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Felicity: Hello, everyone. This podcast is sponsored by 10ofthose.com. 10ofthose.com handpicked the best Christian books that point to Jesus and sell them at discounted prices. The more you buy, the cheaper they get. Check them out after this episode at 10ofthose.com.

Sarah: Welcome to Two sisters and a cup of tea! I'm Sarah and I live in the UK and this is my sister Felicity and she lives in the US.

Felicity: Hello, everyone.

Sarah: Listen, what's new of today?

Felicity: Well, I thought, you know, it's our last episode, which I feel a little sad about, and I thought, really, what could I drink apart from Yorkshire Gray, which, if you're new to this, is the mixture yorkshire tea, Earl Gray. You can't beat it.

Sarah: It is a winner, actually. I've definitely grown to really enjoy it over the last few weeks. So thank you very much for influencing my team decisions there.

Felicity: Oh, I feel quite proud of that. I was actually talking to a friend yesterday and she had a cup of Yorkshire Gray in front of her as we were speaking. I felt very proud, to be honest. I don't know whether she was doing that already or whether I had changed her tea habits. I'm going to take the credit.

Sarah: Yeah, I would. Is it a biscuit kind of time for you right now or not?

Felicity: Well, I mean, many people would say not, but I have eaten most of the milk chocolate hot knob. It's the last one in the house. I don't know whether Jonathan knows that it is the last one that's gone.

Sarah: Now a worthy time to eat it.

Felicity: I think, so I've been saving it. Every time I've offered biscuits to the boys, I've removed the hobnob.

Sarah: Do they know that or not?

Felicity: No. Also, they don't really know what hobnob is. I feel it'd be a wasted biscuit moment. They are happy with Aldi's best.

Sarah: That's a good point. Well, I have gone for Aldi's best this week. You'll be glad to know I'm off the cheat and onto the specially selected all butter salted caramel cookies, half coated with milk chocolate.

Felicity: Wow. Half coated? Like dipped in or dip?

Sarah: Half dipped. It's definitely a step up for the painting in every way.

Felicity: I'm glad that Specially Selected has made the podcast.

Sarah: It's a significant moment since the last episode of the first season. It's a big moment and we've got lots of questions. Thank you so much to everyone who has sent in a question over the last couple of weeks. We're really thankful for that and we are looking forward to getting stuck into answering them. This episode is going to be a little longer than our 20 minutes usual time, just because we really wanted to answer all these questions and we want to give them good amount of time to do that. So we're looking at about half an hour for this episode, aren't we?

Felicity: Yeah.

Sarah: So should we get stuck into the question?

Felicity: Yes. You kick us off, Sarah.

Sarah: So the first question is a tea related one, actually. So if you make tea in a teapot, do you add milk to the cup before or after adding the tea?

Felicity: I mean, it's a good question, to be honest. It's not a question I've ever considered. The irony of this, Sarah, in many ways, is that you and I only started drinking tea probably in our mid 20s. We're relatively new to the tea game, and our parents, I would say, I've never seen them put milk in the cup before pouring the tea in. However, I think I have seen our granny do it.

Sarah: I think it's like a step up on the tea class enos, which surprises me that you therefore haven't done that.

Felicity: Because of my classy tea drinking habits.

Sarah: Yes, it's true.

Felicity: Or maybe I should start doing it. I think that you don't need to put the milk in the cup first, but it might enhance the experience. I actually had an American speak to me recently, a friend, say that she had put the milk into the teapot. Oh, no. I know. I didn't know how to respond, because exactly, that's the response. But in a time, I say it's really not a very good idea. I think your pee experience will be much better if you don't do that ever again, please.

Sarah: Because everyone knows you're not even really meant to wash up the teapot with washing up liquid, are you? You just meant to rinse it.

Felicity: She was really embracing the tea drinking fingers. So it's kind of like applause for the effort and maybe just change the tactic.

Sarah: Method.

Felicity: Method. That's it. Method. Yeah.

Sarah: Okay, let's move on to the next question. So, Felicity, we've got a couple of questions here, a bit more about you and I, so I'm going to kick off with Felicity. How did you end up in the US and what cultural adjustments have you had to make.

