Today on the girl to find show, we're talking about something that I never imagined in a million years would be words coming out of my mouth. It's the fact that our sister, Alyssa, who was on this podcast not that long ago, living in America very is safe and kind of like this dream life married her dream man, moved to Ukraine. And at 38 weeks pregnant was in the car for five days. And to escape literally the invasion of Russia bombs that she could hear outside of her house. And we are so grateful that she is in a safe place now, but her, her parent in laws, her husband are back at the borders in Ukraine fighting for their freedom, fighting for their lives. So many people they know and love. And I promise you so many Christians. Right now, and non Christians are asked. Thing is, God good God, are you even good? How could you allow this to happen? Whether it's something like that or just something so personal going on in your life, a tragic loss. Someone you love that you're like, how could this happen? God, why? What's going on? If you're in that place or you've ever asked that question, we have good news for you. We have hope. And we have something incredible to share about the character of God. This is the news that has really biblical news that has given us hope in these hard times, given our sister hope, given our brother-in-law hope, even as they are literally fleeing for their lives, we want to bring this biblical truth to you today, right here on the girl to find show. Hey, sisterhood, it is Kristen and Bethany here. And we are. So glad that you're joining us for this heavy but much needed and much hope filled conversation. If this is your first time ever tuning into the girl to find show welcome. Bethany and I are sisters and we are passionate about God's word and helping women understand the truth of God's word because God's word has so much freedom. To our lives as we as we have taken it literally and seriously, in our darkest and deepest valleys and our mountain top moments of celebration, praising the Lord and crying out to him, going to him, going to his word for everything that we need, his word truly is sufficient if you're joining. This as a part of the girl to find book club going through not part of the plan, if that's what's bringing you here today. We're so glad you're here. And if you're like, wait, what? Book club. We have a book called not part of the plan and talk about timing for this book, not part of the plan, trusting God with the twists and turns of your story. We wrote this book in the middle of a pandemic in the middle of crazy stuff already going on in the world. And little did we know. That right on the other side of this book being released at our own sister like Bethany shared in the intro would literally be. Fleeing Ukraine because of the Russian invasion, fleeing for her life, and so we just feel like this book is even more relevant now. I mean, it was relevant before, but even more so now in light of the craziness that's going on in the world. So if you are joining us for the book study, we are covering chapters 4:00 and 5:00 today. And if you're brand new here, welcome. You can still join us. It's not too late. We're reading, not part of the plan with sisters from all around the world. Just go to girl to find.com/book club. It's free. You can follow along, download our PDF Guide that will help you walk through chapter by chapter. Help you. Dig in, but we're reading it together, and then every week on the podcast for eight weeks, we are covering different chapters. So right now we are on Week 3 and I just wanted to share something. It was actually a message. One of you sent me about our book, not part of the plan. And I thought it was just so incredible. So if you are struggling right now, I just want to read to you what someone said when they. Read the book so she says, just to say I have started reading your book as I recently lost my job and I'm now faced with crippling anxiety. I'm only on Chapter 3, but each page has helped me reframe my thoughts and. So thank you. Still having a hard time, but your book is a blessing, so know if you're going through something hard right now or have gone. Don't do it on your own. And if you're like, I don't know where to turn in Scripture, our book is not scripture, but we have scripture all throughout it. We have free study guide at the end. We have this free book study we're doing. So I encourage you to grab a copy because just like this woman who message. Reading this book is giving me hope. It's helping me to know how to deal with these emotions, how to deal with my anxiety, how to deal with my questions of God. Are you even? God, this book not part of the plan, trusting God with the twists and turns of your story will help you do that. I know that it will bring you so much hope because it has the word of God in it, so I encourage you to go to girldefine.com/book club, grab a copy and jump in and join. Us as we read through this book. And if you if you don't have the book and you're like I'm hearing about this for the first time. Stick with us today. Because you're gonna find so much encouragement. Because I know if I could sit across from you right now and have a conversation with you. And if I asked, you tell me about the hard things going on in your life, right? Now tell me about your struggles. Tell me about your disappointments. Tell me about prayers. You've been praying that you feel are unanswered. I guarantee and you know this, there