

Ep. 250

Shelby: [00:00:00] If you've been around the Daily Grace podcast for very long, then you've probably heard Krystal and I rave about the In the Word Bible Study Journal.

In the Word is a Bible exposition journal for deep Bible study. The In the Word Journal will guide you through a verse by verse study of the scripture of your choice with easy to use workbook pages, you pick the passage and it will guide you through step by step. [00:01:00] The journal provides prompts to help you understand, interpret, and apply the text, as well as see the connections to Jesus and the Gospel. And we just released two brand new cover options. My personal favorite is the Floral Leatherette.

We'll link the In the Word journal in the show notes, or you can find it on thedailygraceco.com.

Hey everyone. And welcome back to the daily grace podcast. This is Shelby. And I'm here as always with my friend and co host Krystal.

Hi, Krystal . Hey Shelby. And we are so excited to introduce you to our special guests today. We're thrilled that Keri Folmar is joining us. Hi, Keri.

Keri: Hi, I'm thrilled to be joining you too.

Shelby: Yeah, we are so excited. So Keri is a woman who has many passions. A couple of those are local church ministry. also just helping women to study. And I love how you said this on your bio to enjoy scripture, not just study, but really enjoy it. And that means that you are involved in a lot of really amazing ministries and initiatives.

And so Keri, can you tell us just a little bit [00:02:00] about who you are and what you do?

Keri: it would be a pleasure. I am the wife of John Fulmer. He's the senior pastor of the Evangelical Christian Church of Dubai and we've lived there for about 18 years. We raised our children there. I have three children. They're all adults now. in various places and walks of life. and I have run the women's bible studies there for the past, probably 17 years.

at the church, and we, Love women's Bible study there. I love being with these women. we have grabbed a group of Arabic speaking women from around the Middle East, and we're training them to teach the Bible in Arabic. There are very few women in the Middle East who are actually doing expositional teaching of the Bible, and so we have gathered them together, and we're training them to teach the Bible, and we just had a [00:03:00] conference in Beirut.

~~It was wonderful. It was a conference on delighting in the scriptures and, um, women were truly delighting in the scriptures during that with these. We had six teachers. It was wonderful. Um, and then we're going to have one in Egypt and at the beginning of September. Um, so I've done that through really my, um, the Bible studies that I've done.~~

~~At E C C D, um, ha. We've sent those away to be published. So, uh, there are several bible studies I've just done Romans, hopefully it'll be out sometime soon. They're called delighting, um, in the. In the Bible, Bible studies, and, uh, those are put out by Cruciform Press. And then I've written a couple books.~~

One is, The Good Portion, Delighting in the Scriptures. It's on the doctrine of scripture with the goal of teaching women why we should delight so much in the scriptures. Because they bring us to God. And it's all about relationship with him.

Krystal: Yeah. Just a few things. Just a couple tiny things that you've done.

Keri: Well, I'm 57 years old now, so I've had some time to do them.

Krystal: I love that. And you have something exciting coming up in January. It's actually a conference that I've had some friends involved with and it's cross con. So do you want to tell us just a little bit about that conference?

Keri: Yes. Cross Con is a fantastic conference. and it's for, really students, 18 to 25 years old. Although I think high school students who are a little bit. 18 and people who are older than 25 can also benefit from it. but it's mainly a college conference and it's all [00:04:00] about calling students and young adults to really live for Christ and make a difference with their lives.

Really live for the gospel. we're gonna have John Piper there, David uh, Trip Lee will be there. Those are some of the plenary speakers. And then there are panels of people who have. I've ministered all over the world, and then there are some breakout sessions also. And it's just a great conference for bringing students in and calling them to be intentional with their lives, make their lives

count for the gospel, And really, it's a conference where they can explore going overseas, there will be lots of people to talk to about that.

And, I would just highly recommend anybody in that age range or any non Pastors or leaders who work with students in that age range, they should come to Cross. It's fantastic.

