

Speaker 1 0:12

Welcome to the Practical Missions Podcast, I'm your host. Today on the Pod, I'm talking to the author of two books. The first called Overflowing Ministry and Missions That Flow From the Heart. The second book is Godly Grit, Unshakable Resilience and Grit for Life and Leadership. The first book, Overflowing, is about being with God before doing for God and letting your ministry flow out of your relationship with God. The second book, Godly Grit, is about understanding and reframing what God is doing in and through our challenges. I think you're really going to love our conversation today because my guest is not just an author, but he's also a missionary himself. He knows what it's like to learn a new language, worry about visa renewals, navigating transitions from one country to the next, raising a family overseas and wondering why the heck is everything taking so long. Well, I really do have the perfect guest for you today, so stay with us.

A Call To Take The Gospel
Speaker 1 1:00

I think before we get started, before anything else, just tell me who you are and your two books that you've written, and then I'll go back and ask you how you got into missions in the first place.

Speaker 1:12

So my name is Kyle Farran. We uh we serve as their Western Europe Regional Director for ABWE. We've been here for eight years in Portugal. And it's a couple of the books that have put out one, the first one is Overflowing Ministry and Missions That Flow from the Heart. And that's uh was really just a 15-ish year process of working on that one, of just God working in my heart to uh to grow to become the person that he wants me to be. And we can talk a little bit about that. And then the second one is Godly grit, and that one just recently came out, and just looking at how we face challenges and how we do that in a way that honors and glorifies God in a way that makes him look great in the midst of that.

Speaker 1 2:00

I've read the second one, Godly Grit. I haven't read the first one, but I really want to talk about both of them. But also, I just wanted you to know this is the first, I think I've done 106, I think your 107th interview I've done. And this is the first name we've had on the podcast. So be it.

Speaker 2:18

It's not a big name.

Speaker 1 2:20

It's not a big podcast. It's okay. So take me back to 2003. Why like why did you guys get into missions in the first place? What called you guys to go overseas?

Speaker 2:30

So, for myself, I grew up as an MK. Uh, my parents were missionaries, and so spent from the time I was five going through the training with them. And then we moved over to Papua New Guinea when I was eight. We were there for a number of years. Had to come back to the States for medical reasons when I was in high school and went back to New Guinea when I was 16 on a mission trip. And it was during that mission trip that God really impressed on my heart the

need for me to be involved in taking the gospel to the nations. It wasn't just a thing that my parents were a part of. It was challenging me to see how great that need was and how he had placed that burden and desire and calling on my life to be able to be a part of that. So through that process, then started going through the training. Some of the books that God kind of brought across my desk during that time was Let the Nations Be Glad by John Piper, and then also God's Passion for His Glory, uh, by which is a book Piper put out, but was has a dissertation for the end for which God created the world by Jonathan Edwards. And those two books really changed how I saw missions in seeing it that first and foremost, missions is about exalting the glory of God above everything else. Taking the gospel to people is a great and a wonderful thing, but that's not the primary purpose of it. The primary purpose is to exalt the glory of God. And one of the means by which we do that is taking the gospel to the nations. And so just seeing that in the proper perspective. And so that really reframed my drive towards missions, to see it primarily about the glory of God. My wife and I had met. She was also led into missions during a missions trip during her college years. And we were moving towards the process of going into missions. Had heard a podcast or radio broadcast. It wasn't a podcast then. It was too early before that, uh, pre-podcast. Heard a radio broadcast about the need in Africa for just the AIDS out on the AIDS pandemic and just the number of people that were dying and going to hell without ever even hearing the gospel. And we had taught, we talked about that. We were at the time planning to go into tribal missions, said, Hey, you know, let's let's pray that God sends someone to uh to go and minister to these people. Well, a few months later we had a conversation, like, you know, actually, I think God's actually leading us to go in that direction. And it was a culmination of those two desires of seeing people that need the gospel get the gospel, but also that same desire of seeing God glorified in a great way, of taking the gospel to a really, really dark place and allowing like a like a jeweler would set a diamond on a piece of black cloth. Where can we take the gospel in such a way that it's gonna shine brightest? And that was our real desire there to uh to see God glorified

Learning Patience In Support Raising
Speaker 5:27

in that way. So that's how we ended up in going that direction, did our training, three-ish years of support raising, which you know, you as you go into support raising, you think I'm gonna get there in a year, and God's like, I'll get you there. I think the the th the verse I had up in my fridge was Isaiah 46, 9 to 11. And I'm probably gonna misquote this a little bit, but it says, uh, remember the things long past, uh, for I am God and there is no other. I am God and there is no one like me, declaring the end from the beginning, things which have not been done before they've been done. Say, My purpose will be established, and I will accomplish all my good purpose. Those verses were so challenging me every day seeing those. And the reminder to me was I'm gonna get you there in the day, hour, and minute that I want you there. Like, don't worry. Like, you're here ministering and preparing now. I'll get you there when I want you there. And that has been so such a good reminder over the years that you know, we learn those things once, but we have to keep learning them over and over and over again in deeper and deeper ways. So I always encourage people during that pre-field time to really learn all that God wants to teach you through that time because you're gonna need those lessons for many, many years to come and in an even deeper way when you get to the field to just wait on his timing.

Speaker 1 6:52

Oh, absolutely. What a powerful verse as well. His plan will be accomplished. We can rest in that.

When Expectations Collide With Reality
Speaker 1 7:00

I'm curious before we start talking about the book overflowing. When you went to Africa and you had this passion, did you experience any misalignment between your expectations of what missions would be and then what it actually was once you got out to the field? No, never.