Felicity: In the US? We came to be in the US through my husband's work. He works, actually, for ten of those.com who sponsored this podcast, and we are kind of kicking off the US branch of that UK company. So we sell and publish Christian Resources books and things that point to Jesus. And so we find ourselves in Illinois for that reason. We've been here for just over 18 months. And culturally speaking, to be honest, I know we joke about the biscuit thing, but the food aspect is quite a big factor in that. Even just the trip to the supermarket, which they call the grocery store over here, lots of the foods have different names and then the American kind of menu and choices of what they eat, it's just a bit different to us. So you can't find a few things and random things like stock cubes or creme fraiche or cheese. If you're going to buy a good cheese, it's really expensive, which is surprising, because in the UK, that's the thing. I think that was probably the hardest thing to navigate. And then on a social level, there's a whole world of assumptions, I think, in relationships. That just probably a shared context. So if you've grown up in America, then that's just you kind of know about a lot of stuff that happened in America and I know nothing. And then I've got my own origins back in the UK, so that's been one of the challenges, has probably been just reading other people and working out what they're thinking as they're speaking and that kind of thing.

Sarah: Yeah. I'd say looking on and watching you from a distance. It's definitely been one of those things where you speak the same language as everyone. But actually. That doesn't necessarily mean that you get the culture that you've moved to. And as you move to any culture. It's a learning curve. Isn't it. Of what life looks like in places. And that's regardless of the UK or overseas. It's been very interesting.

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's right, and I think you're right. But it's not just a kind of cross Atlantic thing, isn't it? So you way from Dorset and you now live in Newcastle. How did you end up in Newcastle? That's what someone has asked here.

Sarah: By God's providence, we got a job here. So David, my husband, is a pastor up here at our church almost seven years ago now, he got a job to come up here. So that's why, really, we looked at lots of different places. This is the job that seated us most and that he was offered. And so we moved. Yes, that's how we came to be here. Our next question is, how has God used us in these contexts? Which I think is a tricky one, but I think both Newcastle and the US, we've both been in life situations where we both have small children. Primarily, God has used us to mother our children and to serve our families in looking after small children. And alongside that, it's been faithful, as Lord Jesus calls us to, isn't it? So I think probably I watch you and I guess I hope maybe you watch me. And we've probably seen each other grow and our love for Jesus through different moves and through the different contexts that we're in. And also growing our love for other people. Whether that's been serving in different ways in our church families. Or for me at the school gates or

toddler groups or whatever else it is. In terms of how we try to meet lots of people and like. Share Christ. Let's turn to have a cook, then. So our first question on how to cook for you, what made you choose have a cook?

Felicity: We decided on how to cook. I don't know whether this is really not a very good reason, but it's quite a short book. And that was a good thing, because we wanted to test the water on this podcast thing and we wanted to have to do a whole book together, didn't we? So we get the kind of the big punch of the whole of Habakkuk rather than kind of dipping into a longer book. I've spent quite a lot of time in Old Testament prophecy recently, so I'm always inclined towards that and I think for both of us, it's not a massively familiar book, is it? And so we wanted to do something that neither of us knew very well. And also I think it's one that maybe people hesitate to go to because we're not quite sure how to read it, so we wanted to help others to feel a bit more confident, to stumble along with us.

Sarah: It's been a good stumble, isn't it? I've really enjoyed the journey and it's been good to hear that other people have appreciated they wouldn't normally pick up themselves, maybe.

Felicity: Yeah, we've been massively encouraged by being in it and I do think it has shaped the way that we're thinking, actually. Let's move on to the next question. Someone came up with a really good question here. So this person says, I found Habakkuk really exposing at times, particularly when it comes to my attitude to prayer. Any advice for praying when life is hard and not just burying your head in the sand?

