

Ep. 247

Shelby: [00:00:00] Hey, everybody, and welcome to the Daily Grace podcast. This is Shelby, and I am joined by my co host, Krystal.

Hey, Krystal. Hey. And we're really excited to introduce you to our guests today, although they may not really need much of an introduction because they're well known speakers, authors, and podcasters themselves, but we're really excited to introduce you to Jen Wilkin and JT English. Hi, Jen. Hi, JT.

Jen: Hi guys.

JT: Hey, thanks for having us.

Jen: Yeah,

Shelby: yeah, we're so glad that you're here with us. Yeah.

Krystal: So, okay, I do have an opening question. Since y'all both do your own podcasts, you just came out of podcast recordings, I would love to hear if either one of y'all or both of y'all have just a favorite story from podcasting. I feel like we have so many funny stories, crazy stories.

If you have a favorite story to share, I'd be like... Like the

Shelby: things that get cut out of the episode. You know what I mean? Yeah.

Krystal: Yeah. Anything you want to share we'd love to

Jen: we had one and JT. I can't remember what set us off. we

JT: I know what you're referring to and I don't remember either, but I know [00:01:00] exactly what you're

talking

Jen: We had one, there's been a couple episodes where we were like, we're not gonna be able to finish the episode because we are cry laughing, like bent over

JT: like shoulders going up and down uncontrollably. were still recording in person.

This is before-COVID and we were all in the same room and we had one of those giggle fits that we just couldn't stop. I know exactly what you're referring to. I thought about that one also. I was hoping you could remember what it was, but I can't remember.

I can't remember what it was.

Jen: we've had miniature versions of that, like where one of us will say something the wrong way or something, or, you know, it's like someone says something and you're like. Oh, that sounds dirty. Or, oh, that sounds, you know, and then you're just like, and we're ~~not~~, we're not mature enough to just roll right past it.

JT: You

just put your

head

Jen: Yeah. What about you guys?

Krystal: We have a lot. I was thinking of one where I had put a Greek word into the script and I was like, totally, we're gonna get really theological and I get the word and my mind, I just, it's blank. I'm like, how do you say it? So we spent probably 30 seconds [00:02:00] like How do I don't remember what the word

Shelby: was, but We were like, going in, pronouncing it, and we just ~~like~~, couldn't get it.

And it just didn't sound It sounded Italian. I like, didn't say it. It just sounded

Krystal: Italian, like any accent. I was like, this is

JT: And spaghetti!

Krystal: I can't get out. I can't say it. I was like, I'm not a Greek scholar, obviously. You're thankful for our, ~~um~~, editing team. ~~They~~, they make us sound better than we are.

But ~~we~~, we laugh a

lot in

Jen: Yeah. Ours doesn't, ours

leaves in all the, the bad stuff. Are you listening, Brad? I'm talking about

JT: literally just

starts the episode and ends it. ~~Like that's,~~ that's the editing process for us.

Jen: and if there's something incriminating, he saves it in a file of incriminating things so that

he can, you know, blackmail us.

Krystal: Yes. We have that file. Yes. We have the same. Yeah. Yeah. Oh, I love it.

Shelby: Well, we're really excited to get into our topic today. ~~Um, you know,~~ y'all have just come out with a brand new book. You are a theologian. ~~And one of the things that we loved when we started reading about the book and what you're hoping to accomplish with it was that you kind of wanted to have this conversation about Becoming not just a consumer of theology, but a contributor to the conversation.~~

And I feel like that's something that we always want to encourage our audience in. ~~Um, but before we get into that, we also know that y'all are passionate about brothers and sisters in Christ and discussing theology together. So we wanted to ask you kind of one question about that. And then we'll get into some more questions specific to this kind of whole consumer versus contributor mentality.~~

~~Oh,~~

Krystal: ~~I thought you were going to ask it. I thought you were going to ask it. You were setting it up so well. I was like, you just make it. So yeah, because that is something that y'all have done personally in the local church. That's something that you're really passionate about. Others doing local church. I would just love to hear either one of y'all share just examples of how you've seen brothers and sisters in Christ doing theology together, learning alongside each other, and just the benefit and the impact that has in the church context.~~

Jen: Yeah. I mean, I would say that we, uh, have had the great privilege of seeing this happen in a, specifically in a theological training environment in the church that we served at together. Now JT has that going on in his current church and we still have it going on in ours and it certainly doesn't need to be limited to that one.

It just happens that as we were looking at where in our discipleship patterns can we make sure that this is an emphasis, that's the room that it landed in. And, um, so, you know, you could have it in a Bible study setting. It just happens that at our, at my church we have a women's study and a men's study, but that's not, that's more space related than it is.

you know, a strategy. Um, and so what you end up seeing is, um, conversations happening around like what you're going to see in the book that we just put out. And there are conversations that because they're happening in the local church instead of in like a seminary classroom setting, you have, um, a shared Goal and a lot of cheering on of people instead of a competitive atmosphere.

And so, um, it's just a really sweet thing And and we, we know that we can learn from each other. Like, I don't I don't know anybody, any guy who would be Like, I don't, have anything to learn from this woman that I know or vice versa. But we don't actually necessarily have a lot of places where that is.

