Episode 6-24:Thanksgiving

Resources:

Podcasts

Books
Gentle and Lowly - Dane Ortland
Suffering - Paul Tripp
Waiting Isn't a Waste - Mark Vroegop
God's Smuggler - Brother Andrew
I Prayed and Nothing Changed - Ste Casey
Revolution - Eric Metaxas
We Shall See God - Randy Alcorn
Romans for You - Tim Keller
Shattered Shepherds - Steve Swartz
Picture Perfect - Amy Baker
Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety - Elyse Fitzpatrick

Songs/Movies
Safe in Your Arms - Josh Baldwin
Judas - Josiah Queen
Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call - Keith and Kristin Getty
A Great Awakening - Sight and Sound

Sermons/Podcasts
Romans Sermon Series - R. C. Sproul
Do Not Reject Sonship to Return to Slavery Gal. 4:1-11 - Ross Reeder
God is Holy - Brent Aucoin
God is Independent - Greg Wetterlin
God is Unchanging - Greg Wetterlin

Website
Faith Bible Seminary

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, welcome back, listeners. This is Janet, and I get to be here with both of our co-hosts. Noelle and Leah are here.

Noelle: Hey, everyone.

Leah: Hello.

Janet: And for this Thanksgiving episode, we wanted to just ask each other some questions, about what's been helpful to us throughout the year. Any, favorites of... And I will tell you, I have this thing about is it a favorite? Because I don't even know how to answer that half the time. So multiple favorites, things that have been helpful. so I'm gonna just ask some questions about as you look back on the year, different things, and let's see if we can remind each other of the goodness of God.

Noelle: Sounds great.

Janet: So as you look back on the year, how might each of you describe a spiritual theme for the year, or maybe aspects of God's character that just really stood out to you?

Noelle: I'll go ahead and get started with that. So I have a tradition for the past several years with one of my best friends. She and I choose a word for each other that we like to pray for each other over the year. It has to do-

Janet: So how do you pick that?

Noelle: We just choose.

Janet: That's so cool, though.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: 'Cause normally they say, "What's my word for the year?"

Noelle: Right.

Janet: Which is a great thing. It gets you thinking. But you choose one for each other.

Noelle: Yeah. So as we pray and think about each other in the coming year, we pray over a specific word, and then we use that word as we encourage each other spiritually throughout the year.

Leah: I like that.

Noelle: So-

Janet: That's cool.

Noelle: Yeah. So the words that she chose for me for this year was the word known, and she had three aspects that she talked to me about, at the beginning of the year, really praying over three different aspects of that word. And the first one was that God himself would be more known by me, and so I've seen that through, obviously, the reading of scripture, which has been a big deal this year for me. But also something maybe not quite as common was just sitting with him. So she really challenged me, "Don't... You know, Noelle, you don't have to just do, do, do, do." Like, because I tend to be a Martha.

Janet: Yep.

Noelle: And so she challenged me to think through practicing just being in his presence and then I would be able to know him more just by sitting in his presence. And that's been a huge encouragement to me this year. The second aspect of known that she prayed for me is that being known by God would become truer and more precious to me. So that really affects my identity, because if I'm known by God, I can better understand what it means to bear his image. As you guys know, we use the definition to be a visible representation of an invisible God.

Janet: Yep.

Noelle: And so that's been really precious to me, and it also really affects where I put my worth, which is definitely something I'm still working on, but do I care most about what others say of me or lies that I believe about myself, or do I care about being known by God and knowing that he knows the true me, you know? And that should affect me, motivate me in the way I act and think. And then the last way that she prayed for known for me is that being known by God would set me free to be known by His people. And so really just bringing in that aspect of community within the church, and I've seen this all over this year. But I can think of two specific ways that

it's been met, and one of those is by me being more vulnerable with His people, and partly that means sharing more, but also that means asking for more accountability-

Janet: Yeah

Noelle: ... in areas that I struggle with more than just one person, you know? Having accountability in different areas of my life.

Leah: Yeah.

Noelle: And then the second way is I've just seen this theme through noticing small ways that I'm known, that are really just God's kindness through His people. So through specific prayers sent to me, via text or Marco Polo, or prayed over me in small group, through being asked to serve at church in ways that I love, through receiving bouquets of flowers just because, because people know I love flowers. Through coworkers engaging in thoughtful conversations at lunch or stepping in when my workload is extra heavy. I mean, I could go on and on and on, but people, specifically God's people, know me, and I am free to be known by them, and then to receive their encouragement and kindness and help that is ultimately God's kindness. And so I've just seen that in really beautiful ways throughout this year with that word known, and I'm really thankful for the ways that my friend especially encouraged me to think through that this year, and then so faithfully prayed for me throughout the year.

Leah: That's great.

Noelle: What about you, Leah?

