

Episode 242

Shelby: [00:00:00] Welcome to Daily Grace. We believe the Bible is true, trustworthy, and timeless. And we want to help women like you know and love God's Word. The Bible shows us who God is, and who He is changes everything. My name is Shelby,

Krystal: and I'm Krystal. And we want to invite you to come join us as we chat about the truth of God's Word in our everyday lives.

Shelby: Hey everybody and welcome back to our summer series, Mistakes We've Made In Bible Studies. We're having so much fun talking about all the times we've gotten it wrong. Yeah, surprisingly. I'm not sure I've ever said that sentence before.

~~Um,~~ But we're back today to talk about another mistake that we've made many, many times. But first we are gonna do favorite things and we're doing them in 15 seconds or less because we're trying to keep these episodes short for you so you can listen on the [00:01:00] go in the summer.

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: So I have my 15 second timer. Krystal, are you ready?

Krystal: Yes.

Shelby: Okay. On your mark. Get set. Go.

Krystal: Okay. My favorite thing is the Tecarta Bible app. ~~Uh,~~ \$5 a month, but you have access to 150 different resources on my phone, on my iPad, study Bibles, notes, different translations. It's really helpful on Sunday morning as I'm listening to a sermon to pull up notes.

Shelby: Wow. Good job.

Krystal: Yes, I was watching the, the time. ~~Go down.~~ ~~Uh,~~

Shelby: I didn't know what that app was. When you mentioned it just a second ago. I asked you if it was like a clothing app where I could find cute outfits.

Krystal: No, not quite.

Shelby: And it's not. It's not.

Krystal: It's the Bible. It's a little different.

Shelby: Better?

Krystal: Yes.

Shelby: Better?

Krystal: Yes. Okay. Are you ready?

Shelby: I am ready.

Krystal: Right. What is your favorite thing? And go.

Shelby: My favorite thing, no shock, is a book I'm reading. It's called, "Never Split the Difference: Negotiating As If Your Life Depended Upon It." It's written by a former international FBI hostage negotiator.

Krystal: Whoa.

Shelby: And it's so fascinating and super helpful.

Krystal: [00:02:00] Oh. Oh, I didn't think you were gonna make it. You did because that title is long.

Shelby: I know, but I need five more seconds. I need to clarify what I'm negotiating.

Krystal: Okay, go ahead.

Shelby: It's bedtime with my five year old.

Krystal: That feels like the right book for our situation.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: Oh, I love it.

Shelby: It's really, it's like the psychology behind negotiation. It's fascinating.

Krystal: Is it a short book or a long book?

Shelby: Uh, Medium.

Krystal: What's medium to you?

Shelby: Uh, I think it's a total of ~~like~~ six-ish hours on audiobook. I'm listening to it on an audiobook.

Krystal: Okay.

Shelby: So maybe it might be eight hours. I can't quite remember.

Krystal: Okay. That's not too bad. Okay, cool. All right. Well this week's episode is a mistake that we feel is really important because we feel like it's really woven into the fabric of, like, western American Christianity.

Shelby: Mm-hmm.

Krystal: And, this mistake is reading the Bible like a spiritual self-help book. So, shelby, can you unpack what that means for us?

Shelby: Yeah, and we really debated how to title this episode. ~~Like~~ This was kind of an idea floating around and we're like, "How do we put concrete terms to this?"

So, but we decided to call it, "Reading the Bible Like a Spiritual Self-help Book." And so I actually wanna [00:03:00] just define "self-help," because I think that's really helpful.

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: So I pulled up just Miriam-Webster Dictionary and it defines "self-help" as, "the action or process of bettering one's self or overcoming one's problems without the aid of others, especially the coping with one's personal or emotional problems without professional help."

And ~~um~~, you know, if you're anything like me, you hear that definition and you're like, "That's who I wanna be. I don't wanna have to rely on anyone else. I don't wanna have to be dependent on anyone else. I wanna be able to overcome all my problems on my own."

We're just like fiercely independent people, especially in the American West. ~~Um,~~ But if we're not careful, we can begin to integrate the Bible into that kind of lifestyle that we want to live.

And so we come to the Bible as if it is a tool that we will use to solve our own problems, rather than coming to it as the divinely inspired Word of God, ~~who~~ that was authored by the God on whom we are [00:04:00] totally

Krystal: Yeah.

Shelby: and utterly dependent. And so hopefully that kind of clears up, ~~uh,~~ what we mean by this.

I wanna tell a super short story about when I was first introduced to this idea. ~~So in my early twenties, um, my. I'm not gonna tell the whole story.~~ In my early twenties, I, for the first time, like, went to see a Christian counselor, and it was insanely helpful. We're like huge fans of Christian counseling here.

