

219 With Authority Comes Responsibility

This is part two of our series on loving our wives as Christ loved the church, building up our wives. I don't know how the wives are going to be taking all these. Maybe you could be grading us by giving us some input, but it is definitely directed towards husbands.

Let's pray: Father, thank you for your word. It gives us so much specific instruction and implied instruction and guidance on how we are to love our wives. We know that the world says that this mission impossible and yet with you all things are possible. I pray that you'll give us another insight or two today and talk to us, not just in our minds, which is wonderful for transforming them, but also talk to our hearts and our spirits for we're complete in you and you've made us this way. I pray that we'll be changed from the inside out just as we listen to your words today in Jesus's name. Amen.

I'm still working on foundational assumptions. I know that some people, if they were to tune into this podcast, they might say, well I would like a how to list, especially men. You're waiting for me to say hold her hand or spend more time or have a date night. This is stuff that the world, everybody knows. But as Christians, I think that the deeper we can dig, the better off we're going to be and we want to build our relationships on scripture but we also want to go deeper in how we can understand God's thoughts towards a subject.

I'm going to start today with a passage in second Corinthians 13 verse 10 and Paul is talking to the church and he says this, "I want to use the authority the Lord has given me to strengthen you, not to tear you down." I'm building on our last episode. We said that the husband is the head of the wife. Again, not commonly accepted by most people, but it's God's word and God's word doesn't change. But when God calls us to be the head, that comes with authority, some authority.

But I like to think of what Paul says. "I want to use the authority that the Lord has given me to strengthen you, not to tear you down." That word authority, it conveys responsibility. I believe personally that I have the potential to build up and encourage my wife and children like no one else. I also believe I have the potential to hurt and wound them like no one else. 2012, I learned many of these things when we were going through our family business transition, which you've heard me speak of many times, but what was so significant about that was is that having a third party at the table, having a consultant/counselor there provided a safe place that my wife and sons could begin speaking to me.

My wife has continued. She and I have our weekly chair chats and I continue to learn. That's one of the large lessons that I learned during that period of time is that it's not just what I say. It can be how I say it. It can be a look, it can be a word, it can be my tone, my body language. But as a man, what I'm thinking, and according to scripture, this is because of the authority that God invested in me as the husband. This authority is not to rule over, but to build up. The root word, the Greek word for authority in this passage in second Corinthians is *exousía*. I remember way back in seminary being taught the difference between *dynamis* which we would get words like dynamic or dynamo or dynamite is power. But *exousía* is authority, which is different. It's delegated influence.

For example, think about when you have a child and you want to get a message to the other children. So you don't want to run all the way up and run out in the yard, but you just say, "Go tell the children that it's time to eat." For example. Now that little four year old can run outside and say, "Papa says it's time to eat." And they'll listen, the other children who normally wouldn't. If the child went out on their own authority, it wouldn't happen, but he goes out with your authority as the parent and they listen because it's really the authority of the parent. But I like to think of the fact that I have been

delegated a certain amount of influence or authority by God to build up my wife, to strengthen her, and not to tear her down.

That's where we're going to start. We have been authorized, we have been called, this is something that God designed us to do, but if we're not building up our spouse, then we're not using this authority that he's given us properly. If we have, I should say if we have, we all have blind spots and we all have baggage and we all bring things to the table that are not helpful and that can tear down and wound. That's part of the process of us deepening our relationship with God and asking God to search our heart and being willing to be taught by our wife and our kids, willing to listen to our close friends and our pastor and work on those blind spots and have God reveal them and acknowledge them so we don't then wound others because of our own stuff.

Now, I previously mentioned this on several podcasts. I don't want to overstate it, but I also don't want to overlook it. The second biggest lesson I learned going through 2012 was that my relationship with God impacts my relationship with my family. I mean how I perceive God flows into how I treat others. Again, I don't want to just assume that we're all in a great place and all we would need to do is pick up a couple more tips from these podcasts and then we can go out and be great husbands. But one of the things that I invest more time in than anything else in my life right now because I am finally convinced of this concept. I'm convinced that I can't give something I haven't received. I'm intentional in a way I've never been before about my personal times with God.

I get up and I read God's word. I'm on a really good roll right now. I'm trying to get into a new rhythm now that I'm done speaking and I'm home, I'm trying to get into this rhythm of going for a daily walk, spending significant amount of time in God's word, not only reading through the Bible, but doing studies and scripture. I know that nobody has as much time probably as me right now, but I got lots of things on my plate. I've got lots of things to keep me busy, but I'm realizing that the best thing I can do for my wife is to spend time with my dad. I just know this, if I'm in a good place and I'm living in grace and I'm being loved well, then I'm going to be able to love well. We love because he first loved us. The more I take in his love, the more I'm able to love. The more I take in grace, the more I'm able to extend grace.