Leah: Well, for me, I think a personal theme that God has really been teaching me is the importance of training my heart to desire to want to look more like Christ over anything else. So to really want to be being made in the image of Christ more and more, over the other things that I find myself wanting, like respect, especially from children, like obedience or being successful in the things I've been asked to do or in this season of life. And so for me, I've just really been realizing more and more of my need to die to myself in order to love and care for those around me. Like, that's what it means to look more like Jesus. And I just see my tendency to focus on behavior in others, and even behavior in myself, rather than on my own heart first.

Janet: Right.

Leah: So it's been very humbling, and so I think just that theme of being humbled and embracing God's discipline has also been very good for me. And then when I think about God's character, I

just think of His amazing faithfulness. Time after time this year, He's answered prayers far greater and in better ways than I could have asked. There's been a lot of hard this year, but also a lot of good, and His ways and timing have really just blown me away. So I've just continued to think of that refrain in the Psalms, "His faithful love endures forever." So for me, that's just been, again, a lot of hard things, but encouraging things as well-

Janet: Yeah

Leah: to be humbled and to want to be more like our faithful God.

Janet: Oh, I love that. 'Cause I think, you know, there's been a lot of hard things in all of our lives, and when we think big picture, we're in a world affected by the curse. That's the norm. Is that throughout a year, there's gonna be hard things.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: And God is using it, even in that. I love hearing about His faithfulness. Mine, when I think about this year, just being made even more aware of my weakness because there's been a lot of circumstances that have made that very obvious, and just spiritually my own weakness, and when I am weak, how easily I return to sin. so you think, "Wow, that's kind of a depressing spiritual theme." But for me, the theme that has just been amazing me this year is in the midst of all of that, His gentleness.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Which is amazing. Hebrews 5:2, I was rereading Gentle and Lowly, which I'll probably be mentioning a lot-

Noelle: Yeah ...

Janet: because it was so helpful to reread. And he talks about Hebrews 5:2, and I'm just gonna read it. " He can deal gently with the ignorant and wayward, since He himself is beset with weakness." I love that He deals gently, and He pointed that out in the Gentle and Lowly book, that the ignorant is we don't know any better. We're foolish. Wayward, we're rebellious.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: But His response is not different. I tend to think, "Well, He understands I didn't know better," but when I'm rebellious, what's He gonna do?

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: But even when I know better and I go to my sin instead of my Savior, He deals with me gently, and I love that. I love that about Him. It's so different from me. Praise God. So for me, one of the themes of the year has been in the midst of weakness, I want to run to Him more, but even when I don't, His gentleness is part of what turns me back to Him.

Noelle: Yeah. I love that you say that. I read through the Bible this summer for a challenge that was really awesome. Everyone should do it. I read through the Bible in 60 days, which was really cool, and actually that's what stood out to me most about God as I read through the Bible that time, was just His gentleness. You see it all over. It's awesome.

Janet: Yes, yes. Well so, thinking about what we read, in addition to the Bible, did you read anything this year that was particularly impactful to you?

Leah: So I can start with this one. I listened to Suffering by Paul Tripp for the first time.

Janet: Oh. That's a good book.

Leah: Yeah, and what I like about that book is it's really focused on the spiritual aspect of suffering-

Janet: Yep

Leah: ... the theology behind that. But I liked how he talked about that suffering is shaped profoundly by the heart rather than just physical circumstances, and he says that believers bring a lifetime of expectations, desires, and assumptions into their pain. And so for me, when I think about, oh, I've had a pretty good life, but the hard times when I am suffering, because we all suffer, it is really impactful to stop back and think, "What was my heart in that?"

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: You know, what's beyond just the circumstances were causing me to suffer in those moments? And for me as a foster mom, like when I think about the suffering of the kids that I serve-

Janet: Yeah

Leah: right, in my care, this, like, idea was really helpful to think more than it's not just what happened, right? But-

Janet: It's what they brought into it ...

Leah: it's what they brought into it and how they're responding to it, and if you know the Lord versus if you don't know the Lord-

Janet: Right

Leah: ... your heart really is gonna impact your suffering.

Noelle: Yeah.

Leah: and then he also said that while discouragement and fear can dominate our emotions, they are temporary compared to God's eternal care. And so that was just really helpful again to think about in my life and those I'm loving. Like discouragement and fear, they don't win.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: They aren't- '

Janet: Cause they feel so big.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: But they're not the end.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And God's eternal care for me, eternal care for the children that I love, you know, that goes far beyond these emotions that seem so big-

Janet: Yes

Leah: ... and overwhelming when it comes to times of suffering. And then the last thing I really liked from that book was he said that Jesus intimately understands human sorrow and meets suffering with grace, ensuring that believers never endure their pain alone. and so I always love reflecting on Jesus's humanness and the fact that He chose to suffer for us, and it just goes back to, like, He's the high priest who's able to empathize with our weaknesses. so that book was really encouraging to me, and I had never read it before, so just a different outlook on suffering than I had heard previously.

