**Episode 6-23: Psalm 37**

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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: Hello, this is Janet back here once again, and today I have a returning guest who is just a precious friend of mine, Amy Baker. If you've been listening for a while, you have heard her do a couple of other podcast episodes with us, one on aging and one on parenting anxious children. So we will link those, in the show notes as well so you can go back to that. But today, I've asked Amy to come and share with us a specific Psalm that has ministered to her but that she uses frequently to minister to other people. And so Amy, what Psalm did you pick? And talk to us about why that is meaningful to you, how you use it for others.

Amy: So I love the Psalms, so when Janet says, do you wanna do a Psalm? It's like yes, but.

Janet: All of them.

Amy: So this is gonna be a long podcast.

Janet: Great.

Amy: Actually, I decided to narrow it down to Psalm 37, and I do love the Psalms because they give me words for things, I'm not a very, loquacious.

Janet: Ooh.

Amy: Person like I can get out, God, I need your help, and then it's and.

Janet: I don't know what else to say.

Amy: I've said all there is to say. So the Psalms just do such a beautiful job of helping me have words for what I often don't have words for.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: So they give me words to praise.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Words to lament, to confess, to see God's majesty, to mourn, to express trust, to confront anxiety, and generally just tell God what I'm thinking, but I don't have any words to say it with. So yeah, the Psalms are very precious to me.

Janet: They are. Sometimes I'll read and I'll think, that's it. That's what, yes, that's, I wouldn't have thought to say it that way, but that's exactly it.

Amy: Exactly.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Exactly. And one of the areas that I've needed help with is how to talk to God when I experience wrongdoing. When someone did something evil to me.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: So I'm guessing probably we all have stories of ways that we've experienced evil, and for some that's been Particularly my life, I can say the evil that I've experienced you would probably call run-of-the-mill, Amy. Yeah. That's probably, if I were to tell you about the, what I've called evil, you'd probably say, Amy, that sounds probably run-of-the-mill. But I know that probably for a lot of you who are listening, that, your experience- It's anything but has not been

run-of-the-mill at all. Things like rape and abuse and people making promises they don't keep and.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Online bullying and a best friend who sleeps with your husband.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Just the.

Janet: The pain.

Amy: Yes.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Yes. And so I think obviously we confront evil on a daily basis.

Janet: Yep.

Amy: We're in a battle not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world, and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realm.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: So obviously we are confronting evil on a daily basis. But in my case, I can sometimes tune out to that struggle because I'm not feeling immediate pain or weariness in it. And at other times, it feels as if the battle is so intense that I'm not gonna come out alive.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: One of the ways that Psalm 37 particularly came alive for me was, when someone stole my identity.

Janet: Ugh.

Amy: It wasn't life-encompassing, but they stole my identity. And I'm sure that's a minor evil in comparison to the evil others have endured, but I found it bewildering and scary.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: And I was tempted to fret and to be anxious. And if that's true in a relatively minor situation like that, I can only imagine what it must be like for those who have experienced a much more severe evil.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: So, I had read Psalm 37 many times in the past. I had even memorized it. But when this happened, after that experience, it came alive for me in new ways. And it gave me words and things to think about that were going on in my soul that I hadn't even brought to the surface and recognized that I needed to be addressing in my soul. I'm just very grateful that God decided to allow the authors in the Psalms to express things in ways that, show that God's Word is still living and active.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Even today having an impact. So one of the reasons that I liked it, it seems like we often struggle with prayer.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: And I think we're often not used to speaking to God as we would to someone with whom we have a personal relationship. And that's another advantage for me of the Psalms because by looking at how the psalmist talks to God, it helps show me a way to be drawn into a more intimate and beautiful relationship with Him.

Janet: And isn't that what we all long for?

Amy: Yes.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Yes, and so when somebody else has gone ahead of me, that's so helpful to me.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: And so I decided just to talk to God using this Psalm. So Janet, I'll try to walk through the whole thing during our podcast.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: But I would suggest

Janet: That'll be a lot.

Amy: Yes. There's probably a better way to do that. if you would like to do that, I would suggest that you might wanna consider breaking it into smaller pieces because it's a big chunk, and this talks about a lot of things. And if you're like me, you may not be used to having conversations with God that last for more than five minutes.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: And if you try to go through an entire Psalm in one sitting, like we're gonna do here, it could be challenging.

Janet: Or you just stop paying attention.

Amy: Yes. Yes. And you're just rotely reading the Psalm and.

Janet: Yep.

Amy: It's no longer personal.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Anymore. So I would just encourage you, if you're thinking about doing something like this, you may wanna break it into smaller chunks. So.

Janet: But I'm thankful you're gonna do it in one here because it's gonna give us an example of what it could look like, even if we do it at a much slower pace.