are things you would share. And so that is why we wrote this book, because out of our own, each of our own journeys as sisters walking side by side for the last decade, each of us facing twists and turns, we never saw coming like we had no idea. I had no idea I was going to go on a 10 plus year journey of infertility, recurrent miscarriage. Eventually down the path of international adoption in the middle of a pandemic, a year before a war breaks out. I mean, no idea, but trusting God in some of those hardest and darkest moments, asking the question God, are you even good? Do you even see my circumstances? Do you even hear hear my prayers? I have cried out to God like that and same with Bethany and her journey of a decade of singleness, desiring marriage, longing for that good gift, and God saying not yet not yet. And Bethany, learning to fully surrender even in asking those questions. God, are you even good if you're good, why aren't you answering my prayers? Why aren't you giving me this good gift that you say is a blessing in scripture, learning how to entrust that to the Lord? And thrive right where God has her and to become a woman who is now encouraged so many other women who find themselves in those. Team seasons of Struggle so. Thank you. Hey, like my my own little intro like. Yeah, ready to come? That is why we wrote this book. We are not at the end of our journey. We're still very much in the middle of it, still learning how to trust God in deeper ways. But this chapter, specifically Chapter 5, is what we're going to really focus on right now because I think you look around. I mean, look around in the past two years, right? Still coming out of this worldwide crazy pandemic, which has affected all of. Their lives in really hard ways, like really, really hard ways. Some of us have lost people that we love. I think we all know someone, whether an acquaintance, a friend of a friend, someone who has died because of this pandemic, losing jobs, losing future opportunities, schools being cancelled, losing graduation. I mean, the list goes on of things that have been lost. And in that loss, there is a very real sense of God. Where are you in the midst of this? The world is crazy. Are are you seeing this? Are you still here? Are you? Even good. And now as we're, you know, still in the pandemic, but hopefully slowly coming out of it. This war breaks. Out. And it's not just a word that's impacting people on the other side of the world, but a war that is becoming very real and impacting all of us because of economy issues and things that are happening that are only probably going to get worse. We're we're feeling it in small ways as well, even though we're far away and in our family, we're feeling it in a very. Personal way because of our sister and her husband, who are living in Ukraine and now fleeing and trying to figure out what to do our sister about to have a baby. I feel it very personally because of the children that my husband and I adopted who are Ukrainian less than a year ago. We were in. Kiev, like it's just blows my mind to look back at these pictures and everything looks so normal. And then to read news stories about their specific region, Mariupol, which is southeastern Ukraine, and to see that Russia has completely taken over the city where we just were less than a year ago. Adopting our boys, it is crazy and I have found myself not questioning God. Are you even good? Because I feel like through the valleys God has anchored my heart in him. And the truth of his word, which we're gonna dig into here in a minute. So I don't find myself asking that question. But I find myself looking around sometimes and going what is the point of all of this? This is really hard. So wherever you are, whatever you're wrestling with. I think we all need some hope in the. Lord, right now, I think most people want to know though, was there a time in your life where you actually did ask that, like where you know and I know you share and not part of the plan, you really dig into, I think some of those moments and you share, you know, through your miscarriages and just infertility. You use that as kind of like the foundation of. Those questions that you asked so do you have a time in your life where you felt that or where you were asking, like? God, why would you do this? Like, I almost feel like you're. Playing tricks on. Me like, what's going on? Can you take us to one of those moments just because I feel like so many of us feel alone in those questions and we feel like, well, you know, you're on the other side of it now you're doing great. Where you can look back and see God's faithfulness. But I'm in the midst of it and I don't feel like my faith is. So strong. Yeah. So what you know can. I would say what I do share in this chapter, Chapter 5 of not part of the plan is, is the point in my life where I was asking this question. God, are you. Even good, and sadly, I it wasn't the last time I asked it. So the first time I asked, it was right after my second miscarriage. So Zach and I were married for about 2 1/2 years. At this point the first two years of marriage, we were open to having kids. We were on birth control and nothing was happening and I just thought, Oh well, it's kind of weird, but maybe God has a greater purpose and he wants us to build this really great foundation for our marriage. So he's giving us time. So that was my thinking. And so we had, you got pregnant right around 2:00. Years of marriage. So excited