Speaker 7:18

No, yeah, absolutely.

Speaker 1 7:20

Okay, and that's the end of the show.

Speaker 7:22

God bless you. No, I just I think part of it came back to that, just that timing component of you know how long it things take to be it for God to work his his plan, just being patient on his and his timing and realizing that it's his plan. It's not my plan. I I can work and labor, but we have to trust him for the results. Just like you know, we we plant the seeds, but God grows the seeds. That's not our part in the ministry. We don't we don't grow those seeds. Our part is to plant and to to water, to be, to do what he calls us to do. But his part is to create the results. Remembering that is just a daily task to be able to, or submission of our will to his will. And it's so easy to get that misalignment of thinking that by doing more, it's gonna create more results. And I think that's really where a lot of that that first book overflowing came from is man, I was working my butt off doing and doing and doing and doing, but I wasn't stepping back enough, taking time to to be still and to truly, truly rest in God's sovereignty and in in the fact that He's the one that causes the results. He's the one that grows those seeds. So that that balance there of we have a part, we there's a means that God has ordained that we be a part of. We we do plant the seeds, we do water the seeds, we do work hard. There is that part of it. But at the same time, there's a part of resting, there's a part of worshiping, there's a part of just trusting in him and and doing doing our work in such a way that magnifies God at the end of the day, that so that he's the one that gets the glory for it, not us. And I think that's where some of my probably misalignment was, and God had to really work in my heart a lot on. And then, yeah, the other part to that is just that that growth in holiness and humility and faith through that process of who I am is more important than what I do, because what I do flows out of who I am. And that was really what God was working into me over and over and continues to work into me over and over. That who I am is is more important. What I do is important, but it's not as important as who I am because it's one precedes the other.

Speaker 1 9:46

One thing I've noticed living in the Arab world for 900 years now, or whatever it's been, is that Arabs typically are the Arabs uh that I live uh in the country that I live in, they don't get their identity primarily from what they do uh in the same way that Westerners do. Uh they get their identity from what tribe they're from, what village they're from, who their dad is, what their last name is, how many kids they have, but not really from what they do. And it's interesting how for us as Westerners, how integrated our identity is into what we're doing. And of course, that spills over to cross-cultural workers as well. When I hear you talk, I think, yes, amen. I love it.

Being Before Doing Gets Practical

Speaker 1 10:33

But at the same time, it feels a bit theoretical. I need to be before I do, I need to do everything I do for the glory of God and not uh just to do more stuff, not to be busy. How do I know if I'm

doing it for the glory of God? How do I know when I'm being or when I need to be and when I need to do? How do I take this from the theoretical to what does this mean for my life?

Speaker 10:55

It's a good question. So I kind of answer it in two parts. First part would just be on a practical day-to-day level. And that one would be if you're to look at your schedule of your of your day, of your life, of your week, what are the things that we're making the time for? Are we are we prioritizing that time of personal worship? Are we prioritizing that time of prayer so that those things would someone look at our life and say, wow, they they have a life that is devoted to prayer? And if not, then then that begs the question, okay, so what then are we depending on for results? Our schedule really is a clear way of looking at our life to see what is that, what are we depending on for the results to happen? Are we depending on God through prayer, which is evidence through prayer, or are we depending on our actions? Now we we still need to act, but what's the basis of that? Do we draw our strength for our actions from prayer or do we work first and then pray for God to bless it? Which one comes first there? So I think that's kind of a practical way that we can evaluate that. And for me, it was really just seeing, you know, I was just work, work, work, work. And I would, if I would stop work to pray and take more time to do that, now I'd still have my devotional time, but you know, those those seasons of prayer, those, those, like taking a chunk of time to pray. Do I feel guilty about that? And if I do, then maybe, just maybe, we we've misaligned some things there. And I remember just being challenged, going through the book of Luke and seeing the number of times where Jesus would withdraw by himself to a quiet place to pray. And it just struck me like, you know, I hadn't really seen this modeled very well of just being having that balance. But there it was, right there in the Gospels, that Jesus did this. And if if Jesus did this, I think it's okay if if we as his servants also follow suit in that, in that as well, of prioritizing that prayer. If people look at our lives, are they seeing prayer as that foundation? The other part to that was with the identity. One of the ways that I think we can notice this is when things aren't going well, what rises to the surface? What what creeps in? If if someone pushes back on us, or if things aren't going well, what is it that we fall on to? What is what is it that we fall back on? Does it ruffle our feathers? Does it cause anxiety? What's really deeply our identity there? Is it to be seen? Is it to accomplish, or is it to make much of Christ and be like John the Baptist who said, He must increase, I must decrease. Are we are we in that place and are we okay with that? One of the things that tests us or reveals that is when we face challenges. That that really reveals so many times what our true identity is, what our true purpose is. And so sometimes God gives us those challenges to reveal what's really below the surface, and then we see it. And then we have to work with God on that to uh to have him change us and grow us.

Speaker 1 14:09

The a refining process.

