

AT S9 E1 Word of the Year Transcript

Michelle Benzinger: [00:00:00] Happy new year abiding together podcast listeners. It is 2021. We are so excited to journey with you with a new season and a new calendar year. And I'm really excited to talk about our sponsor for this week's podcast episode. We, once again, are teaming up with Jill and the amazing team at Pink Salt Riot. They are offering custom word of the year jewelry and key chains. Plus she's offering a special offer exclusive to abiding together listeners. So you can go over to pinksaltriot.com and get your 2021 word of the year memorialized in a place that you will see it over and over again, whether it be a bracelet or a key chain or a necklace, we feel that the word of the year is not just a trendy thing that we do, but it is something that gives your spiritual life and all other areas of your life clarity. And it's really a word or a theme the Holy spirit wants to cultivate in you and with you and through you. And for our Abiding Together Listeners you also get 15% off all regularly priced items in the pink salt riot shop with that discount code `abide15`. So check out the brand new word of the year bracelet options for 2021, as well as returning favorite key chains and necklaces. The word of the year pieces are only available until January 24th. So. Head over to the pinksaltriot.com and order yours today. Happy new year!

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:01:27] Hello and welcome to the Abiding Together Podcast. abiding together as a place where you can find connection, rest and encouragement on your journey with Jesus Christ. My name is Sister Miriam James Heidland and every week I'm joined by two of my very dearest friends, Heather Khym and Michelle Benzinger. This podcast is born out of our friendship and all that the Lord is doing in our lives. You hear us laugh. You hear us cry. You hear us share very vulnerably, and you hear us talk about the things that we're still learning along the way. And you're most welcome to join us. You can find out all of our information on our podcast episodes on abidingtogetherpodcast.com, but for now, grab a cup of coffee, settle in and welcome home.

Welcome to season nine of the abiding together podcast and our first episode of the year, which we're going to talk about our word of the year and it, you know, when this airs is going to be 2021 ladies and wow, here we are season nine. Did we ever think it would happen?

Heather Khym: [00:02:29] We never thought it would end, but here we are. Praise be Jesus.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:02:33] I know it's a brand new year and you know, here we go. And we're actually recording this before. So it just a full disclosure. We're actually recording this before. So Michelle was just saying, we should tell them that in case the world ends. And then it's like we know that ,

Heather Khym: [00:02:46] I know. What I want to say is I had the most fabulous Christmas. We haven't had it yet, but I do want to say happy new year to everybody who's listening. I want to say happy new year and just praise be Jesus. And may you be blessed by him and his presence as we begin this new year. And you know, as much as 2020 was a gong show, like, let us not forget, God is good. And he's always good. And there was so many blessings that came out of 2020 that I, I don't want to miss because of the difficulties that happen. So. Yay. Here we go.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:03:19] Here we go. Michelle, what about you, girl? Where are you at today?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:22] I am at a new year, a new season. I feel like it's perfect timing for something new and exciting. I mean, yeah, I'm just gonna try to focus and be a person of hope right now. So that is the name of the game. So here we go.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:03:39] Here we go indeed.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:40] And we are not going to ask the question. What else can happen? No, do not ask that question. People do not.

Heather Khym: [00:03:49] I'm just going to say in faith that 2021 is a year of hope. Yeah. That's just going to be the overarching word. Alright. Let's claim it.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:03:58] Let's claim it. Here we go.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:04:00] Well, I I'm excited because we don't ever, we don't tell each other our words of the year before this episode. So we're about to like, as all things that unfolds real time in our podcast recording. So we're about to find that out for each other and talk about that. So we have a beautiful quote from Henri Nouwen and then a scripture passage is going to guide our discussion today. So our scripture passage, which is really great for the whole year is a wonderful, wonderful opening to the brand new year of 2021. It's Psalm 65 verse 11. It says you crown the year with your bounty and your carts overflow with abundance and Henri Nouwen says, this is so great, Henry Nouwen says a new beginning. We must learn to live each day, each hour. Yes. Each minute as a new beginning, as a unique opportunity to make everything new. Imagine that we could live each moment as the moment pregnant with new life. Imagine that we could live each day as a day full of promises. Imagine that we could walk through the new year, always listening to a voice saying to us, I have a gift for you and I can't wait for you to see it. Imagine! So, this is so great. So Heather, you want to talk about some of what the scripture passage and what Henri Nouwen's words are. And then we will jump in we'll all add a bit and we can jump into our words of the year, or you can share it now, whatever you want. I mean, we're living on the edge here, other, so it's like, whatever.

