

Season 2, Episode 10: Grace that shapes all of James

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Sarah: Welcome to the final episode of season two of Two Sisters and a cup of Tea. My name is Sarah, I live in Newcastle in the UK, and this is my sister Felicity who actually lives in the US.

Felicity: Hello, everyone. I can't believe it's our final episode.

Sarah: I know. It's just happened like that. It's just here already. It's gone.

Felicity: I know. Like I said, I feel like James really has become our friend over this time and yet we have to put him down.

Sarah: Well, do we though? That's the question, isn't it? I mean, we might come on to that later. Do we just have to shut the book and that's it? I don't know. But I do feel a bit like we did it with habakook and then it was quite fasting about Habakkuk, wasn't it? Yes.

Felicity: When I said put down, I didn't really mean like put down, as in you put a dog down, just not be talking about him so much for a while. But you're right, it's a good question to be asking. Is that how it works?

Sarah: That's a book, I don't think I was thinking that you would be putting it down anyway.

Felicity: What's in your cup?

Sarah: Hot water. Well, that's interesting.

Felicity: Two citizens in a cup of hot water.

Sarah: I know, it's just a bit late for caffity.

Felicity: Yes, caffeine hit. I've actually realized we've got a little bit of a crisis in our house because there are only six Yorkshire tea bags left. We are coming to England, but it's not for, like, two and a half weeks.

Sarah: You're going to have to max out on the o grey, aren't you?

Felicity: Well, that's what I'm doing.

Sarah: Hang on, hang on. You still put your damage tea bags. You said you still had, like, 38 you're fine. Interesting. Yes.

Felicity: I'm not sure there'll be a worthy replacement.

Sarah: So what are you eating?

Felicity: Just the classic chocolate hognob. It's really hot here, so it has actually begun to melt on the way from the kitchen down to the basement, where I'm recording. So it's got a sort of, like, gooey feel, which reminded me of this. I'm looking forward to when I get to England. That kind of caramel digestive under the chocolate one. Remember that?

Sarah: Yes. I was thinking we might get some when you actually come to see us. Celebratory biscuit for that moment.

Felicity: Absolutely right. So what we were thinking was that we would sort of round up James by thinking in terms of summarizing. But also thinking in terms of what have really been the big punches for us.

Sarah: I guess.

Felicity: As we've been trying to sort of summarize where we've got to then. Actually for our hearts. Where has it really hit hard and not in a negative way. But in an encouraging way as well. So that's what we're going to be doing this episode. But first of all, Sarah, do you want to just help us think through what is the point of even thinking about summarizing things and rounding things up and all that kind of stuff? Is this just something we're doing for the podcast or is that what you do in your normal Bible study life?

Sarah: Yeah, it's really good question. I think it's a bit of a discipline to actually sit down at the end of the book and go, I'm actually just going to intentionally take some time to think this three, but I felt like we just whistle stopped our way through that last bit of change last week that I was like, actually, I really needed this. I really need the time to just kind of sit down and think, actually what has been the really significant moments in this book and how has it changed me? I just think it's a really helpful thing to do, isn't it? I think it just brings it all together. It just helps you cement things. I feel like there's been a lot going on in James and it's really helpful to just cement what actually are the real big takeaways that I want to keep coming back to. And I think that just takes a bit of time. And also it's just helpful to do it with someone else in that, isn't it? I don't know, what do you think?

Felicity: Yeah, no, I think that's right and I think it just makes it a bit more manageable because if we think back on James, there are so many different things that we've talked about, so trying to pull it together just means that we actually have something a bit more concrete to think about, really. And to think, oh, that's what James was all about. Before we started recording the podcast on James, I tried to come up with a little kind of summary statement, so I've just been comparing that to what I've kind of thought by the end.

Sarah: Oh, yeah, that's a good idea.