Sarah: Such a helpful question, isn't it? I think we're all probably feeling like that at different times, don't we? And definitely have a Cook has been so exposing on my own heart and my own prayer life as well. So thank you so much for this question. I think the first thing to say is that Habakkuk shows us a pattern of lament, doesn't he? All the way through the book, he shows us what it looks like to come to the Lord honestly, openly, in a row. His questions are raw, his prayers are raw and honest and I think that's really helpful for a pattern of how we approach the Lord our God. And it's helpful for us whatever situation, whatever circumstance we're finding really hard. We can pray like habitat, even when we don't feel like it. And I think that what we were looking at last time is just that he's written this song at the end of Habakkuk for the people of God. It's a personal song of his, but he's written it with a congregation in mind so that they can sing it and they can pray it in exile when things are really tough and it can help train their hearts to pray these things, even when they might not feel like praying straight away. And I think that's really helpful, isn't it? And you get a similar thing all the way through the Psalms that actually it's good for us to pray God's word, even when we might not feel like our hearts might not be in that place. So I think that's the first thing I'd say on that question. The second thing is I've been really struck. We've been doing Hebrews in sermons on Sundays at the moment. And in Hebrews three, verse twelve talks about today if you hear his voice, do not harden your hearts and it says see to it, brothers and sisters, that none of you have a sinful, unbelieving heart that turns away from the living God, but encourage one another daily as long as it is called today. And I think just kind of off the back of this question that makes me think actually if you're hearing God's voice through habitat today, just ask Him to help you. Ask God honestly for that help to pray rather than burying your head in the sand. And then also talk to someone else. Talk to others and seek the encouragement of others for your own heart when you're feeling like you just don't know how to pray at the moment and get others to encourage you. To ask you how you're doing. To pray with you. Whatever it is to know that you're not alone because we're never alone in these battles but can often feel lonely.

Felicity: I think that's a really great answer to that. And I think apart of that is that last point because it can feel like we're just supposed to pray on our own because that's me and my God, I'm just supposed to be able to do this. But I think if I look back over my Christian life, I've hugely benefited from praying with people and actually learning from others how to pray honestly. And that's one of the things about Habakkuk, isn't it? How honest he is in coming to the Lord, but we can also hear other people being honest and then kind of learn how to do it ourselves. And I think that's really helpful and a really apt question because I think we all go through kind of seasons of feeling like that.

Sarah: Absolutely. And what we were talking about the other day actually off the back of Hebrews in this is like encouraging one another daily doesn't always look like being the

joyful encourager encouraging someone can look back like a WhatsApp message going I'm really struggling to pray at the moment, please can you pray for me? What an encouragement that is to receive that kind of message. Because you're asking me to journey with you, you're asking me to commit you to the Lord. Of course I'd want to do that. I think just having a broad view of what encouraging looks like as well. Being honest with that is a real encouragement.

Felicity: Yeah, really helpful.

Sarah: Let me ask okay, so the next question then is what has impacted you most as you've been reading have a Cook and another question as well, which is quite similar and you got a standout verse from Having a cook.

Felicity: Yeah, I've been thinking about this one, this one all week actually in there. I mean, there's so much to say, isn't it my temptation? And I talk a bit too much anyway. So I'm going to resist this temptation. It's just to talk through the whole of Habakku because it feels like there's so much in there it's impacted me. I'm not going to do that, don't worry. But I was thinking about it this morning and I was thinking that there's a verse, chapter three, verse two. And he says, Lord, I've heard of your fame, I stand in awe of your deeds. Lord, I repeat them in our day, in our time, make them known in Roth. Remember mercy. It's not my kind of go to verse in Habakkuk. But as I was thinking about it. I think there's so much in this that has really wowed me about God because Habakkuk in many ways has shown me a huge picture of God and a God who's really bothered about injustice and just the certainty of this powerful God. This mighty God who is in relationship with his people and he is coming in rough because he really cares about injustice and he's going to sort that out and yet he is also the God who comes in mercy. And so as we know Jesus, so we know that mercy all the more. And I think there's something about the kind of repeated picture of God in chapter three, particularly that kind of poetry of it, how kind of big and graphic the language is there that just reminds us again and again our God is big and powerful and is able to sort out the mess that we see around us. And amazingly in the midst of that we live by faith in Christ and so we know his mercy. And so that really struck me as we've been going through. What about you sir? Any standout verses?