Prayer As Worship Not A Lever

Speaker 1 14:12

Yes. That's you have you just made a great segue into uh godly grit, but I I don't want to go there just yet. Oh, I just want to go back to this to your point about prayer. I really like what you said. What if if somebody were to look at my schedule, what would they see? What would they see? Where's my dependence in my schedule? My question for you is about prayer, and that is, how do we know even if we're praying in the right way? Like, is it I just need to pray more so that God blesses my ministry more? You know, this idea of like, okay, well, if it's not about doing, it's about being with God. Okay, I need to be with God so that my so that my ministry gets better or whatever. Like, how do we actually know, like, man, am I spending time with the Lord here? Am I just like trying to twist his arm to get to get better results in my ministry? Tell

me about how one understands even if they're I don't want to say if their prayer is acceptable. God accepts uh, God is a gracious father. We don't know how to pray as we ought, but praise the Lord, he gives us his Holy Spirit. But any uh any thoughts on prayer and how, especially the cross-cultural kingdom worker, can uh spend that time in prayer spending it with his father rather than just trying to take a checklist?

Speaker 15:30

One component of that is in prayer, just remembering that we can't use prayer just like another one of our other actions. In other words, we can't just use it like a tool to bend God's arm to get our will. And that really is that foundational part of prayer is coming in submission to God, coming as as needy, not as, hey, I'm gonna use this now as okay, I'm not gonna use this other tool, but I'm gonna use prayer as this tool. That totally misses the point. So remembering that as we come in prayer, it is a submission to God's will, not my will, but thine be done, and dependence on him for him to be working. And that is really just a key part to that. And then seeking his glory in this. That is truly just that taking that time of the greater part of our prayer initially is not just Lord, do this, do this. It's first and foremost coming is a opportunity to worship and to be in awe of who God is. Like, are we lost in awe or have we lost our awe? And that's always a question I have to ask myself because it's so easy to get so focused on what we're trying to accomplish for God that we forget about God. We forget to be like like Mary before Jesus, and we're more like the Martha that's that's rushing around, and maybe we're not rushing right then, but we're praying that he would do something. So we're always thinking about doing, even in even in our praying. But God wants us to slow down to worship him, to be with him. And so that's I think the first part of prayer is just that that submission and worship and just being in awe of who he is. And then it moves to praying for his will to be done through the ministries in all that we do.

Speaker 1 17:22

A few days ago, we had a worship night and we sang, when I survey the wondrous cross, and I was struck, I was struck by how often I'm not surveying the wonder the wondrous cross. You know, you you talk about being in awe uh of God, and yeah, it take for that to happen, it takes our eyes being fastened, both of our eyes being fastened uh onto our great triune God. It's hard to be in awe of him when we're not surveying, as it were, the his wondrous, his wondrousness, his greatness, his beauty.

Speaker 18:00

I think that has to be the foundation of of all we we do is just taking that time for worship and to just to be still and know that he's God, to worship him for who he is. That will absolutely alone will change your life and your ministry to be able to prioritize that true personal worship of God. I did think of one other part to that, going back to the prayer question. Your personal holiness, our personal holiness and and walk with God is also a key part to that. You know, God tells us that if we're not walking in in holiness and when we're when we're ignoring his clear commandments and his clear revealed will for our lives, we shouldn't expect him to be also then turning around and answering our prayers and and giving us guidance in the the unclear areas, because God wants our hearts to be holy before him. And one of the passages that God really used, challenged me with so much in writing the overflowing book was 2 Timothy 2, 20 and 21. It says, Now in a great house are there not vessels of gold and silver, but also of wood and clay, some for honorable use, some for dishonorable. Therefore, if a man cleanses himself from what is dishonorable, he will be a vessel for honorable use, set apart as holy, useful to the master of the house, ready for every good work. And that that if it hit me so hard that God wants holy servants. In our actions and our thoughts, all of it. That is a foundation to prayer. If we desire God to be hearing our prayers and listening to our prayers, he wants our hearts first

and foremost to be holy before him. And that is foundational then to being a servant that is useful to the master of a life of holiness.

Feeling Unworthy And Finding Grace
Speaker 1 20:03

Can I ask you a question about that? When you think about maybe we'll talk about this when we talk about godly grit. But when you talk about uh God wants holy vessels, and of course, that passage is very real that you just read. I myself constantly struggle with the feeling of the weight of my own sin. I didn't respond the way I wanted. Last night in my living room, there was a bunch of guys around, and we had this heated conversation. And I felt like, oh, afterwards, I just felt like, man, I don't know if I had the gentleness. I don't know if the fruit of the spirit of gentleness was flowing from me during that conversation last night. You know, it's just this constant feeling of like, I'm not good enough. I'm not good enough. I'm I'm not that like how the heck am I supposed to be this vessel that God wants to use when I'm when I'm such a broken vessel? What advice would you give for a weary Christian like me?

Speaker 21:00

Part of our brokenness is a good thing. Uh it is that it's that realization that this side of heaven, we're never going to be a perfect vessel. But when we see our sin and when we see our our fallenness and are willing to come in brokenness and seeking forgiveness, he says that he washes us, he cleanses us. And it also, it's also not a, even though we need to be growing in holiness, even our ability to do so is a gift of grace. It's not that we work, we we work it out in our own strength. We work it out, we he works in us and through us, he works with us to grow us in holiness by his strength. So he gets all the glory for that. So even as we are seeing our sin, even our ability to see that we are sinning is a work of grace. So that we're not blinded by our pride. Because if if we think that we have no sin, that's an even bigger problem, right? So even the fact that we see the areas of our needed growth and are broken over them on a daily basis brings us to the foot of the cross. It brings us to that point of relying on him so that he can fill us day by day by day. If we think we don't have any problems, we actually have a bigger problem. And so even the fact that we see those problems is an evidence of God's work in our lives. We want to be growing day by day closer to him and having him change us, is probably similar to, you know, as as for the many people that have learned the language, I was initially I really struggled at first because I was looking at him, like, you know, I'm not making any progress. Like, I don't feel like I'm I've grown at all. Then one day the idea came to me, like, you know what, I actually don't, I can't measure my growth in weeks or even maybe a month or days. I need to look back over like a longer stretch of period of time. And that was really helpful to me as I was learning a language, to be able to see, okay, if I look back over three months, I have grown. Like I have uh progressed tremendously in that amount of time. And I think the same thing is true in our lives spiritually. We may not be able to see like growth in like a week time, but if we look back over a year, maybe two years, we should be able to see God growing us and the trajectory of our lives moving closer and closer to Him and Him working on us, Him working. Many times it's the same but deeper. The same issues. We all struggle. A lot of times we all have different areas of struggle, and those things keep popping up over and over again. But as they do, God keeps going deeper and deeper and deeper with us to root out some of those root causes and those deeper roots of sin in our lives that He really wants to work on. And so as those things come up, he's still wanting to go deeper into our hearts and lives and reveal the depth of those roots of sin and and root them out in that process.