Krystal: Yes.

Shelby: But after about an hour of talking through things with her and just sharing some different things, at the end of the session, she just asked me, "Do you see God as a tool that helps you achieve your goals?" And I was speechless because my answer was, "Yes," and I had never realized that that was the way that I was viewing God. And it was incredibly convicting, and that was really a ~~pivotal,~~ a pivotal moment for me and a turning point for me.

~~Um,~~ And so I think even as we go through this episode, just to consider that question or something similar to that, like, "Who is God to you?"

Krystal: Yeah.

Shelby: Is He the Being on whom you are totally and utterly dependent? Or is He just a tool that you keep in [00:05:00] your back pocket that helps you get to the life that you're trying to achieve?

Krystal: Yeah. What a profound question for that counselor to ask.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: Because I don't think any of us would think that that's how we treat the Lord or even treat Scripture.

Shelby: Mm-hmm.

Krystal: But it's often how we do it. And so I think that's why we're so passionate about being involved in local church,

Shelby: mm-hmm.

Krystal: being in community and just what we get to do here at Daily Grace. We don't often see those blind spots in ourselves. So we need to be in the Word, we need to be in community ~~um~~, so then we can avoid making the mistake of reading the Bible as if it's just like one more thing that's gonna help us.

Shelby: Mm-hmm.

Krystal: It's ~~like~~ one tool that we have at our disposal instead of ~~like~~, this is our very life.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: So, let's talk about the difference between reading the Bible like spiritual self-help, and then reading it as, like you said, the divinely inspired Word of God.

What is the difference?

Shelby: Yeah, I think this is important to talk through because even if we've just defined it and we understand that definition, I think knowing what it looks like will help us identify when it's happening in our lives. So all I can share is personally what this looks like for me. This might look different for you or for anyone listening.

But ~~um~~, here's [00:06:00] what happens, and here's how I know that I'm looking to the Bible for spiritual self-help instead of looking at it as the divinely inspired Word of God. ~~Um~~, I'll approach the Bible like a crystal ball. I want it to tell me, yes, no, or what I might happen in the future. Like, I just wanna shake it up and I want ~~like~~, the answers to fall out, right?

~~Um~~, When I approach the Bible with a self-sufficient attitude, like, "I can handle anything, but it'd be really nice to have a pat on the back from God to start my day," you know? ~~Like~~, Ugh. Ugh. That happens more than I'd like to admit, you know. ~~Um~~, When I approach the Bible looking for ~~like~~ a three step plan or a quick fix to my solution, that's a total self-help attitude.

And, ~~um~~, I would also say if I'm approaching the Bible, like looking for validation for the choices that I've made, like you'll notice that all these things are really self-centered that we're talking about so far. Like self-help, self-centered, yeah. ~~Um, And then.~~

And one more thing I think that plays into this, too, is I know I'm reading the Bible, like self-help, if I come away with a checklist of, ~~like~~, "Okay, here's the four things I'm gonna change and do better after reading this."

[00:07:00] Now, should the Bible be transformative? Yes. It's way different, and we'll talk about this in just a second, to have a checklist or to have an encounter with God through which you say ~~like~~, "Wow. In worship of Him I have to change some things."

Krystal: Mm. Yeah. As you were going through that list, I was like, "Ooh, I feel convicted. Oh yes, I've done this." And so I think that's why we've enjoyed these episodes so much.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: It allows us to even process the ways that we are not relying on the Lord. We're not relying on the Spirit

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: for, for spiritual growth. We're tempted to rely on ourselves, honestly. I feel like for me, looking at that list, going for a quick fix. I want it to be fixed immediately.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: If I feel bad, I wanna feel good. If I am discouraged, I wanna be encouraged. And so I'm gonna,

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: what's the verse that talks about fill in the blank?

Shelby: Yes.

Krystal: And I'm gonna ~~like~~ look at all those verses out of context and be like, "Okay, I don't feel a ton better, but I tried," and then I move on.

And I'll Google, or I'll go to Instagram. And so it's almost like I'm not treating the Bible as sufficient [00:08:00] for life and godliness and so... so I love being able to talk through this.

Um, What are some other things that you feel like are gonna help us as we approach God's Word, ~~uh~~, in the right way instead of approaching it from that self-centered, self-help perspective?

Shelby: Yeah, so again, just talking from my own experience, ~~like some ways that I know or believe, how am I gonna say this? That's strong wording. That's okay. I'm just gonna go with it.~~ Um, some ways that I know I'm approaching God's Word looking for Him and not for self-help and quick answers are that I'm okay if I leave my time in God's Word, having all the same questions that I had when I came in.