Sarah: Stand out versus for me? It's just so encouraging to hear you say all that. So great, isn't it? Stand out versus for me. I don't know if there's a stand up verse but I think what's really struck me, struck me or impacted me the most is seeing the whole way through habitat circumstances are not good. Whether he's looking at the injustice surrounding him in the people of God or outside of the people of God with Babylon, when he's looking ahead to the judgment and what the destruction that's going to fall upon people at the end, in no way has he got a happy situation going on and yet the core of his faith, the core of his heartbeat is at the end. It's that joyful delight in the Lord. And I think that really struck me and it's really impacted me as I've gone through and we've kind of lived with habitat over the last few weeks and we've just seen the extent to which his face does not depend on his circumstances. It is outside of what's going on and it is so centered on God's character that we seem to be extraordinarily just, righteous and merciful and full of grace. And I think that's just had a big impact on me and it's been really helpful when, like many others in the UK circumstances, it's been a really hard lockdown for all of us. It's been painful in many ways and I think this has just been a really timely word. I'm very struck by we said we could have just chose this almost on a whim of like, let's just put the card but short, but something that will get us stuck in the Old Testament and actually in the Lord's Providence, he used it. It's been a very timely word for my heart in this season and I think probably it's been that for others as well. So that's had a big impact.

Felicity: Okay, let's just move on to general Bible wordy kind of things. Do you have a favorite part of the Bible, Sarah?

Sarah: Oh, I found this a really hard question, and the reason I found it was a hard question is because I'm very fickle and it turns out that my favorite part of the Bible is whatever I've been studying the most recently have a cook or Hebrews, because I'm really enjoying that in our services at the moment of Sundays. I'm also dealing into ephesians where I can, and I'm really enjoying that, but asked me two years ago or 18 months ago and my head was stuck in colossians a lot. So that would be my favorite book. So essentially anywhere that I'm currently sitting and dwelling in, that is my favorite part.

Felicity: Yeah, I think that's so true. I'm like that as well. I spent most of 2020 in Isaiah, and so now I'm like any opportunity to talk about Isaiah, but actually he's small. Yeah.

Sarah: Okay, the next question is do you have a specific train of thought or set of questions when you start studying a passage?

Felicity: Yeah, this is an interesting wasn't it? Because I think and us doing this together has shown us that we have quite different approaches to things, as you would see if you were to look at our various notes and if you were privy to our early conversations on how to cook, it was just a total different planes of like, what are we even talking about? Because I think I probably have I do have a few questions that I'm always asking. One of those kind of ways of thinking about it is every time I'm looking at a Bible passage, I'm thinking, well, what is the writer saying? Why are they saying it? And then, what's the so what for the people then, but also for us now? And then if you dig into those questions a bit more so for the what you're going to be thinking about the context, like what is being said in this context and what's the structure? Like, what's the writer, how is he organizing his words? What's the language being used? But then the why question is really important because why does the writer, why does God want us to hear this right now? And what's the big impact of that? And then when we kind of have a think about that, and that's the one that really requires some thought and kind of pondering, then you're beginning to get into the realms of, well, that then is the impact on our hearts. And what does that actually look like? How does that manifest itself in the way I think, the way I feel, what I'm going to change or seeking to do or any of those things? So it's kind of vague. But also I feel I do have quite a structured method, which is a little different.

Sarah: It's really quite different for me. Hopefully that means it's been helpful. It has been helpful doing this together, isn't it? Yeah. I don't come with the same set of questions. I probably do a little bit, but not quite so structured. What you've seen us do over the course of Habakkuk is just read slowly. I think that we've really gone particularly to many other places in the Bible other than that one time, with the right to solve it by faith and the need to kind of look through how it's applied in the New Testament. I think just trying to read slowly what's there and everything in its context where are really helpful, but I'm sometimes not as ordered in structures, and I.

Felicity: Think that's a good thing. And I think we glean different things from it all within the same ballpark.

Sarah: Okay.

Felicity: When, Sarah, did you first read the Bible with someone else?

