

MS = Melissa Spoelstra

KL = Kendra LeGrand

Kendra LeGrand: Hey, First 5 friends! My name is Kendra LeGrand, and welcome to our weekend teaching for *Seeing Jesus In The Old Testament*. We just finished Week 2 of our study in the First 5 app, and today we get to learn from Melissa Spoelstra. Melissa, how are you doing?

Melissa Spoelstra: I'm doing great. I'm so excited to be here today.

KL: Yes, we cannot wait to learn from you. But before we dive in, let me share this week's Major Moments.

- Genesis 3 | Biblical prophecy teaches us complete dependence on Jesus to bring the fulfillment of what God has promised in His timing.
- 1 Samuel 1 | In the desperation of our unmet desires and longing, the best place to turn is Jesus.
- Psalm 2 | The people of Israel longed for rescue, but what they really needed was redemption only Jesus could bring.
- Micah 5 | The hope of future peace is fulfilled in the Prince of Peace Jesus.
- Isaiah 9 | Unrighteous Israel received the gracious prophecy of Jesus, our Righteousness, Savior and Messiah.

All right, Melissa, we look forward to learning from you.

MS: Well, the title that I put in here was just *Prophecy And Perspective*, because as we're seeing Jesus in the Old Testament, we're talking this week about how we see Him just in this prophetic way.

And I was thinking about when my kids were younger, and they used to play this game called flashlight tag. It's where they're all in the backyard, and one person has the flashlight, and everybody's hiding in the dark trying not to let the flashlight catch them, because if you get shined on by the flashlight then you're out of the game. And so we heard some commotion outside and I went to check, and my daughter, who was about five years old at the time, had her knees and her palms cut up pretty good because she was clearly not the one with the flashlight. She instead was trying to hide from the dark, and she had hit some uneven pavement, and she was just wandering around trying not to get caught by the light, and she ended up getting hurt.

And it made me think of how just recently, I was in a building that I'm not as familiar with, and I needed to go into this back room to get something that I had left, I needed to pick up. And I thought there was like a motion light that was going to come on. And I didn't know where the light switch was, and I thought: *should I wait?* And then I was like, oh, I'll just feel around. I'm sure I can figure it out. And instead, I found there was a step that I didn't know was there, and I fell and took a step down and twisted my ankle.

And I just wonder for you, Kendra, have you ever been in the dark and gotten like a bump or a bruise from running into something or being in the dark?

KL: Oh, absolutely. Probably more times than I can count, yes.

MS: I think we can relate with that. And both my daughter and I had some physical pain from walking in darkness. And as I think about this spiritually, I think there are times when darkness can feel like our present reality. Like I don't know what those out there that are listening today, what they're walking through right now, but I wonder if they can sometimes relate to living in a land that just sometimes feels dark. I mean, we can turn on the news, and there are mostly stories of tragedy, and injustice and difficulty. It's not like here's the ten amazing things happening in our country today, right? And yet at the same time, that darkness isn't just out there. It's sometimes really close and present to us as we grieve, you know, people that we've lost, or complicated relationships or health problems, job loss. I mean, there's just so many trials that can leave us in a dark place.

And so here's the great news. We focused on Jesus in the Old Testament prophecy this week, and this is the truth we want to camp out on. Prophecy gives us the power of perspective. I mean, it can bring light to our darkness, reminding us that our present reality that feels dark isn't our fundamental reality — that there is something out there that is so much greater, and so much brighter — that our God has a plan. And He always has. And that's what's so cool about seeing Jesus in the Old Testament. And that that plan is to redeem, it's to forgive, it's to provide, it's to protect, it's just all these amazing things! And through prophecy we're reminded that this is our God, who sent His one and only Son to save us.

But here's kind of the tension I feel as I read prophecy in the Bible. It can be confusing, right? Like who are they talking about? And when is this stuff supposed to be happening? And how do we know if the prophecy in the Old Testament is actually about Jesus?