I'm content simply that I was with God and that I know Him now more than I did before I opened my Bible. That's, ~~um~~, not always easy.

Krystal: Yeah.

Shelby: Right? Um, Another one is that I ~~I approach my Bible with, not my Bible.~~ approach the Bible with humility, just knowing that I am fully dependent on the Lord. And coming to it almost ~~like~~ as a source of life, like, "I need this today. Like, without this, I won't be okay today. ~~Like,~~ God, I need Your Word."

Um, I think another one is just [00:09:00] submitting myself to the Lord's sovereignty instead of looking for a quick fix. And so usually when I'm coming into God's Word, I might be looking for that quick fix, but then in reading I'm reminded that, "You know what? God is in control. He's sovereign over my life. I trust Him in that."

Like we said before, even when I don't have all the answers. Um, I think another one is just approaching the Bible with the expectation that I'm gonna be convicted of my sin because I know that I am not a sinless person. I think sometimes we can read the Bible and we think, ~~like,~~ "I've pretty much got it together, but this might help me today."

Krystal: Yes.

Shelby: Um, But instead ~~coming,~~ going, like, "Man, I know that there's brokenness in me that I'm unaware of." And so just holding the Bible up almost

like as a mirror and letting it show you, in truth, the reflection of where that sin is at in your life.

~~Um,~~ And then lastly, when I read the Bible as God's divinely inspired Word, and not just as a self-help book, I come away in awe of God. I come away [00:10:00] with a desire to pray and with a desire to worship, and that includes adjusting my actions by the power of the Spirit, you know?

~~Um,~~ If I don't end my Bible time in prayer saying, "Lord, help me to live out what I've read today," then I'm way too dependent on myself and way not dependent enough on the Lord.

Krystal: Yeah. That's so good. ~~Sorry, I've like, felt that cough in my throat the whole time. I'm sorry. That's good. I just wanted to be like, while you're talking.~~

Okay, well, let's just go to God's Word and see what it has to say in this. So we're gonna read First Thessalonians chapter five, verses 16 through 18. It says this, "Rejoice always. Pray constantly. Give thanks in everything for this is God's will for you in Christ Jesus."

So, what conclusions would we draw if we read this like it's just one of those tools, it's our spiritual self-help. How would we read this?

Shelby: Yeah, I feel like it's really important to give an example in this episode of what this looks like, because again, we might not always realize that this is taking place.

So, I like this verse because it literally says, "for this is God's will for [00:11:00] you." So if I'm reading this like spiritual self-help, I'm like, "Oh, that's the goal which I must work towards, God's will for me. Like, I now have a direction for my self-help to travel in."

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: ~~Um,~~ And then we probably immediately think, "Wow, the 'Rejoice always. Pray constantly, give thanks in everything.' I've failed in that quite a few times."

~~Um,~~ And so self-help believes in, like, cause and effect, right?

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: Like, if I do the right things, then the right outcomes will happen. And so if we apply that to these verses then we might be like, "Okay, well I need to start rejoicing, always praying constantly, and giving thanks in everything so that my life will right itself in the areas that it's wrong."

Or we might think, "Oh, because I've not done those things that's why my life is off track or that's why I'm experiencing hardship or difficulty right now."

And so, um, really what that is is moralism. And moralism is just fundamentally opposed to the gospel. Moralism reduces life to a set of principles when, which followed, give you the outcome that [00:12:00] you desire or make you into the type of person that you should be.

~~And the gospel says, "Hey, actually, you could never become the person that you want to be or that God wants. No, I'm not gonna say that. Words. Okay, hold on. But the gospel actually tells us that we were dead in our trespasses.~~

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: We couldn't take one step towards becoming righteous and holy without the salvation of Jesus Christ.

And so I think it's so, so, so important to read this not in a ~~lit~~ a checklist type of way. Like, "Oh, this is what I need to do for God to be pleased with me." But to read this in light of the gospel.

Krystal: Mm. Yeah, and I wanted to even go back to the definition that you read earlier about self-help, that it is, you know, "overcoming problems without the aid of others."

And so even I can go to a verse like this and think, "okay, 'rejoice always.' Well, that means I need to be happy. God wants me to be happy." ~~Like~~ That's God's will is I'm gonna be happy. "Pray constantly." I'm not good at that, but maybe I'll just like here and there, be like, "Okay, God, help me be happy. Help me."