Janet: I think it was in that book one of the phrases that stuck with me was adding hard to your hard.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: I love that 'cause life is hard.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: We're in a broken world. Life is hard. How often am I adding hard to my hard by how I respond to it?

Leah: Right.

Janet: Instead of running to the Lord in it, I'm resisting it, I'm fighting it, I'm trying to control it, or I'm... whatever it is, it's like I add hard to my hard. And that was, a concept that was like, oh, my word. How stupid, and I do it all the time. So such a good book.

Noelle: Yeah. Yeah. I am a reader, and so I had a hard time thinking about this as I was preparing for the episode because I would like to talk about 25.

Janet: I know. I have several on here, and I can't bring them all up. What we could do, though, is seriously, let's give some book recommendations.

Noelle: Yeah, yeah, yeah.

Janet: Give several. You don't have to talk in depth about them.

Noelle: Sure.

Janet: Give several.

Noelle: So I'm gonna give two recommendations without much context and then one with a little bit more context. So first one that I loved this year was Waiting Isn't a Waste by Mark Vroegop.

Janet: Easy for you to say.

Noelle: That book was absolutely phenomenal. Obviously, the main concept is that we all have seasons of waiting, and

Janet: God's at work ...

Noelle: and God's at work. Yep. And but He just brought truths from scripture together in a really beautiful way, and so I really appreciated that read. Another one was an autobiography that I read called God's Smuggler by Brother Andrew. So this is an older book.

Janet: I was gonna say, I've heard of it. I've never read it, though.

Noelle: It's fascinating. So Brother Andrew was essentially a missionary during the Cold War, and so he delivered Bibles behind the Iron Curtain. And just really great book. Definitely recommend that. And then the one that I'd wanna talk about a little bit more is, called I Prayed and Nothing Changed by Ste Casey.

Leah: That's a good one.

Noelle: Yeah. Yes, yes. Oh, my goodness. Well, first of all, it's about praying and nothing changing.

Janet: No way. No way.

Noelle: And I could probably list 20 quotes, but I'll just stick with one that kind of summarizes the book in a little bit, and it's from one of the first chapters. It says, "Outrageous as it may sound, we need to consider the possibility that unanswered prayer, and our experiences of it, may be a vital part of God's gracious dealings with us even a doorway to some new experience of His grace and glory." And my goodness. Like, that is so tricky, and I struggle with that, but also as I think back about the different trials throughout this past year, I think about beautiful ways that God worked and that I got to see, and some that I probably haven't gotten to see yet. And a lot of those trials had unanswered prayer in them.

Janet: Yes.

Noelle: And so, oh, my goodness, I could not recommend this book enough. It was such a powerful read, and it hurt my feelings a little bit, too. You know? So just a warning, like-

Leah: It's that kinda good.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Yes.

Noelle: You're gonna be confronted with what you believe-

Janet: Yeah

Noelle: as you read, and so I would highly, highly encourage it. If you could read only one book in a year besides the Bible, I would choose that one for you for next year.

Janet: And I agree that, I don't have that on mine 'cause I read it last year, so I couldn't include it.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: But, and Brent would tell you, he read it three times and he says this so he would not mind me saying this. The first time, he argued with it.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: You know, 'cause it steps on... It's like, "Yeah, but, yeah," and he's like, second time it was like, "Oh, this is good." The third time it was a balm to his soul. It's like, okay, okay. And then I thought it was gonna be primarily about prayer, and it's really not. It's about the fact that your prayers don't always get answered, but it's not just about the prayer.

Noelle: Right.

Janet: It's about you-

Noelle: Right ...

Janet: and what God is up to. Totally agree. Very, very good book. So I'm gonna try to mention just a few quick and then not talk about all of them. I mentioned Gentle and Lowly. There's so

much I could say about that book, but, I just plan to possibly, if not this one, one like it, read every year. I need to be reminded of the heart of God to help me more quickly run to him no matter what's going on.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: No matter if I know I'm not doing the right things right now, run to him for help. Don't try to fix it. so that, I had forgotten or had not recognized, I don't even... this sounds ridiculous, how theological that book is.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: I think the first time I read it, it was like, "That's really good." But in my... It affected me. And then as I'm rereading it, I'm telling Brent, "This is so, like, theologically rich. Like, there's a lot..." And he goes, "I know." Like, it's not new, but it felt new to me, so that was really good.

Noelle: That's another good one to read or via audiobook too.

Janet: Oh, I bet.

Noelle: Because it's short. I listened to it on a road trip this summer, and I had previously read it, but I listened to it on a road trip, and I think it was only six hours. So that's really nice if-

Janet: Yes

Noelle: ... you just wanna listen, if people listen-

Janet: Especially if you've already read it-

Noelle: Yeah

Janet: or if you just... Yeah. And the chapters are pretty short.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: So that'd be an excellent one to listen to. I read Revolution by Eric Metaxas. I have not read a book that long about a war in my entire life, and probably never will again. I'm not a war person. But I really just wanted to understand a bigger picture of how we got where we are where we started. so I have the book if anybody wants to borrow it. It was really good. I did skim some of the war things. But I'm like, "This is so funny," 'cause I'm getting all... And, like, I know how this ends. Like, I know how the Revolution ends. So it's okay, Janet. And I'm like, "Look at me getting into this," like I don't know what's about to happen.

