

## BFF394 Discerning the Heart, and How I Found my Wife

**Scott Moore:** Welcome to the "Building Faith Families" podcast with Steve Demme. I'm your host, Scott Moore. Thanks for joining us today. Good morning, Steve, and Happy New Year. How are you?

**Steve:** I'm well. When I was in elementary school, I used to take great delight in walking out the door right before Christmas vacation and telling my teacher, "I'll see you next year," and I still do it.

**Scott:** I've done it a few times this week.

**Steve:** Last night we went to our little local diner, and I said, "I haven't seen you since last year." They just smile at me.

**Scott:** You should be happy for me and my son, our whole family went to Waffle House for my son's birthday. It was the first time I've ever been there. It was very fun.

**Steve:** Today I'm celebrating an anniversary. My wife and I got married in May, however, it was New Year's Eve that I asked her to marry me, and the scriptures played a very significant role in that.

**Scott:** Cool.

**Steve:** Let's pray: Thank you, Father, for Your Word that is living and active, and it's way more than just ink on paper. It was authored by the Spirit, and it's alive and living to this day. I pray that You'll help us in this new year to reconnect afresh with the living God in His living Word, in Jesus' name, amen.

**Scott:** Amen.

**Steve:** Hebrews 4:12, "The Word of God is living and active, sharper than any two-edged sword piercing to the division of soul and of spirit, of joints and of marrow, and discerning the thoughts and intentions of the heart."

Now, I thought of a couple instances where that passage was experienced in my own life, but I think the most interesting one is when Sandy and I were courting. Believe it or not, our church had been encouraging a form of courtship way before homeschooling had made it popular.

We didn't date recreationally, if I can put it that way. We wouldn't have even talked to each other if we hadn't felt like God was drawing our hearts together. As you know, courtship is a difficult time to discern God's will because of our emotions and physical attractions.

Everybody goes through situations, whether it's changing jobs or making any decision, wondering what is me and what is God? What is something I feel? What is something that the Spirit is leading me to? Sandy and I had been seeking God, and after talking to godly counselors, we sensed it was time to begin to pursue a courtship, which I would call intentional dating, with the purpose of getting married. She had lots of scriptures that were encouraging her. God had given me a lot of encouragement. During this season she was living in Florida, working at a church, and I was finishing up seminary in Massachusetts. This is before we had free phone calls, FaceTime, and email.

We wrote lots of letters, which I think gave us a good foundation. When you write a letter, then you have time to marinate and think about what the other person has written, and then you respond. Letters were so important that one of my sons did this when he was courting his future wife. They used to write a letter a day to each other. That was their way of getting to know each other.

I think it's much healthier to write letters to discern God's will, than to walk along a beach when the moon is rising and sun is going down because anybody can look good then. Anyway, so we wrote lots of letters and sent cassette tapes. Goodness gracious, am I dating myself now? A cassette tape. We would record a cassette, and I'd send it to her, then she'd record a cassette and send it back to me. We had occasional phone calls but they were expensive back in those days.

One of the obstacles that I was facing was my fear of commitment. One afternoon I was driving up Route 1A in Massachusetts, praying and thinking about whether God's will was for me to marry Sandy. This little phrase from the Christmas song, "O Little Town of Bethlehem" was quickened to me. "All the hopes and fears of all the years are met in thee tonight." When I heard that, I understood what my problem was and thought, "Oh, I'm just afraid. I have cold feet." What God was saying is that He can take care of all my hopes and all my fears. They are all met in Him.

When Sandi was living in Florida, our family determined to drive to Florida from Pittsburgh, Pennsylvania, where my folks lived, to visit my grandparents living in Bradenton, Florida. When we arrived in the Tampa area, we first stopped and picked up Sandi at the church where she was working and spent all Christmas together. Then we drove back to Pittsburgh, stopping to visit my uncle in Atlanta, on the way and had a wonderful trip.

While in Pittsburgh, we celebrated New Year's Eve. As my mom and dad were entertaining their friends in the living room, having a little New Year's Eve party, Sandi and I had found a quiet room and were reading our Bible together. The schedule we both followed at that time went from January to December, Genesis to Revelation.

On this, the last day in December, we were reading the last few chapters of Revelation. We were having a wonderful holiday together, but I still had questions about whether or not to get married. It was probably just fear again. However as we were reading chapters 19, 20, 21, 22, God met me in His Word.

I need to give a little more background. When I had consulted my spiritual mentor, at the time about his thoughts about Sandi and me, I wanted his advice. I said, "I really sense that God is drawing my heart towards Sandy. What do you think?" This was a big step of faith because I rarely ask advice. Anyway, I asked him "What do you think about Sandy?"

