we do not rebuild trust overnight."

Janet: Wow, that seems, that takes me back to Milton Vincent's series on forgiveness-

Leah: Yes

Janet: and the one he does on the relationship to trust, it's incredibly consistent. So any of you dealing with that, we will link that and that would be incredibly helpful as you wrestle through this. But I love the idea that Because I believe in the power of the gospel. I cannot say they can't change,

Leah: right.

Janet: I will never trust them again, because I believe in the power of the gospel, not because I'm just confident they would never do it.

Leah: Right, not because of them.

Janet: Right, but because of the gospel. But I also don't say, "Oh, I just believe you," even though everything around would say, "I don't know."

Leah: Right.

Janet: So I think that's very, very well said.

Leah: Yeah, and I think those two, you know, that article and that podcast were just really helpful for me to think about 1 Corinthians says love always trusts, but what does that really mean?

Janet: Right.

Leah: What is that calling us to do?

Janet: Right.

Leah: You know, 'cause we live in a broken world, and we're in broken relationships.

Janet: That's right.

Leah: Sin's curse means we're gonna be hurt by others.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And trust is going to be broken too, but our trust in God does not have to waver because we have His Word and His Spirit living in us to remind us of His faithfulness, trustworthiness, and goodness. And when we seek to live and love like Christ did, we can start to understand that balance of letting others into our lives to build trust while also discerning against those who have hurt us and broken that trust before.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: We're not called to run away or build up impenetrable walls to keep others out.

Janet: That's right.

Leah: But we're also not called to trust everyone or everything blindly. Instead, we're to trust God's work in our lives and in others.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And we can seek biblical wisdom and counsel from others to help us work through what trusting others would look like in different situations.

Janet: And I'm glad you mentioned that because I think when you're in the midst of that, it can be very confusing.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: You know, somebody might be saying, "But you should trust me," and you're like, "Is it me that I don't trust you?" "Is it you? I, I, aah." And it's really helpful to have somebody who can help you work through exactly what you just said. Yeah.

Leah: Yeah, and, you know, so for me personally in my parenting, trusting God, how does that help me not assume the worst?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Well, it looks like me trusting God's good plan, even when there's a child potentially lying to me-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: disobeying me, or heaven forbid, disrespecting me.

Janet: No way.

Leah: So am I gonna believe God is the one who knows their hearts and can change it? I wanna practice praising my children more for the ways I've seen them grow and change, and I've been asking God to help me develop a heart that thinks more encouragingly of my kids. And I say it that way rather than think positively about them because I don't wanna preach false truths to myself like, "They're good kids. You just need to ease off of them, or give them unlimited chances." Instead, I wanna think of encouraging truths regarding how I've seen God work in their lives and in my relationship with them. I wanna acknowledge potential growth in their words and actions rather than always presuming potential sin or disobedience. I've got a long way to go And assuming the worst is a habit that is hard to break.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: But reflecting on trusting God has really been helping me in this area.

Janet: And I think about as you do that, even though it might be awkward at first 'cause it's a new-- It was for me. Praising my children did not come naturally. I'm not proud of that, but it didn't. So it might even feel awkward.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: But what hope it gives them. Not, "You're a good kid," because they know they're not, and now they gotta hide.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: But, " Look at how I've seen God at work. Look at how you came back and told me. That's evidence of the values of God at work," and boy, the hope in that. And I just, I love the way you just described that. I completely agree. And what I'm hearing is in practice, you're not believing

the best. "I know they didn't mean it." But you're believing the best of the heart of God, and then you get to love them, and you get to look for ways to encourage what God is doing. Oh, that's beautiful.

Leah: Yeah, and I really don't think I would have started studying this and thinking about it in this way if I didn't start with that phrase of what I thought the solution was. "I need to assume the best."

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Right? So again, that phrase helped me springboard off into what does Scripture actually say?

Janet: Yeah. I love that.

Leah: And the hope I actually have in Christ. So the next thing I wanted to challenge us to think about when we're assuming others' motives is to stop and check our own hearts first for any judgmentalism. So-

Janet: Now, you didn't have to go there, okay?

Leah: I know. I know. But if I'm assuming negative intentions or presuming the worst about someone and why they said this or did that, I really need to make myself stop and think through questions like this: For what reasons am I doubting this person's intentions? Am I evaluating my own intentions in this interaction or conversation? What am I wanting more than loving God and loving others?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Am I quick to assume sin in the other, passing sinful judgment on a heart that isn't mine? And you know, a foundational passage for this teaching is found in Matthew 7:1-5. So Janet, could you read those verses for us?