That is encouraged or fostered. And so, um, yeah, we've seen that in our own local church settings, but then also we've enjoyed it even just as serving on staff together. Um, I've enjoyed it in just home group settings. Some of it is, is your disposition that we're supposed to be all the women are over here and all the men are over here, or do we understand the beauty of those shared spaces?

And

are we walking toward each other?-

JT: Yeah, Yeah, I agree with, I know, I think that's great. And I didn't know we were going to see that when we kind of started some of those environments, but that's exactly what happened. It's just seeing men and women learning alongside of each other and learning from each other. And I would even just say the product of this book was kind of the ongoing seven, eight year relationship that Jen and I have had the privilege of having, of learning together.

Like the book wasn't, I would say Jen and I, you know, you introduced us. As like practitioners and podcast hosts and teachers and we are those things But we

~~first and foremost see each other as learners and we learn from each other our other co-host Kyle other people that we've enjoyed with relationships on staff is As we've learned from each other I can remember times when Jen and I had the opportunity to serve together where we would just be like sprinting back and forth between each other's offices of like What do you think about this?~~

~~Or I'm teaching this. And can you help me with that? And just to have that kind of environment where the posture and disposition of a family is meant to be humility. Uh, the family matters more than individuals and we get to learn from each other and enjoy one another and celebrate each other growing.~~

~~And I can remember times where we were praying for Jen cause she was going to go teach this thing or launch this book or the opposite was true. And we had the opportunity to like see each other shaped. Formed in that process was sweet. And that's what I would say. This book is like this book. Wasn't something, it wasn't a manuscript somewhere that we just put our names on.~~

~~It was us emailing each other. What do you think about this? And I'm going to say it this way. Do you agree with that? And so we get to learn, even as we wrote this book together.~~

Shelby: Yeah. Well, thank you for modeling that for us. I think it's an important thing and it's important thing to talk about, especially because our podcast is mostly women and for women. Um, we just thought that was a unique thing that y'all bring to the table. I wanted to be sure to address it in this episode.

~~Um, but kind of going back to your, your brand new book, you are a theologian. It's an invitation to know and love God well, and it answers questions like who is God, what is God like, what [00:03:00] is the Bible, who are we, and so those are. questions that have sometimes weighty answers, uh, detailed answers. And so you'd think that the two people, you know, writing this book, that y'all probably have been Christians since you could walk and that you have tons of theological education and all of these things.~~

~~Um, but knowing just a little of each of your stories, that's, that's not necessarily the case. So right at the front, I think I just wanted to ask y'all to share a little bit of your kind of like. Theological journey to help maybe dispel the myth that, okay, this book is only for people who maybe have had, you know, the Bible in a systematic theology in their hands from the time they were toddling around their house.~~

JT: All right, I'll jump in. ~~I mean,~~ so yeah, my story is, ~~uh,~~ I grew up in a wonderful home, a loving home, but I didn't come to know the Lord until I was in college. Somebody just sat down and shared the four spiritual laws with me, and coming from kind of a post Christian secular background where I didn't really have the echoes of, Or maybe the ~~exhaust,~~ exhaust fumes of a biblical worldview.

I just ~~kind of~~ had nothing, [00:04:00] ~~uh,~~ related to that. And the Lord saved me, ~~uh,~~ sitting in a student center while eating a Whopper. ~~Uh,~~ the Lord just revealed himself to me and I understood the gospel in simple terms that God made me, created me, I'd sinned, Jesus came to, ~~uh,~~ Buy me back and redeem me that I could have everlasting life if I believed in him.

So I did. And then my next three or four years was really involved in a campus ministry, which the primary intention of that ministry was evangelism and teaching people how to be evangelists. And I ~~kind of~~ just jumped in and I knew how to share the gospel, but I really didn't know the Bible very well.

So I went to my pastor at the time and said, I'd love to grow. I'd love to learn the, I ~~kind of~~. Was feeling a call to ministry. And he said, that's great. If you want to grow, we have places for that. They're called seminaries. And I said, ~~you know,~~ what seminary? And I was really surprised that he didn't say you could be in the church.

Like I can develop you and train you. That's not a critique of him in any way. It was just a little bit of a surprising answer to somebody who was new to the whole kind of. world that we live in of evangelicalism. So ~~I went to,~~ I went to seminary, went to Dallas Seminary for a master's degree and [00:05:00] eventually Southern for a PhD, and during that time, the Lord really grew in me a love for the local church because at, the church told me you have to leave the local church in order to lead.

The seminary was telling me this is actually where Real leadership happens. This is where we're doing real theological education. And in addition to that the church said you're probably going to lose your faith when you go to seminary There's those people who thought you know, if you go to seminary, you're not gonna you're not gonna learn about the lord You're gonna just learn a bunch of facts.

You don't need to do that. And what happened for me was It was like gold nuggets in every class. I was like, I can't believe we don't have access to this kind of content in the life of the everyday Christian local church, which I

viewed myself as even while I was getting my theological education. And so I then had the opportunity to come back to the life of the local church because ~~like~~ what I feel like my passion has been ever since I had that conversation with my pastor was to make ~~The~~, the riches of Christian theology accessible to everyday people.