we were celebrating and it seemed like ohh the timing is perfect. We have this great foundation now. We're gonna be, you know, building our family. It's just full of joy. And that first pregnancy only lasted 6 1/2 weeks and ended in mid. Courage and I was shocked. I mean, I don't. I think anyone who experiences A miscarriage, it's always shocking. You're you're hopeful. You're you're hoping for the best. You're thinking the best is gonna happen. You kind of look at the numbers and go OK yeah it could happen but it's probably not gonna happen to me. I mean that's remember I remember feeling that my mom you know burst a whole bunch of kids and just seemed to like have this great she was like a pro birthing lady so I thought I'm good. So first miscarriage happened and you know Zach and I grieved and rustled through that. Our family was so supportive. And then six months later, I got. Pregnant again. And I remember Googling, you know, back-to-back miscarriages. How common is this? And it was like less than a few percent of women, like 3% or something. I can't remember. Like, we'll experience back-to-back miscarriages. They're super rare. So don't worry. Was basically the vibe I was getting from Google. Of course, don't put your hope or your trust in Google that idea, but I was kind of putting my trust in these statistics and thinking, OK, everything's going. Fine. I felt a little little hesitant to get as excited as I did the first time, but at the same time, I felt like everything's going to be fine and then 6 1/2 weeks to the day, seeing the exact timing as the first one, I miscarried again and I just remember after that miscarriage it was kind of a blur. It happened really fast within, like a few hours. I felt like something was wrong and then boom. The whole thing was done and I just remember. Crying and grieving and having to tell Zach, I mean, he he knew something was going on when the bleeding started, so he was kind of a part of the process. But I just remember after that thinking. God, what are you doing? This is crazy. Why would you give me two pregnancies back-to-back, only to take both of them away? This doesn't make any sense. And now I fall into this statistic of like. Few percent of women dealing with this like I just remember feeling so hopeless and asking that question like God, are you even good? And I remember thinking, like my circumstances right now feels so bad. God feels so far away that I was struggling to believe what he says about his character. I was really, and I say this in the book, I was viewing my I was viewing God's character through the lens of my circumstances. Rather than viewing my circumstances through the lens of God's character. And what I mean by that is that I was my circumstances were hard. They were tragic. I was grieving. Just the loss and the pain and emotional pain. The physical pain. I mean, all this pain and loss and and like, OK, the future, the the due date. Like all the things it just all comes crashing down and you're back to square one and you're like what is wrong? Wrong. My circumstances were really tough and I know a lot of you right now are walking through really tough circumstances and you might also be tempted, as I was to question God's goodness because of your circumstances, to view God's character through the lens of your circumstances. OK, my circumstances are bad. Therefore, God is a bad God, and quite frankly, that's just really bad theology. That is not biblical gospel centered, true theology that is alive from our own hearts, alive from the enemy wanting us to view God character through the the length of our circumstances. And so God really had to do a work in my heart and y'all. It's not a one and done kind of thing. It's not, say, a prayer. You know the flair prayer grab that quick verse and cling to it and everything's changed. Like sometimes it's a process and it's as you're grieving and you're experiencing that pain and you're questioning things. Where do you take those questions? Where do you take that grief? And for me, I knew I had to take it to the word of God because if I took it anywhere else, I was going to come up short. Was gonna come up with the quick fix. A temporal, you know, bomb for my emotions. My pain. I knew I needed something more. And so as I dug into the word of God and I saw the true character of our God and meditated on that and rested in the. That for me, that's when I started to see a glimpse of hope. That's when I started to view my circumstances through the lens of God's character. Yes, my circumstances are hard. I don't want this. But God is good. God is faithful. He is constant. Yes. My circumstances just took a twist and turn. They're changing. But God is unchanging. He is the same. Yesterday, today and tomorrow. I'm broken hearted but God is near to the broken hearted. OK so it's like over and over. Scripture was informing my emotion. And leading me toward what is true and that is so important as we question God. Are you even good? And that's why I encourage you, sister, wherever you're listening to dig into not part of the plan, trusting God with the twists and turns of your story for yourself, because you have your own specific circumstances. And so to be able to sit with this book, to open up your Bible and say, OK, here are all the scriptures that they've listed. Here are the prayers. Here are the questions I. And ask, you know, don't just listen, but actually apply. Dig in. Do like the the hours of of meditating