Heather Khym: [00:05:18] I mean, you know, it's like this, or just like, yes. You know, like it just rekindles something that we know deep in our hearts. We were made to be a people of hope. We know what the end of the story is actually. A lot of times it just gets covered up by life. You know, it gets covered up by difficulties, struggle, busy-ness, all of those things. So I love voices like Henri Nouwen that just call to attention. Yes. We should be excited about this life that we have and about the new life that's coming about things that are beginning. The beginning of the year is a wonderful opportunity for people. And for me, for you guys, like to start fresh on things, it's just like a good, like let's put a stake in the ground, we're going to start fresh on some new things. So I am excited about what this year has the potential to be. And a lot of that is dependent on me. You know, in my cooperation with grace and my cooperation with the Lord, like, it really is a lot of it is up to me because God is not going to withhold his goodness and his grace in any way from any of us. It's just a matter of how open is my heart. Like how much am I going to allow him to stretch my heart, to love more and to dive in to what he has. So, Michelle, what do you think about it?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:06:25] Yeah, I think for me, God is a God of hope, but he's not a passive God. He's always a God of initiation and he's always moving and changing, but he's always pursuing. And the question is, are we receiving his advances? Are we receiving his

initiation? Like he is always inviting. The question is, are we responding to the invitation? And so a new year does like put that stake in the ground and said, okay, here we go. Let's begin again. We've said it before on the podcast, we are always beginning again, you know, we will, we don't arrive on this until we, you know, on this side of heaven, but we can always begin again. We can always start over. We can always, you know, there's always more in the spiritual life. There's always more intimacy, more forgiveness, more grace, more hope. It is whether we want to change the lens of how we see the Lord. And do we want to change the lens, how we see ourselves in the Lord, you know, it's both and. So I'm excited and I'm hopeful. And the 2020 went out with the bang personally for me. So in all the good ways the Lord, you know, just really came close. So I'm excited to see what he's going to do in 2021. Yeah. Sister, what about you?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:07:35] I agree with you. I yes. I mean, we are people of hope and we talk about how we don't hope in an outcome. We hope in a person. Our hope is in a person. It doesn't lie in, you know, what I think is going to happen. And it's great to have natural hopes for good outcomes. We have to have that as part of our order toward, as humans, toward what is good, true and beautiful, but ultimately our hope lies in a person. And so I, I, yes, 2020 was a year across the world that nobody ever saw coming. I don't think. And that we were just. Kind of riding a tidal wave. It felt like so many things were changing all the time. And in 2021 is going to have all kinds of different adventures too. And things that we didn't think would happen or what will happen, but that the Lord is doing. He's always about like what you both are saying. He's always about something new. He is always at work. And I think you and I we've talked this year extensively about Lord, what are you doing in this. What are you doing in this? And so I've sat so many times to just sitting in situations that seem hopeless or that seem like there's no way out, or just seem, how could this ever change and just asking, okay, Lord, what are you doing? Like, what are you doing in this? And so, yes, we're being transformed. And I hope, I know I can say it for myself. I'm not the same person I was a year ago. And thank God. The Lord has done massive, massive interior work in me, which has been crucifying to the core of my very being. And I'm so grateful for it. So I'm just. I'm excited to see kind of what the Lord does and let's just see, let's just see what happens. You know, I mean, father, Justin Brady often talks about, you know, why God allows things in our life is for two reasons. So number one, we know we need him. And number two, that we know that he's a giver of good gifts. And I just love that.

Heather Khym: [00:09:12] Yeah, let's open wide, our arms and our hearts and our minds to the gifts that the Lord has. I mean, it's, it's easy after a year, like many of us have had to shut down a little bit, you know, to just be like, no, I know I've been hurt. I don't I've suffered. Like I don't like this and we can, we have choices to make, you know, we can become more self-reliant and closed down, or we can open wide the door to the new things that God has. Amen.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:09:39] Amen. And that's something that we do every day, right. With something. Yeah. So, so gosh, without further ado, who wants to jump in first? Who wants to share their word.

Heather Khym: [00:09:51] Michelle michelle michelle I'm on the edge of my seat, literally.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:09:55] This is how it works. So we have created this tradition of a word of the year and actually my whole family does it and the people that we form and the

reason why we do it, it's not just a cute little thing that we do. We really take it to the Holy spirit and pray and say like, why do we even have the word of the year? It is almost like an anchor and a light house at the same time. It is something that we really feel like each of us, that the Holy spirit is stirring within us, that he wants to like allow to unfold throughout the year. You know, last year for me was romance. So with romance, the Lord really drew me into a deeper intimacy with him. And I mean, man, he, this past December, he just went out with like, okay, I'm going to, you want to see romance? I'm going to romance you girl. Like let's up your game. And it usually doesn't unfold how we think it's going to unfold. His ways are very different, but we have an intentional God. And so he's asking us to open ourselves up to the Holy Spirit and allow something to take root in us and something to flourish in us. And so that is what the word of the year is. So it usually has a theme and we go back to it and, but it also, like Heather said, I love what you said, Heather, it takes participation on our part. If this is a root something the Lord wants to plant a seed as this word within us. Then we have to help cultivate it with the Holy Spirit, not in our own striving, but with abiding, with the Holy spirit and allowing the Holy spirit to let it flourish within us. But okay, I'm just telling our listeners, we don't tell each other with the word of the year is until this episode. And I wouldn't even tell my husband, I said, okay, maybe I know I got a covenant with you, but until I saw Heather and sister first, you know, like they, you can't know what my word of the year is. Yes. But I'm not going first. So there, ha! We could probably rock paper, scissors, and see here.