When I first came to faith, somebody gave me a systematic theology that was around 500 pages long, and that [00:06:00] was really intimidating to me. I didn't, I'd never read a book that big before and had words. I didn't know the definitions too. And, ~~um~~, and had all kinds of controversial topics that I hadn't thought through yet.

~~And~~, and so really the, this book, you are a theologian is kind of a product of, I wish somebody would have handed me this book and told me theology is accessible to you. You don't have to go to seminary, although seminary is great. It's fine. But you can actually be a theologian where you are in the relationships you currently have and in the context of your local church.

Jen: Yeah, my story is very, um, Pretty different from JT's. ~~um~~, he was saved later in life and introduced to theological training earlier in his Spiritual trajectory. I was saved early in life. I was a kid I don't remember the the date when I was I don't remember a time when I didn't have faith in the Lord but I wasn't introduced to theological categories until I was in my late 20s and was already teaching, serving in the local church and just knew I can't do this if I don't have the right framework.

I don't want to get this wrong. [00:07:00] Um, no one said to me, you should go to seminary that that didn't happen until much later. And I think ~~that~~ that happened much later. because people were like, wait, you're out here teaching all of these women and you don't have formal theological training. And that's actually a really good question to ask.

am thankful that there are seminary educations and I love when women go and get a seminary education. That just ended up not being my story. By the time I was a candidate for that, I had four kids who were about to head off to college, so I wasn't the next in line for higher education. And not only that, but I just wouldn't have had the time, you know, based on the other things that were going on in my life during that season.

And so I had to find my way forward, and, um, I did discover the ministry of R. C. Sproul, who was someone who was doing what J. T. described. He was taking these concepts. They were up here, and he was bringing them down to,

an average learner's level without diminishing their impact or significance in doing so.

And I thought, I need that. And [00:08:00] also, I want to do that because I knew that women in particular, were not getting access. To these concepts. they were having feelings level discussions. They were having devotional content filtered their way, and they had no theological lenses through which to operate when they were deciding between one Bible study or another, or one interpretation or another.

And so, on my 30th birthday, my husband, the Diehard romantic, gave me Louis Berkoff's systematic Theology. And yeah, it was a big book even though I was intimidated by it, I pressed forward because I knew I needed to know what was in that book. but I agree with JT this book we've written is the book that I wish that someone had handed to me.

We need on ramps into these ideas and I still would equate myself with the learner in the church. JT and I both see ourselves as learners. And I hope that we will, I assume that we will for as long as the Lord gives us, but to never lose that sense of. I know how hard it was to find these things, and I also [00:09:00] know the great benefit of having access to them, and so I don't want it to just terminate on me.

I want other people to have this as well. So that is the impetus behind the book for sure.-

Krystal: feel like y'all are hitting on a lot of things that we're really passionate about at Daily Grace. Even with the podcast, we talk about like, theology isn't just for the seminarians, not just for the pastor. Like, it is for you. Like, you can know and love God through his word. I love just the emphasis, too, that y'all have on the local church.

That's something we're also very passionate about, and so it's easy to go. outside and go to all these places, but what does it look like for us to learn alongside of each other as brothers and sisters, as we're learning theology together? ~~And so I would love to hear, I feel like this is kind of a little bit of like dropping a bomb in, but it's like, what are the big like theological issues that you see in the local church and what do you think it looks like to address some of those needs?~~

JT: Yeah, I mean, I think we try to, the book is written to answer some of those questions. I'll highlight a few of them, but we, all systematic theology is really about answering and, or asking and answering the big questions that the Bible

offers us. Who is God? What is he like? Who are we? What went wrong in the world?

How is God making it right through Christ and the Spirit? Who do we belong to? The local church? And ultimately, uh, where's everything going? Where did, where's the. All of kind of history marching towards and it's the kingdom of God and the king coming back to make all things right. I do think though that over the course of church history There are specific questions and topics that maybe it's specific local churches or the universal church is asking I would say something that we're never going to get away from is who is God?

I mean, the, the, the, the doctrine of God and his attributes, his characters, nature is something that the church has to have on repeat. Like we just need to keep hitting that, you know, play that song again, play that song again, because if we ever get who, who God is wrong, we get the gospel wrong. And so that's just going to be essential for us to kind of keep, keep talking about and highlighting that he is God, the father, God, the son, God, the Holy spirit, that he has communicable attributes and he is in communicable attributes.

Uh, so that's going to be on repeat. Another one that I would say is the doctrine of sin. Anytime a society forgets the doctrine of sin, they begin to see themselves as saviors. And so we have to continue to highlight that we are a broken people, and the solution is not finding ourselves, and it's not internal, the solution is external, or I think as Sproul said, it's an alien, uh, solution.

It's an alien righteousness, and by that he means it's something outside of us that needs to get in us. And that's, that's the gospel. But I'll, I'll highlight this one specifically. I, I want to highlight all of them, but I'm not gonna, because all of them are so important. But one, one that I think that, that I had a joy writing about in You Are a Theologian and Jen had some really helpful kind of questions and critiques and comments.

