



Welcome to God's Faithful Pursuit with me, Shannon Bishop, your host. We are a ministry of Family Church in Port Charlotte, Florida. Join us as we share stories of God's glory and faithfulness in the lives of others. And it's my hope that you are spurred on to love and good works through the encouragement that you find here. Thanks for joining us.

Hey. So welcome back, friends. We're so happy to have you here today. As you know, I'm Shannon Bishop, and I have a special guest with me today, Marlena Bender. Say hello.

Hello. Marlena is the children's director here at Family Church and also a very good friend of mine. So, we were in a Bible study together this past year studying the Book of Mark, and it was a study for wives. And so, basically, we'd go a chapter at a time, and we would talk about what stood out to us and what we learned. And then I would try to come up with questions that would be related to, like, wives and what can a wife take from this?

And so, yeah, we're just gonna. We're starting a new series today with Marlena, and we're going to talk about every chapter in Mark. Nice. And what we learned, and we're gonna do it all today. Just kidding.

We're gonna. We're gonna space it out. Wonderful. We're gonna do one chapter. That'd be a long month past.

I know. So, yeah, we'll do one chapter a month for you guys and just kind of share what God showed us, and. And so that'll be fun. So, thank you, Marlene. You're welcome.

Thanks for asking me. Before we get started, let's. Let's just have a funny question or an interesting question, like maybe, what would somebody not guess about you just by meeting you? That when I was younger, I went skydiving. What?

I have, I had the personality where if I go to an amusement park, I would do and try every ride. Really? And so my adrenaline level is, like, super high. And so skydiving, me and my brother and then another one of my friends, we decided to take a class, and we went skydiving. And it was amazing.

I loved it. Loved it. And I would do it again. But it does get kind of pricey after a while. Okay, now, were you, like, a young adult or a teenager or what?

Yeah, I was in my 20s. Okay. Yep. Before I had kids. Free, wild and free.

Exactly. Yeah. I can say I wouldn't have guessed that, meeting you. Yeah, well, for me, I lived all over the world growing up. That's amazing.

I got to live in the Philippines. England. Where else? Australia. Guam.

The little island of Guam. That's amazing. I graduated from Guam High School there. Nobody would ever guess that. How many kids were in your graduating class?

I don't know, but I would guess that it was like, 50 or less. Okay. Yeah, it was small. It was small because it was all the military kids that were living on the island, so. From Navy brats, you know, Air Force, army, all those.

And then I was. I was kind of the odd man out because my dad works at the State Department. He didn't actually work in the military. So, you know, I get on the bus and they're like, who's this girl? I was like, hi, Ben.

You don't know me because I didn't live on the base. I lived outside of it. And anyways. But, yeah, so I just kind of became friends with everybody. I wasn't like a click type person.

I just wanted to be friends with everyone. And you still are today. Thanks. It's the extrovert in me. I just have to do it.

I meet people. I'm like, we need to be friends. Yep. You do a good job at that. Thanks.

Yes. All right, so enough about us. Let's talk about the Book of Mark, shall we? Okay. And so we would, like.

I said we would read a chapter a week. We would meet together, a group of women, probably about what, I don't know, seven of us. Seven or eight. And so it was pretty small. I like to keep small groups because then you can be more real and more honest with each other about what's going on in each other's lives.

So when we were reading, I just. Basically, I took a few notes to maybe, like, the top three takeaways or maybe four. I'm not sure about what, about what we talked about. And so the first one is in Mark 1, verse 4. And it's where John the Baptist, he appeared, baptizing in the wilderness and proclaiming a baptism of repentance for the forgiveness of sins.

And the thing that stuck out to me about that, I know it's just one sentence, but John was baptizing in the wilderness. And so that really spoke to me, like, are we still ministering to people when we are in the wilderness? What do you think about that, Marlana? Well, my answer to that is automatically no. I mean, at first.

I mean, when I'm in my wilderness, that's the last thing that I'm kind of thinking about. Which, you know, after reading it, that's what we're supposed to do, right? And I think some

of your other questions will touch base on that a little bit later. But that's not where my first initial thought is right, for sure. I think our flesh, our initial thing is, okay, I'm hurting.

I need to be ministered to. That can be one. Another one is when we hurt, we just sort of go inside of ourselves. Exactly. And we get a little depressed and all we can see is our own pain.

