Kate: It was pretty much a perfect morning. It was beautiful. The sun was shining. It was late-May. We were happy that spring was upon us—had been a long winter. It was a Friday. As a mom of two young kids—I was pretty darn happy I survived the week. We had a lot of plans for the weekend—just some fun things that we had in mind—was hoping for maybe a little extra rest. We were just—it was a happy morning.

Fridays were also fun because every Friday I would travel to my son’s school for my then four year old and I would volunteer in the class. I would read stories and poems. I’d give the teacher a little break during lunch. But this—because it was such a particularly beautiful day and because it was a significant day—it was the last Friday of the school year—I was feeling a little blue about saying goodbye to all of my first-grade friends.

My daughter and I made this spontaneous decision to stay for recess. My son disappeared into a field immediately in search of anything creaturely that he could find. My daughter found a little girl to push her on the swings. I had two of my little first-grade friends hanging on me, so I said, “Let’s play tag.” In an instant, we are running. We are just racing about the playground. I’m having a great time—you know.

I have—if you’ve ever played tag and braved sport with a group of children, then you know that before long, you are the only one being chased. That’s what is happening. I have this kite-string of children on my heels. I’m happy, and I’m laughing. I’m beating these kids at their own little game. In spite of my flip-flops and jean skirt, I’m having a great time.

Unbeknownst to me though—at the same time—there was a boy who was climbing this large play structure full of tubes and slides. He reaches the top of the slide can. He’s not really tempted by these purple slopes on this day. Instead, he makes an ill-fated decision. He climbs over the protective barrier and, just as I’m running, he jumps.

His sneakers crash on my head, and together, we collide into the ground. His elbow is shattered. I’m trying to move. I can’t move. I’m lying on my back in the woodchips. I can’t move anything.

Kim: Did the doctor express any hope?
Kate: “I’m pretty sure she’s going to come off of the ventilator, and beyond that, hope is discouraged.”

Kim: Well, I have to say, when I saw you, it was amazing to see the miracle that God worked.

From the FamilyLife® Podcast Network, this is Unfavorable Odds. I’m Kim Anthony.

On Unfavorable Odds, it’s all about finding hope and help in those difficult seasons of life. You know Jesus has promised us that He would always be with us. He would never leave us nor forsake us, and He would walk hand in hand with us through the valley. On each episode of this podcast, we'll be talking to people who have walked that walk, travelled at those dark places and drawn their strength and hope from Jesus.

Kate Clark was an active young mom. But the thing is she didn’t know that a simple game of tag would lead to the unimaginable, and her life would be changed forever. Now I had a chance to sit down with Kate recently and hear her story. I had read her book, which is called Where I End. I tell you—as I was turning through those pages, I was crying because what she experienced seemed to me to be so unfair.

Kate, one minute you’re running around, dodging kids,—

Kate: Right.

Kim: —playing tag. The next moment, you’re on the ground. Tell me what was going through your mind. What were you feeling? What were you sensing while you lay there on the playground?

Kate: I sensed that there are kids kind of pressing around me, and I hear one of the little girls screaming for the boy to get off me. He’s screaming that his arm is broken. I didn’t even know he was on me—so I immediately know something is terribly wrong. Pretty soon after they whisked the boy off of me into the office, there was a teacher at my side. I can tell by her expression, too, that something is not—this is not good.

She begins to pray. I, too, am just—I’m praying—pretty quickly—“Please, please, Lord, do not let me be paralyzed,” because I know as much as I want to, I cannot—I can’t move anything.

Kim: So you were attempting to move your arms--your legs?

Kate: I think my brain was attempting to—yes—

Kim: Okay.
Kate: —but there’s nothing happening. I’m just stuck kind of staring into the sun and feeling these children, who are very confused—and I didn’t know where my kids were at the time.

Actually, my daughter, at this moment when she realizes—I think one of the teachers said, “Oh, she’s just resting.” My daughter knew—“Mm, no, this is—something’s wrong here.” So she runs to find her big brother. One of the girls I was playing tag with also ran to find William. She beat my daughter, Gwyneth, there and tears come down her face—“You have to come. Your mom is hurt.” Actually, some other kids also ran to William, and they tell him, “Your mom is dead.”

Kim: Oh, my goodness.

Kate: Yes. He doesn’t know what to think. He’s not sure if there’s a trick happening here or what is happening. He slowly makes his way and doesn’t even—probably—I don’t know if he’s ever even quite able to get a good glimpse of me because now there is quite a large group of children. The teachers get on top it fairly fast. Whistles start to blow. Recess is cut short, and I actually didn’t see either of them at that moment.

Kim: Okay. How did your husband learn about what happened?