Felicity: Quite a helpful thing. And then I really like doing that with other people as well. If you almost have a sort of challenge, what's your summary? What's yours? Oh, are they that different or are they similar? What are the big things that we both kind of pulled out, which I guess is a little bit of what we're going to be doing this episode as we highlight different things that have stuck out.

Sarah: I don't think I'm that organized, though, with it. I think this is probably where we go. I don't feel like I've got just to burst your bubble. I don't have a summary sentence for you. I hope you're not expecting I did.

Felicity: Not at all. I appreciate my own way of doing it. We are different.

Sarah: Right.

Felicity: It's a good thing.

Sarah: Okay.

Felicity: Thanks, Sarah. Do you want to kick us off by?

Sarah: Well, so what we thought we would do is we have decided to come up with three words, that things are kind of like our key three words from the book and that kind of sum up where we think this is driving to our heart the most.

Felicity: Yes, that is what we have decided. It's quite tight on that. You're only allowed three words. You're not allowed only one word for each one. You're not allowed to sort of hyphenate a two word thing.

Sarah: No, there's three words. That's very simple, three words. So should I run through my words then? Yes. Right, so my three words are trials, tongue and humility.

Felicity: Interesting.

Sarah: Yes.

Felicity: Do you want to talk us through?

Sarah: Talk you through why? Yeah. Okay. So, number one, trials on my list. Just think it's been massive. I just think this perspective on trials that we've had from right to beginning, right the way through the end of the book, actually has just been hugely significant for me. I found myself praying through it in all manner of ways through the smallest trials of my children on day to day discipline things to some really big stuff that's going on for us and seeing like, wow, if I didn't have this book speaking to my heart in this season, how would I be thinking about these trials at the moment? I don't know. I think it's just been extraordinarily significant having this not a perspective shift, because I think I've known this stuff and I've known how to think about it, but I don't think it's been so real to really consider these trials that we're facing joy because of what it's doing in my heart and because of the perseverance that we're encouraged to see growing. And I don't think I've really ever connected the praying for wisdom to see trials the way that God sees them and to see things from his perspective. So I think that's just been massive for me. And again, the link with temptations coming into that and actually how I tempted to doubt God and be double minded in the face of trials. I think just the whole thing on trials through this book

has been really significant and it's had a really deep impact on the way I'm thinking, on the way that I've approached, thinking about trials going on, and also just in the way that I'm talking to other people like this is that James is coming out a lot. My friends, family probably really bored of me talking about James, but generally this has just been really important in the way that I'm walking alongside other people, I think, at the moment. So Trials, that's been my first big one, the tongue. I mean, it's just been such deep exposure on my use of the tongue and I think that chapter three was just really cut me to the heart and in the way particularly in my parenting and the way that I use my tongue towards my children, in the way I view them. And I think I've really seen again the need for wisdom and just like really praying for wisdom and how I use my words in all manner of different ways and I've really needed to hear that. Where was it? What was the illustration that you recognize a tree by its fruit, that kind of language. I've really needed to hear that in relation to my words. I think it's been very easy for me to assume that you can see it by actions and everything else, but actually my words really show what my heart is thinking.

Felicity: Yeah, it's so clear that our words expose our heart. They are an overflow of our heart, which is sobering, isn't it? When you think words just explode out without much thought.