Krystal: Yeah. And it is [00:05:00] January 3rd through 5th of next year. So it'll be in Louisville, Kentucky. We'll put all of the information in the show notes for anyone that wants to sign up and go. I've heard fantastic things coming out of this conference. It really shapes how you think about the Lord, how you think about missions and how you think about how you're going to live your life, like you said, for the glory of God.

So we're excited to connect our listeners to that.

Keri: Yeah, and I know a woman who was converted there, and I also know a couple who met there and got married. So,

Krystal: so

Keri: and are

Krystal: you never know.

Keri: in ministry.

Krystal: Yeah. Life changing.

Shelby: Yeah. That's right.

Keri: it's a life changing conference in more ways than one.

Shelby: that's so great. That's awesome. Well, we'll be sure to include a link to CrossCon in the show notes. Um, but let's start talking about our topic for today. So, This is the second episode in a series we're calling Women And. And in this series, we're talking through spaces that can be hard to navigate as women.

Um, spaces like calling, home, church, work, even mental health we'll be talking about. And our goal with this series is really to create a safe space for women [00:06:00] to come with their questions and their concerns but when we bring those questions and concerns, our main goal is to... Go back to scripture

with those questions Engage with it what guidance does scripture give us on these spaces and then once we have that foundation Then we can begin to really wrestle well through what it looks like to be a woman in these different spaces.

And so Kerry You've written a book on how women can thrive in the local church And so we've brought you on specifically to talk about women in church today but we're wondering if we can get started with you just kind of telling us your Church story, like what has your relationship with church looks like throughout your life?

Keri: Yeah, well, I grew up in a mixed home, my mom grew up in a Christian family. My dad was not a Christian. in fact, he would not go to church. My mom would take us to different churches. I don't remember specific churches that we attended regularly until I was in about middle school.

[00:07:00] and then my brother and I wanted to go to this church, so we attended regularly through middle school and high school. So, I was confused about church. I don't think my mom was ever a member, of a local church. She hopped around, and I just thought church was optional for Christians. then I went to, a really good church.

I moved to Washington, D. C., and I went to Capitol Hill Baptist. And I was hearing the preaching. And Mark Dever, if you know anything about him, he preaches a lot on the church. the church is all over the scriptures, right? So, he brings it up when it's there. And so, I was sitting under his preaching, but it didn't occur to me to become a member of the church.

And then, he met me at the door one time and he said, Hey, Keri, you've been coming for several weeks. You should join the church. And I thought, Oh, okay. It just had never occurred to me really. And so I, joined the church and it really changed my life because [00:08:00] I had older women pursuing me. I was involved in the church.

I was being prayed for. I was praying for others. I was in relationship with people and, I had been a very independent minded person. And I had lots of friends, but I didn't have brothers and sisters. And when I joined the church, I became part of this family and it really changed my life.

It kind of supercharged my spiritual growth. I was being held accountable. I was reading the scriptures with others. I was doing Bible studies with others. I just praise the Lord that, um, Mark met me at the door challenged me, you should join the church.

Krystal: So as we're talking about what scripture has to say about women in all these spaces and we're talking about the church today, what does the Bible say about our role as women and how it relates to the church and our involvement in the church?

Keri: Well, you know, it's interesting. That's in some ways a difficult question to answer in a short [00:09:00] amount of time because The whole New Testament is written to local churches, right? You look at these letters, Paul, Peter, even the pastoral letters, they're written to pastors of local churches to share with their members of their churches.

So really we could look on almost every page of the New Testament And answer that question. Right? but I think of, 1 Corinthians 12. 1 Corinthians 12 says, For just as the body is one and has many members and all the members of the body, though many are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one spirit, we were all baptized into one body, Jews or Greeks, slaves or free.

And we know in Galatians it says, Male or female, right? Men and women. there's no difference in the church, right? That we're all accepted, we're all equal, in dignity and value, and we're all members of this body. Now, this [00:10:00] body also, Corinthians goes on to say, it has different parts. Right. So we're all individual parts of the body and those parts have different roles.

They do different things. that's the first thing I would bring up that we all have different roles to play. Um, that's men and women, right? and I've already discussed when I became a member of the church, I became a member of a family and you know, Paul writes that to Timothy. In first Timothy, he talks about how Timothy as a pastor is to treat others in the church.