Heather Khym: [00:11:52] All Sister Alright. Lay it on us girl.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:11:55] So this morning I was up at really, really early this morning praying, and I knew we would record this episode today. So I was thinking of the past several years of my words. And if I'm not mistaken, the first word that we talked about was my word for the year it was 'rest'. And then it was 'go' and the last year was 'listen'. And that was something when the world shut down, the Lord said to me very clearly, I want you to listen. This is a very special time. I don't want you to miss it. And so the Lord took me into deep silence, literally where I lived deep silence and it wasn't going anywhere. I was just such a, like, I couldn't avoid it really in a sense. And he kept saying it over and over and over again. Listen, listen, listen. And so, as I was praying for this coming year, I just was asking, I'm gonna ask the Lord for a while now. Okay. What, what is it? What do you want me to hear? Like, how can I listen? Like what - cause they all connect. They're never arbitrary. They all connect. And so I received the word, which is what I prayed about. And I really resonate in my soul. So my word for the year is 'receive.' Right 'receive'. And when I heard the Lord and when I heard the Lord say that to me, it resonated so deeply in my soul and to, to receive is to take into yourself and it's very vulnerable. And so I was thinking of all the things he's taught me this last year and this. You know, as, as a bride of Christ, you know, your bride groom comes to you and he asks you to receive, you know, the God who comes to us and he asks us to receive and he receives us as well. So that mutual reciprocity of the person. And so I, I just have been really praying with that of. You know, as like our lady, like we talked about an adamant that it's not a passive receptivity, it's an active receptivity. So how, how do I already, like, how am I cooperating with that Lord? What are you asking me to receive yourself? People that you send, what you're trying to do in my life. And you're not asking me to run. You're not asking me to try harder or you're just, you're just asking me to take you into myself, which is profoundly vulnerable and transformative. So I, I, I know this is going to be very deep in my soul. And so I'm looking forward to even now, already, just this morning,

praying about that. Okay, Lord, how, and then how I hide from that exactly as well. Right? What areas I don't want to receive, or it just seems too vulnerable or there's areas where I hide or it's, self-defense like all these different things. So how the Lord gently and his kindness for the coming year is going to just invite me to receive. So. There you go, girls.

Heather Khym: [00:14:14] So intimate. That's beautiful. Oh my gosh. That's going to be such a rich, not just reflection, cause you're not just going to reflect on it, but a living into, uh, like a deeper level of your femininity even like, cause that's how our bodies were made as women to receive, you know amen. That's awesome. Oh, I'm excited for you a

Michelle Benzinger: [00:14:34] And I love how you. And I think that's so interesting to see, to see the progress of your words and how they built upon one another as the Lord is constantly writing our story, but he's constantly revealing our story to us saying, okay, this is how I'm writing it right now. Do you see how they go together? Like they are chapters of a book. Do you see how they go together? But you can't have one without the other, like you would not be ready to receive unless you listened, you know, like it just wouldn't have worked. I mean, God could do anything. It could have worked, but the Lord knew he needed to bring you there so you could go there. So that's beautiful. I love that one. That's great.

Heather Khym: [00:15:14] Well, I know it's my turn. Um, because I'm saving the best for last. Uh, okay. So my word last year was littleness and boy, what a special year. That theme has been playing out in a variety of ways for a few years now, but in particular, this last year was so good. It was so deep. It was so hard and it was so freeing at the same time, because I feel like I'm finally not just conceptually understanding. What it means to be little and to lean into a God who's strong and what it means to find strength in my littleness and to, um, depend, you know, to be vulnerable. With him at all, all of that stuff to recognize, like just how sinful, how broken, how I'm nothing without him and my deep need for God. Like, there's just been an aching. Like, God, I desperately need you. And that, that cry, I think for, at the beginning a few years ago was like one of just utter, like broken, literally crying. I just desperately need you. And now it's turned into this like sweet whisper of a lover. Like I just, I, so I welcome you here. And, um, I'm just finding a different level of comfort with the littleness and it's bearing tremendously good fruit in my own. I in my own heart, but in the midst of the littleness, in the midst of the learning about that, there's been a lot of things falling completely apart that have caused me to rest and lean into God in a different way. And at points I, I had this image of myself in the ocean. And just my face, just not even my ears, but just my face was sticking out of the water and that's all I could breathe was just that it was like totally overwhelmed, surrounded. Like everything was crumbling down. Even my marriage had to be reconstructed. The Lord's been restoring a lot there and relationships and all of that, I was just so overwhelmed, broken, felt like I was bleeding out in a variety of ways. And I feel like the transition that's happened is here's my word. The word is 'steady.' Mm. Now I feel like I'm standing on the water and there was this transition towards the end of the year from littleness into, I wrote it in my phone. It was my screensaver on my phone. It just said, keep looking up. It was this, like lift your eyes from what's going on. Look at me, stay in my gaze. Look at me. And this whole thing about Peter being on the water and staying in the gaze of Christ, like to steady yourself, like in the gaze of God. And, um, Yeah. So I feel like there's a lot that, that the Lord wants to do here this year in just, it's not because I feel like I'm going to fall over, but it's like a steadying in his promise like that. Yeah. There's going to be waves. The storms aren't gone, you know, it's just because the year is over. It doesn't mean the storms are gone. There's going to be lots of that. But the Lord is like, I want you to