Kate: There was a parent at the school, who held a cell phone to my ear, dialed my number, and I heard the answer—my husband does not like to answer the phone—I heard the answering machine pick up, and I implored him to pick up the phone. I wasn’t crying. I’m feeling a little panicked, but I just tell him I’m hurt and that he needs to come right away.

He was literally in the middle of typing his doctoral dissertation. He’s halfway through a sentence—and that sentence won’t be returned to for many, many, many months—but he does come to the school soon after that conversation, followed by the paramedics.

If you know my husband’s personality, he’s just a very calm—he’s not rattled easily—so he comes to me. He almost has this bright expression on his face. He kneels over me, and he talks to me for a few minutes. Then the paramedics come, and he goes to find our kids to comfort them and see where they are and how they are.

Kim: Are you naturally a calm person as well? Because in this situation, you were able to communicate on that answering machine to your husband—“Babe, you need to come.”

Kate: I think that generally things stress me out—I mean—clearly a bit more than my husband in tough situations. But in really—probably situations when a lot of people tend to panic—I’m not a panicker—especially—I feel like there are children around me and I know that someone’s got to hold this together. I wasn’t—at that moment—outwardly
panicking. If the blood is rushing and my heart is pounding within, externally I’m appearing somewhat calm.

**Kim:** So, you are able to maintain that composure.

**Kate:** Right.

**Kim:** So, they take you to the hospital. They perform an MRI. What were the results?

**Kate:** Yes. My husband was kind of hopeful—“Maybe, this is just a stinger.” We are college football fans. We’ve watched a lot of football players fall to the ground. They’re immobile. The crowd’s kind of holding their breath just for a few minutes, and eventually, the star rises, or maybe they are out for the duration of the game. This is what we’re—my husband, at least, is thinking in head, “This probably just a stinger; right?”

When the ER doctor comes back, we can just tell from the ashen expression on his face, this is bad. He tells us that there’s obvious injury from the MRI. My spinal cord has been crushed and lacerated. They need to do emergency surgery. He tells us, “We are looking for someone who is willing and able to perform this operation.”

When the surgeon—when they do find this surgeon and he arrives—he’s quite honest with us. He tells us, “This is a Christopher Reeve-level injury. It’s dangerously high, and it’s very serious.”

For any of your younger listeners who aren’t familiar with that name—Christopher Reeve was the first person who played Superman. For us, we have a pretty vivid image of the once strong, six-foot-and-some actor who was confined to a power wheelchair. That name immediately gives us a real sense of the seriousness of what is happening.

**Kim:** Tell me what was going through your mind. Where did your heart go when you heard those words?

**Kate:** When I was in the MRI—that’s a long process—I remember being pretty calm and praying persistently. I’m thinking, “Lord, I want to hug my children. I want to braid my daughter’s hair. I want to run alongside them”—just very much—“Lord, please, let this cup pass from me. I don’t want this cup.”

When I get the results that it is what in the back of my mind I’m thinking that it is, it is a—it’s a blow—it’s an additional blow. But I’m not—I’m not hopeless. I’m not hysterical. I’m still very much—maybe a little bit in shock and thinking, “Okay, so then the next step is surgery.”

We were living in Grand Rapids at the time. Although my husband and I are both from larger families, we weren’t living near any family, so my husband needs to start
making—sort of—the effort of calling. Our family starts to make this heavyhearted journey toward Grand Rapids, Michigan.

My parents arrived just before I was taken into surgery. I remember—I feel like maybe this a moment for all of us who have moms—when I saw my mom, I think that’s when I started to feel a little bit like—“Oh, I’m not sure if I can hold it together here”—but she came right before the surgery. They made it.

Then I was wheeled in for a very long journey of—where they were going to cut the front of my neck open, remove the broken fragments. He told them they needed to then fuse together things back together with some hardware and some donor bone.

**Kim:** When you heard what the procedure would be like, did the doctor express any hope that possibly you would be able to walk again?

**Kate:** You know—he was a realist—I think. I think paralysis is not really for the faint of heart. He was very much honest. When he came to my family and friends who were in the waiting room after the surgery, he told them, “I’m pretty sure she’s going to come off of the ventilator that we inserted for surgery, and beyond that, hope is discouraged.”

**Kim:** “Hope is discouraged.”

**Kate:** Yes.

**Kim:** Do you happen to know what your husband may have been going through at this time when he heard those words?

**Kate:** We all have our own stories—so, yes—he has a story as well. He’s looking at two young children and thinking, “What is our life going to look like? What is going to happen?”