Speaker 1 24:09

Amen. Okay.

Simple First Steps For New Rhythms

Speaker 1 24:11

Last question before we talk about your new book, uh Godly Grit. So if somebody is thinking, yeah, okay, I want to spend that time with God, I want to be near the Father. I don't want, I want to get off the treadmill uh and I want to get on my knees before the Lord. Uh I want to be with God before I do for God, but I don't have any idea where to start. Like, what's the first baby step? Where do you recommend? How do you recommend somebody start to get off the work, work, work, work, work for God and start being with God?

Speaker 24:45

I think two parts of that. One is just in your daily rhythms of making sure that your day, if it's all possible in the timing of where you're at, to start with God, to have that a time of of quiet with him, in his word, taking time to pray. Personally, I find it very beneficial to journal. It helps my mind to stay engaged with things. I can process different challenges we're we're going through. I can write, I write down the passages like every single passage in the book. I wrote it by hand in my my journal. And that's one of the kings, God had the kings write to the word of God. That helps it to stick in our minds. And so that process for me of writing and just journaling is a very helpful. It allows me to take a thought and build on it for 10 years. Like that, the over the overflowing book was literally in this godly grit, also. They were all my journals. And it's it's allowed me to take a thought and just to keep building on it and working with it, massaging it and growing that process. And so for me, that's really helpful. So just that that personal time of being in the word and not just blasting through reading, but like actually taking the time to read the scripture and then just to meditate on it. All right, what is it that God wants to, what do you want to speak to me through this word from? What do you want me to be mulling over throughout the day? Taking the time to memorize those words, God's word. And then the other part to that is I find it very helpful to have scheduled blocks of time, whether it be, I call it my wilderness time. I like to get out into somewhere in the wilderness, somewhere away from people. I really struggled when we lived in a in a big city in Tanzania to just find a place to do that because you're just in the middle of a third world city. So I understand the challenges that sometimes that it that involves. But just to be able to take a block of time where it's uninterrupted, take God's word, take my journal, and just go and just to sit and just to be with God. Those times have been some of the most fruitful times where God gives clarity and wisdom and just joy and encouragement, too, to be able to push through whatever challenges God puts before me. Seeing that pattern of Jesus taking time to go away to a quiet place and regularly do that has been very, very fruitful in my ministry to be able to do that on a regular basis. I'm not gonna say how often you need to do that. You don't need to be doing it every day, uh, because I think there's this the pendulum swing here. We talk some people like, oh yeah, we just do it all the time. Like, are you actually working though? So we need to balance that out. But that practice is a very profound way of saying, God, all of my work means nothing unless, apart from you, apart from you, it's it can accomplish nothing. And that is a very clear way of saying by faith, I'm putting this in your hands, I'm trusting in you, I I value you more than anything else, and relying on you for that wisdom and that guidance and that strength and treasuring him. And that is truly one of the greatest helps in in all of our ministry and facing the different challenges we have faced.

Speaker 1 28:13

Well, amen. You have encouraged me, and hopefully, by God's grace, man, I want to I want to put some of this stuff into practice into my own life. I am a leaky tap. Uh, and I need I need to spend more time with God in those times of prayer and being with God, being awed by him.

Godly Grit As A Field Guide For Challenges

Speaker 1 28:35

All right, let's talk about your newest book. It came out in the spring, huh? Correct. Give me kind of the elevator pitch for the book. So it's called give me the whole title uh of the book, and then maybe just give me a little overview of the whole book. Like, why did you write it? What are the issues that you're trying to address with this book?

Speaker 28:57

So the whole title is Godly Grit, Unshakable Resilience and Grit for Life and Leadership. I think personally, as I was going through just a ton of challenges as a leader, facing those challenges. And as a leader, at that point, I kind of felt like I knew what I needed to do. But as I continued to face different challenges, the real question was like, how do I survive this?

Speaker 1 29:20

Yeah.

Speaker 29:21

I I know I know what I need to do, but just the getting hit day by day by day with challenges, I needed something to help me survive that. And so this book is literally, like I said, it's my journal, kind of reorganized to make it more useful for other people. And I go back to it regularly. I literally was reading a chapter this morning. I was reading a chapter yesterday as I'm processing another big challenge that we're facing. It's it's kind of the field guide to challenges. How do we walk through those in a way that honors God? How do we just survive them in a way that honors God? And the the idea for it was kind of like a field guide for like an Air Force pilot. It's it's not a, it's not a it's not everything. It's not like the encyclopedia, but it's what that that pilot would shove in their pocket when they go down. What do they need to survive? And that is really what I wanted that book to be was what do I need? And what can I encourage other people with to be able to survive those different challenges they're facing?