Noelle: That's funny.

Janet: but seeing... it was a hard year for us as it is for everybody in the world, in a broken world, and in the midst of it, seeing unimaginable difficulty and their faith. Not every person in the Revolution knew Jesus, but many did. John Adams just moved up in my book after reading this. Like, I just never thought much about him. Wow. that was amazing.

Noelle: I'm sorry I'm laughing. I just think you went, "I never thought much about him."

Janet: But when I did, it was just like, "He's a president. That's all I know." And it's like, wow, just his faith and George Washington's faith when he was betrayed and just, you just think, "Okay. You know what? I'm kind of a weenie when it comes to suffering. These people have really been through it." So, and then seeing God's providential control when, America really shouldn't have won. And you read through it, and you're like, "Wow," like-

Leah: How'd they do this?

Janet: That's crazy. God. Twice that I can think of because the weather changed

Noelle: Oh, that's fascinating

Janet: and you're like wow, that's... Wow." So again, just reminded, God works through it all and is orchestrating His plan, so just seeing that. So that was good. In the evenings, my husband and I try to read something in the last few years before bed, and we read through We Shall See God, Charles Spurgeon's devotional on heaven that was edited by Randy Alcorn. So they took excerpts of his sermons, 'cause he talked about heaven all the time, and there's, like, 50 excerpts of his sermons. And so you just read the excerpt, and then Alcorn talks about it.

Noelle: Okay, so it's Spurgeon's sermons.

Janet: Spurgeon's sermons. Got it. And then Alcorn talks about it.

Noelle: That's cool.

Janet: That was really, really good, and I would say more about it except we don't have time. So that's a great one. Just, it's so helpful to be constantly reoriented to think big picture, think eternity. Because everything, especially when you're having a hard year, everything gets smaller.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: And it's only about that. It's like, no, there's so much bigger things going on. So the Bible study that I've been working on, I really wanted to focus on Romans this year. Listened to... Well, I am listening to R.C. Sproul does a whole series on Romans, so I'm listening to that. Tim Keller's book, Romans For You, has been excellent at getting to the heart, and now I'm redoing it with a group of other ladies, so just getting to talk about it. So I love the Romans For You Bible study. Would highly recommend that. The book that I'll talk about, I know I've talked about all of them, but I tried to go fast. Shattered Shepherds. I have never heard of this book, but I was speaking at a church out in California, and they were gracious and very kind, and afterwards mailed me this book. The subtitle is Finding Hope in the Midst of Ministry Disaster. And we've been through a little of that. And this book is so good, but, I'm just gonna read a little excerpt from near the end. this man went through one of those situations, and he says, I now have a personal preference in the selection process for potential elders in our church. While we hold to all the biblical qualifications of an elder, I'm hesitant to recommend we ordain an elder who has not been through a massively humbling life-changing experience. You simply can see the difference between the men who have and have not had to cry out to God in the midst of disaster. I look for broken men, men with scars, and men who've had tender faith beaten into them by the trials of life." And he says, "And you are one of those men." I am not a man, I get that. I am not a pastor either, in case there's a question.

Noelle: Just to clarify.

Janet: Yeah. "You are one whom God has joyfully selected for extra pain, and extra preparation, and extra discipline. This should thrill your heart because God never wastes a trial. It's always for a purpose." We were reading that, and then, you know, this year, As we prayed for kind of a restoration of a lot of things in our own lives this year, the Lord allowed us to, we're now on a cancer journey with my husband. So all of that just rang very true to us, and he ends the book with this, "The bottom line is that you must look in the mirror and tell yourself," and so this is to pastors, so my husband, "I am a minister of the gospel of Jesus Christ, and I must run the race to completion. Gentlemen, the church needs you to run again. You might be running wounded, but you must run nevertheless." I loved that.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: so that book, and I know I'm not, but we read it together, and I'm reading it again. Just being able to think big picture, what is God doing in my life through these things, and seeing God orchestrated all of that. That this extra pain, the extra trials, not that they're more than anybody else has ever had, they're just more than we'd had before-

Leah: Yeah ...

Janet: was designed by God. So that was some of the ones that were powerful for me.

Leah: Well, I can give a couple small recommendations since I only said one.

Janet: Do it. Oh, so you're like, "Wait, I'm allowed more?" Do it.

Leah: I had more ready, but-

Janet: Oh, do it ...