It’s a crazy thing because—even after I was transferred a week later to a rehabilitation hospital—one of the specialists—the lead spinal cord specialist—sends to him, “You know, you should just leave her here, and we’ll take care of her. You go and work on your doctoral dissertation.” He’s perplexed and thinking, “No, that’s not actually an option here.”

**Kim:** Right.

**Kate:** But it is a very—it’s that moment for him too, where all of life is now changed—every—maybe all the hopes and dreams—the visions that you had for your life—that is all up in the air. Yes, he is definitely—he has his own significant journey to take on then in terms of children and work and then just the onslaught of all of the things that go with someone you love who’s in the hospital and can do nothing for themselves—all the way from paperwork—which there seems to be an insurmountable amount of things to do.
But for all of us, life is just upended. The whole bedtime—what that looks—that’s gone. We’re not doing that. We’re just trying to—for him, he would say—"I’m just trying to hold things together here." We’re not doing story time. We’re not doing all of the natural—we’re not getting outside and doing those fun trails.

We’re just trying to hold things together in between visiting Mom in the hospital and trying to get my daughter to let someone to brush her hair. Because she’s so fiercely loyal, she doesn’t want anyone to help her—she doesn’t want anyone to do all of the things that Mom does. She says she has this funny memory of even asking him like—“Do you know how to make hot cocoa?” [Laughter]

Kim: I love it.

Kate: Yes, Mom is central—

Kim: Mom is everything.

Kate: Yes, Mom is central, and that is just been blown out of the water now.

Kim: Your family has literally been told not to hope—

Kate: Correct.

Kim: —in your recovery. You’re in the room—and I don’t know that you have given up hope. After surgery, describe for me what it was like to begin the recovery process.

Kate: Yes, you’re absolutely right—I hadn’t given up hope. I belong to a strong Savior who does the impossible—who does work that doctors can’t do. I haven’t—I’m very much—I’m very much living in that moment of—“I believe. Help my unbelief.” That’s kind of a down-beat of my day.

What’s lovely, Kim, is I have people around me who are also hoping. That’s the beauty of Christian community where—even when you feel like you can’t—in some situations when you’re faltering—you have people around you who can buoy you and hope for you—I have both of that.

One of the really—I think—just both painful and precious moments that my husband would remember or he would say—there was this moment where my daughter comes to him and she says, “Is it okay that I prayed that Mom can walk?” She’s heard the words from the doctor’s mouth that she’s not getting out of bed on her own—she’s never going to walk again—life as you know it is changed—is over—you need to start something new.
There’s this moment in parenting where you think, “Okay, do we believe what we say we believe, and what do I say to this precious child?” He tells her, “Yes, pray for that.”

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:** So she presses in and she prays that her mom can walk.

**Kim:** Is God still good whether someone walks again or not?

**Kate:** He absolutely is still good. This is just the hardness of the reality of this side of heaven. Now, one of the things—I think—we sometimes—we make this mistake of saying things that are good when they’re not good. For example, sometimes I’ll hear people say things like—“I’m so thankful for cancer.” Well, I’m not thankful for cancer. Cancer’s horrible. Cancer’s death.

I’m thankful for Jesus Christ who is life and light and who is the One who can use horrible things to produce good. God is most definitely good, and He can use those very, very painful things in our lives—that He also hates. He can use those things to produce beauty and goodness and—He writes amazing stories.

**Kim:** In your book, you refer to being thankful in all things versus being thankful for all things. Describe a little bit more about that and what that means.

**Kate:** Yes, that goes right back to the story of Joseph, for example. He gets trafficked by his family—you know—he’s in slavery. Then he’s wrongfully accused. He’s living in this dungeon. I don’t think he’s thankful for any of these things that are happening to him. Yet, I don’t think that’s actually the point of the narrative.

As staggering as those trials are—and they really are staggering—I think the point is that there’s this thread that Jesus Christ is present with him. In every stage, we see the presence of God was with him—the presence—I mean it’s repeated over and over—and the presence of Lord was with him.

The point is that His presence is there, and that—that is what’s good. We’re thankful for Him. We don’t have to be thankful. We don’t have to—he calls those things—he says what’s happened to him was evil. We don’t need to call evil good, but we need to be thankful for the One who is good.

**Kim:** And the One who is walking with us—

**Kate:** Amen.

**Kim:** —through those trials.
Kate: Who is present—we are not alone in those places—as lonely as we feel. The real mysterious but wonderful truth is that God was with Joseph. God is with you, Kim. He is with me as well and with everyone who is listening—every person who’s feeling that immense sadness or loneliness or they know someone else who is going through that. That’s the astounding, wonderful beauty of our Lord.

Kim: Were you always able to sense the presence of the Lord? Was there ever a time—after the accident—where you felt abandoned or you wondered where He was? Or was your faith unshakable from the very beginning?