I think one that we kind of, I don't want to say wrestled on, because we didn't disagree with each other, but it's the, if, You know, the church over the last 2000 years has had creeds and councils about major questions that I see in creed about Trinitarianism, the Chalcedonian creed about Christology, the Reformation, a recovery of the gospel, and an emphasis on scripture.

I would, if, if I can't, I'm not, I'm not a Pope and I'm glad I'm not because I'm Protestant, but if I could convene a council today, it

would be on what does it mean to be human? I think conversations around gender conversations around race and race and ethnicity. Uh, artificial intelligence and it kind of an incipient Gnosticism that can come with that.

I think the church really is going to have to wrestle with what does it mean for us to be created in God's image as male and female made to represent and reign and rule on his behalf in need of salvation and also. Therefore, renewed, redeemed, and restored in order to represent him to the nations. Uh, I would say, uh, the doctrine of, of humanity and what it means to be created in God's images is something that the church is going to be wrestling with.

I would say for, I mean, I don't know what the future is, but this is like a century long question. Not a, not a, you know, a podcast or a blog question. We need to be talking about what it means to be humans,

Krystal: Yeah.

Jen: I think for me, it was the chapter on the doctrine of the church. I was listening to JT go through all that and thinking, Oh, I do. I

actually care a whole lot about each chapter. Um, but the doctrine of the church, you know, especially in an age where, um, everything becomes therapeutic and, and so often we.

Speak of the good news of the gospel as what it means for me, Jen, like how is it gonna impact me, Jen, and how is it gonna make me feel better or, um, be at peace or, you know, it's, it's, it's very emotive and therapeutic and even, uh, takes on a self-care, uh, tone to it. We, we need the doctrine of the church more than ever.

The doctrine of The God and Combina, the doctrine of God in combination with the doctrine of the church is a much needed reminder that we are not. We are saved for our own, um, um, self actualization. We are saved into relationship with God and with others. And that the trajectory of the Christian faith is not to be turned more inward, but in fact, to be turned more outward, both toward God and toward others.

And I think we need that so much. There are so many people who are coming to church on a weekly basis, asking what's in it for me instead of how is this turning me into someone who is a better servant of God and others. And so that's a much needed

turn.

Krystal: Yeah,

Shelby: Yeah, I think what you just said there, ~~kind of people coming saying what's in this for me,~~ that leads well into our next question because we want to get to this idea of being kind of a consumer of or a contributor to the conversation of theology. I'm wondering if you can just kind of break down those terms for us and explain a little bit what you mean by that.

Jen: This gets to an idea, JT, and I care a lot about, and that is the idea of passive learning environments versus active learning [00:10:00] environments. And so, if you think about most of the spaces ~~that~~ we inhabit when we come to church, uh, and I'll speak specifically of Sunday-morning, which many of us have regarded as the most formative space.

learning space that we can be in during the week. when you sit and listen to a sermon, you are passively receiving information from the, preacher and, passive learning does have some impact on our spiritual formation, but active learning is where we partner in the learning process and we don't just passively receive, but we are doing work on our own, which then shapes the way that we hear what is being taught to us.

And so I love. preaching. JT and I both, uh, hold a high view of preaching. JT's doing it on a weekly basis. and just, hey internet, I'm never doing it just in case you wondered. but I will say that, we have a really, deep sense of the significance of learning spaces where people are actually functioning as a student, where it's dialogic, where you have an opportunity to discuss.

And Even the way that we structured the book, it has [00:11:00] that in view, with discussion questions at the end and prayer exercises ~~to,~~ to help people begin to have these conversations. We are not meant to just sit and listen to theology and think about it in our own heads. We are meant to be in conversation with others so that we're moving forward in our understanding in a way that you're just not when all you're doing is downloading

information.

JT: Yeah, ~~I,~~ I agree with that wholeheartedly. So I remember there was a meeting that we had at the church that Jen and I used to work at together and ~~it,~~ it was an HR meeting. So if you work in HR, I apologize, but it was one of

those meetings that was not excited to go to. It wasn't like a bad HR meeting. It was like a train, like an all day training.

I was like, Oh my gosh, I've got so much to do, but I took something away from this meeting that meant so much to me. She, she helped us think about how people learn and how they can develop. And she said, you know, if people simply hear what you're saying, they'll write, you know, they'll, they'll maybe remember 5, 10% of it a week from now.

If they hear it and write it down, they'll remember 20 or 30%. But if they hear it, write it down, and then speak it, they can remember up to 70 or 80% of it a week from now. And so that made me think, okay, how does that change the way we do [00:12:00] discipleship? And it turns out... This is not a new idea. It's actually just a, as Jen has mentioned, an old idea or an old idea that we've recently forgot that we want to retrieve and recover.

And it really is. The church is, and this is, this is biblical. Paul describes the church as not being ministered to, but as the ones doing ministry. That's why we're a body and we all need each other. And so that includes the work of theology. The work of theology is not simply for pastors. Theology is being done every single night in the English home when Macy and J.