Leah: one that I thought was just really good if someone is struggling with perfectionism or just control, I read Amy Baker's Picture Perfect this year, which was just really helpful, so I would recommend that as a-

Janet: Yes

Leah: ... good tool for someone wanting to work through that in their life. And then I re-read for probably the fourth or fifth time, Overcoming Fear, Worry, and Anxiety by Elise Fitzpatrick-

Janet: Yes

Leah: ... with a counselee. And I love the book because it's so practical but so focused on scripture, and just the way that she even adds the reflection questions at the end of each chapter of if you really are struggling with something like this, and you may think you don't struggle with fear, worry, or anxiety-

Janet: Right

Leah: but she's really helpful in how she explains, like, the cycle of our desire for control which then leads to fear, worry, and anxiety. Chapter four is when you feel you're losing control. That's where she goes through that spiral, and I think it's just a really helpful visual for people to look

at. And in chapter seven, it's called God Really Does Care for You, and she uses the eight filters from Philippians 4:8 about how to filter our thoughts and train thoughts, to keep them captive.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: So for me, I've always found that as just a really helpful tool when I'm studying Philippians with someone or talking to someone about anxiety or any type of fear or worry. So those were two other books that I wanted to mention as well.

Janet: I've read that, but it's been years, so now I'm like, "Ooh, I wanna read that again." And I wanna read the Brother... It, what, Brother-

Noelle: Brother Andrew

Janet: ... Andrew. Well- I'm gonna read that too. Now I'm gonna read everything. This is awesome. How about any songs? Were there any songs that were particularly meaningful to you this year?

Noelle: Yeah. I'll start with that one. Probably a song not very well-known. the title is Safe in Your Arms, and the artist is Josh Baldwin. I've probably listened to this song, oh, I would guess over 100 times this year. I'll let you know after I get my Spotify Wrapped, but-

Janet: Oh, funny.

Noelle: I listen to it very, very frequently, and there's a section of lyrics, I love the whole song obviously, just go listen to it, but there's a section of lyrics that is particularly impactful to me, and it says this: "You were there", you being God. "You were there when there was nothing left. A spark of hope where I saw emptiness. Somehow in pieces, you restore me with your peace. In the driest of deserts, you're the never ending stream. I'm safe in your arms, your arms of love." And as a language person, I just love those, like, hope and emptiness. I'm in pieces, but I have your peace. I'm in the driest of deserts, but you're the stream, you know? Oh, my goodness. Just beautiful. But I really like the, it's kind of a chill vibe. It's not really necessarily a song that you would just sing as a worship song in church, but when I'm driving, when I'm thinking, when I'm getting ready in the morning, just, it's very, very chill, just acoustic guitar. Beautiful. You should listen to it.

Janet: Love it. How about you?

Leah: Yeah, so I thought of several. One specifically is a song called Judas by Josiah Queen, and that song's been really convicting for me every time I hear it on the radio because it talks about how easy it is for us to, like, judge Judas' actions and his betrayal towards Jesus, yet we betray our Savior every day-

Janet: Yes

Leah: for the idols in our lives that will never satisfy. So the chorus, the main part of the song that I really like is, "I said I'd never turn away. I said I'd never leave his side all the days of my life, but I am weak and I'm afraid. I traded my Lord for pocket change. Yeah, maybe I'm like Judas. Maybe I'm that thief. Maybe I'm that sinner that put you on that tree. For 30 pieces of silver, he ain't worse than me, 'cause he betrayed you for money and I did it all for free." I just love that.

Janet: Oh, wow.

Leah: So it's just been really-- short song, very simple. But it's just been really impactful for me to think about how easy it is not just to judge Judas, but to judge others, right?

Janet: Right.

Leah: And maybe what they've done against God.

Noelle: Sure.

Leah: Rather than looking at how had I betrayed Jesus-

Janet: What have I done? And I know better ...

Leah: today. Yeah.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: Exactly.

Janet: for me, I have really loved, I love Sunday morning worship-

Leah: Yeah ...

Janet: with my church family. And I am horrible at knowing what songs are what. As my daughter who's on the worship team's over here nodding. I know. So I was thinking, "Oh, I love the ones that I just, I'm able..." and there's usually certain songs that talk about worshiping God before the throne, and it always takes me to Revelation 5-

Noelle: Yeah ...

Janet: when we're all gonna be doing that. And I am convinced it'll be the first time that I worship With right motives completely.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: No mixed motives. And I'm like, "I can't... That's just gonna be amazing." So any of our songs that take me there, I love. The one that I did, When people graciously send me songs- ... I listen to them, enjoy them, and add them to my list, and that's all I have. So, 'cause I don't... that's all I do. But I love music, and I just don't know much about it. But, recently, somebody sent me, and I was starting to listen to, Lord From Sorrows Deep I Call. I loved the song, and so some of the words were, "For so long I've pled and prayed, God, come to my rescue. Even so, the thorn remains. Still, my heart will praise you." she goes on, "Should my life be torn from me, every worldly pleasure. When all I possess is grief, God be then my treasure." The refrain is, "Oh my soul, put your hope in God. My help, my rock, I will praise him. Sing, oh sing through the raging storm. You're still my God, my salvation." Those are just anchoring for me that I'm not worshiping because the storm is over, I'm worshiping- in it.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: and I know one day it will be over.