and being in God's word because one podcast is great, but we don't want you to stop here. We want you to make this personal. We want you to have a relationship with God for yourself and we really equip you in that in our book, not part of the plan. Trusting God with the twists and turns of your story. Go to girldefine.com/book club and you can get all of the information about the book. A free study guide everything. I just want to do a really quick fly over cause we talk. You know, I hear you say Kristen. Like, OK, we've got to see God's character through the lens of script. And it's like, I OK, who is God? Like if I'm not gonna popcorn these verses. What in the world are we talking about? And I actually just shared this on my Instagram account, my personal Instagram account, because so many people have been asking us, like, how is your family dealing with this war in Ukraine? Like, how is your family dealing with all of this? Like, back in the states, are you questioning God? If God is good. Family seems to have a strong faith, like how are you even doing that? And people have been asking me this question over the last week over and over again, and I was thinking about it and just like, why is our family stable? Why do we come together during hard times? Yes, we're hurting. Yes, we're. And you know, they're suffering. We've our hearts are broken for the people. They're doing everything we can, but it feels so little, you know, and things are out of, you know, out of our control. And that's how so much of life is like, you just can't change things sometimes or stop things really hard. Things in life happen. And so who is this God that we're praying to? Who are we serving? And So what? I came back to is truly like knowing. Who the God of the Bible is, and I think in our modern day, so many of us have such a weak understanding of scripture and. We view it as very individual rather. Then one big story and we we view it as the story of Christ and his redemption and who he is. It makes so much more sense. But when we just pull our little circumstance out and say, God, who are you, are you even good? Yes. We're gonna feel alone. We're gonna feel broken. But what I want you to do is just. I'm gonna do this super quick so you can dig into our book. Not part of the plan to dig deeper into this stuff. But I'm just gonna give you a quick overview. If you think of our loving, amazing God, he created the world, he created the garden perfect. There was no sin in the world. You had Adam and Eve, and he created them to work the garden, to be in perfect relationship, not only with each other, but with him. They walked with him. That was God's original design. That was his plan to. And perfect fellowship. Not because he needed us, but. Out of love. That he loved us and he wanted us and he wanted to create us. Like, what an incredible God we serve. That's the same God that we serve today. And it wasn't him who rejected us. It wasn't him who said Nope. You're not good enough. I'm gonna reject you. It was humans. It was us. It was Adam and Eve who said God. I know you're loving, but I think I know better. So I'm going to do things my own way. They rejected God. They did the one thing he told them not to do, and at that point sin entered the world and after that. An animal was slayed. Blood had to be shed to pay for the punishment of sin. It could not go unpaid for and that animal, that blood that was shed was only a foreshadowing of what was to come. I mean, think. About this the. Whole Old Testament points and draws us to this moment in the New Testament of the Savior, the Redeemer. Coming. That's what everyone was looking forward to. You can see it. Even throughout the Old Testament, this Redeemer, when is he going to come? Who is this man that will come and save us? People we're anticipating and looking forward to it and think about it. God creates the world. He creates humans. They reject him. They rebel against him. We rebel against him all of the time. And what? He do? He gave his one and only son like John 316 says for God so loved the world that he gave his one and only son, that whoever believes in him shall not perish but have eternal life. He had his only son. Perfect, complete. Nothing wrong with him. And he says these humans that I created that rejected me. I'm going to spend my perfect son because he's the only one who can pay the true. Ultimate price for the sin and the unjust and and the the wrong that they have done. And So what did Jesus do? He came to Earth, lived for 33 years, a perfect life never sent was fully God and fully man. And then he literally went willingly to the. He understands suffering and injustice more than anyone that ever existed. He was perfect. He's the only one that deserved everything and he gave up everything for us. He was tortured, he was beaten all as a an innocent man. And what did they do? They hung him on the cross. And you know what Jesus said? Some of his dying words. He said, father. Forgive them for they know not what they do. Even him the perfect creator who. Could have literally just sapped us and said bad ideas. Shouldn't have created them out of? Love gave up his life, but he didn't stay dead. He went to the grave and then he rose three days later, miraculously conquering sin, conquering death and saying I have made a way. I am now at my the right hand of my father, and one day after, graciously, I give you time to come to know me. I mean, that's why the world still exists so that