Kate: There are definitely times where I just felt like—“Lord, do You see me? Do You see me?” I think that even still today we go through times where we just—we doubt and we just wonder, “Lord, do You see me?” Yes, I think in that’s—again—like those moments where—it’s not our grip that’s so sure—it’s His grip that is sure. I’m thankful for that—so glad that He’s not counting on me.

Kim: Yes.

Kate: My pastor once recently said, “God does everything, and we do something.” I said, “Yes, I’m going to do my little something, but the Lord has me.”

Kim: He has me, and no one can snatch us out of His hand.

Kate: That’s right.

Kim: I’m going to talk about a couple of scenarios. The first one was when you were driving your power wheelchair down the corridor and someone stopped you. They asked you a question that really took you off guard. Tell me—what was that question and how did it affect your faith and belief that you would one day walk again?

Kate: I remember that so well. I’m using my power wheelchair on my way to therapy, and this woman stops me and she says, “Are you a quadriplegic?” I didn’t even know how to answer that. I just was kind of stunned. Quite honestly, no one had said those words to me—not even the doctors. They didn’t tell me that I had quadriplegia.

It’s the first time I’ve actually heard the words—I’m a little bit stunned, and I’m just—I don’t even think I answered her. If I did, I can’t even remember what I said. It was probably something intelligible—but then I kept going to therapy. Then I asked my therapist, “Am I a quadriplegic?” She said, “Yes.” Just this crazy moment where I’m thinking, “What are you talking about?” It’s first time I’ve heard the words, and they do not sound good to my ears.

Kim: No, not at all. Then there is another instance when your son—

Kate: Right.
Kim: —was—I think he was riding on the wheelchair with you, and you come to this sign that says, “Handicap access only.” William—your son—makes a comment. What did he say, and how did that affect you?

Kate: Yes, one of our favorite things—my kids would come in the evening, and we’d all have dinner together. Then they would love to drive my wheelchair really fast down the hallways. Thankfully, they were large—wide hallways. He’s sitting on my lap, and he’s driving the power-wheelchair. We do—we reach this end, and we see this sign. He’s kind of contemplating it—handicap—and he says, “Mom, are you handicapped?”

Before I can even answer, he’s like—“Oh, wait. You’re a quad.” It was like the breath just went out of me, and I’m trying to hold it together. I know I didn’t say anything to him, and he just kind of kept going. When he left, I remember someone has helped me get back into my bed. I had this sweet nursing assistant. She came in, and I just wept, “I don’t want to be a quad. I don’t want my kids to think of me as a quad. These are words that are painful and not good.”

So, yes, I was incredibly—and he didn’t even—I mean—he’s a seven-year-old. He just says what he says.

Kim: Right.

Kate: You know?

Kim: Yes.

Kate: He just says what’s in his brain. I don’t even think he realized it until he looked at the book several years later and was just shocked at the whole ordeal of it.

Kim: Through it all, you said you were not afflicted with the question, “Why me?” However, you said you were harassed, at times, by the question, “Why?” From your perspective, what’s the difference between “Why me” and “Why?” Is one or the other more acceptable?

Kate: I didn’t say, “Why me,” because I had been in so many good churches where we had talked about pain and suffering. This is a part of the Christian life. You don’t get by without having a cross to pick up. Jesus Christ tells us to pick up our cross. I wasn’t actually surprised that I was in pain and that something terrible had happened to me. But I was wondering, at times, about, “Why?”—like, “Was this somehow caused by something in my life?”

I mean I remember there was this moment right before the injury where I had this sort of—this prideful thought flit through my mind. I thought, “Uh-oh, is that why this happened?” I was a little bit harassed by just wondering why. It doesn’t throw the Lord
off guard when we ask those questions, okay? I mean the Psalms are full of them. I love the Psalms. It’s just honesty. He already knows what we’re feeling in our hearts—

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:**—so we might as well just utter it right back to Him. We can. We can ask those questions—but we also notice in the Psalms is they’ll ask that, but then they’ll always return to *Who* the Lord is, okay?

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:** We’re—so what’s important is when we ask that question, and then we—in the end, we remind ourselves—“But this is who You are.” We need to continually be confessing words of truth about Him—singing words of truth about Him because we are so prone to forget.

Yes, we can ask the questions, but if we just stick to the *why* question, it’s this maze that you will not get out of. It will—it can really turn you inward, and that’s not really a good place to be—just continually looking inward—because you’ll start to feel a lot of pity and despair and things like that. You need to turn your face back to Jesus Christ.

**Kim:** As you were able to walk through the grief in your mind, tell me what that looked like because I think many times we don’t know how to grieve well.