He said, "Well, I've known her since she was born. She's battled physical ailments all her life. She's had a lifelong struggle with headaches." I knew her health had caused her to miss part of one year in Bible school, and she'd been in the hospital. However, her character and her spiritual set of soul were stellar.

I used to think of her when we sang a song called "Victory Through Grace." The chorus is, "Not to the strong is the battle, not to the swift is the race, but to the true

and the faithful, victory is promised through grace." In other words, yes, she has physical ailments, but what really matters is her set of soul and her spirit, which is solid and true.

Back to New Year's Eve, that evening as we're reading Revelation , I read in 19:11 where Jesus appears on a white horse, and he's called faithful and true. Here's what it says, "I saw heaven opened and behold a white horse, the one sitting on it called Faithful and True."

When I read those words, they seemed to be highlighted, like they were all in caps, and they were a wonderful confirmation that Sandy had the most important qualities despite her physical weakness, she was faithful and true. That was point number one, and that was a wonderful confirmation and affirmation.

The next confirmation, you're going to think is funny. Two chapters later, I noticed this phrase, "Fearful and unbelieving." Now, it was at the end of a longer passage, but I was convicted by this scripture as I saw that I was fearful, and not walking in faith. I was unbelieving.

I also observed that these people were going to spend time in the lake of fire. Let me read it. "He who sits on the throne said, Behold, I am making all things new." He said, "Write, for these words are faithful and true." Then he said to me, "It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the beginning and the end. I will give to the one who thirsts from the spring of the water of life without cost.

He who overcomes will inherit these things, and I will be his God, and he will be My son. For the fearful and unbelieving and abominable and murderers and fornicators and sorcerers and idolaters and all liars, their part shall be in the lake that burns with fire and brimstone, which is the second death."

When we finished reading this chapter together, I recognized that God's word had confirmed, on the positive side, Sandy was faithful and true. It also confirmed that I was simply fearful and unbelieving. In those scriptures, my needs were revealed and my concerns were addressed, and I simply needed to obey God. This was His will, and I knew it.

I know it's not going to sound romantic, and I know I should have planned this ahead of time and had somebody there with a camera and all that other stuff, but that's not my nature. As soon as we closed the Bible, I turned and looked at her, and I said, "Will you marry me?" She looked at me and laughed. She thought I was making a joke. I don't know why she'd think I'm making a joke. [laughs] I said, "I'm serious." She said, "Yes." That's how we got married.

**Scott:** I was going to ask if you just dropped to your knees after reading "The fearful and unbelieving and the lake of fire" bit. [laughs]

**Steve:** I didn't do anything romantic. Sorry. It's my nature, though, if I get light, do it. I closed the book, looked at her, and then we went out and told my mom and dad and their friends. I think they gave us a toast, and then we called her parents, where they were in a church service up in New Hampshire, and we pulled them out of the meeting.

**Scott:** Wow.

**Steve:** I thought you'd enjoy that story. I also noticed, as I was reading through my notes for this, there's at least three references to the marriage of the bride and the lamb in those chapters too. I was aware that there had been three things that touched my heart in that Bible reading, but I only remember two.

I remember the faithful and the true, and I remember the fearful and unbelieving. That's what the Word of God does. It discerns what's really going on in our hearts, and it brings what is hidden in the heart to the surface. I didn't even realize I was fearful and unbelieving until I read that passage, and recognized, "Oh, that's me." Now here we are married 45 years this coming May. God has helped us.

**Scott:** Awesome.

**Steve:** You have time for one more story?

**Scott:** Sure.

**Steve:** I'd like to share how our son was named. We decided to get married the day after I graduated from seminary. How do you like that for a full weekend? My grandmother couldn't make two round trips from Pittsburgh up to New England. We had originally planned for a June wedding. We moved the date up a couple weeks, so that they could do both on the same weekend.

I went to baccalaureate Friday night in Massachusetts, graduated Saturday afternoon in Massachusetts. Then we drove to Southern Maine for the rehearsal dinner Saturday night. Then on to central Maine, where we were married on Sunday.

**Scott:** That's a busy weekend.

**Steve** [laughs] I know, that's my life. The pastor, who was going to marry us that afternoon at three o'clock, was asked to preach that Sunday morning. When he did, he preached on Isaac. It was a very special sermon and very anointed. Sandy and I felt after that service that if God would give us a child, we would name him Isaac.

**Scott:** Do you have all this written down, or do you just remember it that well? I'm thinking, I can tell you the basics of my story of how my wife and I decided to get married. I know God was involved a lot, and there was some convicting and some verses, but I would have to dig back to find out what things really tugged at my heart. Maybe I got dropped too many times as a baby or something, I don't know. [laughs] I don't remember it that well.