This is something that I'm so convinced of that I'm not doing a lot of, you might say, busy stuff because this is the most important stuff. I've told this story before and I'm going to tell it again and I'm sorry if I'm repeating myself. When I fly Southwest Airlines, they always, after they tell you to put your tray table in the full and upright locked position and turn off your electronics, I can almost do the whole spiel. Then they tell you that in the event of cabin depressurization there's going to be an oxygen mask fall from the overhead compartment. If you're on that plane with your wife and/or your kids, your first response as a dad is to protect and the first thing you want to do is you're not even thinking about yourself. You want to make sure that your family has those oxygen masks on. That's how we're wired. That's how we're created and that's okay. That's why men will jump on hand grenades for their family. It's okay, it's good.

But what the airline has to tell you, because it's counterintuitive on every flight, is the best thing you can do for your family is to put that oxygen mask on yourself first and then you'll be equipped to make sure that your family is cared for. I think of that illustration frequently because I need to breathe God's grace. I need to spend time developing and deepening my relationship with God because when I am loved well, then I'll be equipped to love well.

All right. So now there's several podcasts on that in the past but I just can't go very far with us saying it. Now let's get into some specific commands and this will surprise you. I think the first two are

going to surprise you today, and this might be all we have time for today anyway, but they're excellent commands.

The first command for husbands and wives is not found Ephesians 5, 22 through 33. I'm going to start a little earlier. I'm going to start in Ephesians 5, 15 to 20. "Be careful how you live. Don't live like fools, but like those who are wise. Make the most of every opportunity in these evil days. Don't act thoughtlessly, but understand what the Lord wants you to do. Don't be drunk with wine because that will ruin your life. Instead be filled with the spirit, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs among yourselves and making music to the Lord in your hearts and give thanks for everything to God the Father in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ."

I had been taught by people that know more than I do about how the Greek is arranged in Ephesians that that phrase, "Be filled with the spirit," is really where we should begin when we talk all the way through the end of the fifth chapter on husbands and wives and marriage and family dynamics. It's consistent with what I just got done saying is that we're filled with the spirit, then we're equipped to love our wives as Christ loved the church. Wives are equipped to submit to their husbands as unto the Lord. Husbands and wives both need to be filled with the spirit. I'm not going to get into a debate on whether you have the Holy Spirit or you have part of him or you just whatever at salvation.

But I don't think I've ever offended the Holy Spirit by asking him to fill me a fresh. I frequently ask him to fill me with the spirit. Help me to walk in this spirit, help me to be led by the spirit. Help me to listen to the Holy Spirit. I don't think he gets tired of hearing it, at least I've never sensed that in my own spirit. I simply want to be filled with the spirit. I don't care if it's a second, third, fourth, or 10th experience. Maybe for me it's a thousandth experience, but I want to keep topping off the tank so to speak. When we're filled with the spirit, then we're equipped to love our wives as Christ loved the church.

A second command is found in the 21st verse. Again, not a verse normally read when you're talking about husbands and wives, "And further submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Submit to one another." Normally when we hear the word submit, we're thinking of wives being submissive to husbands, which you don't hear many sermons on any more anyway, but if you happen to be in that persuasion, you will hear that. But before he says that first, he says, "Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ." Again, this is the result of 40 years of marriage. One of the lessons that took me a long time to learn is that mutuality means a lot to my wife. It means that we're a team. It means that it's not all the husband and then the wife coming along as the help meet to help her husband, but that we need each other and we're working together and we're pulling together.

It's not all the wife either. I've seen some families where the husband just, "Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am. Yes ma'am." No, it's mutuality and we need to develop that. If you have a strong husband and a more submissive wife or a more submissive husband and a strong wife, you guys have to work that out yourself. All I'm saying is the scripture says submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. This is a biblical principle. This is a foundational concept and it's something that's in God's word.

Now I will admit, confess, acknowledge, whatever word you want to use, that this was hard for me. Because when it came right down to thinking about transferring our business in 2012, I thought it was my business and certainly my wife had helped out a little bit, but I was spending the 14 to 18 hours, I don't know, not 18. Let's just say 12 to 14 hours a day working on the business for many years. She gently reminded me that she walked through those years with me. Not only did she give input, she was my sounding board, she was my supporter, she was my encourager. You know what? She was absolutely right, and she gently reminded me of these things. I had to have an attitude adjustment.