**Kate:** That’s very true. There is the tendency to, either not want to grieve and say, as Christians, we think that we need to race to gratitude—“I’m thankful.” We want to look positive. We want to be thankful. We’re Christians; right? That’s what looks right. There’s *that* tendency sometimes in that we don’t allow ourselves to grieve and we don’t allow others to grieve.

On the other side of that, Kim, there is also something that happens—I think—with some, in that grief becomes kind of the star and that’s all that we can do. We’re just kind of so entrenched in the sorrow that we turn inward and we lose sight of the face of Jesus Christ; you know?

There’s this interesting story in Scripture where Jesus comes and He asks a man who is crippled and sitting out and He says, “Do you want to be healed?” It seems kind of like kind of a strange—is that a rhetorical question? Of course, he wants to be healed. But I’ve thought about it. I think He asks that to us too because sometimes we’re very content to just live in the pain and live in the sorrow. I think He’s very much asking him, “Do you want to be healed? Do you want to want come out of this?”

I think that we also need to live in the reality that grief is a part of our identity—but it is not the *star* of the show. Sorrow can be a part of the stories, but the suffering is not the answer—light is answer. Jesus Christ is—the One who is glorious—and He is writing
the story. We always need to look forward and look to the face of Christ so that we’re not falling into either of those misunderstandings about grief.

**Kim:** There were times when you were going through therapy—one particular instance I remember from your book is—they were teaching you how to get on and off a plane in your electric wheelchair, and you made a comment about walking on and off the plane. The therapist looked at you with this shocked expression. What did that therapist say?

**Kate:** That was interesting. Sure, I’m in something—I think it was a recreational therapy. Their—her job is to try to get you back to normal-ish life. One of the things that I did is I travelled a little bit. I worked at conferences for my employer. She thought, “Okay, I’m just going to work on you today on using this power wheelchair to get on and off of a plane.” I did—I looked at her and I—I’m thinking in the back of my head, “But I don’t know if this is my story—like—I think that maybe I’m going actually walk.”

She does. She looks at me. I think she thinks I’m like still just stuck in that first stage of like a Kübler-Ross—“You’re in denial. This woman is in denial and how sad.” I think she’s kind of pitying me at that moment. I can feel my face getting a little bit hot, and I’m feeling like that small child who’s like a fool or something—like—“How can you actually be thinking that you’re going to walk? That’s sort of the stuff of fairy tales, okay? We live in the real world. Science has told you. This isn’t happening. Come on. Get on the right page.”

Yes, we have this very awkward exchange—and I think that she just thinks, “Oh, maybe, you just need some more time to go to psychiatric therapy and then come back and see me again.” But it was one of those, sort of, seared-in-your-mind moments where you think, “Oh, Lord, do I believe what You say is possible? Can You do the impossible?”

Not that He has to. I’m not trying to be presumptuous and say that He has to do this. I mean there are—Joni Eareckson Tada is someone who is just one of the great saints of the Lord, and she had an accident similar to mine. I’m really, really humbled by her faithfulness and her joy. I’m not trying to be presumptuous and say, “In order to be good, the Lord has to do this.” But I am very much living in—“God, I know You can.” That’s what I’m praying for and hoping for. I’m trying to give hope room to breathe.

**Kim:**—hope room to breathe.

What is life like for you today? I sit here across from you. I can see, but describe what life is like.

**Kate:** Okay. I live—I say—in the midst of sort of this gratitude and grief place because I am a miracle, okay? We’ll just put that out there right now because I am able to walk and do so very many things. I can drive. I can do a lot of things, but technically,
everything from the neck down is still broken. I’m technically still a quadriplegic which most people would never know looking at me but my—

Kim: I’d like you to explain that to me—

Kate: Sure.

Kim: —because I watched you walk into the room today.

Kate: Right.

Kim: Yet, you tell me you are still a quadriplegic. How is that?

Kate: Yes, I fought with my doctor a little bit on that one—who told me, “No.” Because of the injury, yes, everything from the neck down is technically still affected.

Even though you might not notice it, I feel it and I notice it. My right side is weaker than my left. Balance is kind of a crazy thing. I can’t quite feel my hands. Fine motor things—I’m really good at breaking and dropping things. I do that pretty often. I have just muscle spasticity and problems with that. I have this chronic nerve pain that is this angry buzzing bees kind of stinging sensation that’s especially in my extremities.

Technically, yes, I was raised wounded which is—again—the truth of us all. We are all raised wounded. I am technically still quadriplegic because of that injury, but it is substantial and still sustained. But yes, the Lord has been so very merciful and kind to me.