And I think there's kind of two extremes that we can dabble in and have to be careful of as we approach prophecy. One is that we can overly fixate on it, where we assign every current

event to prophetic mentions in Scripture. And I think prophecy is much easier to recognize in hindsight. Like I don't know if anyone could have taken all of the Messianic prophecy in the Old Testament to detail ahead of time exactly how Jesus would be born, what His ministry, His death and resurrection, how it would all unfold. But looking back, we can see how it was fulfilled, you know, so specifically through the hints and the shadows.

So that's one danger — is that we can overly assign everything happening in today's news with chapter and verse in the Bible. But then the other extreme is that we stay away from prophecy because it's obscure, and we're not sure how to apply it, and we're not sure what it means. So we just focus on other genres in Scripture, like history, or narrative, or poetry or literature forms that seem more straightforward. But I hope that all of us this week just were like wow! Prophecy is so important to dig into.

And I found this quote by Dr. James Gray. He was the third President of the Moody Bible Institute, which is where I went to college. And he once said, “Taking it in bulk, more than one half of the Bible is predictive. So no further reason is necessary as to why Christians should study prophecy.” And I think about the apostle Peter's words in 2 Peter 1:19-21. He reminds us as New Testament followers of Christ that prophecy still is important for us to study. He said this, *“And we have the prophetic word more fully confirmed, to which you will do well to pay attention as to a lamp shining in a dark place, until the day dawns and the morning star rises in your hearts, knowing this first of all, that no prophecy of Scripture comes from someone's own interpretation. For no prophecy was ever produced by the will of man, but men spoke from God as they were carried along by the Holy Spirit.”* And again, that's 2 Peter 1:19-21. And it's just a reminder that prophecy has benefits for us as its students.

And I thought of just, kind of, four quick things that prophecy can help us do.

- It helps us answer questions we have about the next life.
- It helps us pursue a life of obedience in light of the future benefits of holy living.
- It helps us deepen our faith, and how trustworthy God is to do what He foretold through His prophets. I mean, how encouraging was it this week to read in Genesis, and 1 Samuel, in Psalms, and Micah and Isaiah, and see everything God said He would do He did!
- And then the last is just to recognize God's relentless love and forgiveness for His creation through His prophecies. I mean, His prophecies are that He's going to love us, that He's going to forgive us, that He's going to care for us.

And I love how Revelation 19:10, the end of that verse, kind of sums up prophecy. It says, *“For the testimony of Jesus is the spirit of prophecy.”* (Revelation 19:10B) And the New Living Translation says it this way, *“For the essence of prophecy is to give a clear witness*

for Jesus.” (Revelation 19:10B, NLT) I love that statement — to say the essence of prophecy. And we're doing that in this whole series.

And we've covered a lot of ground this week seeing Jesus in the Old Testament through prophecy. And so today we're just going to camp out on what we did on Friday from Isaiah 9, to help us remember that prophecy gives us the power of perspective.

I know that just recently, I needed a perspective ... you know, a mindset shift — a little bit of a realignment of my perspective— because I was just having a hard day. It was this day where my foster son got suspended from school. He had made some bad choices that caused him to also lose his part-time job, and sometimes just his disadvantages from the past and the poor decisions in the present make me so discouraged about ... like, we have all this investment of time, and energy and love. And I'm like: does it even matter? Is it even going to make a difference? It feels dark, and sometimes even hopeless.

And for you, maybe you're not doing foster care with a teenage boy, but maybe there's something that you're investing love, and time and energy, and there are just moments where you're like does it even matter? But Isaiah reminds me that love makes a difference; that we have hope, because God promised a Savior, and He sent that Savior because of love. From the very beginning as sin first entered the world in Genesis 3, we found that first mention of a plan to save us. It's called the protoevangelium, and it's this prophecy of the seed or the offspring of woman that would crush the serpent's head.