Why Many Missionaries Leave Early

Speaker 30:23

Some different observations was just seeing some trends in missions of you know, 50% of missionaries leave the field after the first term. Wow. And one of the things that we've observed is we work with a lot of missionaries. We've worked in, you know, a number of countries now. We were in South Africa, then we were in Tanzania, overseeing a few countries in East Africa, and then we've been up here in Western Europe now for eight years. And we have eight eight countries we work with here. And so God's allowed us over the last 20 years just to see trends in in ministry and to see these. And one of them is that expectation or hoping for easy. Wow. And when people think that it's going to be easy and they get there, and it's hard. And it's a lot harder than they thought it was going to be. And so people sometimes people will will burn out, and that's that's more what the overflowing was written towards of those that just push, push, push, push, push until they drop and they burn out. Godly grit was probably more for when we feel like we need to tap out, when we're we're when we are pushed and pushed and pushed, and we're just like, I can't take it anymore, or those that just don't push at all and and quit too easily. That's was just an observation there. I was going through a uh some studies and came across a quote that said a Haitian proverb that says, Behind mountains are more mountains. And I realized so many times we have that wrong perspective, like because I would push and push thinking, if I can just get through this, then it'll be okay. And I would never say that because it doesn't actually jive with what I really believe, but in the reality of what I was probably living like, that's more like what it was. And so that realization that, you know what,

there are going to be challenges. We need to be able to just wrestle with that and be okay with that because that changes how we see all of life. It changes how we feel about things. It changes how we look for our strength and try to be able to move forward. And so this book was really to help myself, other leaders, missionaries, new missionaries, and Christians change our perspective on problems and challenges to be one that's more centered on

The Reframe That Changes Everything
Speaker 32:43

God. So, real as an example of this, when we were in South Africa, we would go camping every year and for our family holiday, and every year it would rain. For a few of the days, it would rain. And if you've ever camped, you know, the enemy of camping is rain, wind, and cold. And so you're at war with those. And one year I wanted to hike up to the top of Tagella Falls, which is the second highest waterfall in the world. And the rules were anyone that wanted to go, one, we were not turning back unless there was a blizzard. And two, there was no complaining. And so my oldest daughter and I, we did the hike and we were, you know, climbing up through the rain through the chain ladder or up the chain ladders, up to the top of the escarpment. And it was the first half of the day was through a rain cloud. You could hardly see uh the fog and the rain. And as I got up to the top and it cleared off, and I got a nice view up at the top. But I was thinking about that. I'm like, you know what? The rain didn't bother me like it did at the campsite. It was the same rain. Like we drove through the rain to get up to the top, and then we then we hiked. And as I was thinking about that, I realized, you know what, the reason why it didn't bother me was my perspective. I had a different perspective on that rain. I had a different purpose. And in this, the same thing is true in life. If we change our perspective on our challenges and our purpose for going through those challenges, it doesn't change the challenge. Like it's still the same rain, but it changes how we feel about it. It changes how we're able to walk through those. And I really believe, and I've seen this in my own life, as we change our perspective on our challenges, it changes us. It allows us to be able to push through those challenges with new energy and new hope and not just be torn down by those challenges because we see them for what they really are. And we see that is it as a means to get through through things. We're not fighting for our comfort, we're pressing on towards the summit. And that changes everything when we look at our challenges.

Speaker 1 34:50

Well, amen. I love that you wrote a book for maybe for the weary Christian, you know, who is facing a ton of challenges. And we all face a lot of challenges, and it's this idea of how do we reframe these to not get beat down by them, but to let God transform us by them. These change, this changed perspective. Before we get into maybe more of the change of perspective and what does what God is doing in challenges, which I think I kind of am desperate to hear.

Worldly Grit Versus Godly Grit
Speaker 1 35:29

Tell me, just the title is godly grit. Uh, tell me a little bit about uh an unshakable resilience. Tell me a little bit about that name. What is grit? What is godly grit? How does it differ from worldly grit?

Speaker 35:43

One of the key re key differences between worldly grit and godly grit is the source. What is the source of our grit and resilience? Is it that we just have to like dig deeper within ourselves or pull ourselves up by our bootstraps, or or is it that we lean ourselves fully on God and draw our

strength from God? And then that's really one of the key differences of worldly grit and godly grit. Now, there's some there's some principles that carry over. So you read, you read some of these other books on on grit, or some of the like the stoic writings and things like that, and you're like, okay, there's some principles there that are close, but the source is different. The source is is finding our strength in ourselves or or our perspectives that are not focused on God. Whereas godly grit finds its strength completely in God, it does things for the glory of God. So the result of that is if our source of strength is ourselves for worldly grit, who gets the glory? We do. Like we do. It's our our strength, and we we end up then taking some of that glory for that. Whereas godly grit focuses completely and rests completely on God for the goal of seeing God glorified in those things. Just like Paul says, you know, when I am weak, then I am strong. And he talks about how he was content with weaknesses. Why? Because it showed the glory of God. He was he was okay with weaknesses and struggles because he understood that through those weaknesses, it highlighted more of God's power and his glory instead of Paul's. And that is truly one of the key differences there. There's a lot of overlap of principles, but those, the source and the and the results are two of those key differences.