Janet: Do not judge others and you will not be judged, for you will be treated as you treat others. The standard you use in judging is the standard by which you will be judged. And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own. How can you think of saying to your friend, "Let me help you get rid of that speck in your eye," when you can't see past the log in your own eye? Hypocrite. First, get rid of the log in your own eye, then you will see well enough to deal with the speck in your friend's eye.

Leah: And I love the bluntness of those verses in the NLT right there, especially in verse four, and when I just think of, how can you think of saying to your friend?

Janet: And it's like, I totally think of saying to my friend.

Leah: Exactly. You know, when I'm listening to someone share or observing someone's actions, if I'm quick to assume they have bad intentions, I really am trying to play the judge.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And like in my parenting, I fall easily into this thinking if I'm only focused on mistakes my children have made in the past.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Especially ones I've claimed to have forgiven.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So there's no grace being demonstrated when I act as judge, jury, prosecutor in my mind, just based on the assumption that my child is gonna do the same thing she did last week or yesterday or whenever.

Janet: Yeah. And again, this is not believing the best, but it's also a commitment, I will not assume the worst.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: You'll see their patterns, and so you're not saying if they have lied 12 times about this very thing, when I talk to them, if I've already forgiven them, I have to act like that never happened. No, I love their soul, and so I will recognize that could be happening, but I'll also give them an opportunity. I don't know that they are this time.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: And I wanna give them an opportunity to actually honor the Lord. I don't need to make sure I know.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Yeah. Oh, I love this.

Leah: Yeah. I love, I found that John Calvin, in his commentary on 1 Corinthians 13, says this about judgmentalism, when we're refusing to believe the best about others. So again, he's kind of saying about that translation that would say believe the best.

Janet: Okay.

Leah: He said that, "Love believes all things. Not that the Christian knowingly and willingly allows himself to be imposed upon, not that he divests himself of prudence and judgment, that he may be the more easily taken advantage of, not that he unlearns the way of distinguishing black from white. What then he requires here, as I've already said, is simplicity and kindness in judging of things, and he declares that these are the invariable accompaniments of love. The consequence will be that a Christian man will reckon it better to be imposed upon by his own kindness and easy temper than to wrong his brother by an unfriendly suspicion."

Janet: Wow, I love that very end there.

Leah: I know.

Janet: That he would rather be imposed upon than to give an unfriendly suspicion. Not deal with sin that you know-

Leah: Right ...

Janet: But an unfriendly suspicion.

Leah: Yeah, all about the assuming the worst.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: I love how he says that when we're judging or assuming, right? In our conversation, when we're assuming others' motives, we need to do so with simplicity and kindness. And I like that word simplicity because it calls out a big fault we fall into when we're assuming the worst about others. We are adding detail upon detail in our mind to whatever the person has said or did, rather than just simply taking them at their word.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And if we're assuming that their intentions are bad just because we've been wrong before, we're definitely not showing kindness towards our brother or sister.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: You know, judgmentalism is really not kindness, no matter how right we are convinced we are in a matter. And there's so many passages on judging others in the Bible, and there was actually a podcast that you all did back in 2024 on judgmentalism with Pastor Rob Green from our church. And that one's called Judging Versus Judgmentalism. So we can link that in our show notes, and if you want a deeper dive into this idea of guarding our hearts against judgmentalism, I really encourage listeners to go back and give that a listen. You know, understanding how to judge or discern is extremely important for believers, but we must also be careful so that we're not presuming God's role in our relationships to others.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: You know, only He knows the other person's heart.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: Just because we assume we know what someone meant, it does not mean that we do know.

Janet: You know, which, exactly, and it actually makes me think, wow, if only God knows their heart, assuming the best, who am I? I'm not God. I don't know their heart.

Leah: Right.

Janet: I shouldn't assume the worst. I shouldn't assume the best. Yeah.

Leah: Yeah. And you know, one way that we can practice stopping our negative thoughts like this towards others is using passages like Philippians 4:8 to filter that thinking.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: You know, this is a great practice for guarding against judgmentalism, honestly. You can ask, are my thoughts about the meaning of this person's words true, or are they purely my speculation or just based on past incidents?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Am I looking for the good in others or for growth in them? Or am I so self-protective that I just assume the worst? You know, I'm not supposed to just discern what is bad or wrong and what needs changed. God's also called us to discern and praise what is good in those around us.