steady on me. Just stay steady with me. Like, hold, hold right here. Stay with me, stay in my gaze here. So. That's it.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:18:30] Oh, I do too. I do too. Oh, I love that on so many levels. And I just thank you for sharing that image of you even. It has, you felt like you were almost underwater and I think so many people can relate to that and just keep looking up. And it reminds me of, you know, what many times generals and armies when they lead their troops in a battle right before the battle, they'll tell their men or the women steady like steady, steady. Steady and Oh, I just, Oh, I can't wait for that to unfold for you friend that in his gaze. Oh, that's so I can see it now in my soul. That's gorgeous.

Heather Khym: [00:19:04] I love it. Yeah. It's funny that you bring that up because we were watching Braveheart, my family is Scottish. I don't know if everybody knows that, but my parents were,

Michelle Benzinger: [00:19:11] I mean, with cutest Scottish accents, like I just could listen to Heather's parents talk forever. Anything sounds better with a Scottish English, Irish or Australian accent. I don't know why, but.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:19:26] Tell me whatever you have to tell me, but tell me in an accent. So yeah.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:19:30] Seriously, seriously, go ahead, Heather.

Heather Khym: [00:19:34] Yeah. So we were watching Braveheart, which of course is like, okay, kids, we need to watch this as part of your family history. It's like a history lesson, you know, we're homeschooling right now and watching Braveheart. So. Anyway, I was watching Braveheart and sister. This goes to what you were saying about the army and this part just like leapt out at me in relation to my word of the year where the army is advancing against them. And they're just sitting there and say, hold, hold, hold. This is anticipation about, we're about to move here, but just stay steady here. And, and I think like with my word of the year, I don't think it's all about just steadying in the midst of the storm. I think there's a steadying because there's something really good that I'm anticipating, I'm feeling this anticipation mounting. It's like just steady here because something is about to break wide open. So it's exciting. We'll see.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:20:23] Yes, indeed. Yes, indeed.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:20:25] I was trying to think of the song Heather. Though. Isn't there a song? I think it's Bethel steady heart. Yeah, I was just, right, as soon as you said, I love that song. Go girl, got to get a playlist for the word of the year! There you go. So my word came like unfolded and it is not a usual word that you would pick, go figure for me. And it makes me sound a little nerdy, you know, but okay. It is. So I'll still leave you in suspense. So anyway, my word.

Uh, two years ago it was 'rhythm' and like just finding a rhythm and the rhythm of the Lord really aligning my heart to the rhythm of the Lord's heart. Like what does that look like? And then last year was 'romance' and it was such a pivotal word for me and how the Lord pursued me, but how I think we get glimpses of intimacy, but the Lord always has more intimacy. And he can not be out in generosity, but he's such a beautiful lover. Like he is just