Sarah: Yeah, that's it, isn't it? Without much thought. And yeah. He says, be slow to speak and be quick to listen. I think out of all the different challenges through the book, that's been the one that has kept on kind of exposing my heart and I'm thankful for it. I think that's what comes down to you. I think, like we were saying at the beginning of the book, we're like we're just so really daunted by this because it's going to be really hard and it has been really hard to hear all this stuff. But in a really good way, I'm really thankful for the light that's been shining into my heart. That it's good as I kind of encourage my children when we have a moment of discipline, it's like it's grace that shines these moments and helps us to see what's going on, isn't it? Trials, tongue and then humility. My last one, I think just both of those two leading me to see my need and see the need, the value, the importance of humility in every aspect of our Christian walk. And seeing ourselves truly as God sees us as a mist. Just saying that we're in desperate need of his grace and mercy that we cannot do this without. In order to get to that point, we have to be humbled, don't we? To see their need. Yeah. And humility and how we see others, how we see others around us, how we see our church family, how we see our circumstances and trials. It's a big theme for the book, isn't it? But just basically really seeing my need to need to see this. And I don't think I often pray, lord, help me see my need for humility. But that's been a prayer and a kind of ongoing prayer in this book that I want the perspective that he's saying we need. And I think that's increasingly just thinking, yeah, I want to be more and more humble. And that's definitely been I guess that is the result of praying for wisdom, isn't it? As we pray for wisdom and all these things, ultimately we want the heavenly wisdom that shows humility to see who God is and who we are. Does that make sense?

Felicity: Absolutely. So praying for humility because we know that as we're humble and as we're dependent on God, then we fall back on his grace. I think without the grace in there in our understanding, then it was a bit daunting to be humble, isn't it? Because what a water left in the dirt? That phrase that's been through James, that lifted up, but more grace and then lifted up. Whatever our circumstances, then we are lifted up as we are humble. So it's kind of a prayer to be see the real perspective, see the Godly, see who we are, see who God is. And as we are, then we are lifted up and embrace the implanted words that can save us. Yeah, absolutely.

Sarah: Okay, go. Your three words. We're running out of time already.

Felicity: That's pretty much the whole book.

Sarah: Just.

Felicity: Mine. They're quite similar, but maybe just slightly different. So I think the first thing I was thinking about was I think all the way through James has been this cultivating of a mindset. And I think it starts with that very first word in verse two. Consider pure joy whenever you face trials of many kinds. And that and it varies up as a statement, it's just a crazy statement that you might consider it pure joy that you'd have trials very similar to what you were saying, how we think about trials and how we think about what's going on. But I think I've maybe just taken a step back and it is all to do with trials. But in the midst of

that, James, as we've been reading his letter, has been cultivating this mindset that has put things in the right place through the eyes of the Lord. This is what's going on. And trials can be considered joy because through the trials, he is humbling us and causing us to fall back on his grace and lifting us up. And if we're not in that mindset, then it's total madness. And I think that has really changed the way that I've read James, because, as you say, we were at the start, we're like, are we ready for the pummeling that's going to happen? Convicted by the ways, we're not doing this. But I think I've been so thankful for the way that God really has been shifting my mindset that I might see things the way that he's seeing. And as we've had these various trials throughout the book, whether it be are we actually looking after orphans and widows? Are we too worldly? Are we showing favoritism? And you read that and you're like, no, I've got it all wrong, but as we see that we've got it all wrong and the relief of this is how it is without the wisdom that comes from the Lord. And we did it all wrong. But he says ask for wisdom. So I think the mindset, that kind of cultivated mindset and I guess as a part of that is dependency, which is very similar to your humility, really, if I was allowed two words, no.

Sarah: You're not there to keep with this dependency.

Felicity: Very much. I feel like every time I'm convicted of my falling short, then I'm reminded of how dependent I am on the Lord. And especially in our last passage last week when we were thinking that as we're dependent and we pray and pray and pray and pray. And that comes back to the chapter one, doesn't it? If you are lacking wisdom, then ask God, pray. And I love that kind of little phrase in the middle of but more grace. We can be dependent because there is more grace and there's grace. And then actually this is one which if I was usually saying this, I think I would be having alarm bells about myself. But actually I'm thinking like activity. So the doing, which if you just have doing on it, so it's like, no, I'm not sure about that. You're just ticking the box and keeping the rules. But actually in the James context, it's more is my activity matching up with what I say I believe. And I think the kind of embodied faith that we were talking about back in relation to chapter three and the whole notion that actually we should not be doubleminded, we're not hedging our bets. Actually, let's follow through on Read, Believe and See because God is God and this is the reality, this is what's going on. So I think that's been really challenging. And in the midst of all this, Sarah, we have been talking again and again about grace. How has your view of grace been enlarged or grown by all of this?