Kim: You mentioned the importance of community. Talk about why that was crucial in your situation and in the situation for many others who are going through difficult—very, very difficult times.

Kate: I think especially as Americans, we tend to live a little bit of isolated lives—maybe we even pride ourselves on being able to get done what we need to do and be just on top of it and strong and all of those things. But the reality is that to actually be human is what it is to be in community. We’re in community with God. We’re in community with the body of Christ.

It’s not an option—it’s not optional. We don’t have just a Jesus-and-me type of relationship. We have Jesus—and we also have Him engrafting us into His body. So we need the—we need the body. I needed the prayers of His saints desperately. I needed very practical things from community. I mean, we had strangers now who were not only praying for me, but they’re also providing meals for my family. I have strangers visiting me which is such a—just a humbling thing.
Some of the paramedics, when they heard my story—I guess it’s kind of a crazy thing for someone to be bested—wow—on a playground. The paramedics who I met on the playground—they told my story. Then I even—when they’re dropping other patients off, they come up and they visit me—

**Kim:** Wow.

**Kate:**—which is just a really humbling experience. Also, I think, it’s what the Lord calls us to because He—Jesus Christ—He has also been vulnerable for us and shown us the way in that.

We just need to really put down those falsehoods of just looking good and having it all together because we just honestly don’t. The sooner we enter into that and are honest about that, then we can really start to experience the joy and the real connection and the honesty and the authenticity.

**Kim:** I love that. You think about the Triune God lives in community.

**Kate:** Exactly.

**Kim:** Jesus—when He was on this earth—lived in community. We were designed to live in community.

**Kate:** Absolutely, and He’s engrafted us into that community—

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:**—of the Father, Son, and Holy Spirit. It’s just—it’s a mysterious and awesome thing to think that we are joined—

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:** —to the Triune God.

**Kim:** It is. I think about that on my morning walks.

**Kate:** Right.

**Kim:** I’m just like—“Lord, how is this even possible?!” It is an awesome experience. I think about that community you had in the hospital. It makes me wonder—what type of impact did your community have on the people working in that hospital—the nurses and the other staff?
**Kate:** Well, the story was something that was almost just like a shockwave. It went out and people are watching and people are praying. I actually had nurses who were Christians.

I had one sweet caregiver who would come in—I had to be turned every three hours—this woman—she would come in and she would move me so slowly and so gently. She would pray for me. She is literally the presence of Jesus Christ to me in the dark hours of the night. I am really—when darkness and loneliness—when those things threaten to come in, here she is battling for me, which is wonderful and beautiful. Yes, people are watching, and therapists are watching. They would say later to you, “It was astonishing.”

Even teachers—this one teacher—she said to me—I used to sometimes run while my son rode his bike to school. I would run alongside him, and she was at this one checkpoint.

She said, “I remember you running. I remember you running. So, I would think of you in the morning, and I would pray for you.” She said, “But you know what? I didn’t really actually think that the Lord could heal you there. If I’m honest with myself, I’m praying for it. But I’m also probably—in that, ‘I believe. Help my unbelief.'” She didn’t say that, but that’s where she is.

Then, to see holy work of God when He does start to give me things back—well, just everyone is rejoicing and mesmerized at the power and the goodness of our Lord.

**Kim:** Yes. He used your situation to minister to those people in that hospital—to the teachers, to the students—

**Kate:** —to the teacher, to the students, to strangers, to therapists and to my surgeon—who, when he heard the news that I was on my feet, he was incredulous. He said, “This is something I have to see for myself.” He makes the drive to the hospital that I’m now at—it’s a rehabilitation hospital I’m living at.

He actually does find me in therapy, which was sort of my life then. I’m always in therapy. I’m sort of using this high-walking device to lean on and sort of amble. It’s not pretty, but it’s happening. He comes in, and he just is astonished. I said to him, “You do good work.” He looked at me and he shook his head. He said, “I can take no credit. God did this.”

**Kim:** He was able to recognize the power of God in a hopeless situation.

**Kate:** Yes. Amen.

**Kim:** Now, in your condition—in the condition you were in shortly after your surgery, it is oftentimes a struggle in the area of isolation. You had your community, but in actuality, people could not be there 24/7.
Kate: Right.

Kim: There were limitations that you experienced. I believe that isolation was something that you wrestled with.

Kate: I think there is just no way around the fact that pain isolates. If I’m sitting here across from you and I’m in pain, you don’t necessarily know that. That can be lonely at times.

There is definitely the struggle, I think, for anyone who’s going through something hard—be it with a child or in a marriage or just really any type of pain—that threatens to turn you a little bit inward. I think the enemy’s always in our ear kind of telling us that—“You’re alone. You’re alone.” We’re tempted—in those moments—to think somehow we’re out of the grip or care of our Heavenly Father.