so tender and kind. So I knew something was coming before advent started. Like, I just had that feeling like something is stirring, like with the changes, the liturgical season, I was like, Oh, I just that gut intuition. You're like, Oh, all right. Something's about to come. And I was like, Oh, we have one. And I even thought we have one month left of my word for the year romance. And I could almost feel like the Lord like. Like, um, I'm going to bring my A game here. Here we go. And so as soon as it began, like the first Sunday, I just felt it like we were doing the Ascension press beautiful advent study that Fr. Mark Toups did. And I've talked about it before, but the sister was in and it was just really in the home of Nazareth, the St. Joseph and Mary. And I don't think it was any coincidence that I started the year with a consecration to St. Joseph at night. We ended the year with the consecration of Mary, and it was really showing you what the power of this family is, this Holy family, but their time and Nazareth, this time that is unseen. And then a scripture kept on popping up to me. Like over and over. And actually sister got it at the beginning of quarantine. And then for me, it came up two weeks or the first week of advent. And it was like let the land life fallow, like let it rest. And so then I started researching, what does that mean? Like even like in horticulture terms and it means like you allow the land to rest in farming terms so it can build up nutrients again. So it could be fertile again. So. Uh, we were about to the first week and haven't about to launch a couple of initiatives. So we were doing stuff with greenhouse collective, which we've been running. We were doing a couple of other things and I felt so strongly the Lord just telling me to pause. And I was like, Lord, that doesn't make sense. Like we're about to do this. And if we pause and I mean, we have people that work for us, we have all these different things and it was so strong pause. And then when I was going through the reform program, that Jackie Mulligan runs that we had her as a guest. Also one of the biggest thing that stood out to me was create space, make room like that was it. Like that was the pillar and the reform program. That was huge for me. Like make space, rhythm, I mean, make space. You know, make room for him rest. And then one of the big other big themes is womb. That's come up to me like the womb, you know, like Mary's womb being in the womb with the women's a safe place is where life happens. It is sacred. It is where the Lord is, you know, bringing forth new life. It is a sacred space. So. When I was having spiritual direction, my spiritual director said, Michelle, you, so remind me of gladiatorial. Like, there's something about you. That's gladreal from Lord of the rings, you know, because he, he said, you'd love to call people's gifts out. He's like, you get more excited about other people's gifts, more so than your own. They're like, look at this person, look at this person. And a couple of other conversations have happened and we were talking about the place that glad, real. Lift and we are the fellowship of the rings. I know. I sound like totally like a nerd Lord of the rings, like whether it was gamers to play the Lord of the rings game right now. But anyway, go with it people

Heather Khym: [00:24:43] You have the map on your wall.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:24:44] Yeah, exactly. Yeah. Come on. Uh, I mean, I can't even pronounce their names right. But it's okay. So, but. So my word of the year is 'Lorien.' It's actually the abbreviated version of where gladreal lived. The place, where the fellowship went. And I kept on hearing that word Lorien, Lorien and then I looked it up and people that are really into Lord of the rings, all knew what I was talking about. Like there was all these different things. So I brought it to my spiritual director. I was on retreat and he said, of course he does. Um, he said, look what it means. And he sent me this article about. Lorien's like a womb: it's a safe place for people to create space for people to come. Um, and so it was

really interesting. He said, dig deeper in it. And he sent me this article. So when I was telling Chris that I felt like my husband, that I felt like we were supposed to pause, he and I were having a really hard conversation. I mean, he asked me some really hard questions and. About certain things about, you know, about me about certain things. And, um, it was a really good, hard wrestling conversation. And he said, okay, we can pause, but is there anything that you want to just work on, you know, for the next couple months? Like, is there anything that you want because I've never had a season where I haven't had a hundred million things going on. I've never had a season. I mean, And like raising six kids and doing our life is a lot. And I realized that is a lot and just, you know, all these other things. And Chris is like, let's make space for you, but like, what are you dreaming? Is there one project, you know, besides the podcast you would like to work on or do, I mean, I have such a great husband that even asked these kinds of the questions tend to be very thankful for, but this, um, and he's asking me, he's looking at me cause he's like, you love to dream. And I realized it brought me back to the summer when a couple of us got together to pray. There is no dream. Like I haven't had dreams in months. And for me it's painful not to have something, you know, there's a scripture says my people perish for lack of vision. Like, I feel that like, if there's not a vision, Like a dream. Like there's something in me that almost withers. Chris is asking me, this makes me cry like, honey, is there anything? I was like, I don't have a dream anymore! I like, there is nothing. It's like, Oh, okay. That's a strong reaction. And it was, and it was beautiful when I was praying about this. Time and just like with the Lord once, like this is the time to pray and this is a time to restored, but when I researched the word, Lorian the word means dreamland and to bloom, a field of dreams and flowers. And it was like, God's just way of, you know, answering all the prayers and what I went on, my personal retreat, there's this gorgeous tree right outside of the place I was staying. And I even mentioned to my spiritual here, it's like, you should see this tree, there's a lamppost and a tree. And they said, of course there is because he said it's Lucy and gladreal. I mean, he remembers these things because the two of your favorite characters, I know he said, but Michelle, the tree is a symbol of Lorian. You know, and Lord of the rings. And I was like, Oh wow. And, but he said to me, uh, I was telling him about my conversation with Chris. And he said to me, he said, the reason why you are not able to dream is because all your nutrients have been stripped, you know, in your land. And he said, it's time to let them be, you know, gain nutrients again. It's time to rest. It's time to spend the time with the Lord. It is time. Just to be, you know, in the safe place. And so I'm telling all of our listeners that too, because what I probably going to be a lot quieter, which is not to pray as easy for me to be quiet is not easy to not fill my schedule up is not easy to go to the rhythm of the Lord has for me to pause is, you know, and it's not a passive pause. It is an act of pause, but in a slower pace, And, um, I think for me, I realized that I'm not bleeding out. I like, I'm not things aren't bad, I'm not bleeding out, but I realized I'm like a cell phone. I think I'm at 22% and I'm not on red. That I'm really good.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:28:56] That's good insight. I bet so many people can relate to that. Yep. Yeah.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:29:00] But the Lord is like, I want you on like 95% and sister yells at me all the time. How I let my battery go on my phone. She's like, girl, charge your phone, charge your phone. So I'm just taking time to charge myself. So.