T. put Thomas and Bailey to bed. Sometimes they're asking big questions about life. Sometimes they're asking nothing and we just pray for them. Sometimes we're maybe singing a song together, but that, so I think about moms and dads, maybe listening to this, you're doing theology. Every single night when you put those kiddos to bed, are you doing good theology?

Is it reflective of who God is or is it a distortion of who God is? And so that's really the heart of the book is and how do we help people realize? Okay, it's not just important that my kids go to church and listen to the kids minister or listen to the pastor Who is the theologian? But actually that I'm a theologian and being [00:13:00] trained and equipped by my church To be a theologian in my home in my workplace with my neighbors or ever God might have me

Krystal: Yeah, so okay, if you're watching the video, you might see this, but I'm wearing my theologian sweatshirt and this is one when I wear out in public. There's always the, yeah, there's the person that's like, Oh, are you a theologian? I'm like, Well, I try to be a good one, ~~but yeah, I am, or you, you know, you would be too, you know?~~

~~And so I think, though, even when I wear this shirt, there is this sense in which I'm like, what am I, what am I communicating? Like, I feel like, am I actually, like, what is it that I'm communicating with this?~~ I think there's probably a lot of people maybe listening, thinking that, ~~like,~~ they're maybe intimidated to even think of themselves as that, or even intimidated to even grow in their understanding of theology.

So what advice would you have for someone who maybe is either intimidated by that or they're thinking like, I don't think I'm a theologian. I'm not this. I'm not that. I'm not smart enough. I don't know enough. How could I call myself a theologian?

JT: I'll offer just two quick ideas, and Jen, I'd love to hear what you would say too. The first ~~is,~~ is more, I think, a biblical idea. And second, I just want to share part of my story. The first idea ~~is,~~ is when you think about the Bible, specifically Genesis 1 and 2, which I'm sure most of your listeners are familiar with, one of the most shocking things that God does is He calls His creation, part of His creation, [00:14:00] humans, Image bearers.

Now that is not new language. ~~Uh,~~ to be an image bearer of God was something that other cultures had and it was reserved specifically for kings and queens and princesses and princes. And it was something that was reserved for the elite, something that was reserved for the expert, the one ~~who, who,~~ who was aside.

And what God does is he says, nope, it is not just the elite that bear my image. It is actually all people. It's a democratization of what it means to have dignity, value, and worth. And to be an image bearer then means to also be a theologian because you're in relationship with God and you're in relationship with his creation, specifically other people.

~~So,~~ to be a theologian is a deeply biblical thing because God has told you that you are his image bearer. Every single one of us. And we either bear his image in ways that reflect him or in ways that distort him. But also the word theology itself can be intimidating. ~~You know,~~ we even wrestled with the title of the book of like, what are we?

Should we call this, do we just come out and say it? ~~Like,~~ do we just tell them what they are, ~~you know,~~ or do we bury the thesis in the first chapter somewhere? But really the [00:15:00] thesis is the title is in the reason ~~we,~~ we chose to use the word theology, that you are a theologian is because we wanted to make sure we communicate this idea.

Theology though, it sounds like an intimidating word. It's really just two Greek words put together, theos. In Lagos, the word Theos means God and the word Lagos means word or words about or the logic of, and everybody has that. Everybody has words about God, an atheist, somebody who's secular, somebody who's just apathetic, ~~uh~~, somebody who adheres to some other kind of religion.

Somebody who's antithetical to the faith or Christians people who would consider themselves to be Christians. They are theologians, too So one of the main turns that we try to make in the book is after we hopefully convince people that they are theologians And you just mentioned this ~~it's~~ it's not a question of are you a theologian?

It's a question of are you a good one? ~~Are you~~ are you thinking about? Are your affections in a line with, you know, are you acting in accordance with who God is and how he's revealed himself? Or are you somehow distorting that? And theology isn't just writing papers or singing songs. It's life. Theology is the most [00:16:00] practical thing.

Theology should impact every single thing we do every day.

Jen: Yeah. I would just add to that that it's not wrong to know that there is a distinction between someone who is a theologian as a profession. the people whose commentaries I read, they are theologians in a very formal way that I am not. And that is valid. Uh, JT has a PhD.

That's a different level, or a different approach, certainly, a more formalized approach to learning and doing theology than has been something that I have gotten to pursue. But I also am a theologian, and so I want to be as good a one as I can for the settings in which the Lord is going to place me.

And so in the same way that, like, a lot of times women will come up to me, um, ~~in~~ a, in a greeting line and say, Uh, um, well, I teach the Bible, but I'm not teaching like you're teaching And I'm thinking, well, yes you are. You're teaching in the place that the Lord has given you to teach and so you need to be adequately equipped to do the work wherever the Lord places you.

And JT and I see this issue of being a theologian is nothing less than a Great Commission [00:17:00] responsibility. the Great Commission tasks All of us with teaching others to observe all that Christ commanded, and we cannot teach to others what we do not know ourselves. And so I do think, you know, when

we talk about what the book covers, it's important for listeners to understand that, we're talking about the basic beliefs of the Christian faith.