Speaker 1 37:44

It's so interesting. I always think this like the the self-help world, atomic habits or whatever. You know, they there's there's super good stuff, but they can only take you so far. There's a limit, there's a a ceiling to what they can do because I think they're looking, they're just looking inside. They're just looking at me. What can you do? Uh and so godly grid kind of flips around and says, maybe we should be getting our source of strength from God and not from ourself during during these seasons of challenge. And uh resilience, unshakeable resilience.

Speaker 38:19

So in the book, I kind of break down the different parts there. So just a little analogy that helped me. If you were to understand courage, strength, resilience, grit, and discipline. So discipline would be what gets you out of bed every morning. If you see, if you're climbing a mountain, if you want to climb a mountain, discipline is what gets you out of bed every morning to train to be able to climb that mountain. Courage is looking at looking at this rock face and be like, okay, this I might die here. And and having the courage to be able to start that climb. Uh, strength is just that what God gives us to be able to actually do that climb. Resilience is, okay, you just fell and you're gonna get back up and you're gonna keep going. And grit is what is the combination of all of those things to keep going until you get to the top. And having that purpose and that drive to say, hey, I want to get to the summit, and pressing on day by day and enduring and perseverance. So that's kind of how they all work together. So I probably could have written a book about each one of those separately, but for me, I was really just trying to figure out, okay, how does all of this work together? How does it all gel in our lives in such a way that we can be honoring God as we work through challenges?

Speaker 1 39:39

Who was in mind when you wrote this book? Who's this book for?

Speaker 39:42

Uh, first of all, it was for myself. Uh just to be able to survive myself. And so it was my journal to be able to process things and grow my own for my own self for grit and resilience. And then after that, it was really just for leaders and those in ministry, especially, to be able to work through the different challenges that that they will inevitably face. You know, when you go into leadership, you you not only have your own problems, you just you inherit all kinds of other problems that you have to also then learn to manage and and work with as well. And so

wanting to be able to share this with others in such a way that they can benefit from that. But also just for the the average normal Christian uh that's that's not in ministry, and I don't say that in a bad way, but not in ministry, not in leadership, we all face challenges. We all need to be able to have a proper biblical perspective on how to be able to navigate those challenges in such a way that God looks great through that process. And challenges are one of the ways that God gives us gifts to be able to be a light and a testimony for Him. And so many times we miss those opportunities. So this book was really designed to be able to challenge anyone that's a Christian and how they should be living their life for God. And I have really written both of my books because we've lived overseas for so many years. A number of my friends that were second language English, I would have loved to hand them, you know, a John Piper book or something like that. And I love John's books, but the the language level was sometimes really hard for a non-native English speaker to be able to pick up and read. And so I've really tried to keep the language level at a global English as much as possible to make it easy to read. It's it's hard concepts, it's difficult concepts. So those concepts are hard enough. I didn't want to make the language hard as well. And so I hope that it was written in an easier-to-read language to be able to make it more accessible for people to be able to really wrestle with the truths that that are there in God's word.

Speaker 1 42:00

I love that. I really, really love that. That in your mind as you're writing this book, you're thinking about non-native English speakers might read this and let me get let me get something that's accessible to them. Wow, well done. I love that. I don't know if I've ever heard anybody say that before.

Speaker 42:15

Yeah, it was a very purposeful desire to do that to make it as accessible as possible. I know it may not make it sound as amazing, but at the same time, if it makes it more accessible to more people, then I hope that uh that God uses that in that in a good way that way. There's a there's a place for both of those. And so I'm not putting down any other styles of writing in any way, but that's this was something that God really challenged my heart with to be able to do.

Speaker 1 42:40

No, I think that's great. And uh a lot of people who listen to this podcast are non-native English speakers, so that's really cool. Uh, I think providentially, two days ago, I started reading a book called The, I think it's called The Christian in Complete Armor by a Puritan named William Gurnall. And right at the beginning of his book, like I think in either in the introduction or the first chapter, he says, it requires more prowess and greatness of spirit to obey God faithfully than to command an army of men. It's harder to be a Christian than a captain. I thought wow, that's that's so good because it seems like what you're doing in this book, Godly Grit, is you're actually saying God is doing something in the difficulties, in the challenges, in the hard parts of life. God is doing something. So maybe can we just maybe I know we're we're short on time, but uh, can we just maybe go through some of these perspectives on challenges?

How God Shows His Strength
Speaker 1 43:37

And and one is that God is glorifying himself through our challenges. Tell me a little bit about that.

Speaker 43:43

I think that's one of the great encouragements as we look at and you go through the Bible and you look at all the different people that we think of that God used in a great way. How did he do it? They went through really, really tough challenges. You think about Joseph. You know, in prison, all kinds of, you know, sold as a slave. Moses, how many years in the desert, 40 years in the desert? David, chased by Saul and running for his life. Paul, all the different challenges he faced, and you look at those and you see God's hand working through those. So what it did is it diminished the servant so that as other people and that servant saw what God did, it was clear to them and to everybody else whose power saved the day. A wonderful example of this is the story of Gideon, where you know Gideon's got like 32,000, I think, up against 120,000, and God reduces it to 10,000. Then he reduces it to 300, and he's and it says, so that no one would boast over me saying my own hand has saved me. That was the reason God gave that he gave for why he decreased that army. And that's what God does and challenges. He decreases us, he makes it super clear to everybody that, hey, they've got nothing here. They there is no way they can get through this. And then God gets the glory when he acts, he shows up, and it's absolutely clear whose power it was. And so I think that's one of the great things that God does through those challenges is, and then we forget that because we don't like going through those challenges, but we forget that God's pattern throughout history is that he has worked through challenges. He took Israel to the Red Sea. When you look at that, that situation strategically, that is a terrible place to go if you're trying to escape. And yet he backed them into that corner where there was no way of escape unless God intervened. And that's what God does in our lives sometimes too. He he backs us into a corner and he says, and we realize, you know what? We've got nothing. Like all we have is God in prayer. That's it. And we have to rely on him. And then when he does work, he gets 100% of the glory through that challenge.