I mean, from the minute sin entered the world, God has a plan to restore, to bring light in our darkness. And here are the words from Isaiah 9:2 that we read this week. *“The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; those who dwelt in a land of deep darkness, on them has light shone.”* And so kind of the first tangible way for us that prophecy can bring us perspective is that we can shift our focus from darkness to light. That's what we read in Isaiah.

One scholar said this about the darkness mentioned in Isaiah Chapter 9. He said, “The darkness and distress are real, but they are neither the only reality nor the fundamental reality. In any given situation we can either sink into despair or rise to faith and hope.” And I think that's how prophecy can shift our perspective, from darkness to light — to go OK, today feels dark. Like this situation is discouraging, or this grief is hard or this difficulty I'm walking through feels dark, but when we recognize it feels that way, it's not our fundamental reality; in fact, our fundamental reality is one focused on hope rather than despair, by shifting our focus.

See, prophecy helps us look from what is right now to what will be one day — to look at what is happening on the earth, this earth that's affected by the curse of sin, to heaven, to where there is light, and perfection, and intimacy with God, completely unhindered by sin.

And so I wonder ... I wonder for you, Kendra ... I'm just gonna start with you, but I want everybody to be thinking about how to answer this question. How is the Lord calling you to shift your focus when it comes to whatever present darkness you're experiencing today?

KL: You know, as you were talking, Melissa, I was thinking about how we know the end of the story. And I think that's such a beautiful reminder for us. And my old pastor used to say, "We're not fighting for victory. We're fighting from victory." Meaning that we have already won because of Jesus. And so, I think just remembering those two things can really help.

MS: Yeah, that's awesome. And I think, you know, as I think of a specific answer to that question in my life, about how can I shift my focus when it comes to my present darkness, I think about just what we're walking through with my foster son; how praying for him helps me shift my focus from all the trauma and difficulty of his past to the possibilities for the future, to know that we serve the kind of God who Isaiah says, gives a crown of beauty from ashes. You know, that's what He does. And so maybe prayer is something that people can consider to go, OK, how can I ... how can I embrace this truth that prophecy can change my perspectives? And to shift my focus from darkness to light is to begin to pray about whatever that dark reality is and ask God to open our eyes — to wake us up to see what He could be doing — and the hope that He can bring out of the situation.

So we skip down a few verses in Isaiah. We just read Isaiah 9 verse 2. We're gonna skip down to verses 6 and 7 and see the source of this light that Isaiah is speaking about. It says, *"For to us a child is born, to us a son is given; and the government shall be upon his shoulder, and his name shall be called Wonderful Counselor, Mighty God, Everlasting Father, Prince of Peace. Of the increase of his government and of peace there will be no end, on the throne of David and over his kingdom, to establish it and to uphold it with justice and with righteousness from this time forth and forevermore. The zeal of the LORD of hosts will do this."* I love those verses. And there's another translation ... I think it's the New Living, that says, *"The passionate commitment of the LORD of Heaven's Armies will make this happen!"* (Isaiah 9:7c)

And as we look at this, I thought it was so interesting, one of the scholars says that in Isaiah 9, not only in verses 6 and 7 that I just read, but in verses 1-7, Isaiah used past tense verbs in the Hebrew, because his hope was so certain. He wrote about it as though it had already happened. And I just think that is so amazing, that Isaiah believed these words from God — these prophetic words— that, you know, Jesus was going to come and be born seven hundred

years after Isaiah's writings. And yet he believed them so firmly, he wrote them in the past tense.

And so this brings us to kind of our second shift. We said we can shift our focus from darkness to light, but we can also shift our focus from problems to possibilities. And we can do that because of the name of Jesus. We just read a bunch of the names that Isaiah prophesied about Him. We can either fix our eyes on our trials, or we can gaze intently at the Promised One.

And the names found in verse 6 just reveal the character that the Messiah would have. And I want to just talk through these really quickly because I think they're so fascinating.