Heather Khym: [00:29:19] That's awesome. I love that. And I love that you're sharing too, like very, very specifically, like how the Lord is speaking to you. Like as you're sharing, I was like, that's so typical of how God speaks to you. And, you know, I shared about how God

speaks to me and sister. You shared how God speaks to you and to know. Like as we're sharing this, yeah, we're sharing about our personal whatever with an audience of people who are like, yeah. So what's my word of the year. That's what you're all asking if you don't know yet. And the thing that I think is so important to take from this conversation is that God wants to share his heart with us. Like he wants us to know in our personal relationship with, with him, he wants to reveal things to us and that these things, aren't just a random word that we think of that we just choose out of the air as something to focus on, but something we feel like is being revealed to us with the hope and the purpose of growing in deeper union with God. Like that's the whole purpose of everyone in our spiritual life. So, yeah, like, I mean, I know that there's different ways to find your word of the year. There's a word of that, your generator and all of that kind of stuff. And I, I don't want to, you know, dismiss any way that you might find that word, but to not look at it, like like a fortune cookie. Like I just want to, you know, find something or a lottery ticket or something you just scratch off. I just want the, I want the answer. I want the thing and that's exciting. Or if I don't like it, I'm going to throw it away and get another one. But to really seek the heart of God, no matter how you find your word to seek his heart for you to open up why the door of your heart, to what he wants to say to you and to really ponder, what has God been doing in this last season and where do I think he's leading me next? You know, how would you sister, like just encourage people to find their word of the year or decide upon it?

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:31:03] Asking the Lord. Lord, you know, however, the Lord speaks to you just to ask the Lord, Lord, can you just highlight, like, Lord, can you just highlight a few themes in my life? Or how can you highlight a few things? And you'd be surprised at how certain things just start to come to the surface and just to write those down and just to start praying about it. Do you have a certain scripture passages keeps coming to your mind? I can't tell you how many times I've woken up in the morning with a song in my head. And I just, like, it sort of says like eighties music and I'm like, what is like, what is that? And I'll write it down. Or I'll like, I'll go and research it. So I, as the Lord is always speaking to us. And so I, I love what you're saying, Heather, this is not a fortune cookie. It's not, it's not, I mean, it's, it's something that's revealed to us and in these beautiful, different ways, like how the three of us are so different and how I can see each of the Lord revealing to you, your word, how fitting that is for you. I'm like, Oh, that's just so how God speaks to you. So I think asking the Lord. To, to start highlighting a few things and you, I think what happens, what you'll find is you're going to have a word or a phrase or something that's really going to come to the surface. And sometimes it can be scary for us. We're like, Oh, not that, not that one Lord, not that one, but you can see if it resonates deep within you. It's just to really ponder about that and pray about that. And just to ask the Lord, like, or does this what you're saying to me? And you'll, you'll find that there's going to be something that settles in your heart and you'll just know that you'll just know and just to see kind of. Maybe it's maybe an image for you. Maybe it's an image for the year. Sometimes art. Like, it's just interesting how God does that, but he's always trying to speak to us and I love what you said michelle it's a lighthouse and an anchor, and it's a beautiful way of kind of like, like a vision of seeing the year through like, okay Lord, in light of this, what are you. Because it's not exhaustive and it's not definitive, but it's a, it's a vision through which we can see the whole year of like, Oh, this is what you're doing. This is the lighthouse. This is the anchor. So that's what I would recommend.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:32:46] And it's constantly unfolding, like the word unfolded. It's always yes. And what you think it is? Yeah. Like I said, at the beginning of what you think it is, the Lord's like, Oh, but it's so much more. Yeah.

Heather Khym: [00:33:00] And to find little ways to remember it, to hold it at the forefront, whether you put like a bookmark in your Bible or, you know, like I made it my lock screen on my phone already just as steady. And I keep, every time I open my phone, I'm like, yeah, like it's just a reminder. You might put a sticky note on the mirror of your bathroom or whatever it might be. There's some wonderful things from pink salt riot that you're going to be hearing about in this episode. But yeah. There's ways that we can be reminded of the words so that it doesn't have that impact of like, It's flippant or it was just a moment or this came up on my screen and then I forgot about it the next week. Like, we are constantly consuming things all the time, but I don't know if we're actually digesting it. And this is something that I think we need to digest, you know, that we really need to let come into our being and to take root and then to bear fruit in our life. Michelle, what's an encouragement that you would give to people as far as how they can discover their word?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:33:53] Yeah. I think as like, we both have what we've said on this podcast, but just ask the Holy spirit to do the heavy lifting. We've said that often, but just to seek him get quiet, like for me, the like, mine didn't happen. Like it wasn't this light bulb moment or whatever. It was a process. The Lord, it was like almost, I felt like breadcrumbs. The Lord was saying, okay, go here. And here and here. And it was an overarching theme for all the areas. The Lord is working in my life already. And. You know, for me, but me personally, cause I it's a little whimsical. It's a little out there, you know, because that is how the Lord speaks to me. It's to bring yes. But I also would say get quiet. You cannot hear the Lord. And I, I cannot, I think one of the biggest things he has pressed on my heart is spending time with him in silence, not in loneliness. And not in isolation, but spending time in silence and not in isolation, but just to spend time in silence, to hear him to hear what he's whispering to you, it's not going to be, I think for each of us, we could say this, it wasn't, you know, the rushing wind or the earthquake. It was a still small voice that we each heard what he was speaking to us this year. It was a still small voice, but we have to quiet all the other things.