Janet: Wow. We don't use the word discernment in that way.

Leah: No. No, we do not.

Janet: To discern the good.

Leah: Yeah, and especially if you think, you know, that discernment is something you've been gifted with.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Are you using it to discern and call out all the good around you?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: No. No. It's typically to, "Oh, I see that. That's a warning." "That's a trouble that I wanna help"-

Janet: Yep

Leah: "or a problem I wanna fix." But you know, I can trust that God is good and working in me and in the other person for His glory and my good. So if He gives us discernment, the power of discernment, then He's gonna help us discern what's good and right.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: It's not just to guard, guard, guard.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: You know, and God's a good, perfect, and right judge.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And he doesn't need me to try and usurp his role in seeing and working in other people's hearts and minds.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So those truths help me, like, in my parenting because I'm reminded that my job as a parent is not just to judge, judge, judge, or even just correct, correct, correct. Sometimes it feels that way. My job's to image my savior to the children in my care. I have the privilege of teaching them true things from God's word, of demonstrating gospel love and forgiveness, and I really can't do those things well when I'm constantly judging my kids a certain way because they've sinned or disappointed me before. And when I'm assuming the worst or judging their thoughts and actions, I see it affect my ability to teach. Instead of seeing someone who loves and cares for them, they see my teaching as my judgment or as my condemnation of them because they messed up again. You know, I see it in their faces.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: I see it in their reactions. So instead, I want my kids to experience God's grace in my parenting and not my fear and wrath or think that they can never earn my trust.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So I want them to see God changing me rather than just me trying to change them.

Janet: And, you know, I would imagine, when you recognize that you have interacted with them in that way, when you make that right with them, they get to see how to deal with the areas they need to change, and they're watching you do it, too. And that's beautiful.

Leah: Yes. It's humbling, but very, very beautiful, and I'm so thankful for that gift that parenting has brought to my life. Now the final point I wanted to share on how to train our minds to love others biblically today is to think about loving others as Christ loves them. Which means us seeing them as fellow image-bearers. So when we're tempted to assume negative intentions of someone else, we need to stop and try to view them through the lens of the gospel. That person was created in the image of God according to Genesis 1:27, and they're also a sinner in need of grace just like me, like we see-

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: In Romans 3:23. So when I'm tempted to assume the worst about someone's motives, I need to actively stop and think about the way God views that person. Then I need to change my thinking to obey God's commands because he actually tells us how to think of others. Janet, could you read Philippians 2:3-4 for us?

Janet: " Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility, value others above yourselves, not looking to your own interests, but each of you to the interests of the others."

Leah: So if I actually put this into practice and value others above myself, then I'm loving like Christ loves. Because I really don't actually do that most of the time, you know? And again, when I think of value, I think of am I seeing them the way God sees them? Am I understanding that God's working in their life too.

Janet: Yes. Yes.

Leah: It's not just my job to work in their life or to change what I see.

Janet: Amazingly, God is quite capable and doesn't need me to be the junior Holy Spirit.

Leah: Exactly. Yeah. In Philippians 2:5-11 describes how humble love follows Christ's example-

Janet: Yeah ...

Leah: instead of trying to walk in Christ-like humility, we're being proud, selfish, and self-righteous when we are quick to assume the worst about someone. There was an article from Desiring God titled " Assume the Best of Others," and in that, Greg Morse wrote, "We easily see most of our problems out there with other people. Their sin against me, not my sin against a holy God. And that's what troubles me most. And when this is our focus, we are quick to speak and slow to listen, quick to write off and slow to bear with, quick to suspect and slow to forgive. 'It would be better to be deceived 100 times,' Charles Spurgeon declares to his students, 'than to live a life of suspicion.' From his lectures to my students. Doesn't this strike you as true? Better to miss the possible offense in her email, the possible insult in his actions, the possible slight in that text or tweet. Where sin is apparent, things may change, but suspicion would have us confront possible sins with the same conviction and severity as obvious ones. We really have been freed by Christ to hope the best, to assume the best of others' intentions, and to leave the secret sins of others to their creator. This is the love that covers a multitude of sins, actual or imagined. This is that glory of a godly person who passes over affronts."

Janet: Oh, that's beautiful.

