

Podcast 226

Let's pray. Father, once again, we ask for divine help. Divine help to see things from your perspective. Divine help to hear your thoughts. Divine help to respond as your spirit is moving in each one of us in our own journeys. I pray that you'll give us encouragement along this line and help us to see new things from your word today. In Jesus's name, amen.

One of the primary precepts is that when we think about loving our wives as Christ loved the church, which I think is probably one of the overarching scriptures, and we discovered that that comes from the new commandment that Jesus gave in John 13 and in John 15 where he says, "Love one another as I have loved you." Paul's using similar words, but it's the same concept. "Love your wife as I have loved you or love your wife as Christ has loved us, the church." So we've had that overarching theme that we're supposed to love each other, starting with our wives is the way I read it, and then love one another, love our wives, just as God, the father loved Jesus and as Jesus loved us.

Now that, they had the perfect relationship. Jesus was loved perfectly, which enabled him to love perfectly, but you and I have never been loved perfectly on this Earth, and unfortunately for us, most of us, we are affected more than we realize. I don't know if affected is the right word or influenced perhaps is a better word, but we're influenced on how our parents loved us and we're influenced by how we watched our parents love each other, and that colored the way that we love each other and the way that we love our spouses.

I don't know how else to go into this in more detail, but if you don't believe that, I think that you probably ought to sit down with your wife and just say, "Am I like my dad?" Or, "Have I ..." Because when a spouse comes into a family, and it works both ways. When a wife enters into a husband's family, when a husband enters into a wife's family, they see dysfunction as well as the good. They see it. There's a different perspective, and when you're in it, it's hard to see it. But somehow we've got to work through that baggage and that influence and we've got to aim for loving our wives as Christ was loved by his father and as Christ loved us. That's the command. That's the goal. That's the standard.

Okay, and then along that same line, I believe that we can only love as we have been loved. We love because he first loved us, and so the more I take in God's love for me and he loves me unconditionally. He loves me all the time. He doesn't change. He loved us to the end. He's committed. He's going to marry us. That kind of incredibly permanent, committed love that God has for us. The more we take it in, the easier it is then to pass it on to others.

I'll give you a funny example. I hope I haven't already told you this one. The other night I was out walking. It was in the evening and I was meditating on God's character that God takes the initiative and God loved us even when we were unlovely.

God took the initiative to love us. His love for us quickens something in us and we end up responding by loving him, and I was thinking about taking the initiative and how it's kind of scary sometimes to love and to put yourself out there, because what if you're not loved in return? You know what I'm saying? Those kind of things. Fear.

Anyway, I'm walking down the street and I was thinking something similar to that, and there was a new neighbor. We have some new houses that have been built on our street and he was out for the first time putting out his Christmas lights, and it just flowed from me and I kind of shouted across the street as I was walking. I said, "Looking good!" And he responded in kind and we had just a little brief, and I walked down the street smiling and I think he was standing there smiling, but somebody had to take the initiative and it was God that took the initiative to love us.

Okay, so when we focus on God's love and we assimilate it and comprehend it ourselves, then we're able to love our wives the same way. So when it comes to the perfect expression, I think of how the father loved his son was at his baptism. I've talked about this many times, but I never get over it and it still reverberates in my heart.

I'm going to read it from the NLT to give you a little bit different flavor. "After his baptism, as Jesus came out of the water, the heavens were opened. He saw the spirit of God descending like a dove and settling on him and a voice from Heaven said." This is the father to his son. It's the father's heart to his son's heart. It's love embodied in every word of this phrase. "This is my dearly loved son who brings me great joy," and without going into more the implications of that, there's three principles there that I think we can apply to loving our wives.

The first one is when God said: "This is my dearly loved son." Well, how can we love our wife the same way? I'm just going to give some thoughts that I've come up with this, but this is something that you can chew on when you're at work or when you have some downtime. How can I love my wife to make her know that she belongs? What can I do to make her know that she belongs to me, to our marriage, that I'm committed to her? I'm going to give you a couple thoughts. The first one is, wear your wedding ring.

When Sandy and I were at a marriage retreat one time and that topic came up and I looked at her. I said, "Does that mean a lot to you that I wear my ring?" And she said yes.

It's a sign of commitment. It's a sign of covenant. It's a sign that we're one unit, that we belong to each other, and just so you know, I have probably a half a dozen wedding rings upstairs. I go through them because I lose them. I take them off when I'm painting, working with my hands, working out at the gym, and when I sleep at night.

Another one is a personal observation and one that is not found in scripture, but I think it's important that I don't call Sandy Mom or Mother. She's my wife. She's

not my children's mother. She is, but she isn't. I call her Sandy. I call her by her name, and I think that that's important that people know that she's my wife and my girlfriend. Because she is my girlfriend and she is my wife and she belongs to me, we belong to each other, and we're one flesh. I personally cringe when I hear somebody talk to their wife and call her Mother. Okay, that's a personal one so you don't have to take as from the word of God, but I am trying to think of ways that we can make our wife know that she belongs to us. You might ask your wife to see what she thinks.