Heather Khym: [00:35:08] Yeah. And I think for me, like I always sit with something for awhile, you know, like there's other words that floated in and out of my mind that I was like, is it, this is it this, you know, it's like, you got to test it a little bit and then steady came in and it just sort of sat there. It's kind of stuck, you know, like that's what I would describe it as it just kind of stuck around. And then I was like, well, just wait. Like I just want to wait with this. And then. Sunday mass came and in the scriptures there, it was twice just jumped right off the page at me. I was like, okay, like you look for the confirmation. You look at what sticks with you, because it is hard to discern the voice of God sometimes in the midst of everything else. So you'd be quiet. You see what sticks you, you know, open your heart. You look inward. That's great. So great. I think one of the questions that I think is a good one, just, I know we have to wrap up soon, but this conversation is so good. It's like. When you look at a word of the year and he makes space for something new, what do you need to say no to. And Michelle like yours is very clear. Like what you're saying no to is the busy-ness and you know, other things. Is there anything else that you would say there?

Michelle Benzinger: [00:36:09] I think what do you have to say no to, I think it's really easy to, it's not the hard, bad stuff that is a challenge to say no to. It's the good stuff, you know, like, Oh, but this would be a good idea, but this be a good idea, but is it a good idea for ? And is it God's best for you? Is the question, you know, and if you say yes to this, what are you going to say? No to other things like, for me, I'm like, if I say yes to this certain thing that I'm saying no to my family, for this like energy for this, if I say yet, like you have to weigh what your yeses mean. Like you have to hold the weight of what you're saying yes. To, because it means saying no to something else. And just to really pray and discern that, like to see what the, yeah, like the Holy spirit is inviting you into with that. And I think we are really quick to answer. And I think with everything is to take a Holy pause and say, I'll get back. You don't have to say yes right away. I'll get back to you on that. Or I would love to do you just wait and just see how it would go. So, yeah, that would be my advice, I guess. So. Sure. What about you? What do you feel like you need to say no to, or that might be valuable for people in that.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:37:19] I think one tool that we can always look at is we talked about earlier in the year about con conditions for growth. We talked about the garden and what's the environment for growth look like. So, you know, the garden of your soul, what are the best conditions for growth for you? So I think that's a great way to discern it of is this going to help me grow? Is this going to be conducive for growth or is it going to hinder and, and like, you know, W like Michelle just said is St. Ignatius of Loyola is it's usually not, we're not discerning between good and bad is between what's better and what's best. So it doesn't always look the same for, I mean, there's always moral norms, but doesn't always look the same for everybody, but I think we can always take back to our souls with the Lord and say, you know, and when you look at your word of the year and kinda what the Lord is doing, is this going to be something that's going to be conducive for me to grow. Does This help my environment, my soul, the garden of my soul? Or is it going to hinder it? Maybe have some weeds grow there. Even if they look at really good weeds, A weed is a weed, whether it looks really good. So I think that's helpful to have just kind of that gentle, like, is this the best for conditions for growth, but yeah. What would you say Heather?

Heather Khym: [00:38:18] Uh, yeah, for me, I love that. And for me specifically, like I keep going back to that image of where I was. That's so descriptive of where I was in the last two years of being under the water. And it's like, for me, I started to ask the questions, what was in the water? You know, it was anxiety, it was lack of control. It was like, what were the things that made the water that was surrounding me? And. So for me, I think part of it, I mean, I'm, I'm ready for it to unfold because I think there's a lot, I don't know right now I'm excited about what the Lord is going to unfold for me with this word of the year. But yeah, part of it is saying no to some of those old mindsets or maybe agreements that I made. Like as I sit with that and go, where did I let anxiety creep in? Or where did I let maybe some despair or resentment or whatever it might be in my lack of control, like that I need to say no to and make space for what's new. So as I'm stepping. Up above the water and standing on the water with my eyes, fixed on Jesus. What am I saying yes to in this new season? And what am I letting go of and saying no more, this isn't going to happen anymore because I knew this is a, this is a new day of mercy and grace for me. It's a new year of mercy and grace to step into some new things that God has. And, and these are the decisions that we talk about a lot of different things, but this is how some of it integrates, um, in our living out our spiritual life is like, we have some decisions to make. And we've talked about this before, but there is a lot