Amy: Yes. I would just say, you probably. Okay, recognize that I have a deserved reputation for going slow, but I'm gonna say, you probably don't wanna take more than four verses at once if you're gonna do this. Just do four verses, and then that's enough for today. But we're gonna do it all.

Janet: Yes, we are.

Amy: All right. Shall we dive in?

Janet: Let's do it.

Amy: All right. So Psalm 37 is a Psalm of David, and it begins with verses, one and two, where David says, Do not fret because of evil men or be envious of those who do wrong. For like the grass, they will soon wither. Like green plants, they will soon die away. And Timothy Keller, in a commentary on this Psalm, said, Fretting is a common activity of our age.

Janet: Wow.

Amy: And I agree with him. I don't know that I usually label what I'm doing fretting. I usually have nicer words for it. But when I read that, it's like, he is right.

Janet: That's what we're doing, yes.

Amy: He is right. And he went on to explain, it's composed of worry, resentment, jealousy, and self-pity. It chews us up inside while accomplishing nothing. And then he suggested praying, which is, I think, one of the things that encouraged me to try to do the same thing. He suggested praying, Father, I brood that I am getting a worse life than I deserve and others are getting better ones. But your son Jesus did not begrudge me a far better life than I deserve. Make me generous to others and content in your love. And I might wanna continue in prayer now that he's given me that springboard and say, Lord, it doesn't feel to me like they are soon dying away.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Soon, in my book, would mean that they would already have been caught and sentenced.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: Yet I know this is the path they're on. You've said they're gonna wither and die. Thank you that you're extending mercy to them right now.

Janet: And even that, that was just two verses.

Amy: That was just.

Janet: And there's a lot more that you could slowly think through to pray about.

Amy: Yes, and it's connecting to where I'm struggling.

Janet: Yes.

Amy: To where I'm struggling, because really soon in my book, like really, you say they're soon gonna die away?

Janet: And they're still using my identity.

Amy: Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: When does soon happen?

Janet: Yes.

Amy: This is good. Shall we try a few more?

Janet: Yeah. How about I'll read the verses, and then you can stop me when you're ready teach us?

Amy: All right.

Janet: Trust in the Lord and do good. Dwell in the land and enjoy safe pasture. Delight yourself in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart. Commit your way to the Lord. Trust in Him and He will do this. He will make your righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of your cause like the noonday sun.

Amy: Okay, so I don't think I can get much farther than that and just thinking about that again, I think speaking to God in a relational kind of way, I might say something like, Lord, I'm tempted to trust in myself.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: And look for ways to build my own fortress.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: I'm tempted to isolate, to not let anyone else get close enough to harm me, to try to never let myself be vulnerable. And rather than doing good to others, I'm tempted to become cynical and bitter and worried.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: And not only that, Father, I'm tempted to argue and tell you that I'm not enjoying safe pasture. This evil against me has made me feel unsafe. But your Son's death for me has secured safety for me from Your wrath, a safety which is gonna last for all eternity. And although it's difficult for me, help me to thank You for this reminder not to put my confidence in things that could never keep me safe. Help me to trust you and to do good in spite of my fear. And Lord, this evil has also made me wrestle with what I truly desire. Do I truly desire You? Or do I find something else more desirable? Something like not going through hard things. Thank You for this promise that if I delight in You and in being like Jesus, You'll give me my desire. You will give me the delight of becoming like my Savior. Oh, my King, twice in these four verses, You've brought up trust. You know me so well. It seems like the temptation not to trust assaults me every two seconds. Clearly, You understand the strength of this temptation since I'm being reminded to trust and then reminded again to trust two verses later. And then, Lord, You say that You'll make my righteousness shine like the dawn, the justice of my cause like the noonday sun. And you make that statement as though it's gonna satisfy me. As though I don't have to have a return to innocence about evil, as though I don't have to have a return of honor, as though I don't have to have restoration of my possessions in order for satisfaction to occur I think that happens because Jesus is my righteousness. And if Jesus is my righteousness, and You will make my righteousness shine like the dawn, I can infer that You will allow me to show how beautiful Jesus is. And I will get the desires of my heart. I'll get to be like Jesus

Janet: Be still before the Lord and wait patiently for Him. Do not fret when men succeed in their ways, when they carry out their wicked schemes.

Amy: Now, Lord, you're again reminding me not to fret. Thank You that You know the temptation to fret dogs me in situations like this. It just doesn't want to let loose. And You tell me to wait patiently. Your solution seems so foreign to me. I tend to believe that the way for fretting to end is for all evil to be stopped. And here You're explaining that the solution is to wait patiently for You. Oh, how that stretches me. Please help me

Janet: Refrain from anger and turn from wrath. Do not fret; it leads only to evil. For evil men will be cut off, but those who hope in the Lord will inherit the land. A little while, and the wicked will be no more; though you look for them, they will not be found. But the meek will

inherit the land and enjoy great peace. The wicked plot against the righteous and gnash their teeth at them; but the Lord laughs at the wicked, for He knows their day is coming. The wicked draw the sword and bend the bow to bring down the poor and needy, to slay those whose ways are upright. But their swords will pierce their own hearts, and their bows will be broken.