You know, like, when we're not reading in the context of community. Without needing the help of [00:13:00] others and the help of the Spirit, we're reading this in very different ways.

Shelby: Mm-hmm.

Krystal: And we're misinterpreting what God's will is for our lives.

Shelby: Yeah.

Krystal: And so we will have another episode kind of going a little bit more into the value of reading with others. But I think it's just, it's so good for us to recognize, where are those gaps in the way that we come to God's Word and just the posture of our hearts?

Because then that's gonna allow us to then come to God's Word, read it in context, and understand what is God's will. It really is our sanctification, right?

Shelby: Mm-hmm.

Krystal: And these are the ways in which He does that. So, so how can we avoid coming to God's Word in this way? ~~What,~~ How can we help our heart posture come in knowing humbly like we are coming to God in His Word, versus we're coming to help ourselves to make ourselves feel better.

Shelby: Yeah. So I think there's a number of things ~~um,~~ that can be really helpful with this. I think, one, and this should be the goal of Bible study always, but anytime we approach the Bible, you know, our primary goal should be knowing [00:14:00] God and not seeking circumstantial answers. ~~Um,~~ And so if we can shift our focus in Bible study to just simply be the Lord, and what do I learn about Him through the passage of scripture? How should I respond to that? ~~Um,~~ What does this passage say about me as a human and how humans should respond to the Lord?

And so I talked about it earlier, but it's just this total shift, like, Bible reading isn't about me. Bible reading is about God because the Bible is about God.

Krystal: Mm-hmm.

Shelby: And so I think that's one of the biggest things, you know, as I was processing through, just like how, how do we actually do this? Like, how do we approach the Bible, not self-centered, but in a God-centered way?

Isaiah 55, and these are probably common verses, but Isaiah 55, 8 through 11 came to mind and it just says, "For My thoughts are not your thoughts. Neither are your ways My ways, declares the Lord."

I mean, right there, just simply just a correction, like the thoughts and intentions and desires [00:15:00] that we have in our minds, like, they will never be 100% in sync with the Lord's. ~~Like,~~ And so we have to know that coming to Scripture.

Um, But then it continues on, "As the heavens are higher than the earth, so are My ways higher than your ways and My thoughts than your thoughts." And I love this. "As the rain and the snow come down from heaven and do not return to it without watering the earth and making it bud and flourish so that it yields seed for the sower and bread for the eater, so is My Word that goes out from My mouth. It will not return to me empty, but will accomplish what I desire."

And so I think we have to remember that ~~like~~ God and His Word, obviously there's context to these verses. These are in Isaiah. But we also learn a principle from this, and that's that God's Word always accomplishes what He desires for it to accomplish.

And so the Bible, I think we need to ask ~~like~~, what is God's purpose behind this? And we've had so many episodes where we try and teach you how to do that. Even some in this series, ~~um~~, some others that we can link in the show notes for you. But we have to come to the Bible desiring that God's will might be accomplished in our lives and not that our [00:16:00] will might be accomplished in our lives.

Krystal: Mm. And we are really passionate here at Daily Grace. We wanna help resource you in being able to do this, to be able to come to God's Word in the right posture, in the right way. And to be able to draw out the truths that are revealed in Scripture versus the truth that we sometimes try to add to it or what we're looking for in the text. We wanna help you find what's actually in the text.

And so we have a couple resources that we think would be really helpful if you really wanted to grow in this area. We have a great booklet called "Faith Questions" and the subtitle is "Truth." So we have a whole series, this one's on truth. And a lot of what we were talking about today is really kind of a cultural way, a cultural Christianity, ~~um~~, and a cultural way of coming to God's Word. And so this booklet is gonna help you see, like, what is biblical truth and how do we find it? We find it in God's Word and that's gonna help you just walk through that on your own.

And then we have another resource I feel like we mention a lot. But it's very good and it is, "Search The Word." ~~Uh~~, That resource is gonna help you to know how do you handle God's Word? What are the things that you should be looking for? Because [00:17:00] if we don't know what we're looking for, we're just gonna go to our natural bents, which is like, how does this apply to me? You know, what are the things I'm going through? And we run the risk of misunderstanding what we see in God's words. We find those two resources I think could be really helpful in this.

Shelby: Yeah, absolutely. So we'll make sure we link all those things in the show notes. We're so thankful that y'all have been along the ride for us in this series. We have a couple episodes left. We're very, very excited about those. So be sure you tune in the next couple of weeks. ~~Um,~~ But in the meantime, you can follow us on Instagram, @DailyGracePodcast.

We'd love to interact with you there. And other than that, we'll see you next week.

Krystal: Bye.