And he says, do not rebuke an older man, but encourage him as you would a father, younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, younger women as sisters. In all purity. So we see these two pictures of the church, the body with different parts doing different things. And then we see, a family here. And [00:11:00] Timothy is encouraged to treat the members of his church as family as brothers and sisters, fathers and mothers.

Shelby: Yeah, I love that. You're first of all, I love that you're going to these two passages to kind of say, like, here's the bottom line. Like, here's what this looks like. I imagine that there's some women listening and they maybe have had several light bulb moments or even several questions that have come up already.

and you know, one of them might be, wow, I don't feel that family or I haven't experienced that, or maybe they haven't chosen to engage in that yet. Or maybe the body and all the pieces working together. And so, as someone who's both studied this and just is living this out in your local church, what are some of the obstacles that you think prevent women from maybe living in this family unity or living in this, being a part of the body all working together for the same mission?

Keri: Yeah. Um, I think the primary obstacle Is our own sin. I mean, we are all [00:12:00] rebellious against God. That's why we need Christ. I mean, we need his, sacrifice. We need his atoning blood, right? Because we're all sinful. And I think that, the primary obstacle to us thriving in the church, as women or men is our own sin.

And It causes us to keep distant from the church, from other members, we don't want them to know what's going on in our lives because we don't want to be called to account. we want our independence. Like I said, you know, that's how I lived for how many years was it? It was, almost 30 years that I lived just independently from the church.

and We don't want to be under authority and We take offense easily. We don't give people the benefit of the doubt. So I think The first primary thing that keeps us from thriving in the local church is really our own sin.

Krystal: That's, man, that's kind of like a mic drop moment, or it's like, [00:13:00] I feel like it's easy for us to look at the church and assume motive or blame to other people without actually looking at her own heart first. I think

Keri: Mm hmm

Krystal: to consider, um, you might, you might visit a church for the first time and leave because no one said hi to you or no one looked friendly or whatever, but it's also like, what's our role coming in?

It's not just about us, but it is about being a part of a family. So I think it's a really good encouragement for us to consider. So, um, Um, you wrote a book, on how women can thrive in the local church and you discuss these eight principles. And I'm curious if there's one that is maybe personally impactful for you as you're putting this resource together.

Keri: Yeah, I think it was membership. Like I said, I was just clueless about it Um, and I think so many Christians are, but we're, not saved to be individuals

where the, the Lord does a work in us. The Holy Spirit changes our heart from a heart of stone to a heart of [00:14:00] flesh when we see who Christ is and we put our trust in him.

And when that happens, we're saved into a body of believers. and that's why I say. you may have. Presbyterians listening here and a whole host. But, but I think that's why we're baptized and we're baptized into a local church, a local body. and so, like I said, membership really changed everything for me.

And Um, now I have, I mean, even now at 57 years old, I have older women in the church and women my age who keep me accountable, who I can go to with my sin, who I can talk to about family issues. And then I have younger women who I meet with and pray for and talk to them about issues that they have.

And sometimes. They give me good counsel, about issues that I have, so I think that, membership and just, making the [00:15:00] church the center of your life is what was most important to me. impactful for me when I was writing this book. I just thought about how different my life would be.

I mean, I was snatched out of darkness and ushered into his marvelous light. And it was really through the church that I saw all of my spiritual growth and My love for the scriptures grow, um, without the church, I don't know where I would be so I think that, that women who are kind of on the fringes of the church and not particularly happy in life, it's not just That the book that I wrote it's really not just about thriving in the church.

It's about thriving in all of life You're gonna thrive in all of life if you center your life around the church.

Shelby: I think that's really helpful the way you framed that near the end, because I know that in my own life, it would be super easy [00:16:00] to like. Sign the membership form, or make the commitment, or however it works, you know, for your church. But then, that's a paper only commitment. It's not something that I've committed to practically with my time, with my schedule, or maybe emotionally, with my heart and mind.

spiritually. And so I love how you framed that at the end that it's a centering your life around the church. you know, we can't really have a discussion about women in church without answering, or at least asking you to attempt to answer the big question. So Keri, I feel like, a lot of women, they just want to know, what am I able to do within the local church?