Leah: Right.

Janet: Praise God. But, this side of heaven, I don't know if and when, and I can still, you're still my God, my salvation. So that's been really anchoring for me.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: How about anything else? Was there a sermon, movie, anything that stands out to you from the year?

Leah: Yeah, so one sermon in

particular from our Galatians series that we did this year, on prioritizing the gospel really stood out to me. Back in March, Ross Reeder gave the sermon at Faith West.

Janet: Okay.

Leah: And it was over Galatians 4:1-11 specifically. But it was exactly what I needed to hear in the sense of his personal examples that he was sharing. And it was dealing with struggling with a sinful attitude or behavior legalistically, right? So how he talked about legalism in that message really encouraged me to think about my mistakes more in the light of gospel hope. So he said something like, "My justification doesn't have anything to do with my performance, and that that type of thinking confuses the good news if I act condemned." So those words and that truth in Galatians really encouraged me to just keep remembering what I've been forgiven, and how my struggles with sin are not what define my relationship with who I am in Christ.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: So just very good. You know?

Janet: Love it.

Leah: Just when the Word comes at the right time-

Janet: Yep ...

Leah: the right week of what you're going through.

Noelle: Yeah.

Leah: So that was really helpful to me. and just very thankful for that whole series that we've been going through.

Noelle: I was really challenged by the God Is sermon series- that we did over the summer. And I loved-

Janet: That was so good.

Noelle: Yeah. I loved it so much. And I travel a lot over the summer with missions and some other things, and that was one that I was, like, running to still listen to them, you know, if I was gone from our local church. But anyway, two in particular stood out to me that I would highly

recommend if you only have time for a few, and one is God is Holy, which at Faith East, Pastor Brent taught. I'm not sure at the other campuses. But man, yeah, just listen. I won't It was so good.

Janet: And, and Karis, we're gonna ask you all these things we've talked about to be links Okay.

Noelle: And another one that was kind of more of a new, well, I don't know if new concept, but a newer concept for me to think about was God is independent. And at Faith East I was under Pastor Greg Wetterling for that one. So those two, God is holy and God is independent from the God Is sermon series this summer.

Janet: Yeah. The God is immutable I thought was really good, too. Like, they were all very good. But, you know, that one hits 'cause you're like, "That sounds really boring," but really-

Noelle: Yeah

Janet: the, security that it gives that our God never changes.

Noelle: yeah.

Janet: Cause if He changed only a very, very small amount, I don't have security.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: You know, so thinking about that, I remember that from that series, too. That was really good. I also got to see The Great Awakening. I don't know if either of you saw that. It's a movie by Sight & Sound.

Noelle: I have not.

Janet: But it's on George Whitefield-

Noelle: Okay ...

Janet: and his relationship with Ben Franklin. So that was... I am enjoying looking at history and things that actually happened and what people did and just, it just broadens my mind. But seeing history there, and then seeing the power of God within it and how that impacted our nation, even George Whitefield and what he did. And that George Whitefield, they didn't get into a lot of his

personal life. I learned a little bit outside of that, that there are some things that you're like, "Huh, I don't know what I think of that." And it's such a reminder, only Jesus-

Noelle: Sure.

Janet: Gets it all right, and yet God chooses to use His imperfect people-

Noelle: Yeah ...

Janet: who are committed to Him. And so seeing that, was just, it was good. Brent and I really enjoyed seeing that.

Leah: I've heard a lot of good things about it. I haven't seen it yet, though.

Janet: Yeah. I don't know if it's gonna be on TV anywhere. I don't know. We saw it in the theater, but it was really good. how about just in general, what are some ways that you saw God's goodness this year?

Noelle: Well, mine is a little tricky because it's maybe not the traditional way that you'd think about seeing God's goodness when I was thinking about this question that you sent, Janet, for us to consider. I took an MABC course this summer, and the name of the course was Methods of Biblical Change. One of the things that we worked through in the course was different idols and the removal of those idols, both in the context of counseling and then also in self-counsel. And so I'm just gonna share with the audience, be really vulnerable for a second, the repentance plan that Dr. Aucoin helped me come up with. With my idol of the desire of ease. Because I see God's goodness in this, but also I just want people to know, like, you can work on this and you can think about things specifically. You can't just say, "Oh-

Janet: That's just how I am ...