Speaker 1 46:05

Amen. It kind of separates our sheep motives from our goat motives, doesn't it? You know, we always say, Oh, I want God to get all the glory, but then it's kind of like, but I also want recognition myself, you know? Yeah. So yeah, going through challenges really makes you, like you said, makes you weak and God strong.

Speaker 46:26

Tears us down. And uh, and you know, like Paul, you know, saying he's content with those weaknesses because of what it does, because it shows the greatness of God.

Speaker 1 46:36

Amen. God works more through our weaknesses than through our strengths.

Speaker 46:41

Yeah, and as our our our weaknesses force us, very similar to that last one, our they force us to rely on his strength, not ours. And so it it takes us to the end of ourselves. It's kind of like with a runner. When they run and they kind of they hit that that that runner's wall, and they then have to then press on in new strength. Uh, then when they get get that second wind. And the same thing is true in our lives, is we have to push, God has to often push us to the point where we run out of our strength, and then we realize, oh, okay, that actually wasn't enough to get us through. We actually need to rely on a different source of strength. And just like our body kind of switches over to draw its strength differently when it's in that for getting our second wind and a run as a runner, we have to switch over to draw our source of strength from God. But we have to actually get pushed to the end of our own strength before we realize we need to do

that. And so that's what God does in those challenges. He he pushes us to the end of ourselves. And so then we're able to run in his strength.

Speaker 1 47:47

Yeah, amen. That's the power of reframing what challenges are. So I think, you know, oh man, I hate being weak. Honestly, I hate it. I can't stand being weak. But, you know, I can only run in my own strength for so long. And then what? When actually, what we want is for to be running in God's strength for him to be uh the source of our strength. And that requires me to feel my own weakness. As long as I'm feeling my own strength, man, I'm strong. I'm good at this. I'm not necessarily, I don't need to rely on God's strength. Yeah, great reframe. I love it. God uses challenges to make us stronger.

Speaker 48:27

So I think a part of that just kind of connected to the last part is we do grow stronger, but it's stronger in God's strength. I think that that's a key component there to that. We're told that we press on in the strength that God supplies. And so that that is a key part I go into in a little bit in the book there, just making sure we understand that that distinction there. Yeah, God uses challenges to make us stronger. When you think about the the illustration of the gym, you know, if you walk into a gym and you look around, you're like, hey, you know what? I know what the problem is here in this gym. It's all these weights are just too heavy. We just need to we just need to put all these little Barbie weights in there, and then we're gonna feel awesome because we can all do it, right? No, the reason we need those, those heavier weights or those harder exercises is because they push our limits. And we create new limits by pushing the limits. And God does the same thing in our lives. He pushes our limits, he pushes us to new harder places, and it grows us stronger in Him, not in ourselves. We need those challenges to strengthen us. We need those hard times. And without them, it actually would be an unloving thing because we wouldn't ever grow stronger then. We would never be pushed harder. We would spiritually atrophy just in the same way as when we physically atrophy. I ruptured my Achilles a couple of years ago and was in a cast and couldn't do anything for a long time. And, you know, those muscles atrophied tremendously during that time when we're not using our spiritual muscles in the same way, when we're not pushed or given hard things to do. We just plateau or atrophy. We need those, and that's a loving thing of God to do to actually give us those as hard as they are. We do need them.

Speaker 1 50:10

Man, I wish we could go. Ah, I wish we could just like dive into the weeds on some of these things. It's so interesting. Maybe next time we'll we'll talk about it. But some people break under the pressure, under the challenges. You know, it's like God uses challenges to make us stronger. Some people break under it, you know, they get angry at God. Why are you doing this? Uh, and for other people, God actually makes us stronger and grows us.

Speaker 50:36

When we're rigid and fighting against God, you know, brittle breaks. When but when we're moldable, we we flex under the weight of

Bedrock Beliefs About God's Character

Speaker 50:46

that. The I think the chapter in the book called Goodness and Sovereignty would be the chapter that I would point people to on that, because those are the two key areas that people

most likely break under. And as I've looked at challenges and fear and things like that over the years and face those, the two different paths that fear can take and that's that are maybe anger at God or bitterness towards God, that it typically will take is one of those two paths, is it's either sovereignty or goodness. So we're struggling with one of those two things. And for the sovereignty, it's it's understanding that nothing gets to me that doesn't pass through the hands of God. For goodness, it's realizing that nothing passes through the hands of God that's not for his glory and my eternal good. If we can understand both of those two things and remind ourselves daily of them, that God is both sovereign and good. Because if he's just sovereign, that's that's not maybe a good thing because you know he can just do whatever he wanted to. But if he's good as well, that that balances out that sovereignty and that we know that all of the things that he does in his sovereignty is also coming from his goodness. When we struggle, many of the times it's with one of those two things. You're struggling with the fact that, you know, God allowed this to happen. How could he allow this to happen? Or we're struggling with why did God allow this to happen? Remembering he is sovereign, he is good, helps us to kind of stay on track there to remind us of who God is and to know that he is loving God, he's working things out for our eternal good. We may not see it right now, but we can know that he's good and he is working for our eternal good. And those have been two very helpful things for me to remind myself of regularly and to dig deeply deeply into. If people are preparing for missions or in missions, diving deeply, deeply into those two areas of his goodness and his sovereignty will help build the bedrock to be able to withstand the different challenges and struggles you're going to face because you will face them. But if you don't have the proper theological perspective to view them through, they will destroy you. Wow. You won't be able to handle them. And many of the people that I've worked with that have struggled the most foundationally did not understand one of those two things and did not really truly grasp them. And then worry and bitterness and anger were the results of those of that lack of understanding of who God was.