Sarah: I think in a really surprising way because I wasn't sure. I wasn't sure it was all about grace at the beginning, but it really is. And I think something that Sam Aubrey said has stuck with me and it's been super helpful, but he just said James is like a really good friend who's willing to call you out and show your heart and point you to Jesus grace. And that has just really stuck with me because actually you look back in the book and go, yeah, this is a letter of grace. This is a letter that exposes our hearts. But the exposure is grace. That is a gift, isn't it? It's an undeserved gift that the Lord will show us our hearts and point us to the fact that he is generously, willing and ready to give us more and more grace as we see our hearts. And I think that's just been wonderfully surprising. And beautiful to behold that in so many different kinds of facets of how this has impacted our hearts. And it's all God given. He knows what we need and he gives it freely. And we've seen that, haven't we? How about you? Yeah, I think similarly, I think that's.

Felicity: The deepness of the well of grace has been all right. I think as I've become more aware of my sin, more aware of my doublemindedness, then I've become all the more thankful. The grace is sweeter, isn't it? I think yeah.

Sarah: I think, as you said, we weren't.

Felicity: Sure at the start of the book whether it be that clear, but I think it's clear and I think it's probably because of that humble dependency, we've got nothing and so we then see that we've got everything through what God gives us. So it's kind of all the more clear and all the more deep. It's always been that I think we're seeing it to be that deep because we're seeing the nature of our hearts.

Sarah: I think it also kind of gives perspective on not just James calling me out of my sin, but actually willing my friends, willing the people in my home group, willing my church family to do this, to be willing to stand up and say, I'm concerned about your son at the moment, or have you thought about the way that you're loving such family? I think just that

willingness to say in grace, it is a gift to be able to call each other, to account almost, and say, let's keep striving together and let's be humble enough to accept those challenges in a kind of James like mindset and James that way.

Felicity: The knowledge of grace, because we have knowledge of that grace, then why would we do it? You're left hanging. But when it breaks and there's every reason absolutely. Well, running out of time already and we could do it for a long time, that's our big press, that anyone who's listening, that these conversations would be ongoing and the fruit of talking about these things together, I think, is huge. Not underestimated. So do pick up the phone, ring up a friend, have a chat about James, see where heart and grace, understanding and freedoms to say these things.

Sarah: Yeah, definitely. So the only other thing to say, really, is that we will be back for season three, but we're going to take the summer off and you are coming over to the UK, very exciting. And we're going to have a good think and pray about what is good to be getting stuck into next. So we will reappear in the autumn.

Felicity: With the actual please do be telling friends, reviewing. We just really appreciate we read every review and we're just so encouraged by what people are saying and we'd love for more people to be getting into the work together. So do tell people, leave a review and we'll look forward to being back in the autumn or the fall, as they call it. Of course.

Sarah: Yeah. Sorry. Will I say a quick prayer as we round up? Oh, yes, please do.

Felicity: Yes.

Sarah: Okay. God, we thank you for your grace. We thank you for the many ways in which you've shown us our hearts in the last season in James. And Lord, some ways it's been very painful. But we thank you that it is grace that you expose our hearts and point us to the Lord Jesus. And point us to more and more grace found in him. Thank you so much. And we do pray, Lord, for all of our hearts, wherever we're listening, whatever we're doing right now, help us to stop and reflect. Help us to consider our ways in light of this book. And we do pray that you help us not to forget what you've been teaching us. Please help us to cement these things deeply in our hearts that we will be living out our faith with deeds, knowing that you give us grace for every step along the way. In Jesus wonderful name, we pray. Amen.

Felicity: Thanks, Sarah. Thanks for listening, everybody, and we look forward to seeing you in the fall.

Sarah: Bye. Bye bye.

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