We're talking about this means you're a Christian, and if you don't believe it, it means you're not a. And this is not like a deep dive into, one theological concept. It's meant to say, Hey, these are the things that Christians have agreed to find us across the centuries. And, what we were seeing in our own church. And then as it turns out is something that is. everywhere in evangelicalism is that while we are ready to argue about our politics or about ideologies, and we have made done a great deal of research into why we think about those things the way that we do, that many of us cannot articulate the basic Christian beliefs that are our inheritance.

They're the good [00:18:00] deposit we're supposed to pass on from one generation to the next. So when we say you're a theologian, what we're saying is your generation, this generation is tasked with passing along this good deposit. Are you equipped to do

so?

Krystal: Yeah, I love that y'all are able to do Something that I think can be challenging, or we maybe don't see it modeled well, which is holding theology high, but also making it accessible. And I think that's really encouraging for someone who's thinking, well, I don't have access to the books, or I can't go to seminary.

That's a lot of what the women in our church would say. It's ~~like,~~ I want to grow, I want to learn, but... Fill in the blank. I can't do these things. But it's ~~like,~~ no, we can do this in the local church. ~~Like,~~ there are things accessible to us, and part of that is one another in the body of Christ. And ~~so, uh,~~ I just appreciate this encouragement of it's not just learning all the right things, but it's ~~like,~~ hey, you are a theologian.

It's just a matter of like, how are you developing that? How are you learning and growing and becoming a better theologian day by day? ~~Um,~~ so I just, I appreciate this.

Shelby: conversation. Yeah. ~~I mean,~~ I would say one of my greatest seasons of growth in theological knowledge was when I was a stay at home mom to four

Jen: Mm [00:19:00] hmm.

Shelby: I had a lot of chores to do and there were a lot of podcasts and audio books that I could listen to during that time. And so I think like, yeah, there's so many avenues, great avenues, free avenues out there. ~~Um, and so I'm glad that we're talking about~~

Jen: ~~about, you know, most of the women listening probably know that I care about Bible literacy,~~

JT: ~~Mm.~~

Jen: ~~but to sort of like give them a sense of why theological literacy is also important.~~

JT: ~~Why don't you do that? That's your question. Like that's what you, that, that, that, that's important that you say that. Mm-hmm.~~

Jen: ~~So do you guys want to like set it up as just like, Hey Jen, we've heard you talk a lot about Bible literacy. Why are you writing a book on theology or something, something like that?~~

Shelby: ~~Sure. Yeah. Okay.~~ So Jen, just a question for you, ~~you know,~~ we've heard you talk a lot about Bible literacy. ~~Uh,~~ you have women of the word which is also a podcast recently, which is super exciting ~~Um,~~ but now you're writing a book about theology. So why is that? Are these two connected?

Jen: Yeah. They're absolutely connected. In fact, JT and I have had a friendly debate going on about this for years, about which one is more important. And of course the answer is they're, they're both important. if Bible literacy is a crisis in the local church, and I absolutely believe that it is, I would say that it's twin crisis would be theological literacy.

And honestly, we have the numbers to back it up. Um, the research is out there about what. Evangelical, so like what Christians know about their own faith is just shocking. And so I'll just, I'll give you a couple of examples. Um, this is from a study that Lifeway Resources did. ~~[00:20:00]~~ the belief that God learns and adapts to different circumstances. So that's a denial of God's immutability. The belief that God learns and adapts to different circumstances. 48% of evangelicals agree that that is true. So Christians, 48% of Christian surveyed said that that's true. ~~the belief that everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God.~~

So that's a denial of the doctrine of original sin. that belief 65% of evangelicals agree that it is true that everyone is born innocent in the eyes of God. God accepts the worship of all religions, including Christianity, Judaism, and Islam. 56% of Christians surveyed said, yes, we agree with that. And then this one, Jesus was a great teacher, but he was not.

God. 43% of evangelicals agree, and those numbers are climbing. They're not. Getting lower. And in an age of deconstruction, in an age of de churching, we have people potentially leaving the church who are leaving behind a faith that the good deposit of was perhaps never even given to [00:21:00] them in the first place.

not only that, but when we understand these basic beliefs, it helps us. If you're familiar with, you know, the study method that I talk about, when you move from comprehension to interpretation and you're trying to say, what does this mean? Well, we don't start from nothing there. There's historic agreement in the church on, on how to interpret, ~~um~~, aspects of the Bible because it's been so viewed for so long.

And so these beliefs are what give us the right lenses by which we begin the good and hard work of interpretation and application.

Shelby: Yeah, I think that's really encouraging, and those numbers are sobering, for sure, but I think knowing them tells us the conversations that we need to be having, and I think that this book goes a long way towards starting those conversations, for sure.

Krystal: so ~~Uh~~, my heart is for women in ministry I did women's ministry for ~~uh~~ over 10 years and I feel like I always filter some of our conversations through okay How does a woman in a church?

Practically model this for women. How do they lead other women in this and [00:22:00] especially if maybe there aren't the spaces They are talking about in the local church for women To grow and to thrive in this, and especially if they have like a teaching gift or a leading gift, and maybe they don't really know how to use that.