people can come. To know God, one day I will return and there will be a new garden and all will be made just like it was meant to be. The world will be completely new and it will be all as it was meant to be. You will walk in perfect fellowship with me, but I'm not going to. I'm not going to come back yet you. Know why? Because. I want more people to come to know Jesus. I want more people to come to know. The God who created them, who we were made in his image. And so as you're thinking about Scripture. You have to view these verses through that lens. That is the God you serve, the God of the gospel, the God who is making a new heavens and a new Earth one day so that we can live in perfect fellowship with him. And that is what gives our family hope. That is what we build our lives upon when you, you know, when we talk to our sister Alisa, who is, you know about, to have a baby any day. May have a baby by the time you listen to this, whose husband is going back trying to help refugees trying to get people out of Ukraine trying to help fight this war? Who are literally, you know, literally left everything that they own. They have nothing now, and our family is saying we feel so helpless. We feel so heartbroken. What can we do? How can we love you? How can we support you instead of rejecting God? We say God, we know this breaks your heart. Just even more as it does ours, because you sent Jesus to die for this. He literally hung on the cross for these injustices, for this sin. His battery literally was tortured for this. You sent your only son. I can't even imagine that I have one son. I cannot imagine giving him up to people who. Hate him and want to kill. For him, Can you imagine that? That's what God did. And so we need to think about when we ask that question. God, are you even good? Which is hard. And I know the pain is much we say God, are you even good? And then we think of the God of Scripture and then we think, wow, if I've trusted in him for my salvation, I'm adopted into his family, which means I get his inheritance. I am his just like Kristen. Dropped her boys. They have her inheritance. They take on her name. There are Clarks now. They're here. They're in her home. We hit that with Christ. And we don't have to be here forever to be absent from the body is to be present with the Lord. We have hope. So instead of rejecting God, let's cling to him and thank him for his mercy. Thank him for what Jesus did on the cross. Thank him that one day we get to spend forever with him. And instead of just mourning, we should be praying that more would come to know Christ. Because if if there's not hope in that, then there's no hope. And so we don't mourn like people who don't have hope. We do have hope, but it doesn't diminish the pain. But we know we serve a God who can understand and sympathize. Because Jesus went through so much himself. And I love that that is something we wanted to draw out in this chapter. Chapter 5 of not part of the. Is that we don't serve a God who's a distant, detached God who's, like, unacquainted with grief, unacquainted with suffering but a God like Bethany said, who loved us so much that he sent his own son to suffer in our place, to suffer the ultimate consequences of taking the wrath, the sin of the world upon his shoulders, dying in our place, rising again in order. For to give us new life. And so when we pray to this God, when we ask God, are you even good? We have to view God through the Lent of who he really. Is a God. Who is acquainted with grief? A God who suffered as we have suffered and understands. We can take our pain and our brokenness to God. That is the right and good place to take it. Don't take it to the Cheeto bag. Don't take it to the ice cream in your closet. I have taken it to those places. You know, the pills, the meds. Like, there's so many things the world will say. This will soothe. This will fix this will. This will make things new again and God is saying come to me. I understand suffering and something that we write in this chapter. Chapter 5 is you, my sister are so loved by Jesus that he willingly left his perfect place in heaven to live a human life filled with suffering pain. Rejection and loss. And he did this for the ultimate purpose of redeeming humanity by dying a painful death on a cross so that you could be saved. That's how much he loves you. The gospel shows us how incredible. God's love is for us because only a loving and sacrificial God would die to save his people, and that is our God. So every day in every struggle, in every grief from we need to remind our hearts of the cross over and over again. Because God understands there is no better place that we can take. Our pain, and like Bethany pointed to the future, hope I will speak very honestly that that is something in my journey of infertility and recurrent miscarriage, just feeling like. I I don't know if this is ever gonna end. I mean, I, I I kind of jokingly say once I. Hit menopause. I guess I'll. Have my sure answer like as far as biological children go like, OK, Lord, well, you know the door is closed now. Unless God pulls like a miraculous Sarah and Abraham. But I don't see that happening, by the way. You're far from menopause. Kristins only 30. OK. Oh my God. That is my joke though. Is like, OK, Lord, I'm gonna keep praying. It's not gonna. I still long for biological children. We long for the brokenness of what we've experienced. Like we long for redemption even in that. I'm sorry. To see to