Amy: Lord, You have revealed here another temptation for me. The temptation to give in to unrighteous anger. The temptation to be wrathful and vengeful. The temptation to allow bitterness to grow. And You say it only leads to evil. I've been focusing on the evil done by the perpetrators, but here I don't think You're talking about the evil done by someone else. That evil is already committed, and this is saying that when I fret, it leads to evil. I think You're saying that fretting leads to evil in me. That's a bit shocking. it's sobering, and it's scary. I get treated evilly, and I become evil. Oh, please help me take this to heart. I don't want this passage to be talking about me when it talks about those who do evil. You say that the evil will be cut off. Oh, my Savior, it would devastate me to be cut off or canceled, to use the vernacular of our culture, from You. To no longer have You hear me when I cry out to You? To be alone and abandoned? To be separated from You forever in eternity? To be cut off from the worldly good I have desired is a small thing in comparison to being cut off from You. Lord, would you please be merciful to these people who have done evil? Please give them the gift of repentance so that this dreadful curse won't come upon them. Thank You that Jesus has already made the way for this to happen, and that because He was cut off, those who trust in You will not be My precious King, help me to meekly leave vindication and vengeance to You. Jesus became meek and helpless like a lamb before his shearers. Because He was stripped of everything, I get to inherit the land. In your great mercy, You've given me an inheritance that can never perish, spoil, or fade, that can never be stolen and I get to enjoy peace. Unlike those who treated me evilly, I don't have to be constantly looking over my shoulder concerned that I might get caught. I don't have to worry that some other evil person will invade my patch. I don't have to worry that someone will rat me out. I get to have peace Father, You say that the wicked plot. They promise good things. They use the intelligence You entrusted to them to plan how to take advantage of others. They deceive with words and actions. They present themselves as someone who cares about my best interest, and they do it deliberately and intentionally. According to this, they're fighting with a boomerang. What they're doing to me is gonna come back to them.

Janet: Better the little that the righteous have than the wealth of many wicked. For the power of the wicked will be broken, but the Lord upholds the righteous. The days of the blameless are known to the Lord, and their inheritance will endure forever. In times of disaster they will not wither; in days of famine they will enjoy plenty.

Amy: My beloved Father, while I am far from sinless, when these people perpetrated evil against me, I was blameless in that. Thank You that.

Janet: Yeah.

Amy: Thank You that even though these evil people tried to say this is my fault, and thank You that Jesus came so that by receiving Him and being given His righteousness, I could be truly blameless when I stand before You because I've been given His righteousness. Please help me not to wither as a result of what happened to me, and instead enjoy the lavish grace You are giving me to cling to You. And thank You again that I have an inheritance that's gonna endure forever. You, Lord, are my good. You are my inheritance. You are better than life. My Father, I'm tempted to get things backwards. I'm tempted to treasure the things of the world more than righteousness. Help me to love how You turn things upside down. Thank You that I can always have what's better because I have the righteousness of Jesus on my account, and by Your grace, I can be progressively growing in His image every day. You're giving me an opportunity to examine what I really treasure. Do I treasure You more than I treasure your gifts? Please help me to have You as my greatest treasure. And thank You for telling me how this story turns out. That there truly is a happy ending.

Janet: But the wicked will perish. The Lord's enemies will be like the beauty of the fields. They will vanish like smoke. The wicked borrow and do not repay, but the righteous give generously. Those the Lord blesses will inherit the land, but those He curses will be cut off.

Amy: Lord, it's difficult for me to trust in Your provision for me enough to be radically generous with all that You've entrusted to me. Money, time, skills, relationships, basically every good thing I have. I'm afraid they will vanish if I'm generous. But You say it's the wicked who will vanish. And as Tim Keller points out, if Jesus had been as grudging with His life and blood as I am, then where would I be? Help me not to be ruled by fear, and instead make me a joyful giver, not only with my money, but in my relationships with others and everything else You've entrusted to me.

Janet: If the Lord delights in a man's way, He makes his steps firm. Though he stumble, he will not fall, for the Lord upholds him with His hand

Amy: My beloved, thank You for this encouragement. It's easy for me to slip into fretting about the wicked or envying the wicked or indulging in self-pity. I've stumbled many times. Thank You for your merciful assurance that You will make my steps firm because I'm clinging to You and Your ways, and You are holding me up. You will uphold me. You will help me to repent.