Noelle: i" ... Right. I like for things to be easy. Don't we all, right? But oh my goodness, when we even just worked on these very specific and detailed repentance sentences, it made it so much clearer to me, and so I wanna share that with you guys. So this is what we came up with. "When I am tempted to live for my desire of ease which manifests itself in seeking certainty of schedule to avoid difficulty or prioritizing efficiency and manifestations of irritability and unkindness, I will meditate on how God did not live for ease," specifically Christ did not live for ease on the Earth, "but left the ease of Heaven to enter into a difficult world, prioritizing love individually, and by this I was saved, healed, and rescued. Therefore, I will delight in Christ's love for me, resulting in taking my concerns first to Him, and then trusting His sovereign control of my

schedule and prioritizing love and being flexible and kind." So man, I just see God's goodness all through that and through Him helping me to know to take that course, but then working through this and being vulnerable with my classmates and thinking through all the ways that they helped me and then thinking, "Okay, man, now I need to actually think about this in true repentance," right? And it's kind of an everyday thing, probably-

Janet: Oh, absolutely

Noelle: ... more than every, every hour, you know? So anyway, I just saw God's goodness all of that, and I'm really thankful for that.

Janet: That's so interesting. part of when I was thinking about God's goodness this year it's like, you know, I can't say here's a circumstance that was just so amazingly fun-

Noelle: Yeah

Janet: that I saw His goodness. I saw His goodness in many ways. but I'm mentioning this because it's very much in the same line of what you were talking about. You know, we asked God to restore our joy, and now we have a cancer diagnosis that we're working through. And what we see is God's answering that prayer.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: He's reorienting our joy to a more sure place. So between some circumstances that surfaced our sinful typical responses, and then this diagnosis, what we've discovered is we're both redoing our repentance plans.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: You know, it's like, "Okay, what is being surfaced about me right now?" So I'm in the process. I just started making a list of when I'm in my flesh, what's my heart going after? What do I believe I need? You know, so if I believe what I need is for people to look up to me, then I can't take criticism at all. And if I believe that what I need or am entitled to is if I've done all of this hard work to be appreciated, not to have it misrepresented.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Wow, what's that pulling up in me? So but again, that's the goodness of God because we've been praying to have a true biblical joy. And I've been praying for us and for many others this

year, for real growth and humility. And here's the goodness of God. He's doing it. You know? And then it's wonderful.

Leah: Yeah. I think it's interesting with both of what you shared is really impactful to me about balancing God's goodness and His sovereignty together becuase in the hard parts of life if I don't believe that God is good, then what does it really matter that He's in control?

Noelle: Sure.

Leah: Right?

Janet: it's terrifying- Right ... that He's in control and not good.

Leah: Right. So I think it's just amazing that the Christian view of what is good really looks so different than the world. Like, it's not just a list of all these good things that-

Janet: Yeah .

Leah: ... Happened or that we got.

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: It's, no, because of these hard, bad things, I see that God is good.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah. Yes.

Leah: So I just thought that it was really good, things that you guys shared. but for me, I made a list, but I said first how God has provided for our family through really specific things.

Noelle: Yeah.

Leah: Like, through our jobs, work situation, through finding a new car that we needed at the right time. Having friends lend us a car for two months-

Noelle: Wow

Leah: ... so that we could find one that fit our needs, and then a new house that really meets our family's needs- Yes ... at the right time, when we weren't necessarily planning for that. So those

are just really specific things that God answered prayers for that I really hadn't been, like, praying for in advance, if that makes sense.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Like, I saw God's goodness even though I maybe wasn't actively praying and asking God for that to begin.

Janet: He just took care of you.

Leah: He just did it, yeah, because He knows.

Janet: 'Cause He's good.

Leah: He knows and He's good.

Noelle: And kind.

Leah: Yes. Yeah. So kind. And I also put the way I've seen His goodness is His grace to humble me, to show me-

Janet: Yes

Leah: where I'm weak and where He's strong.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: Also just He's been working in the hearts of our girls, and I'm starting to see change and fruit in their lives. I mean, that is just-

Janet: Oh, that's-

Leah: ... an amazing picture-

Janet: That's so encouraging ...

Leah: of God's goodness.

Janet: Yes.

Noelle: Yeah.

Leah: And then the last thing is, for those of who may not know, we have twin infant sons that we are fostering, and I've never been a baby person, not that I don't like babies or anything like that. But this was definitely not part of our immediate plan.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: And it has just been so good to get to love on these little babies. Like, I love them so much, and so just seeing God's goodness in that and getting to care for them, like, which always to me seemed so hard and difficult and, I mean, it is hard and it is difficult.

Noelle: Yeah.

Leah: But just to see the gift of that.

Janet: Yeah. Yeah.

Leah: So that's just been a really cool, unexpected, only-God-would-do-it way of His goodness.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: And what I love is that you said, "I'm not a baby person." That's not sinful that, like some people are like, "If there's a baby in the room, I wanna hold him."

Leah: Right.

Janet: I'm that person, and I wasn't, and that, not because I don't like them. It's just, but when God gives you them and you invest, I think about the scripture where you invest your treasure, your heart will follow.

Leah: Yes.

Janet: You invest in these babies, your heart is there.

Noelle: Yeah. Yeah.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: You know? And now you're a this baby person.

Leah: Yeah.

Janet: These babies-

Leah: Exactly

Janet: ... person. Maybe not a baby person, but these babies.

Leah: Right. These babies, I am their person.

