

## Podcast 225

I need to think of a good title for this series. In my notes I call it "Loving as Christ Loved." I also have it as "Strategies for Building Up Your Wife." The one I am leaning towards is "Biblical Husbanding."

We are currently focused on loving our wives based on how Jesus has loved us. The talk today is about Jesus forgiving us, and then how we can pass that concept on and forgive our wife and others.

Let's pray: Father, help us today to tap into more of the character of Jesus. Help us to imbibe it. Help us to change even as we're listening to these scriptures, and then help us to be forgiving in our homes just as Jesus has forgiven us. In Jesus' name, amen.

### Jesus Forgives

There are parts of the life of Jesus that I can understand and grasp a little bit. The crucifixion is probably not one of them. When he's hanging on the cross and he's suffering, that is way beyond my experience. I've heard doctors describe how unimaginable the suffering to hang on a cross with nails and how every breath is an effort and I am in awe.

If I was hanging there and people started fussing at me, probably the last words come out of my mouth would be, "Father forgive them for they know not what they do." I just reread the whole passage in Luke 23 where they say, "Crucify him," and Pilate says, "Why?" He keeps giving them a way out, and assures them that he can release a prisoner, but they are insistent. They're adamant and shout, "Crucify him." Then Jesus says, "Father, forgive them for they know not what to do."

This is such an incredible display of forgiveness, and if we're going to love our wives as Christ loved us, we need to remember this event. Christ loved us by asking his Father to forgive us even when we do things that we know are wrong. It's not that they didn't know what they were saying. They knew they were wrong and Jesus still asked God to forgive them.

I want to be forgiving when I am being stoned like my namesake Stephen. In the Book of Acts 7, we read, "They cast him out of the city and stoned him, and the witnesses laid down their garments at the feet of a young man named Saul. As they were stoning Stephen, he called out, 'Lord Jesus, receive my spirit,' and falling to his knees, he cried out with a loud voice, 'Lord, do not hold this sin against them.' When he had said this, he fell asleep."

It was not Stephen's natural makeup to forgive people, but Christ had so transformed him that you see the exact same spirit in Stephen that you saw in Jesus. As they were stoning him for no reason, his last words were, "Do not hold this sin against them." This is powerful stuff. Naturally, it's not easy for any of us to forgive anybody. We want justice. We want vengeance, revenge, whatever you want to put in there. But Stephen, "full of the Spirit" asks for forgiveness.

Notice in this account where Saul was. Not only did the early church embody the Spirit of Jesus, which is what Stephen did, and asked them just like his Savior did, "Don't hold this in against them," but I believe the early church also took the words from the Sermon on the Mount seriously.

In Matthew 5:43 and 44, "You have heard that it was said. You shall love your neighbor and hate your enemy, but I say to you, love your enemy and pray for those who persecute you." I like to think that the early church was praying for Paul. They weren't just hiding behind closed doors, but they were praying for their enemies, whose name is Saul then.

I imagine the early believers saw him persecuting the church, and the Holy Spirit reminded them to pray. They may have said something like, "You know what we're supposed to do and how we are to treat our enemies? We're supposed to pray for people that persecute us. We're supposed to ask God to change their hearts and change their life and forgive their sin," and then they prayed. Perhaps when Stephen was being unjustly killed with rocks, and Saul was a witness that it made such an impression on him, that the event began to change him. It was two chapters later in Acts 9 that Saul was converted.

This is love in action. That's the ultimate application of what it means to be forgiving and to pray for those who are persecuting you, hurting you, doing things against you. I think we can all see how we can apply that in our home because all of us are going to make mistakes. Sometimes we know what we're doing. Sometimes we're oblivious, but we need to learn to forgive each other, and we need to keep praying for each other, and we need to have the Spirit of Jesus in our homes.

1 Corinthians 13 says, "Love keeps no record of being wronged." I think we can easily see how this truth would apply in the home. "Love keeps no record of being wronged," "Takes no account of evil," different translations use different words. I like "keeps no record."