Now some people say, "Well, I am. I'm already. I got this. We're mutual." But Sandi sensed that I wasn't treating her as an equal, that I wasn't treating her as... And let me read this passage from first Peter chapter three. "You husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat your wife with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. Treat her as you should so your prayers will be not hindered." So she may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If we really embrace this, not just in our mind but in our heart, and if we get our attitudes adjusted with this, then our life will reflect what we hold deep in our heart.

The scripture says, "Out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks. The tongue is connected to those deep seated beliefs that you hold in your heart of hearts." In scripture, the heart is the real you. If your heart and your mind can grasp this concept, then you'll act differently. If I really believe that Sandi is my equal partner in God's gift of life and that I am to submit to her as she submits to me and we develop this attitude of mutuality, we are going to be a much better team. I'm going to have a much easier time honoring her and building her up and encouraging her and using this authority that God has given me to see that she's cared for.

But if I don't really believe these things in my heart, if I'm not really believing that we are joint heirs of God's grace, then my attitudes are going to come out. God forbid that there's somebody listening that says, "I would like to have some tips on how I could love my wife better, how I could build her up, how I could encourage." I think it starts on the inside. If you're doing stuff on the outside but your attitudes in your heart and your spirit and your mind are not fully embracing them on the inside, it's going to come across as hypocrisy. It's not going to go well. Your wife, I'm just telling you, wives sense things more than men do. That's my humble opinion. But you can't trick them. They know us. I think that what's happened in our own relationship between Sandi and myself is that she really senses now that I value her, that I really believe that we're co heirs. We're joint heirs of the grace of life. We're equal partners and I'm submitting to her.

It doesn't diminish the fact that God has given us different responsibilities in our marriage and our relationship. But having that attitude is huge, and I keep thinking about that a Philippians chapter two, which we're going to talk about another point down the line, but Paul said, "Have this mind in you, which was in Christ Jesus, that though he was God, he did not consider this as something to be grasped, but he emptied himself, took the form of a servant, and he treated others better than himself." So that is what we're supposed to be focused on is loving each other as Christ has loved us. That's what that verse says. Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ, and with our eyes on Jesus recognizing that he had every right to be the leader, the ruler, the head, the big kahuna, whatever you want to call him and he emptied himself. He took the form of a servant and he built up the church.

I want to have the same attitude that Jesus did when it comes to this and I want to submit to my wife as a joint heir and I want to acknowledge that we're equal in Christ, that we're equal partners and I want mutuality to be the order of the day and not just on rare occasions.

Back when I was younger and had more chutzpah, I was leading a men's prayer meeting and I said, "By the way, we shouldn't waste our time here if we're not honoring our wives, living with her in an understanding way and recognizing she's an equal partner, since our prayers aren't going to get answered anyway."

The pastor of the church I attended in seminary would close every service by asking God to take what we had heard and then write it on our hearts. Pretty much without exception that's what we did because we didn't want to just be putting stuff in our notebooks. We wanted to be hiding God's word

in our hearts and asking Him to incorporate it into our life so we'd be changed. He said that there was one man who was being disciplined by a godly minister. As soon as the minister was done teaching, he looked at the man and he said, "Wouldn't you like to stop and pray and ask God to change your life and make it according to what we've been talking about?" He says, "Pastor, I'm taking it in as fast as you're giving it."

The idea is that sometimes if we just have the right as we're listening, we can be changed. God's spirit, it's almost like we're saying amen as the words are coming to us. But other times we have to pray, and I do a lot of praying. I ask God to turn my heart towards him, help me to love him more. I ask God to turn my heart towards my family. One of my favorite prayer verses is first John 5, 14 and 15 that says, "This is the confidence that we have toward him. If we ask anything according to his will, he hears us. And if we know that he hears us in whatever we ask, we know that we have the requests that we have asked of him. And since we're reading God's word, we know it's God's will for us to use our authority wisely and to build up and not to tear down. We know it's God's will for us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ and we know it's God's will for us to recognize that we are equal partners."

Based on that, let's pray. Father, help us and all who are listening to these words help us to not have blind spots on this subject. If we do, reveal them to us either by your word or by your spirit or through the input of our spouse. But I pray that you would enable us by your spirit to use the authority that you've given us to build each other up, help us to be chilled with the spirit, help us to recognize that we are equal partners and joint heirs, and help us to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Let these words be emblazoned and written on our hearts down deep so that eventually they will work their way out in our behaviors, in our attitudes, in our speech. In Jesus's name, amen.