Leah: Yeah, and you know, if we're to obey the second greatest commandment, to love our neighbors as ourselves, then we have to remember that truth, that in Christ we have been freed to love.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: This means we do not have to give in to assuming the worst about someone, about-

Janet: Even if that's just how I am.

Leah: Exactly.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: We aren't a slave to judging their hearts and motives.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: We've been freed to love like Christ loves us, sacrificially.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: Rather than being a slave to loving only those who are good to us or have something to offer us. And in Christ, we can focus on loving because of him, keeping our eyes on the one most deserving of love. Preaching these truths to ourselves helps us guard against the tendency to just keep our eyes on ourselves-

Janet: Yes ...

Leah: to look out for me first-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: and me only.

Janet: Yep.

Leah: And Greg Morris, in that same article, went on to say, "How I am treated, how I am being empowered, how I am being understood, seen, and known is not the business of the Christian life. How we are regarded, while not unimportant, is not all in all anymore. How they speak of us behind our backs, how they treat us in the unseen chambers of their minds, whether they like us or not, or what so-and-so really intended, is too groveling a thing to consume a born-again life. While the self-important, and thus self-imprisoned, deaden the beautiful flowers around them, Christ lifts drooping lilies and teaches us to hope all things, especially with other believers. Loving God with all and our neighbors as ourselves gives sunlight and blessing to our relationships, fresh meat and drink to our own souls, and obedience and honor to the name of Christ."

Janet: Wow, that... Not only is that beautiful, I mean, some of the phrases, when he says, "The self-important are self-imprisoned." And to realize, well, you're choosing that, who wants that? That's not attractive. I don't want that.

Leah: Yeah, no, I mean, I think the imagery there is so helpful. Because when we choose to love others, even in our thinking, we actually get to become more like Christ-

Janet: Yes

Leah: breathing life into the world around us and being the salt of the earth that he called us to be.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: If we fail to correct our critical, judgmental hearts towards others, we deaden the beautiful things around us. And those things are our fellow image-bearers.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So we must daily preach the beauty of the gospel to ourselves by being in the Word, by spending intentional time in prayer with the Lord, if we want to grow in our desire to please him in this area of our life and in any other.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So for me, I've been trying to pray regularly that God would help me care more about his Word and about my children's hearts than I do about being respected.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And, you know, those prayers really help me recenter my focus on pleasing God and loving others by practicing patience and grace towards my kids. And it's hard.

Janet: Yes, it's supernatural.

Leah: But it's been so good to draw near to my Savior through struggling, honestly trying to love more like he loves. So if assuming the worst about others is a habit or ingrained way of thinking for you-

Janet: Yeah ...

Leah: I encourage you to seek help through accountability, through counsel from godly people in your life. You know, we're a part of the body of Christ, so we need to take advantage of the gift that God has given through others around us-

Janet: Yeah ...

Leah: who can come alongside us in our struggles of the heart and of the mind. And I think it's important at the end here to clarify one thing. You know, this episode is all about assumptions and our attitudes towards others, living in the imagined negative possibilities And thus becoming guarded and hardened towards others. This is something that we can and should change in our hearts-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: through the power of Christ in us.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: However, we do live in a world full of sinful sinners.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: People really are going to hurt us.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And they're gonna sin against us. So please don't hear what we've shared today and think that sin should never be addressed or wrongs ever corrected. That's not what we're saying. If you want help and some biblical thinking regarding how to respond to the sin of others, I encourage you to go back and listen to the episode that janet did back in 2023 called When Someone Else Is Sinning. Janet and Jocelyn dive deep into the biblical principles of how believers should interact with others when sin is involved. And that's another really important topic to especially train our minds to think about biblically, but it's separate from what we're trying to share today.

Janet: Yeah. And even then, it's not-- You don't deal with it because of yourself. You deal with it for the good of their soul.

Leah: Exactly.

Janet: So the heart is the same, it just looks very different. Right.

Leah: Yeah. Exactly. So we wanna thank you guys again for joining us, and I pray that we would all continue to seek to change our thinking so that it would align more with God's Word and bring Him glory. We can't assume the best. We can't just assume the worst. We can't grow in any way if we aren't asking for God's help. So instead of just trying to assume the best to fix the problem of assuming the worst-

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Let's go to God and His Word for help.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Let's choose to love with wisdom and grace. And praise God, He's willing and ready to give us that help when we call on Him and seek His Word.

Janet: Amen.

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