And I think people want, like, precise answers. Those are best found in their local congregations. Um, but, can you give us some direction on what does Scripture say that women can and should do within the local church?

Keri: Yeah, it's a great question There are so [00:17:00] many things That we can do in the local church, ~~um, we can teach women and children, we, which is so valuable, you know, um, I'll say, I'll, I'll say what we can't do, okay, we're, we're not to be elders, Paul says that women, he says we're to be silent in the church, he doesn't mean by that, that we're not to Um, you know, raise our hand during a prayer meeting and pray, ask a question, that sort of thing.~~

~~He means that we're not to teach or have authority over men in the church. It's authoritative preaching of the word. So we're not to get up and preach. In a local church, um, and we're not to be elders and, um, pastors that that word elder is the same as pastor or overseer. And so that's what, that's what the apostle Paul tells us.~~

~~Um, but it's just as valuable to teach women, isn't it? I mean, I think women are just as valuable as men are, and we have a special role in teaching women and discipling women, so we really, I would categorize it by saying we can be mothers. Mothers to men and women. We can give young men advice, right? and we can be sisters to one another.~~

We can disciple one another. We can speak the gospel to one another. We can speak encouragement, sing songs. praises and, you know, speak the word to one another and we can be daughters too. That can be a huge encouragement to others to be a daughter to someone. So I would say that that's what we need to go into the church.

Looking at and what we need to do when we're trying to find our place in the church is go in and ask, what are the needs that I see here? that comes before asking, what do I think I'm gifted at? if we go into the church asking what are the needs that are here, then [00:18:00] we can slot in and make a real difference in the church and be that hand or that foot, or the arm or the eye, and make a difference in the church if we just ask what's needed here.

And then I always counsel people to do what they love doing. if you see a need and you fill that need for a while and then someone else can come along and fill that need and you feel like, you know, I'd really rather do this other thing. Well, I think the Lord gives us desires. He puts desires on our hearts and he gives us the desires of our hearts.

So I say, look for something that's needed in the church and do things that you love doing.

Krystal: Yeah, I love to just even recognizing there are needs in the church that the Lord has placed you in that he may have placed you to meet. And there's going to be ways that we can meet needs within our giftings that might just look outside of what we think it should look like. If we have a teaching gift, maybe it is teaching children [00:19:00] or even holding babies and being able to help parents as they come pick up and encourage them and like what a gift to allow.

The parent to go to service while you're holding their baby. There's just so many ways that we can serve within the church. So I love that encouragement. I want to go back to something you said earlier about maybe women that are on the fringe that maybe they've kind of been in church, maybe not, they're kind of unhappy and really that being part of the heart behind your, your resource on women thriving in the local church.

So for women that I think we probably all have friends, maybe even family members that have been hurt by the church in some varying degree. So maybe they're listening to this and you know, they're thinking, this sounds great, but this hasn't been my experience. Or maybe I don't feel like this can be my experience.

What would you say to someone just to encourage them maybe that they have been hurt by the church in some way? What would be kind of your encouragement to them?

Keri: Yeah, um, that's such a great question, and it's a hard one to answer without knowing the specific [00:20:00] circumstances. So I think I would begin by saying that if a woman has been hurt in a church, and it's been some kind of abuse, that she should right away go get help. And you should not stay in a church where there's abuse going on, ~~on, um, and, but, but, you know, sometimes there are questions.~~

~~What, what does abuse really mean?~~ So, I think a woman right away, if she thinks she's being abused, she should separate herself from the abuser and talk to others. If there are others in the church that she can talk to, or if there's somebody outside of the church she can get good advice from, then I think definitely Definitely.

Abuse does happen, and she should get help. apart from abuse, I think, again, we need to check our own hearts, because, you know, we need to give other

people the benefit of the doubt. sometimes there can be some hurt from something that a pastor has said or someone else in the church has said.