But I think, you know, not saying that John was depressed or anything, for him, it was a literal wilderness. Right. But for us as, you know, women, a lot of times it's not a literal wilderness. We're not out in the wild, but we are dealing with things going through seasons that sometimes it is like a wilderness. There's not a lot of fruit; there's not a lot of happy times.

It's just. It's a tough time. And so, I think a lot of times we just go inside ourselves or we think, well, I don't want to burden someone else with my problems. But really, what should we be doing? That's what we should be doing.

Sharing and just getting the support and sharing our support with others. Because the way that women, you know, I open up to more women when they open up to me. And so I need to remember that in my time of being in the wilderness, that if I'm not willing to share, then how is that helping, right? Anybody. And it's definitely not helping myself because I just get more and more into myself.

And that's what we're not supposed to do. Yeah, exactly. It reminds me of in the Word, when John the Baptist was beheaded. And when Jesus heard the news of his cousin's death, he retreated away to be by himself, which makes sense. He wants to be alone to mourn.

But something drew him out of that desolate place, and it was the people that he saw, that they were hungry and they were looking for him, and so he had compassion on them and. And he went out to go and teach and then provide the fish and the loaves and everything. But it's just that reminder for us to let compassion draw us out of sadness instead of staying in that place and just knowing that God still has purpose for us. He can still use us when we are in that time of, well, awareness, even though we don't feel like it. Yes, for sure.

And I mean, it can even kind of jolt us out of our emotions, too. That is very true. Yes. So, let's see. Verse 20.

I liked that one. And it reminds us to leave and cleave that's the one where James and John immediately left their father, and they followed Christ. When he said, follow me, they just were like, bye, dad, and they just left. So, the obvious application is that we are to leave our old ways behind and follow Christ. But if we take it a little deeper for the wife application,

it's also a good reminder that when we get married, we leave our father and mother and we cleave to our husband.

And this is first mentioned in Genesis 2:24. Therefore, a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. So, besides the obvious meaning here, what are some other ways that we can cleave to our husband? Well, when I was reading this, you know, I kind of. You know, it's hard sometimes to mesh families together.

Even if you both come from Christian backgrounds, you still have your own way of doing things. Your family. You're comfortable with your family growing up. And so, when you're trying to mesh those two households together, it can be very, very frustrating. Yeah.

And challenging as a newlywed. But just to keep in mind, if your focus is both on growing spiritually together and being united as a family, you're gonna want to try to set up those healthy boundaries, which we did a lot of learning with our first year. But it was good. I mean, not only for my family and his family, but for us as a couple to know where we stood and. And what.

How we wanted our family when we started having kids, how we wanted to be. Right. So, I mean, we're still learning, you know, I mean, when family visits, now that we're in Florida and they're in Michigan, I mean, it's. You're still learning those boundaries and what. What is acceptable, what's not, and that's okay.

Yeah, for sure. And I think one thing that wives can forget or kind of like your go to, like, wrong response if your husband makes you mad or whatever is to go talk to your mom about it or your sister or, you know, someone who is close to you is family who would understand. And you can just vent to. And they'll be on your side, but, yeah, they'll be on your side. And that's kind of the problem is then they start.

They can start to view your husband in that negative light and. And then say, next day you're over it and everything's fine. They're still thinking that he's a jerk or whatever. And so leaving and cleaving, I think a lot of times is on the emotional side where you just you don't go share these things about your husband with your family because it can have lasting negative effects. That's actually what happened with us.

I just remember in the beginning years, I mean, not at first, because my parents had told me they didn't want us to get married young. And so, I didn't want them to feel like they were right. So, it did take me quite some years, but eventually I came to them and was like, and this and this and this. And it wasn't good. It was not good because it made them, you know, upset with him.

And it's like, okay, now I really mess things up, you know? So, yeah, if you're a young wife listening, please just go to God with your things. Go to God with your issues, with your husband. And then if you need a godly friend to pray with you and give you some godly advice, there's nothing wrong with that. But, yeah, it's got to be somebody that's not going to start viewing your husband negatively and then feeding that back into you.

Right, exactly. And I think, too, that's where the church and having strong women mentors in your life come in handy. Because I know when we moved to Florida, I mean, that was quite a transition, being away from my family. I mean, I had nobody. And you depend as a woman, you depend on your family, your mom, your sisters.

And so because I didn't have that, I looked to the church, but I reached out. That's good. And I was able to connect. They were able to let me or lead me to somebody that was able to just listen, just be there. She was more seasoned than I was, so she was at a different stage in life.