Speaker 1 53:23

Oh amen.

Unshakable Roots And A Watching World

Speaker 1 53:25

I needed to hear that. God uses challenges to prove that he's an unshakable foundation.

Speaker 53:34

I think this is one of my favorite lessons through this path, through this writing process. I was going to share a quick story, and I'll show the found the a bit more about that. But we were up on a vacation up by a waterfall, and my wife and I were at this waterfall, and there was these steep cliffs up both sides of this waterfall. Trees were growing down into the rocks out of those cliffs. And as I was looking closer, these these trees kind of their roots went back into the rocks and wrapped around these rocks. And if there was ever a storm that came through the those trees weren't going anywhere. Why? It's because they were rooted to the rock. They were rooted to an unshakable foundation. They were connected to something that wasn't going to move. And the same thing is true in our life. If our roots are going into a foundation that doesn't shake, even if everything else around us is shaken, we can be unshakable. Now, that unshakable doesn't mean unfeeling. Like we still hurt, we see, but we're not shaken to our core. When we really, really understand this and we drive our roots down deep into God, even when everything else around us is shaken, our roots aren't shaken. And we can be unshakable. There's a few passages in Psalms that really go into this, but one of them was Psalm 16, verse 8. It says, I have set the Lord always before me. Because he's at my right hand, I shall not be shaken. That is just, it was just such a powerful, powerful passage to me. Just that reminder of

I don't have to be shaken by challenges. And there was one other one. I was going to read from Psalm 112. It says, For the righteous will never be moved. He'll be remembered forever. He's not afraid of bad news. His heart is firm, trusting in the Lord. His heart is steady. He will not be afraid. What an amazing reminder that if our roots are down deep in Christ, we don't have to be afraid of bad news because it doesn't change our foundation. And what we communicate through about God as we go through challenges is huge because people are looking to us. When we go through challenges, they're looking to see, okay, they're a Christian. How do they handle challenges? And challenges are one of the greatest ways that we put God on display to other people because they're watching our lives. How we respond in the midst of those challenges is going to be what they view God like. And so how we go through challenges either makes God look really big or really small. So how we work through that is one of the ways that we make God look great. And if we're shaken to our core, people are gonna look at us and be like, well, you know, they don't respond any different than I do. So their God must not be all that big. But if we respond with unshakable faith and courage through that process, they're gonna say, you know what? I don't know, I'm not sure what's different about them, but there's something different because I could never, I would melt under that. And yet they're able to walk through that with courage and faith. What's different? And so it gives us an opportunity to make God look great.

Speaker 1 56:54

Amen. I mean, that's the last point I had there was God uses our challenges to advance his gospel. I mean, these are your points ultimately. Did you want to say something else about uh that? I know what you just said about having an unshakable faith actually spills into our witness to the world around us.

Speaker 57:11

I think the other part I'm just gonna add to that is just remembering that the purpose sometimes of those challenges is for that express purpose. It's not just, oh, we should do, we should act this way so that God's glorified through this challenge. It's remembering that the actual purpose of that challenge might be for that express purpose in God's heart, that we are a light for him in different places. But those challenges also open doors for us to be able to be able to speak into or be in front of different people that we would have never been able to be in front of or be around as a result of those challenges. One example of that was my Achilles surgery and the you know, nine months of rehab. I got to share the gospel with a number of physical therapists as a result of that, that I would have never met as a because of if I hadn't had that injury. Paul, we see in Philippians how he was taken before kings and governors, the challenges open the door for more of the gospel to spread. And so just remembering that, you know what, God may be doing something through this challenge. It may be a really tough time, but you know, my car is broken down, or I have to talk to the mechanic, or whatever it is, all those challenges, they're going to put us into different situations that are outside of our normal everyday life that God may be wanting to use as an opportunity to spread the gospel, to be a light for him in a different place, different way than we would have normally been able to do, as well as how we respond to those

Perfect Peace And Closing Words
Speaker 58:42

challenges. Amen to that.

Speaker 1 58:44

Thank you so much uh for journaling and then for putting your journals into books so that we can benefit from them. I've really enjoyed uh my time with you. I'll I'll link everything in the show notes. Uh, was there any was there anything uh you wanted to say before we go?

Speaker 59:01

I think just the encouragement from Isaiah 26, 3. This has been a real encouragement to me. It says, you keep him in perfect peace whose mind is stayed on you. And whatever challenge people are going through, my encouragement was just to keep your mind on him, be still and know that he is God. A lot of times we're we're carrying burdens that we weren't meant to carry. He wants us to stop, to be still, and to focus on him and remind ourselves that he's there to help carry those burdens with us. And he's there to walk through those challenges with us. And thanks, man. It's been great to have you on.

Speaker 1 59:38

My pleasure. Amen. To that note, the pleasure is all live. Well, I hope you really enjoyed today's conversation. I know I learned a lot, and I have a lot to continue to think about and process from this conversation. Everything that we mentioned today is going to be in the show notes, so you can go there and click the links. But for now, I just want to remind you that it's okay to be normal.