see like, OK, the Lord answer our prayers. We still pray every day and we also praise God every day for the two boys that he has given us. But it is still a prayer of our hearts. And so I'm gonna keep praying until I hit menopause. But something that I that really encourages. Me in the. Midst of this longing, it is, for me, still an unfulfilled longing in that way, and I know. Many of you have those prayers. You just wonder, like I've been praying this for a long time. And God still hasn't answered. He's saying wait, he hasn't maybe said no, because there's still time, but I don't know what his answer is going to be. That's where I find myself. And the thing that gives me so much hope is even on this side of heaven. If these prayers never get answered in the way that I'm praying for them to be answered, I can trust them to God and I can look to my ultimate hope, which is that I am not going to be on this earth. Wherever that at any point, I could die. But Lord willing, if I live in normal long life, I'll die of old age, you know, that's. My prayer as. Well, die of old age? And then I will go. To be with the Lord and my whole. Purpose of this? Have living on this earth. My whole purpose is to build God's. Them to glorify God and to love God with my whole heart. That is my calling. That is my goal. So as I'm here on this Earth, thinking about the suffering and the prayers and wrestling and continuing to pray, I find so much hope in knowing that this is just a. Blip on the timeline of humanity, like my life, is so short, and this is not my home. It's temporal and I will be with the Lord. One day where he will wipe away every tear where there will be no more crying, no more pain, no more grief, because these former things will have passed away and we will be with God made new with new bodies. Like Bethany said, the garden. Stored for all of eternity. That's what we're aiming for. That's what we're going for as Christians, that's what we're going toward. And so that gives me so much hope because I know this pain truly is only temporal. The longings are real. The longings are hard, the seasons are difficult, but it's not forever. And so when I meditate on the truth of Scripture, I remember what I'm moving forward. Toward as a Christian, the Lord brings so much hope to my heart. As we wrap this up and I hope this has been really encouraging to you, I want to point out a free resource that we created that I specifically found incredibly encouraging after my third miscarriage actually, and it is the names and attributes of God, because something that we can struggle with. And I think part of the reason we even asked the question. God, are you? And good, it's because our hearts have forgotten who God really is. And in those moments when our pain is so big, we actually make God really small in our minds, we bring him down to a human level and we view him through the pain of our circumstances. And so I remember in my heart, grieving so much, crying out. God, are you even good? You even see. And I knew it was going to be a downward spiral if I did not get some truth in my heart, I knew I was diminishing God, that I was putting him in a box, making him way smaller than the incredible God that he really is. And so I needed truth to be injected into my heart and my brain. And so I found. Line this 30 day PDF and every single day like day one, day two it had a different name or attribute of God listed in this little square with the verses for where that was found in Scripture and I just took little baby steps. Like I said earlier, it's a journey as we work through these painful things and we process these unfulfilled longings. We take them to the Lord but we run to his truth and as I ran to truth. Every day, by studying who God says he is in scripture, the names that he gives himself, the character, the attributes that define God throughout scripture as I study them one day at a time, I am telling you by the end of the the. My heart was renewed. God was big. He was awesome. He was good. He was faithful. He is everything he says. He is my heart just needed to be reminded of that. So if that sounds like something that would be really encouraging to you right now, we created a free PDF, a 30 day page. It's a 30 day. It's a 30 day. Prayer journal through the names and attributes of God, but really it's just a little square. Same kind of thing. But we girl to find it up. So it's really cute. And you can just take one day at a time and pray that name or attribute of God look up those scriptures journal in your own journal and use that as a way to meditate and remind your heart of this incredible, good and love. Your father that we have and you can get that for free. Over on girl to find.com/god. That's girldefine.com/god. Well, y'all, thank you so much for sticking with us if you haven't. Joined the book. Study please join us so that you can be reading along with us and finding this kind of encouragement week after week with sisters all around the world to get more info and to sign up for free. Go to girlfriend.com. Slash Book Club and if you enjoyed this episode, please tap that five star. Even if you've done it, you can do it every single day. That's something I learned every single day that you pull up your podcast app. You can tap five stars and continue to help us get more ratings, which will allow our podcast to be discovered by more women who also need hope. We love you so much. We're praying for you and we'll see you guys next week.