of power in our yes. As we reflected on Mary throughout all of advent and the power of her. Yes. There is power in our, yes. Especially when that yes. Is like in communion with God and his desire and his. And so I think for many of us, yeah, just even sitting with that and saying, what do I need to say a big yes to this year? And what am I saying no to? And how can I partner with the Holy spirit and go on an adventure with God, knowing that there's going to be pain and suffering. And it's not all, some big blissful, like imaginary world. That's not what life is, but. But how can I partner with God in the adventure that he has? And when I'm going through those difficult times that I'm able to cling to him and know that he has the wheel, that he is the one leading here, he's the shepherd and I'm walking with him. I'm also following him, you know, I'm following his lead.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:40:31] So people, what do you need to release? So you can receive the fullness of your word this year?

Yeah, I think maybe one last thing before we jump into our one thing, I, one thing that I did last year for all of us is I wrote your guys's word of the year on my desk on a sticky note on my desk and I interceded for you the entire year. And so I think maybe if it feels safe enough to you, sometimes for people that's very personal, but it feels safe enough to you, if you have some good friends that are on the journey with you, or you're listening to this in a group, if a couple of you want to share your words with each other, just that's a great way to like partner with each other and to come alongside each other and just also have conversations about that. So, and that's a way that I would think of you guys. Every day that I sat at my desk and thought of your word and prayed for you in that place. And so that might also be something too, that we can abide together right. For the entire year for the people that you're your journey within your own small groups also. Wow.

Heather Khym: [00:41:21] Abiding Together - that's a good name for a podcast.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:41:23] Or Together Abiding. You'll hear more about that next week. So.

Oh, okay. Well, so should we jump into our one things, dear friends, I am just going to give you mine. My one thing is the new year, so we it's a new year and it's new grace and God's mercies are made new every morning, but I just look forward to yeah. What the Lord's going to do this year. And so that is my one thing for the years. It's a brand new year and we'll come to you as you know. So there you go. That's awesome.

Heather Khym: [00:41:55] Um, my one thing, I don't know if this was my one thing before, if I just talked about, I can't remember, it's my one thing again, if I ever said it before, but Sunday dinners at our house are my one thing. I've just been relishing in this new little thing that has occurred in our household. And I, it started with everyday was running together cause of lockdown and all that stuff. And I was like, I want to make Sunday special. And so how do we do that? And one of the ways amongst other things was just setting the table a little bit nicer. Making a nicer dinner and then having some really like, just making space for conversation after where my husband is very practical, he's like, let's get the dishes done. And then, you know, then we can relax. But what happens in the transition is that everybody would just go off and do their own thing, like playing video games and going on their phones or talking to another friend or whatever. And it would just lose the momentum of this family and conversation vibe that was going on. So. We've just extended the time and everybody's prepared for it for our dinners. And we've been having the most wonderful conversations

with our teenagers. And some of it is like full of laughter and playfulness. And some of it is just serious, like good. We're getting into it, conversations about things in the world and whatever. So. Sunday dinners. My one thing, Michelle.

Michelle Benzinger: [00:43:06] My one thing is I'm overhauling. A lot of things just living simply, but one thing is I'm really working on like skincare and being natural and trying to get toxins stuff out. I'm one of those people like, Oh my gosh, once you start going down this rabbit hole, you're like, I wish I didn't know all of this. Like I wished I didn't know, but it is really important, but a good friend of ours, Brooke Summers, she's actually part of family missions company. She just created her own natural, like skincare line and it's called Rooted. And I have like, she sent me some under eye cream and some eyelash serum. Y'all I love it. And I love that it's not very expensive, but it's all natural. Like she makes it herself and it's made with love. I just absolutely love that. And my other one thing, cause I mean, it would not be a one thing for the new year, but at least. It didn't have more than one is, uh, Kate capeto is a beautiful artists and she is here visiting one of our dear young adults. And she just brought one of the most beautiful pictures that she just painted of one of the three Kings. And it is stunning. And Kate is such a talented artist. Like the Holy spirit has really ordained her gifts to be such beauty truth and goodness. And so you all have to check out this image. It is breathtaking.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:44:15] She has so much beautiful work.

Heather Khym: [00:44:17] We'll have it in the show notes for people..

Michelle Benzinger: [00:44:18] Yes. Yeah. Yeah.

Sister Miriam James Heidland: [00:44:20] Well, Hey friends, word of the year. Let's see what the Lord is doing and welcome to 2021 and season nine, the abiding together podcast. Thank you for joining us on the journey and we look forward to the year unfolding with you. So until next week we will be abiding together. God bless you. Have a wonderful week.

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