That’s one of the reasons why I love when the passage in Jeremiah talks about the clay. It says that the clay was spoiled in the potter’s hands. We’re in the potter’s hands. Then it says He refashions it as it seemed good to do. That’s our stories. That’s my story. That’s your story. We get spoiled. There’s pain, but we’re not outside His grip. We need to really press into that reality.

Kim: What would you tell the woman or the man who is hearing your story? They are wrestling with their own difficult situation as you mentioned before—whatever that may be—they’re wrestling with isolation—they are wrestling with the pain that they’ve been going through. Perhaps they are listening to those lies that the Lord is not there. How would you encourage them? What are some of the things that you focused on—that you used to continue to help pull you away from those voices?

Kate: Well, as we said, I think community is essential. You need to have people that you are really honest with. We cannot live hiding. The masks have to come down. There are people who need to know that there is pain there.

I think that we can look to Jesus Christ—I love that He tells us that for the joy that was set before Him He endured the cross, despising its shame and is seated at the right hand of the throne of God. Here’s the truth of that. The joy is set before Him, but He knows He has to endure the cross to get to the joy. Joy is sometimes—it feels like it’s buried beneath.

You might not be conscious of it, but it is there. It’s living in you because we’re connected—as we said—to the One who is our joy. We are—there’s no way that we can be pulled apart from that because we’ve been engrafted into the love of the Triune God.
Even if you feel like you’re in that place where you don’t feel the joy, spring always follows winter. The sun always rises. He goes to the cross knowing that there is joy and that He’s going to have that fully, but He has to go through it. He doesn’t go around the cross. He has to go through it.

**Kim:** Powerful. Your friends—that community—they put Bible verses in your room.

**Kate:** Yes.

**Kim:** Tell me a little bit about how that affected you. The reason I ask this is because for some people going through very difficult circumstances—the way you were—sometimes not even reading the Bible can encourage them—sometimes they push the Lord away—sometimes they are like—

**Kate:** Right.

**Kim:** —“Do not quote another Scripture.”

**Kate:** Sure. Sure.

**Kim:** What was that like for you?

**Kate:** The experience of the Bible verses was actually quite precious to me—and not because—not because I think there’s something magical about that but because they’re bringing us close to Jesus Christ—they’re reminding us of those truths that are hard to remember when we’re in the midst of the pain—they’re pulling us back to the one who loves us.

Now, I completely agree with—sometimes as Christians, we’re quick to rush to—God works all things for good for those who love Him. You know what? That is a wonderful, precious truth, but sometimes I think that as Christians, we just are uncomfortable with the pain. We want to say something like that because we think, “I don’t—this doesn’t feel good, and I really want to jump to the part that’s good.” We want to be really careful in that there needs to space to grieve—there needs to be space to feel the sadness. We have a Savior who grieved.

I love when Jesus comes and Lazarus is dead in the tomb and Mary falls at His feet. She’s weeping. You know what? He knows what He is going to do. It would be very easy for Him to just say, “Hey, guess what! You don’t even need to cry because just wait, I’m going to do something awesome here.” I mean, it actually seems like that if you knew in a few minutes that Lazarus was going to be alive, it almost seems like you would just say, “Hey, just”—but He doesn’t. It doesn’t even say a tear came down. It says, “He wept.”
He enters into her pain and His pain—this is not what is supposed to be. Here He is—Life of the world—and He has death before Him. This isn’t how it was supposed to be. I think that it’s really, really important as Christians to give that space to grieve. Sometimes it’s really—just even your presence that’s most significant and precious to a Christian who’s struggling. Just be careful not to race to a verse in order to make things feel less hard for you.

**Kim:** Well, I have to say when I saw you walk through the door after reading your story, it was amazing—truly amazing—to see the miracle that God worked and to hear a doctor discourage hope and to see you walk through that door. Have you seen that doctor?

**Kate:** I did see that doctor. I had some follow-up appointments with him. I haven’t seen him in a while because I live in the Chicago area and he is in Michigan—but I remember—probably the last time I saw him, he kind of shook his head. He brought someone else in.

**Kim:** Did you walk into the room?

**Kate:** Oh, yes. [Laughter]

**Kim:** Oh, I would have loved to have been there.

**Kate:** He brought another—he brought another doctor in just because it’s amazing.

**Kim:** Yes.

**Kate:** Praise the Lord! It’s amazing. He did just kind of shake his head. He said, “This could have been so different for you.” I said, “I know. I know. I shouldn’t by medical standards be walking into your office and doing all the things that I can do.”

**Kim:** The little boy who jumped on you and caused this accident to happen—you saw him at some point at a school function. Tell me about that.