The first one is Wonderful Counselor. And it literally means Wonder Planner or Wonder-Working Planner. I don't know why, I just ... I don't think I've ever thought about it. Like counselor, I know, is someone who provides counsel and provides help. But to think that Jesus is planning wonder is just so cool to me.

And then the next one is Mighty God. And that emphasized like the power of a champion in battle. Just that might and that power that Jesus has.

And then as we get to the next one: Everlasting Father. It may seem an odd title for the Son of God, right? Because there's the Father, but these are titles for the Messiah. These are Messianic titles. But as I was digging into some of the commentators, they were saying that this highlights the Messiah's timeless concern, care and discipline of His people, because that's what a father does. He has concern. He has care, but He also disciplines His people.

And then this last one: the Prince of Peace suggests an army commander. But unlike most princes, this commander's ultimate goal is peace. As we think of many princes that are, you know, commanding their armies, their goal is war. But the Prince of Peace is saying that their ultimate goal — the Messiah's ultimate goal — is to bring us peace with God.

So I wonder for you, Kendra, how do these attributes of Jesus, prophesied over seven hundred years before He was born, just encourage you personally today?

KL: Well I love learning about the different names of Jesus because it reminds me of who He is, right? And so as you were listing them out, first off, can we talk about Wonder Planner? I have never heard of that. And I just find it fascinating. So that'll be fun to really dig in a little later. But I would say Prince of Peace is just a wonderful reminder for me. It's like a breath of

fresh air anytime I can remember that peace is the ultimate goal, and that is what he brings, right? So I would say that really encourages me.

MS: Yeah. And I love how that kind of fits with this second point, which is to shift our focus from problems to possibilities. I mean peace is not the opposite of war, right? Shalom — peace — is the opposite of anxiety. And so we're gonna have problems. We're gonna have that darkness, but God is saying, "I can give you stillness of soul in the midst of the problems." So we can shift our focus from just the details of what's happening to the possibilities of what God can do in the midst of that.

And yeah, I definitely picked the Wonderful Counselor, because that wonder planner, it just sticks so much out to me. It makes me think of the wonder of Christmas, and celebrating the Truth that God sent His Son to leave heaven, to put on flesh, to be born in humble circumstances, but ultimately, to die on a cross, and then rise again for me and for you. And those truths just bring me wonder today in the midst of current problems. They help shift my focus.

And that brings us back to our key point today — that prophecy gives us the power of perspective. It reminds us that God has a plan, and it's a good one. He's outside of time. He's working even when I don't see it or feel it. And these truths helped me shift my focus from darkness to light, from problems to possibilities.

And I just come back to thinking about my daughter with the flashlight tag wandering in the dark, me twisting my ankle in the dark, that sometimes life feels dark. There's so many trials and difficulties I don't understand, and some of them hurt, not just physically but emotionally, mentally, spiritually. But we can remember today that while darkness may feel like it's overshadowing things, it's not your only reality. And it's certainly not your fundamental reality. And you can shift your focus to the God of light and walk in His light, and His love and His grace today.

KL: Something that I loved that you mentioned, Melissa, was towards the beginning of your teaching, how you reminded us of the good things of prophecy — how it answers our questions, it can provide ... It can deepen our faith or recognize God's love and forgiveness. And so I'm just very grateful that you helped us focus on prophecy and the good things about it today. So I would love to close us in prayer as we end our time together.

MS: Awesome.

KL: Heavenly Father, thank You so much for the teaching, Lord. Thank You for prophecy all throughout the Bible, Lord, that we get to see, and that it was fulfilled, and that we get to see that in the New Testament, God. I thank You that You sent Jesus Your Son, and He is our Prince of Peace. He is our Light of the World. He is our Wonderful Counselor. He is so many things. And as we go about our day and our week, if we might feel hopeless, or helpless or like does it even matter like Melissa mentioned, I pray that we're reminded that You are ultimately ... that there is a plan, and You are good, and we can rest assured in that plan, Lord. I thank You for this time together. And it's in Your Son's name that we pray. Amen.