She had older kids. I had younger ones. But it was nice because she could walk me through some of these things. And I think that's great as a church that we have, you know, those kinds of women mentors. Absolutely.

Not that we vent about everything with them. Right. But we can, you know, just go to them for advice or. Yeah, well, and that's support. In the Book of Titus, that's what it tells the older women to help the younger women learn how to be the wife that they should be.

So. Yep, that's good. Good talk. So let's see, what else? What else stood out to me?

To me, I should have said what stood out to you. But we already chose these things. So what stood out to us was verse 31. We see that Peter's mother is ill and Jesus heals her, and she immediately got up and began serving people. Marlena will you read that verse for us? Yes.

And he came and took her by the hand and lifted her up, and the fever left her, and she began to serve them. I think that's so funny. She's like, oh, thank you. Oh, let me get the bread, or whatever. Yes.

So, what do you think we can gather from this verse? Well, I think sometimes this is hard to do with. Well, I mean, what I kind of like took from it is. I mean, I love to serve. I mean that some people don't, but that's one of my guesses.

I just love to do that. And it doesn't bother me to do the dishes. I don't, you know, that kind of stuff. I just love doing, picking up around the house. But when you work full time, your husband works full time or you're a stay-at-home mom and that's your job and your full time and to still have the energy to serve and.

And not complain about it and to do it, because this is what God has called me to do, that can be hard. And you can start to get a little resentful, I think, at times. So, I think that's where the teamwork comes in from. What we kind of maybe touch base later. As you know, we're not going to our parents, we're not going to our friends about our problems.

We're going to our team, like. And that is your husband. Yeah. And to just talk and see how we can make the household run better, how we can make this service to each other. Because I mean, he's called to serve too.

Right. It's not just the woman, but I think it comes more naturally sometimes for us women for sure to do that. Yeah. But. Yeah, that's kind of what I took away.

Well, yeah. And I see this verse as having a very similar message to that very first one we talked about serving even in the wilderness. Like she. This mother-in-law was like sick and dying, I think, and he just healed her, and she immediately got up to serve. And so it just had me thinking about, like, when God heals you of something, whether it be an actual physical thing or something that you've gone through, maybe some sin that you were struggling with an addiction or whatever, and he heals you.

Sometimes we might just want to keep to ourself to be like, whoa, I never want to go that way again. And that's understandable that you might need some time, but eventually it's your turn to start serving and to start helping others. Especially if you see someone that maybe was struggling with the same thing. You were right. You know, and so just not.

Or if he heals you, being like, thanks, God, and then carrying on with your life, and it's all about me. And now I'm healthy and good, and it's like, no, no, let's take that and tell somebody about it. Be like, look what God did in my life. And I want to help. I want to serve.

I just want to display his glory, you know? So, I think it's a good reminder for us to just, I don't know, not have that excuse when it comes to serving and loving others. Like, oh, I can't because of this, or. Mm, no, I agree. Because I think the more.

I mean, I think when people know, like, you. Your testimony or your background and what you've come out. The illness. Yeah. I mean, it doesn't necessarily have to be like, you're on your deathbed, but the illness that we all have some form of.

I think when you share that stuff and open up, other people are more connected, for sure to you. And the service opportunities can be endless. Yeah. Well, and that's the exact reason why we started this podcast, is because I want people to be able to share their testimonies of what God's done in their life, his pursuit over them. And.

And then. So when people listen, they can go, oh, wow, I never knew. So and so went through that. I'm gonna go talk to her when I see her at church and let her know, you know, because you just. You just never know.

You don't. And at church, sometimes I think we try to put up a wall and hide that stuff. Yeah. Not that you want to go around and say, hey, this is. This is me.

This is my past life, you know, but you wanna. In a. Like this, like the podcast, you want to be able to share for those that do, you know, connect or can make those connections with you, because I'm open to talk to anybody about any of my past stuff. Yeah. You know, that's gone on.

I don't know if I think I may be shared that in past podcasts. Yeah, a little bit, I think. Yeah. But, yeah, and I feel like at church, too, it can be hard to really deeply connect with someone because, you know, we have a minute to mingle. That's not enough time.

Or if you're not in a small group, then no one knows you. You're just showing up on a Sunday, which we're very happy you're here, but then you leave, and we don't know you, and you don't know others. And so, another encouragement is just to, you know, get into a small group or find that person that you feel comfortable with and say, hey, could we grab coffee sometime? Just take it to the next level. You know what I mean?