And, we need to check our own hearts and see, are [00:21:00] we giving them the benefit of the doubt? Or are we reading behind what they're saying and assuming things of them that That just aren't true and we can go to our brothers and sisters and talk to them about offenses or scripture says we can cover over them with love.

and so I think that the first thing is to just kind of check our hearts. Um, I had a situation in our church where, you know, we have a lot of different nationalities. So we have people from over 60 different countries, so we can step on each other's toes and not really know it. And there was a woman who was kind of gruff with me, and so I just decided to kind of reach out to her and do something.

special, like she, she liked cooking. So I got her a cookbook. And so I just tried to go overboard in greeting her and in caring for her. she warmed up after [00:22:00] a while. And it was just a situation where she wasn't a warm personality. And I needed to work a little bit harder at breaking through to her.

And so So I would just say, give people the benefit of the doubt and go into the church thinking of yourself as a sister to everybody there. and sometimes a mother, sometimes a daughter, but if we have that kind of attitude, then I think things are going to work out better for us. And if they're, they're minor issues like, You know, I don't like the music at this church or, you know, you can go to your elders and talk to them about these things, but make sure you're considering, does that person sitting across from me, does she love the music?

in the church. does she love the color of the paint on the walls? Let me not insist on my own way, but let me exercise the fruit of the spirit and love others in [00:23:00] a way that's going to be beneficial and encouraging to them.

Shelby: Yeah, I think Personally, that's encouraging. I think we've all been in situations both where maybe a conversation was, was warranted to say, Hey, I'm struggling with this, or can you help me here or help me understand? But then I also know there's been many, many times where I needed to give someone the benefit of the doubt and where I was really just focusing on my own needs, wants, and desires over being a part of the body and loving others.

So I think that's helpful encouragement. ~~Um, I am going to ask this question, and then I'm going to walk out of the room, okay? So I can make it to my next,~~

~~next, and I'm going to let you finish up the interview. Carrie, I wish, I'm so sorry it ended, the schedule ended up like this today. I wish I could stay and chat until the end, um, but.~~

~~That's totally fine. Um, uh, Keri, just to make this really practical, what is one step that any woman listening to this episode today can take this week to begin thriving in her local church?~~

Keri: Yeah, I think go into your church on Sunday and look for somebody who you can reach out to. Look for somebody who you can encourage, and speak the gospel to them, and maybe see if you can get coffee with them during the week. or have dinner, or invite them over to your home, exercise some [00:24:00] hospitality and all you have to do is offer them a glass of water when they come into your home.

Or you can have them for a full meal. That's what I would recommend.

Shelby: I

Krystal: Think that's something that's so accessible that anyone can do. I think we feel really overwhelmed coming in thinking like we have to do something really big and grand, but it's just like taking steps of obedience and faith and just trusting the Lord is going to continue to grow that. Love for the church continue to grow that community as Shelby and I just moved to the Houston area And so we had to find a new church for the first time and we both were in churches that we loved and were really Connected to and so it's it's encouraging just to hear this as we're kind of getting plugged in to new church communities and Just to recognize our role too within the body of Christ in, um, in that local church.

So, okay, I have one last question for you. It's a question we ask every guest that comes on the podcast. So we say at the Daily Grace Co that the gospel changes everything. So Keri, what has the [00:25:00] gospel changed for you?

Keri: hmm. the gospel has changed everything. I mean, I was snatched out of the world and my feet were set on the rock. And I was just reading yesterday about Peter denying Jesus. Three times and he he didn't just him and ha he said I do not know him and I think that I have been that and Even daily I behave that way, you know, In my actions I say I do not know him And so I was just overwhelmed looking at that at the grace of the Lord Jesus.

I mean, Peter does this. He didn't even give him a lecture. and he said beforehand that Peter was going to do it. And he said, but after you turn back.