Janet: I was young and now I'm old, yet I've never seen the righteous forsaken or their children begging bread. They're always generous and lend freely. Their children will be blessed. Turn from evil and do good, then you will dwell in the land forever

Amy: Father, my temptation is to just act like the wicked. Manipulate, deceive, have it as my goal to get all I can, to have more, to have the most toys. I'm tempted to lose faith in your provision and believe I must take matters into my own hands. I find myself fretting over the wicked rather than lending freely, being content, wanting you to be glorified, and praying for mercy. As you've shown mercy to me in this very thing, help me long for mercy for others.

Janet: For the Lord loves the just and will not forsake his faithful ones. They will be protected forever, but the offspring of the wicked will be cut off, and the righteous will inherit the land and dwell in it forever

Amy: Father, in these verses, we see that the choices the wicked make affect their children. Now, I know that where sin abounds, grace abounds much more. So I know this can't be saying if the parents do wrong, the children are doomed. Your grace abounds much more than the parents' sin. However, please let this sober me. In verse 26, you said the children of those who are generous are blessed. The children of those who aren't generous, who are intent on getting what they can for themselves, who are living for themselves, endanger not only themselves, but make life hard for their children as well. Help me to remember what Jesus had to say about people who do this. When He said that things that cause people to stumble are bound to come, but woe to anyone through whom they come. It would be better for them to be thrown in the sea with a millstone tied around their neck than to cause one of these little ones to stumble.

Janet: The mouth of the righteous man utters wisdom, and his tongue speaks what is just. The law of his God is in his heart. His feet do not slip.

Amy: Lord, earlier you said you would uphold me. I still wrestle with feeling vulnerable. So thank You for this added reminder that you won't let my feet slip. And You give me proactive steps to take, speaking what is just, hiding Your word in my heart.

Janet: The wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives. But the Lord will not leave them in their power or let them be condemned when brought to trial.

Amy: My King, when You say that the wicked lie in wait for the righteous, seeking their very lives, that evokes images of our accuser, the prowling lion looking for whom he can devour, the one who was a murderer from the beginning, who knew when he enticed Eve to eat the forbidding fruit that it would kill her. Thank You for putting this side by side with another image, the image of Jesus who is my Mediator, Intercessor, and Savior. Because Jesus was condemned when brought to trial, I will never be condemned in your final courtroom to an eternity in hell. Oh, thank You. Thank You. Thank You.

Janet: Wait for the Lord and keep He way. He will exalt you to inherit the land. When the wicked are cut off, you will see it. I have seen a wicked and ruthless man flourishing like a green tree in its native soil, but he soon passed away and was no more. Though I looked for Him, He could not be found. Consider the blameless. Observe the upright. There is a future for the man of peace, but all sinners will be destroyed. The future of the wicked will be cut off

Amy: Father, with this exploitation, I've seen the wicked flourishing. But here You've said that someday I'll see his ruination. Someday I'll stand in heaven and see the goats cut off from the sheep. And at that time, I'll no longer be able to find the wicked. They'll be cut off forever Thank You that You're a holy God, that when You set up Your eternal kingdom, there will never again be exploitation or people who selfishly seek out their own interest at the expense of others or any other evil. Thank You that You're long-suffering. Will You please continue to give wicked people an opportunity to repent and turn to You, even while restraining their wicked schemes from succeeding? Lord, I haven't been evil in the same way as those who perpetrated this wickedness against me, but I too am regularly guilty of pursuing my own selfish interest. Please allow this passage to give me a growing disgust for that, the humility to confess and repent, and the delight of Your compassionate forgiveness.

Janet: The salvation of the righteous comes from the Lord. He is their stronghold in time of trouble. The Lord helps them and delivers them. He delivers them from the wicked and saves them because they take refuge in Him

Amy: Father, thank You for the ultimate and immediate solutions You've given me in this Psalm. I praise You for the ultimate solution. I have a future forever with You, and absolutely no breath of wickedness will be part of that future. Thank You also for the immediate solution. Thank You for your promise that you will be my stronghold, that You will help, You will deliver, You will save. May You be glorified now and forever. Amen.

Janet: Wow. I hope our listeners can go back and listen to that again. And I agree with you, Amy, that if we were going through this in our own lives, we're not gonna do all that in one day. But, showing us how to slow down and not just read the words and go, oh, that was good, but being able to say, what would that look like in my situation.

Amy: Right.

Janet: As I pray that to the Lord? I love that. There's nothing I want to add to that. I pray that God uses that to show us the beauty of His Word and gives us a way to more deeply interact and engage with it.

Amy: Yeah.

Janet: Thank you for being willing to do that for us today.

Amy: We have the best God, don't we?

Janet: Oh, we do. Amen.

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