Is there any encouragement that y'all might have, either one of y'all, ~~for women that really feel like,~~

JT: ~~Either one of what you, you know, who we know who you're asking this question to. I've got,~~

Krystal: ~~hey,~~

Shelby: ~~hey, wait. We talked about this though, JT, we actually think it could be great for women to hear from you on this one. For both, like truly for-~~

Krystal: ~~both~~

JT: ~~I'm not answering first.~~

Jen: Well, I don't think it's any secret to anybody listening, if you haven't figured it out so far, let me just say it out loud. One of my greatest JT.

And, um, I, I would pray that every woman in ministry, particularly with a leadership opportunity would have someone like him because it is hard, it is hard and it can be very lonely. but I do think you have to stay open hearted about it. You have to keep asking, you know, I've talked to elsewhere, like I had positive relationships with men in general, like my, I, my, my husband, positive relationship, my brothers, my dad, I did not expect.

Respect to not be met with, uh, mutual respect. When I entered in a dialogue with, with men in ministry, ~~um,~~ however, sometimes I was disappointed in that expectation. Just to be frank, I've never, I have not felt that with [00:23:00] jt. I just, I haven't. he welcomed me in and, treated me as a colleague and that was, revolutionary.

I, I, there are very few men in ministry in my experience who know a woman who they regard as their theological equal and even fewer who know a woman they would regard as their theological superior. And I think that that is something that we need to see in the church. The church needs both fathers and mothers.

And so, if you're a woman listening to this And you're thinking, Oh, I think that might be me. I think I might be. Someone who is moving that direction. then I would say, don't, shut down because in the past, maybe you haven't had an open response from, a male ministry leader, keep asking, is there someone out there who I can, not just, um, enjoy the benefit of partnership with, but also model that.

for my local church. It may happen. It may not happen. I'm praying it will happen. I will say, if you're asking, like, how do I get started with this? Like I know this is something that I want to do and I'm just not sure, like, how or

where, I always tell women, Everybody has a living room and [00:24:00] never underestimate the significance of the discipleship that happens in that space.

I can tell you from firsthand- that. All of the work that goes into the living room, it is really nice when you get to use that work with a few more people than fit into your living room. Because you're going to, if I know you, and I think I do because you're probably like me, you're going to do that work whether one woman or 50 women or 500 women show up because you love the work and you care about it and you see it's important.

but. As you wait to see the settings that the Lord might take you into, man, just open up that living room and get started because for one thing, as you're getting started, you need a place where the consequences for failure are relatively low. Like in the early days of me trying to teach some of this stuff, I'm thankful that it was five people and not 5, 000.

and it, because it gave me, and also that it was dialogic. I'm rarely in spaces anymore where it's a truly dialogic back and forth. And the living room years did more to form me [00:25:00] as a teacher than any other stage in my development.

JT: Yeah. Maybe just to piggyback on that a little bit. ~~Uh,~~ I'll just say this on Jen's behalf. I think it's hard to remember that, ~~you know,~~ Jen has, is now authored lots of books and has the opportunity to speak to large crowds. I knew Jen when she was doing this in the living room. And I know those women that were in the living room.

That's real. she was not handed a microphone. So often when Jen and I were working together, people would come to us and say, I have the gift of teaching, where can I teach, we would always ask. The question, ~~well,~~ who are you teaching now? Are you teaching in your living room? Like the gift of teaching does not come with a microphone.

It doesn't come with a platform. It comes with a task of teaching people, whether that's your toddlers or your kiddos or your friends. And so begin exercising and using that gift, whether you're a learner of theology and, or a teacher of theology. ~~I know I'm going to, I'm what I'm about to say. I know there might be four.~~

~~I don't know any bros. Listen to your podcast. I don't get a lot of bro vibes here.~~

Krystal: ~~feel like, Thanks, Tom! Do surprisingly.~~

JT: ~~Some bro energy, but I love the energy of this podcast, but, uh, I'll say this. And so if there isn't that, um,~~ I want to say this first of all, as an encouragement ~~to the,~~ to the women who are listeners of this podcast is keep going, you are meant to do this.

You are not in a space that you're not supposed to be. ~~Uh,~~ if it feels foreign and alien to you, keep going, it's going to come more natural and familiar to you. And ~~so, uh,~~ I just want to encourage you. To wherever you're at. Maybe you're somebody who is already teaching God's [00:26:00] word and you have a platform, keep going.

If you're somebody who this is a brand new idea to you, get started. It's never too late to get started. So we want to encourage you to begin. And I will say this, maybe you need to send this to your husband or send it to your pastor or whatever. I'll, I will say this to the guys. You need to hold the door open sometimes for women to come in.

~~They,~~ they don't need your approval. ~~Uh,~~ it's not like you're approving of them. God already approves of them. They're invited to this task and in some, not in some sense, in every sense, biblically commanded to this task to teach, ~~uh,~~ and to sing the good news about who God is. But for you to say, welcome, I'm so glad you're here.

How can we help you? How can we advocate for you is an important thing in the life of local churches or nonprofit ministries or even homes. Sometimes I'll say this. One of the things that I enjoy in my relationship with my wife, Macy. And I don't say this, Jen's heard me say this privately before I said it publicly.