The next principle for loving your wife as Christ was loved is to make her know she is beloved. She's special. She's liked. She's loved. God said, "This is my dearly loved son." He didn't say, "This is my son that I put up with." He did say, "This is my son and I dearly love him." When we see our wife in the morning, let's smile. One of my wife's love languages is touch, and we have a policy now that we hug each day. The last thing we just did before I came downstairs for the podcast was hug. Sometimes I forget to give her a hug during the day or to hold her hand or to rub her back or to do something that makes her know that I'm thinking about her. This requires some effort because it's not my love language. It's not the way that I'm wired, but it is the way that she is wired.

If your wife's love language is quality time, or gifts, or service, or words of affirmation, this is another way that we can recognize that she's special. Speaking her love language communicates that we like her just the way God made her and created her.

Most of us are pretty good at being attentive and romantic when we're seeking to conquer the objective and win her hand in marriage. We're infatuated and focused. God gives us these desires to be with them and they are real and wonderful. Every man has a built in marketing department. We turn on the marketing department full tilt when we are seeking her. Let's make the effort to keep that same effort alive after marriage. The objective now is to make her know that she is dearly loved, and that she's special.

The third principle is when God tells His Son, "You bring me great joy." I want Sandy to know that she's pleasing, that she's enough just the way she is. I don't want her to get it by osmosis. I need to tell her. I need to write notes.

This might be a good time to recall that maybe your parents only loved you when you did good stuff, so you may be tempted to only love your wife when she looks great or when she makes a great meal. Maybe your parents didn't show public displays of affection. I don't know. Maybe your parents had a great relationship, but the point is not to be influenced so much by other relationships, but to look to God and think, "Boy, he really loved His Son. He was glad he was His Son and His Son brought Him great joy, and I'm sure that that meant the world to Jesus to know that his father loved Him, liked Him, and brought great joy to His Dad."

Regardless of how my parents showed love for one another, I would like Sandy to know that I appreciate her for who she is, that she's enough. She doesn't have to fix herself, change herself, or go put on more makeup.

I call these principles the big three. If I want to love my wife as God loved His Son and as His Son loved us, then I need to focus on making my wife know that she belongs to me, she's beloved, and she brings me great joy.

Since I discovered this truth to love as Jesus was loved, I have been thinking about the relationship between the Father and the Son and how the Son has loved us. As I do, it opens up a panoply of Scripture passages that I see differently now. I'll give you one example in 1 Corinthians 13, 4 through 7, the love chapter. I took out the word "love" and replaced it with Jesus. Jesus is the Word of God. He's God in the flesh. God is love. Jesus is God. So Jesus is love. I think it works.

Jesus is patient and kind. Jesus is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Jesus does not demand his own way. Jesus is not irritable. Jesus keeps no record of being wronged. Jesus never gives up, never loses faith. He is always hopeful and endures through every circumstance.

You can read them with Jesus replacing love, or as it is written with the word love. Let's think about the verse that says, "Love keeps no record of being wronged."

Here is one way I apply this concept. I've emptied the dishwasher four times this week and I know she's only done it twice. Love doesn't keep track, love keeps on loving.

Recall the previous podcast when we discussed God's forgiveness. He separates our sin as far as the east is from the west and then puts up a sign, as Corrie ten Boom says and says "no fishing." God doesn't keep a record of being wronged. He forgives our sin. His Son took our sins upon Himself. Thus we shouldn't keep a record of being wronged.

Jesus is patient and kind. We should be patient and kind. Jesus never gives up or loses faith in us. We should never give up on our wife, and never lose faith with her.

There's a lot of these kinds of verses in scripture once we get your mind around the idea that we're to love our wife as God has loved us. As we meditate on what love looks like and how God fleshed out that love to us we'll discover all kinds of applications.

What I'm personally aiming for is to get my love tank filled by God. I want to, as the song says, find in God my all in all. I want to be loved fully by my Dad. I want to spend so much time and energy daily drawing close to God and having Him minister to me and revel and be refreshed in the knowledge that He likes me. That He loves me. That I bring him great joy. That I'm his beloved son.

The more I meditate on these truths, the more I'm freed up from needing my wife and my family and others to fill my love tank. I'm still a human being and I need

other people, but the more I can fill up my love tank from Heaven, then the more I'll be able to give to others.

The more I let God meet my needs, the better equipped I am to meet her needs. And as we love our wife, family, and others, as Christ has loved us, it's going to bear really good fruit. It's going to bear good fruit in our homes. It's going to bear good fruit in our children's lives, because they're going to see something modeled that they will aspire to as well.

Let's pray: Father, thank you for loving us this way. These are wonderful words and it's wonderful to be on the outside looking at the relationship that you had with your son, Jesus. Thank you God for revealing not only through your word but through the life of Jesus divine love. But I pray that we'll be able to taste it and experience it ourselves. Help us to take it in, not just in our mind and not just from afar and not just something we aspire to, but help us to comprehend and grow. These are all words in scripture. Grow in the grace and knowledge of Jesus and be rooted and grounded in this kind of love, and I pray that you help us all get our roots right down deep in how much you love us and drink it in and then be able to pass it on to others, beginning with our spouse, in Jesus's name.

For all those people in really difficult experiences, give them hope. Show them the way out. Give them a fresh hug from Heaven, and I pray for their marriages that you'll hold us together and help them to flourish. In Jesus's name, amen.