Sarah: So I came to Faith when I was 22 in my final year at Uni. And very soon after, actually. The church kind of encouraged me to get stuck in with the youth work, which I wanted to do because I really enjoyed working with teenagers, and that involves reading the Bible with someone. And so I started meeting up with an older woman who was reading the Bible with me, which is wonderful. And the condition of me reading with a teenager was that would happen, which I thought was a really great model. But what turned out with me and Katrina Katrina was maybe 16 or something. Yeah. She'd just grown up in a wonderful Christian home and just knew everything, and I knew nothing. So I think it was probably an absolute disaster in terms of me actually encouraging. It was good fun and I learned a lot, and it was probably the wrong way around in terms of what.

Felicity: Are you sure you were beneficial to each other in that?

Sarah: Yeah, I think we probably were. And what it sparked in me, it definitely sparked in me like, wow, this is really exciting, opening the Bible with someone else and just having a look at what it says together, regardless of age and stage, and that really sparked a love for doing it. How about you?

Felicity: Yeah, I think I became a Christian also towards the end of my university career. And then I moved down to Bristol to do some postgrad stuff and I think I wouldn't have been able to articulate it, but I knew that it was quite a good idea to be reading the Bible with people. Not that I kind of thought I really could do that, but I had a peer kind of within my postgrad world who is a Christian, and so I just said to her, why don't we do this study together? And it was not successful in any way, we just muddled through, neither of us had a clue. I don't really know what we were doing, I can't even remember it. But I remember

thinking, this concept is good, even though this is not really working. But then when I moved up, I moved back to Leeds and I was a teacher, and in the church there were quite a few students and I remember actually just basically starting to read one to one with students and it was really simple. I'd just be asking questions like, what do we learn about God? What do we learn about Jesus? What do we learn about ourselves? And just kind of the very act of a one to one discipline. But I think, as you say, it definitely sparked what I feel like I've been doing ever since. Like any opportunity to meet up with someone and read the Bible, I really grabbed that and I really enjoy that.

Sarah: Follow on that with this next question, then. How does chatting to someone about the Bible go from being awkward to normal?

Felicity: Great question, because there is no doubt that there is awkwardness. That comes with launching into theological chat, like Bible chat in the middle of a playdate or whatever it may be. And I think that is a part of the reason why we've been doing what we've been doing, haven't we? So, 20 minutes over a cup of tea, just digging into the Bible a bit, actually, this, I hope, does feel quite normal, and a part of that is just through habit. So we're both quite used to doing this, so it's not such a kind of big clunky gear shift to do that. And I think that's true in any relationship that you seek to do this in. And it doesn't even have to be 20 minutes, it could be just five minutes, but you're just beginning to say, well, what did you learn from the sermon on Sunday? Or what are you enjoying in the Word and what are you enjoying about Jesus? And just gradually introducing a few of those questions. I think you have to embrace a bit of the pain. There will be an awkward kind of gear change if you have never done that with that person before. But at the end of the conversation, I don't think anyone will be regretting that you've spoken of the Lord together. So you have to kind of get through that and then the next time you try and do it all, it might feel less awkward and then the next time and the next time and I think it's one that you think, conviction wise, this is a really good idea. We're going to benefit, both of us are going to benefit from it. So let's get through the social awkwardness and enjoy dwelling on the Word together. What do you think, Sarah?

Sarah: Yeah, I think all of that. What's been super encouraging, actually, is hearing a lot of people who have been listening to this podcast individually and then going on walks and talking about it with their friends, family. And that's a really good stepping stone, isn't it, to then just, like, having these kind of conversations and when there's more freedom to meet up, actually, with a living cup of tea between you and getting a barbecue together, I think.

Felicity: Did you say a living cup of tea?

Sarah: You can see each other's cup of tea. I know this is unusual for you, but for us, we haven't done this for like, almost a year, where if you had people in your house last night we are very different planes here.

Felicity: I know. I'm so privileged. We got just two or three more questions, haven't we, really? Let me ask you this one, Sarah. How did you or do you because I think both of our children, or groups of children are still quite small. How do you handle your own Bible reading and study when you have very young children?