I have learned more about God from my wife, Macy English, and the way to follow Jesus than I have from any book, any textbook, any seminary professor. And so husbands, this could be you just encouraging your wives to say, keep going after Jesus. Keep loving Jesus. I love learning about God from you. [00:27:00] And that's the way I think ministry was meant to be, whether it's in homes or in churches or nonprofit ministries, men and women pursuing the task of discipleship together.

Shelby: Thank you both. That was just super encouraging. I like, feel personally encouraged and, ~~um,~~ yeah, I think it can feel like a hard space and maybe we've experienced that or maybe we've just heard other people share their experiences of it. And there's a lot of reasons that women maybe wouldn't even pursue this ~~in,~~ in their local spaces.

And so I think that encouragement is gonna go a long way to maybe encourage them to keep going or maybe take the first step. ~~Um, well,~~ as we ~~kind of~~ wrap up this episode, ~~you know,~~ there is one question that we ask every guest who comes on the podcast at the Daily Grace Co. we always say that the gospel changes everything. So Jen and JT, we'd love for you each just to share for a bit on what the gospel has changed we'd love for you each just to share

JT: Oh man, Jen, you got to go first. I feel like I just poured my soul out there. I'm not ready to cry again.

Jen: okay, all right, I'll, I'll take the first hit. Uh, I am the consummate good girl. I can follow a rule all day long. I can be [00:28:00] the, the one who does it exactly the way you wanted it done and give me the gold star. And, so what grace has done for me is it has changed, my doing, um, ~~Um,~~ it is because I already have everything in Christ, and so I can, um, obey out of gratitude instead ~~of~~ out of um, a desire to self promote or to draw attention to myself. And, so. I needed that a lot, and I was in a, I am in, and I have always been in spaces where self promoting worked and brought me the reward that I wanted, and I know more than ever that that is a reward that is here on earth and will not be in heaven, and I don't want to make that trade.

I'm willing to, obey God because he's worthy of our obedience instead of because there's something in it for me. So that's what grace has done for me.

JT: good, Jen. You know, I thought I knew this. Grace is one of those opportunities to keep learning the same lesson over and over again. the lesson that I'm [00:29:00] learning over again now is... I'm now a lead pastor of a church. I wasn't a lead pastor three years ago, and I would have said this, I would have said what I'm about to say to you for, you know, four years ago before I was a lead pastor.

But, ~~um, you know,~~ to now preach the gospel each week, it's so easy, and I hate this about my soul, to become desensitized to it and to ~~kind of~~ think, yeah, ~~you know, they all,~~ they all need to hear this. I'm so glad that I can, ~~you know,~~ come from on high from sermon preparation and preach the gospel to my church.

And then you're just struck again in moments of like, no, no, no, no. This is for me first. This is for me. This needs to live in my soul before it lives in my words. It needs to ~~take,~~ take up residence ~~in,~~ in my heart before it takes up

residence on pages, ~~uh~~, or on a podcast. And so I think what I'm experiencing right now is, ~~you know~~, God's been so kind to our church.

We're growing and. We're seeing baptisms and conversions, and it can be so easy to begin celebrating the successes of ministry. But I don't want to ever trade the successes of ministry or the quote unquote, what we would call successes, worldly successes for enjoying God. ~~I, I~~, I'm not, God doesn't love me because I'm a pastor.

God doesn't love me because I [00:30:00] preach the gospel. God doesn't love me because I've committed my life to ministry. He loves me before those things. And I do those things because I know that, but I have to preach that to myself regularly.

Jen: You better buckle up, J. T., because there's going to be an influx of women into your church.

JT: You guys want the address? 1 4 6 0 5 West 64th

Avenue,

Jen: They're going to be like, that guy's a door holder. I'm going there.

JT: We have 98 Bible teachers this fall. Yeah.

Krystal: a good church growth strategy right There you go. thank you both just for taking the time to chat with us and, ~~uh~~, we're going to link your book, the podcast, everything, ~~um~~, for people to connect with you in the show notes. So we just really appreciate your vulnerability and you just sharing, ~~uh~~, the wisdom that God has given you in the way that you are living now in the local church context.

So we thank you so much for being here today.

Jen: Thanks so much for having us

JT: It was an honor. Thanks for having the conversation with

us

Shelby: um is there anything that y'all wanted to mention in this episode that you didn't get the chance to talk about we can Always record it now and slide it in wherever you wanted it later

JT: I think I'm good.

Jen: wonder if, J. T., the only thing I would think is, we didn't really talk about, you know, most of the women listening probably know that I care about Bible literacy,

JT: Mm.

Jen: but to sort of like give them a sense of why theological literacy is also important.

JT: Why don't you do that? That's your question. Like that's what you, that, that, that, that's important that you say that. Mm-hmm.

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Krystal: make a note to add that in. Yeah, I

Jen: you. Thanks for letting us drop that

in.

Shelby: Scott, we'll do it. Scott,

we'll

Krystal: add that in. Scott, we'll

Jen: ~~Scott, Scott, Scott's over there like, take two.~~

~~Yeah.~~

Krystal: ~~We call him our third host because he's always, he's always there. He's always listening. Um.~~

~~Ah! That was~~