Janet: Yes. I love that. I love it. I love it How about, were there any ways that you saw God's goodness through other people? You mentioned some already-

Noelle: Yeah, I did

Janet: ... Noelle, which is pretty awesome. that's okay. It's not like it's wrong to have mentioned it earlier.

Noelle: I have another answer.

Janet: But how did we see it?

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Tell us more.

Noelle: I'll tell you more. Yeah, both of my answers for the last question and this question could probably be interchangeable, but, so at the end of last year, I received a medical diagnosis and a surgery date, so I had surgery in February. But the way that this took place, oh, my goodness, I just saw God's goodness through others over and over and over, and I wrote a list because I could say more, but I'm gonna stay- to this list. First of all, my friend is my doctor and my surgeon. Like, how cool is that?

Janet: Yeah, not many people get that.

Noelle: What in the world?

Leah: Wow.

Noelle: She and I serve together, and she's a good friend to me, and it was just so precious to be able to have her be the one that I can entrust in a humanly fashion.

Janet: Yep.

Noelle: You know? So that was awesome. A sweet friend of mine took me to the hospital, which was helpful so that I wouldn't have to drive myself. My pastor came to pray with me before the surgery. Some friends housed me for a few days 'cause I'm single and I wasn't supposed to be alone. And I had multiple friends and family members show up just knowing that I'm an extrovert, but I was on bed rest, and they just showed up to hang out with me. I had multiple friends and family members and people from church send care packages and letters and texts and, oh, my goodness, like, I just think through, God orchestrated all of that. None of it took him by surprise. My diagnosis didn't take him by surprise. The surgery didn't take him by surprise, and all of the things that have happened since then. But he just used his body to come around me in a way that I don't always experience, frankly.

Janet: Right.

Noelle: And so just, I felt very known and very loved in specific ways, and he is good to have had me suffer in those ways so that I could be more known and more loved by him through his people. Those were specific ways that I saw God's goodness. And then I would also say, I've really seen God's goodness through others in witnessing some of my other friends suffer well.

Janet: Yes.

Noelle: And I'm obviously not gonna share those stories, but I am so encouraged when I watch people dear to me suffer well.

Janet: Yes. Yes.

Leah: Yeah, so I also put church community specifically when we were placed with the twin newborns-

Janet: Yes

Leah: ... who, you know, we had no baby things for, no baby shower or anything like that. And I mean, we got a call, we knew they'd be coming the next day, and, we got everything we needed to have for the kids by me just reaching out to our friends and our family at church, right?

Janet: Yeah.

Leah: And just to see that provision so quickly, or all the people who are so willing to help watch and care for our kids. Like, that is just a way God shows His care for me.

Janet: Yes.

Leah: You know? And then just a small little thing, but when the girls, who are seven and eight, make like handmade cards or signs just out of nowhere, like for me or for my husband-

Noelle: Yeah

Leah: ... just saying kind things that-

Noelle: Yeah ...

Leah: you know.

Janet: Yes,

Leah: it just-

Janet: It's so meaningful

Leah: it is. And so I just see God's little gift of goodness in that when, you know, there can be a lot of relational difficulty-

Noelle: Sure

Leah: ... in family and in parenting. So yeah, those are just some simple ways I saw His goodness in others.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Well, I think mine would be very similar, as far as seeing the body of Christ. This year, my husband had surgery for the cancer and, somebody asked me, "So do you need meals?" And I said, "I'm not having surgery." No. And they were like, "You need to let people bring you meals."

Noelle: Yep.

Janet: And, uh, so we did, we were loved incredibly well, and I can tell you, not only did I see God's goodness, it was very uncomfortable. And I don't even know how to describe that, but, it's very uncomfortable, and people were incredibly gracious. And one of the Sunday school classes did most of the meals. Brent leads two Sunday school classes. So one of them did most of the meals, and so I didn't even tell the other one about it 'cause I knew we didn't need that many meals. And then the other one, we didn't know. We went in there and they had done just a shower, and we had a bunch of gift cards and-

Noelle: Wow ...

Janet: I was like You never deserve to have people love you. Sometimes you're just more aware-

Noelle: Sure

Janet: ... that you don't deserve it.

Noelle: Exactly.

Janet: and it's not like I think I should deserve it, it's just you're very aware.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: People were just so kind, and I would just even say over this last year for me personally, deepening some community- that we recognized, my husband and I both recognized a couple of years ago we just, we didn't really have much. so seeing God's goodness being upheld in prayer by godly sisters who are committed to praying when things are hard and, praying when things are good, but praying- lifting me up, and so that's been really sweet, to see God's goodness in body life in the Church, and it sounds like we've all experienced that this year.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: Which is pretty amazing. Well, good. I hope as people listened, they got some book ideas and song ideas, some sermons to listen to, but were also reminded of ways that God has been good, in their year as well.

Noelle: Yeah.

Janet: So thanks for having the conversation with me.

Noelle: Yes.

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