Sarah: Great question. My children are now school age, so I think I'm probably out of that hectic toddler baby stage. What I found helpful is someone saying to me, work to your strengths. So my strengths were like, how have I always taken out information? It's been by drawing, it's been by writing and it's been by post it notes. Like, my exams always in my life have been by sticker post it notes, like in the bathroom or in the kitchen cupboards or whatever it is, to remember stuff. So why would I not do the same for God's Word, even if it's just one verse a week, to be just playing to my strength of how do I naturally take in information? So that was something that was really helpful. Also listening to the word. So whether that's through an audio Bible or just through getting someone to read it to me if they were visiting when I had babies, and also just asking my husband to lead me when I felt like I didn't have energy. Yes. So just before he went to work today, can you just pray, pray for me and my heart today? Can you read me this little bit of scripture? And then at the end of the day, just seeing how we're doing and praying again together. So I think again, the Lord, he works through his word, doesn't he? His word will not. Return empty. And whether that's one verse a week or whether that's a chapter a week or whatever it is, and focus on

what's manageable for you. And remember that the Lord is at work through His Word, by his spirit. So just open it up. I don't know if that's helpful or not.

Felicity: Really helpful. Really helpful. I think a big part of what you're saying is just expectations. Like things do change in different seasons of life, so don't expect yourself to have that hour long on your own quiet time when you have small children, that is a rare moment.

Sarah: Yeah. Parenting the small children and reading the Bible. You have to be creative. I'd say it's learning to be creative and going actually, my prayer life isn't going to look like sitting down for a solid good amount of time here. It's going to look like praying on the hoop quite a lot of the time. But is the Lord using that? Is he growing you through that? Absolutely. Trust your heart.

Felicity: Absolutely. Sarah. We are looking to the future. Now, moving on from general wordy things, can you tell us, someone is asking when are we next going to be recording this podcast and also what are we going to be doing?

Sarah: Absolutely. We're very excited that we are planning a new season. Season two will be launching and it's going to be launching around mid April time. So we're going to have six or seven weeks off to get our heads around the new book, which is going to be James, which we're excited for, we're challenged by. It's something that we both feel we don't often choose to go there because it feels quite challenging books. But we know it's a really useful book to be going on. And particularly in light of Habakkuk. Where we talk a lot about where it talks a lot about the righteous living by faith. You then come to James and James seems to say there's quite a lot to do with work as well. So we're very interested to give ourselves a challenge. So if you're up for joining us for that challenge, that will be starting to drop those episodes around mid April, won't we?

Felicity: Yes. Looking forward to already because feeling a little sad about this one being over. Shall we finish by just reading those last couple of verses in Habakkuk and then maybe you could pray for us? Let me read those verses. So, chapter three, verses 17. Three to 19. Though the fig tree does not bud, and there are no grapes on the vines, though the olive crop fails and the fields produce no food, though there are no sheep in the sheepfold and no cattle in the stalls, yet I will rejoice in the Lord. I will be joyful in God, my Savior. The Sovereign Lord is my strength. He makes my feet like the feet of a deer. He enables me to tread on the heights.

Sarah: Let's pray father God, thank you so much for all that you've taught us through the book of Habakkuk. Thank you so much that your word has been at work in our hearts. Thank you that we've seen the value of having our faith not in our circumstances, but in the Lord Jesus. He is the one who lives by faith, who is the completely righteous one and who enables us to live by faith. We thank you for your mercy. We thank you for your justice. We thank you that always seems to this book and we pray lord, please with this word not get snapped up and distracted. We pray this word was sink deeply into our hearts and that it would impact the way that we view our own circumstances, the way that we pray for others, the way that we depend on you so that we can say with habitablog yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will be joyful in God, my Savior. And we pray that to the praise of your glory.

Felicity: Amen.

Sarah: Thanks Sarah, this has been a joy.

Felicity: Thanks for listening everyone and we'll see you, hear you what speak to you in the new season.

Sarah: We will. Take care everyone.

Felicity: Bye. Thanks so much for listening to this episode. It's sponsored by ten of those.com. Check them out for great discounted resources that point you to.