Yep. Yep. All right, so I think we've got one more takeaway to discuss. Let me see. Here it is from verses 35, 39, where Jesus gives us a great model of how to live in a purposeful way.

It says, and rising very early in the morning, while it was still dark, he departed and went out to a desolate place. And there he prayed. And Simon and those who were with him searched for him and. And they found him and said to him, everyone's looking for you. And he said to them, let us go to the next towns that I may preach there also, for that is why I came out.

And he went throughout all Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and casting out demons. And I just love the order he models for us here, because if you really break it down, you notice that. Okay, so first, he rises early in the morning. That's step one. And he does this to spend some alone time with God.

I mean, it's him. But he is praying to God the Father. And after that, he teaches and ministers everywhere he goes. He goes to the ones that need healing, and he heals them. So as wives or moms or any follower of Christ, what.

What do you think we can learn from this example? Well, first, I mean, you need to spend time with God. You need to set aside time. Doesn't have to be in the morning, but I mean,

for me, morning is when it's quiet. The kids are still sleeping, and that's kind of my time to just be with God.

And then I think second is, you know, you see those people that are maybe quiet on Sundays that are not, you know, smiling like they used, like they usually do. And you can go and just talk with them and find those opportunities to be of service. Because I know we're not always. I'm not always happy and joyous. And, you know, the people who are closest to me can notice that.

And, you know, those are opportunities where, hey, you want to go talk? Do you need to talk? And that's important, especially as followers and believers, to do just to hold each other up. Yeah, for sure. And just like, having that mentality of kind of like the Great Commission, just like having that mentality of like, this day is not my day.

This day is for God. What. What can I do today to serve you, Lord? Or, you know, you get ready for the day. And maybe you have a very structured life.

Like, you get up, you do this, Kids, school, work, dinner, bed, you know, but having the mentality of just, okay, what am I doing for God today? Who can I serve today? Lord, show me one person that you want me to encourage today. And that, I think, is what he's looking for, you know, just that heart for him and for spreading the gospel. I mean, it's not going to be the gospel every time, like the actual, like, whole thing laid out for somebody.

But it can be a seed. Yes. You know that we plant and then someone else waters and the whole thing. And so, yeah, I just thought that was so beautiful how he just, you know, because the Bible could have just said, and that day they went to the town and preached, you know, but instead it says he rose early in the morning, and he went out to a desolate place. So, he's being very purposeful.

He's. He's not wasting the day. He's not sleeping in. Yep, I love to do in the summertime, but then how do I feel? I feel like I wasted the day.

And so, you know, it's. He was very intentional. He was so intentional with everything he did. And so, you know, the desolate place, that means he went by himself. That means we do need that alone time with God.

And so I think there's. He's. He's just such a great example for us in everything he did, even just on a normal day.

So. Yeah. Any other thoughts, any other things that you wanted to share before we sign off today? Well, I think, you know, just you saying. Saying that just the intentionality of everything, you know, it doesn't have to be outside our family, and it just kind of brings it

back home as wives, you know, when you're, like me, sometimes feel distant from my husband, well, that can change.

But I need to be intentional. And that starts with, you know, just prayer, spending time with God and, you know, doing something that I normally don't do to show him that I care for him. Right. And sometimes that can be very hard. Sometimes it's harder to do that in our own house than it is outside of our house.

Yeah, but that's where it starts. Yes, exactly. Our first ministry is to our family. It is. And so it was just convicting.

Oh, well, I mean, I'm so glad that the Holy Spirit does that, because that's how we learn, that's how we grow. And it just shows you why it's so important to just sit with a friend who loves Jesus and will talk about him with you. You know, I know when I was younger, I would be like, I need a girls' night. And it would be just about getting out of the house and having fun and all that stuff. And it's like.

But I would come home feeling slightly empty. But the times that I would go out with a friend and we would talk about what's going on in our lives, what God is doing, how we need prayer, that's when I would feel most fulfilled. You know, like a connection was made and then there was actually hope. Yes. And so, yeah, I'm so glad we.

We're talking about this today. And I hope that anyone listening, maybe some of these things were able to jump out in your heart as something that really meant a lot and can spur on change or something in your life. Yes. Thank you so much for listening, Marlena. Thanks for being here.

Of course. Looking forward to next month. That's right. So, we'll see you guys later. God bless you.

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