There are sometimes when I do keep records, and I'm trusting the Holy Spirit to help me to not keep records of offenses against me, real or perceived. 1 Peter 4:8 says,

"Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins." Not only are we forgiven, but when Jesus took our sins upon himself, his sacrifice covered a multitude of sins. Jesus, who is love in the flesh, didn't keep a record of them.

This is how Christ has loved us, and I'm finding this more and more. If I will continue to meditate on what Jesus has done for me, it is easier to emulate His character and find love and forgiveness flowing from my heart. The kind of forgiveness that Jesus has extended to me, I want to extend to others, but the more I take in how much Jesus did it, then the more I'm going to be equipped. The same Spirit that enabled Stephen and the early church to apply Jesus teaching, I believe the same Spirit can help us and enable us to apply it in our home.

### Jesus is Our Helper

We used to watch a lot of "Everybody Loves Raymond." We don't anymore, but we used to. I remember one episode where Robert was feeling very badly. He was at a work party, and his wife told a lame joke which wasn't funny. Afterwards he felt badly because he wished that he had laughed even though nobody else laughed. He felt like he left his wife hanging out to dry.

I thought of this concept when I was looking at this passage that's found in Hebrews 13 when it says, "We can confidently say the Lord is my helper. I will not fear what can man do to me." I thought about that verse, and I thought, the Lord is my helper. The Lord's got my back. He has my back, and I would like to have my wife's back, whether it's lame jokes she tells or at events where we're attending or any other kind of situation.

Maybe it's a work event where I know everybody and she doesn't know anybody, or maybe we're at a family gathering. Maybe the kids have a certain perspective, and maybe she has a different perspective, or perhaps we are gathered at a reunion or something. I don't want my wife to feel alone. I want to have her back.

In our early married days I remember Sandy having to make some tough decisions and say no to some things that her family wanted her to do. She was right in making the tough call, but she was really feeling it. At some point I said to her, "Just tell him Steve said that he didn't want to do it." She asked to clarify, "What you mean?" I said, "Look, I can handle this differently. I'm not as emotionally attached to your family. Just blame me. You have a blank check anytime you want to pull it out."

Now, I'm not sure that's biblical and all the rest, but my attitude is that I wanted my wife to know that I had her back and she wasn't alone in this and I'm standing with her. If she needs to pull that card, she can do it.

### Jesus is a Present Help

I've got couple more scriptures for this podcast which have come from meditating on how Jesus has loved us. Psalm 46 says, "God is our refuge and strength, a very present help in trouble." 2 Thessalonians 2 says, "May our Lord Jesus Christ himself and God our Father who loved us and gave us eternal comfort and good hope through grace comfort your hearts and establish them in every good work and word." I'm not trying to pretend that I'm Jesus or I'm the Father, but I'm recognizing that if they have a heart to comfort and be present in times of sorrow, then I need to have a heart to be present and sit with and be near Sandy when she goes through difficult times.

Probably the biggest lesson I learned from the Book of Job is often the best thing I can do is keep my mouth shut and just sit. Instead of trying to fix people, offer solutions, and brainstorm, just sit and be present.

Jesus never leaves us alone. There's a couple of different passages. Probably one of my favorites is Hebrews 13:5(NLT): "God has said, 'I will never fail you. I will never abandon you.'" Matthew 28:20(NLT) reads, "Be sure of this: I am with you always to the end of the age." Jesus' is called Emmanuel, which means "God with us." So we want to be with our wives. We want to have their back. We want to be their helper. We want to comfort them, but we also just plain want to be there for them.

### Jesus is Faithful

In Revelation 19:11, Jesus is pictured on a white horse: "I saw heaven opened, and behold, a white horse. The one sitting on it is called Faithful and True." There are many scriptures about God being faithful.

His faithfulness builds on the fact that God is with us. He is committed to being with us. He will never leave us. He'll never forsake us. Since God is faithful, I want to be faithful. I want to be there. I don't want to walk away. I don't want to run away. I want to be there.