**Kate:** Sure. He actually did have surgery at the same time I did that evening—on his elbow. I was—first day of school, I saw him. You know kids are all pretty giddy and excited and doing their own thing. I kind of just came up to him, and I asked him how his elbow was. I didn’t actually know if—at least in that moment—if he knew how we were connected. We didn’t have contact.

People have asked me a little bit about him. I don’t know—we moved away. I don’t know where he is. But if he ever saw this story, I would certainly just say to him what I would say to all of us—there are moments in our life that we would love to rewind and redo, but we don’t actually have that option. We have a God who loves to take the
mishaps of our life and create something lovely and good out of them. I’ve found regret and forgiveness to be great lessons in life.

Yes, I did see him, but we didn’t really have any sort of conversation about particularly that day.

**Kim:** Right. Was it difficult for you to see him? Did it spark any emotions? I mean this is a child that—it was unintentional—that wasn’t his plan, but it happened. Did you wrestle with forgiveness? Is that something that you had to exercise?

**Kate:** You know I didn’t—I don’t think I wrestled with forgiveness. There was a moment—not the one on the first day of school—there was another moment, actually, where my kids were at the school where every month, they would focus on a moral characteristic. The first one of the year is always wisdom. “Be careful to do what is right.” —that was the definition—I think—they gave them.

They would always have an assembly at the end of the month. They would award a kid from each class—the award for wisdom for that month. My son’s class was putting on this assembly. He asked us to come. We’re sitting in these plastic chairs, and they are calling out these names. These kids are very excited. They are getting up and shaking the hand of the principal, and they are holding this yellow certificate in their hand. Then I heard his name.

In that moment, I was a little bit undone. My husband sort of quickly ushered me out of the school. Before I could even get to the car, I’m just weeping. Again, we get home. I’m still just weeping. Here I am struggling to tie my shoes—yes, it was just a very hard moment. I’m not feeling angry, per se. I’m just feeling deeply grieved over the state of things.

Yes, I have a good deal of compassion for just the mishaps of life. We can all be placed in moments where we think, “Oh, that could have been very bad,” or—then sometimes, “Oh, that was very, very bad. That didn’t turn out like we would have liked it to.” I didn’t struggle with anger toward him. I think my kids didn’t either so much, in the moment—but I was deeply, deeply grieved.

**Kim:** If this young man were to read your story or his parents were to read your story and feel a sense of sadness—of sorrow—wishing that things didn’t happen the way they did, what would you want to say to them?

**Kate:** I would again want to communicate the beautiful story of and the beautiful truth of our Lord who loves to take broken things and fashion something good. I have a tremendous amount of joy. I belong to the Lord. I would definitely hope and wish for that to be a part of their stories as well. I have found—as I’ve said—I find regret and forgiveness to be great teachers in our lives. I would in great joy tell them that we have
a Lord who takes what is seemingly ugly and horrible, and He’s very good in the midst of it.

**Kim:** When I look back on Kate’s story—I’m not sure if I should say this—but I wonder, how do we make sense of this? It just—all it would have taken was one second to make a difference and this tragedy would not have happened.

When I hear stories like this, here are some things I have to keep in mind. One—pain, hardship, and suffering are a part of this world because it’s broken. But it’s not always going to be that way. There’s hope through Jesus. We have to remember that God stepped out of glory Himself and entered into this broken world. He knows our suffering. He understands our needs.

It’s tempting for us to respond to such tragedies with trite, shallow answers—even the quoting of Scripture as a Band-Aid for a deep, deep wound. In situations like this, I always go to the end of Job.

You may remember that Job was frustrated, and God let him vent. In the end, I don’t know that God gave him answers to his questions, but He did make one thing clear—that is, God is sovereign. He’s sovereign in our joyous times. He’s sovereign in our pain. We can trust that in it all, His love will never fail. He knows what He is doing. He’s a good God.

In fact, at the end of the book of Job, Job says to God, “I had heard of You by the hearing of the ear; but now, my eye sees you.”

If you’d like more information about Katherine Clark or her book, *Where I End*, check out the show notes on the *Unfavorable Odds* page at FamilyLife.com/podcasts.

On the next episode of *Unfavorable Odds*:

**Ramona:** If I did come forward with my story, who is going to believe me? We look like the ideal couple. We’re in ministry. We speak publicly together. There’s no way that I thought people were honestly going to believe me.

**Kim:** Dr. Ramona Probasco, next time.

I’m Kim Anthony. Thanks for listening to this episode of *Unfavorable Odds*. *Unfavorable Odds* is produced by FamilyLife and is a part of the FamilyLife Podcast Network.

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