Encourage your brothers, strengthen your brothers, right? So I was so encouraged by [00:26:00] the grace of the Lord Jesus when I was reading that. And it's hard to pick a way that The gospel has changed me just one way because it's completely transformed my life. but I'll say, one thing regarding the church. It has given me true family. Because I've been accepted by the Father through Christ, I've been united. To a true family, and it's, it's my church, the Evangelical Christian Church of Dubai. I have sisters there who are so dear to me and men and women and who are brothers and sisters and mothers and daughters to me.

so that's what I would say. It's given me true family that'll never be taken away. I'll spend eternity with this family.

Krystal: I love that. I love hearing just how God has used. His bride in your life, and I think for a lot of us That's our story and for those that [00:27:00] maybe are struggling to feel Connected struggling to feel that that love within a local church family feeling like they don't belong or fit in. I pray that this encourages them to really seek the Lord and to seek their local church community to really find that community and to be a part because Something that I love just thinking about as we're in a local church context.

I can look around and think I don't know if there's any other situation that would put us all in the same room together. We all have different interests, different backgrounds, different passions, and yet we are united in Christ and there is such a bond there. And so I just, I appreciate so much of you sharing your wisdom and your passion in this conversation.

So Keri, thank you so much for joining us on the Daily Grace

Keri: Thank you so much. It's been a pleasure.

Krystal: Yeah, and we're going to link your book, your information and cross con in the show notes. So we pray that our listeners will check that out as well. Um, for our listeners, don't forget to subscribe to our weekly newsletter to receive [00:28:00] free resources related to the podcast and it'll come straight to your inbox.

So you can click on the link in the show notes to subscribe. And until next time, come join us as we continue this conversation over on Instagram at daily grace podcast. We'll see you next time. ~~I will pretend Shelby says bye. Ha ha ha ha. Poor Shelby, I felt so bad. Oh, but Carrie, thank you so much. This was so great.~~

Um, we typically send like a thank you gift to our guests. So, you're probably going back overseas. Is that right? Are you just in the States for a little bit?

Keri: Yeah,

Krystal: Okay, we're gonna, we're gonna get an address for you. We're gonna try to figure out how to send that stuff over to you. But I, I think Shelby's been the one communicating maybe with Matt or someone.

So we'll just make sure we'll, we'll get your information.

Keri: if it's not perishable, it's fine to send it here

Krystal: Okay. Yeah,

Keri: Because I'll get it. I'll get it in December.

Krystal: we'll do that then. That might just be easiest. Yeah, so that way it doesn't get lost and all that. You know, you probably know how that is.

Keri: you

Krystal: Yeah, thank you so much.

Keri: and congratulations to you for your promotion and

Krystal: thank you. Shelby was kind. She didn't say she also got a promotion. So we're both directors now when we moved to Houston. So she, she also got one.

Our jobs have been a joy, but it's kept us busy for sure. So,

Keri: And we, um, I was not able to really engage on the podcast with you because I, my equipment, again, was not working right or something.

Krystal: oh no.

Keri: But, um, I mean, I kind of dropped off toward the end of it, if you remember that.

Krystal: Oh, are you thinking of Kristen Schmucker?

Keri: ~~yes.~~

Krystal: ~~People confuse us.~~

Keri: ~~Yeah, I couldn't even see,~~

Krystal: ~~Yeah, yeah, yeah.~~

Keri: ~~because my,~~

Krystal: ~~She said she enjoyed that so much. She had such a great time. So maybe you can have her on again and all the~~

Keri: ~~Yeah, well, she, we got some really good feedback from that. People were really touched and stuff. I'm sorry~~

Krystal: ~~Good. No, no, no, no. You're fine. I, it happens to me all the time. Actually, at TGCW, I had women talking to me and I'm like, I'm not who you think I am, but I will pass it along for sure.~~

~~So yeah, she enjoyed it. It was, it was a good podcast. So~~

Keri: ~~Good, good.~~

Krystal: ~~yeah. Yeah. Well, absolutely. And we'll send all the information to you or to whoever, I don't know if Shelby was connected with someone else, but we'll make sure to get your address and~~

Keri: ~~Okay. I'm send, I think she, she sent me an email to send a picture and my address. So, I'll do~~

Krystal: ~~Perfect. Awesome. Thank you so much, Carrie. All right. Have a good one. Bye.~~