Malachi 2:14–15 is a very poignant scripture, "The Lord was witness between you and the wife of your youth to whom you have been faithless," (the opposite of faithful) "though she is your companion and your wife by covenant. Did He not make them one with a portion of the spirit in their union? What was the one God seeking? Godly offspring. So guard yourselves in your spirit, and let none of you be faithless to the

wife of your youth." God is faithful, and his counsel and his command is let none of us be faithless to the wife of your youth.

Hebrews 13:4 summarizes this concept, "Give honor to marriage, remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery." Practicing unfaithfulness is becoming easier and easier to do in the church, in our present culture. May God help us to be different and be faithful and not faithless. Since Jesus is faithful and true, and He never abandons us, may we never abandon our wives.

#### Jesus Loved His Disciples to the End

John 13:1, "Before the feast of Passover, when Jesus knew that His hour had come to depart out of this world to the Father, having loved His own, who were in the world, He loved them to the end." I'm starting to cry just reading that verse. He was going through it and his own followers had begun to forsake him yet, "He loved them to the end."

I don't want to ever give up on my wife. Jesus never gave up on us. I want to love her to the end as Jesus did. I want to imbibe the spirit of commitment that Christ is exemplifying right there. Something that we mentioned early on in this series, same Spirit though, Jesus is committed to marrying us.

I've heard people teach on this, and I'm not certain from just reading scripture about this tradition, but apparently in John 14 when Jesus was going back to the Father, it was to prepare a place for His bride. Scholars have studied the early Jewish tradition and the bridegroom would go and get the house ready before the marriage. Then he would come and get his bride and take her to the home.

#### Jesus will Marry His Bride

With that background, this section in John 14:1-3 takes on new meaning, "Let not your hearts be troubled. Believe in God. Believe also in me. In my Father's house are many rooms. If it were not so, would I have told you that I go to prepare a place for you? If I go and prepare a place for you, I will come again and will take you to myself that where I am, you may be also."

Yes, He's gone from us right now, but He's coming back. The reason He's coming back is to get His bride, and He's going to take His bride and they will never be separated again. "Where I am, you may be also." In that context, Revelation 19:6 through 9, "I heard what seemed to be the voice of a great multitude, like the roar of many waters and like the sound of the mighty peals of thunder crying out, 'Hallelujah, for the Lord our God, the Almighty reigns. Let us rejoice and exalt and give Him the

glory for the marriage of the Lamb has come. His bride has made herself ready.' It was granted her to clothe herself with fine linen, bright and pure for the fine linen is the righteous deeds of the saints. The angel said to me, 'Write this: Blessed are those who are invited to the marriage supper of the Lamb.'"

I think we have to keep this in mind, yes, he's going to come back, and yes, he's going to lead a wonderful army at Armageddon, but ultimately, His greatest joy is going to be when He is able to marry His bride and take her to the place that He's prepared for her. He's committed to marrying us. It's the same Spirit that we've been talking about. May God help us to be committed to our wives, committed to our vows that we took, committed to marriage, and hang in there and love each other to the end. Amen?

If we want to change the world, men, we have the potential to do it. I really believe this with all my heart that there's nobody that can hurt our wives like us and there's no one that can build them up like us. If we will embody Christ in our homes and if we will keep our eyes on Jesus and love our wives as Jesus has loved us, we can change the world. But it's going to start one home at a time, one marriage at a time, and one husband at a time who is willing to love his wife and be tender, serve her, and embody all these principles we've been considering.

One book that encouraged me greatly is "Discovering the Mind of a Woman" by Ken Nair. I have heard him speak several times and counsel with him. His life and testimony have been an encouragement to us. I've had to learn these things, but I've also seen beautiful fruit when I can keep my eyes on Jesus, learn to die, learn to be filled with the spirit, and learn to apply these principles in the home. I'm in the best place I've ever been with God and my wife. May God help us all.

Let's pray: Father, thank you for this instruction. Help us to have that same faithful, committed Spirit that Jesus embodied. Give us a forgiving faithful heart. In Jesus' name, amen.