**Steve:** That's a good question. It's very real to me because I was concerned that I was going to get it wrong, if I can put it that way. When I was in college, I was dating all the time. It was a new experience when I came to Christ, to fully give myself to Him, and I thought that I should not participate any longer in recreational dating.

I met a Christian sister, and the first date was amazing, to actually pray with the person that you were going out with. We were united by our faith more than our feelings, if I can put it that way. When I got to seminary, a bunch of us started reading books like "Shadow of the Almighty," where Jim Elliot had forsaken dating. We started two clubs. One club was the BTRs. That was the radical group. Bachelors to the

Rapture. The second group was called the CIA, and that was my group. I was president of that group, by the way. Celibates In Action.

**Scott:** Wow.

**Steve:** We were open to the possibility, but we weren't going to pursue dating. That was the idea. We were willing to get married, but we wanted to make sure that God was in it. Isn't that interesting?

**Scott:** I love it.

**Steve:** I felt like this was a weak area for me. I really wanted to get this right because, I thought, next to following Jesus and being fully committed to Him and His kingdom, the most important decision you're ever going to make is who you marry. I knew that, and I wanted to get it right, but I didn't know what to do.

This was all new territory for me, being led by the Spirit, walking by faith, making the scriptures paramount. I wasn't being facetious. That's why it was one of the first times I've ever asked anybody advice. During my ongoing conversation with my spiritual mentor, that I highly respected, I said to him one time, "Why don't you just pick somebody for me?" He looked at me and laughed.

**Scott:** That's a little casual.

**Steve:** That was my attitude which is why I asked his advice when I sensed that God was drawing my heart towards Sandy. The other thing was, to give you more background, when I did sense that God was drawing my heart towards her, I didn't walk up to her and ask her out. She was in Bible school at the time. What I did was, listen intently when she was giving her testimony at meetings.

I found out that their Bible school had a publication, like a newsletter or a monthly magazine, and they had archives of them. It's only been a couple of years and she was still in the Bible school, but found all the articles she'd written, and read them.

I was doing my homework. I discovered that she was a committed Christian and very attractive, but the most important thing to me was her set of soul. Seeking first the Kingdom was my set of soul. And I needed to find out if we were on the same page. I reasoned we could figure out anything else as long as we were putting God first.

**Scott:** It's intriguing to me how people go through this process. My wife and I were dating for a while, and then it just became clear that it was time to break up. We spent two weeks broken up, and God did a lot of work in that time period, and we talked. Funny enough, we talked a bunch during that period.

Through prayer and discussions, it became obvious that God was doing something and that I hadn't been investing myself at all in this relationship because I'd had my heart broken a couple of times before that and wasn't about to open myself up again. I realized that I needed to at least put that on the table as a possibility of maybe this could go to marriage someday. Less than six months later we were engaged to be married. Didn't take much time once we figured out what needed to happen.

**Steve:** I don't think anybody gets a little card in the mail and says, "This is the one you're supposed to marry." You have to work through these things.

**Scott:** It ought to be. Like you said, it's a pretty important decision.

**Steve:** Think about how much you grew during that experience of discerning God's will. This process certainly sent me to the scriptures and to my knees. Sandy was searching the scriptures. Look, I hope everybody is encouraged by this, for God knows how to lead His children, and often He leads them through scripture.

Every time I sing that song, "Victory Through Grace," I think of Sandy. Every time I'm reading Revelation 19, 20, 21, I'm thinking about Sandi. I remember that she's faithful and true, and she has proven faithful and true, for that is her nature, and it's something that God put into her. She still battles physical things and that's been part of our life.

In fact, when we started dating, she told me, "I got tired of asking people to pray for me when I was in Bible school, because every day I have a headache." She says, "Now I can ask you." I was happy to pray. I prayed for her this morning about something. It's OK. It's what we're dealing with.

**Steve:** Father, thank you for Your word that is living and active. It does discern what's really happening in our own hearts, but it also affirms what we need to know. Thank you that it's alive, quicken it to each one of us. If anybody out there is seeking Your will for something, I pray that You'll speak through the word of God to them. In Jesus' name, amen.

**Scott:** Amen. That's our show for this week, folks. Thanks for joining us for the Building Faith Families podcast with Steve Demme. If you have a question for the show, email Steve at [spdemme@gmail.com](mailto:spdemme@gmail.com). If you have a question for me, you can reach me at [scott@unsocialisedmedia.com](mailto:scott@unsocialisedmedia.com). Thanks for joining us. Have a great week.