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SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S WAY

Speaker: Nat Crawford (*Friday Interview*)

Title: Family Done God's Way: An Interview with Dr. Emerson Eggerichs

Now, here's today's interview with Dr. Emerson Eggerichs:

Nat: Let's just get right to the topic at hand. We're in the middle of a marriage series here at Back to the Bible. And we're talking about the challenges of marriage. And the book you wrote, *Love & Respect*, has had a huge impact on couples around the globe. But in the book, *Love & Respect*, you claim to have discovered a secret that can revolutionize any marriage. What is it?

Emerson: Well, we actually say it's a secret hidden in plain sight, in a sense. I didn't come up with the idea. You being a Bible teacher know Ephesians 5:33, which is the summary statement that many would consider one of the greatest treatises in the New Testament on marriage. Ephesians Five, where Paul then brings his thoughts to a conclusion, and he said, *a husband must love his wife and a wife must respect her husband*. And the secret that's been hidden in plain sight, in a sense, is the respect side of that equation. I mean, there has been no real debate that a husband ought to love his wife. But when we talk about respecting a husband, women will say, "Well, Dr. Emerson, I have to be honest with you, I don't feel any respect for him. And it's hypocritical for me to show respect when I don't feel it, and I don't think I should be a hypocrite. He's not superior to me, and that's the dictionary definition of respect. You show respect to your superiors. I'm not inferior to him. I'm not going to be treated like a doormat. I certainly think you might have a secret agenda here, and that's return to a male patriarchy, and I'm not going to go there, and set the feminist team back 50 years. I'm not going to feed his narcissism, and I was profiling the other day on the internet, and he's narcissistic. I'm certainly not going to do that, nor subject myself to emotional abuse, and I'm not going to come in with pom-poms and just worship the guy, but you know, other than these things, I'm really open to hearing what you have to say about this." [Yeah].

That is the mantra that we hear out there and women are not mean spirited about it. They really are afraid. There's a fear that drives that, that they're going to be dismissed when we talk about a man's need to feel respect, and so they don't understand it. It doesn't feel right to them. If we just love one another, that's all that matters. But interestingly, the Scripture doesn't teach that. In fact, nowhere in the Bible is a wife commanded to *agape* love her husband. Only the husband in the Greek Word *agape* is commanded to that. In the Titus Two passage, the older women are to encourage the younger women to love their husbands, love their children. That's *phileo*. And I distinguish those words as significant, and it's more of a friendship love. "You know, Child", you say, "Does your mommy love you?" "Oh yeah. She loves us a lot." "Does she like you? No, we've been bad; she didn't like it." And the same thing, "Hey Harry, does your wife love you?" "Oh yeah. Yeah." "Does she like you?" "No, not today." Does that make sense?

Nat: A hundred percent, a hundred percent. But what I find so fascinating is, as one who's read this book and put it into practice, I can know I'm on the crazy cycle, but I sometimes don't even want to get off the crazy cycle. So talk a little bit about the crazy cycle and then how to get off of it.

Emerson: Yes, yes. No, excellent question. As I studied the Bible 30 hours a week, for nearly 20 years as the senior pastor of Trinity Church in East Lansing, Michigan, it was an honor for me to think long and hard about Scripture. And in this passage, as I was meditating, *a husband is to love, a wife is to respect*. And of course she needs respect, R-E-S-P-E-C-T, and he needs love. But we've asked 7,000 people this question, when you're in a conflict with your spouse, do you feel unloved at that moment or disrespected? And Nat, nearly 83% of the men said they feel disrespected, for the reasons we stated. He doesn't lack assurance that she loves him. He lacks assurance that she likes him, and she'll even say, "I love you, but I don't respect you right now." But to her, that's a marginal comment. To us, that's a core issue. Comparable to a woman, if I would say, what would you think if I said, "I respect you since you got your old man's inheritance money for 10 million, but I never have loved you. I don't love you now; I never have any intentions of loving you." Women said, "I'd be devastated by that".

So he needs love. She needs respect. We're not talking about that, but we're talking about a *felt* need. And 72% of the women say they *feel* unloved. So this is as different as pink is from blue. And it's a felt need. And I think the Scripture is acknowledging that. But then I was meditating

on Ephesians 5:33, I thought, well, what happens when a wife *feels* unloved? And what happens when a husband *feels* disrespected? That'd be a natural next question to ask. And then that's when it hit me. You know what? I'll bet when she feels unloved, she ends up reacting in a way that feels disrespectful to him, which may be the clue as to why God instructs her to put on a respectful demeanor, not respecting bad behavior, respectfully confronting bad behavior.

And why does God command a husband to love? I'll bet it's within his DNA, as a proclivity, to react in a way that feels very unloving when he feels disrespected, and that gave birth to what you referenced, the crazy cycle. Without love she reacts without respect; without respect, he reacts without love. Without love, she reacts without respect; without respect, he reacts without love. And this baby starts to spin, and this is something that seems to describe the best of marriages. Sarah and I get on it. You get on it. Then as you were saying, we get on it, then we're at moments, "You know what? I really don't want to hop off of this right now."

Nat: Right. Yeah. It's a dangerous cycle to be in. And we're in the middle of trying to buy a new house, and it's amazing, as we're talking about her needs, my needs, you know, and our wants, how quickly we actually got on the crazy cycle. Just last night. I'm thinking, man, why can't we be having this conversation after you and I talk? Right? But tomorrow we're looking at another house, and so I'll be primed and prepped and ready for it. But you're exactly right. We get into this constant cycle of withholding what the other person so desires, until we get our needs met. And that's really quite unbiblical across the board. I mean, we forget about grace, right? Grace is an UNmerited gift and we desire it, but God, He says, look, you don't deserve it, but I'm going to give it to you. Part of our witness and our walk with Christ is, in fact, giving that love freely, and as wives, giving that respect freely, not expecting to get something in return. But it's so hard, we just get stuck in that crazy cycle. So how does a person get off the crazy cycle?

Emerson: Well, no, well said, what you just expressed. And I think one of the things that we encourage people, is to be aware of it first and foremost, because many times, we're addressing the purchase of a new home, and we're intense about that, and that the issue that we're addressing is important. But at a certain juncture, if we start reacting in that negative way, because we feel a little defensive when the other says something, that may be suggesting that our idea isn't a good idea. And then we say, well it is, and I don't think yours is. Now suddenly, the issue that's very important, I'm beginning to come across to Sarah in a way that feels unloving to her, and she

starts coming across to me in a way that feels disrespectful, but we don't pick up on that. And then we start negatively reacting to each other, and we lose sight. And I say, *when the issue isn't the issue*, you have to sense when that happens. At a certain point we both kind of sense, you know what? The issue is no longer the issue. Something's happening here, that we don't like each other right now. And we don't like the way each is talking to us. And the question is, are we discerning that? Are we decoding that? And the first and foremost thing is to understand this crazy cycle happens, without dismissing either one. She ought not to feel unloved. He ought not to feel disrespect. Well, that could be true, but if we give our spouse the benefit of the doubt, or as you were saying, give some grace here, that she has a vulnerability where I don't, and I have a vulnerability where Sarah doesn't, but we can sense that we're standing on each other's air hose, when we see the spirit of that person deflate. I often say, when you see the spirit of your spouse deflate, you're either going to dismiss them as childish and go, "Oh, now what did I say? Oh brother; Oh good grief." We can either do it that way, or we can realize, you know what? We're about to enter this crazy cycle, which everybody gets on. And that's one of the points that I think is encouraging, when we realize we're normal.

I think some people feel like maybe they're abnormal, and so they start trying to suppress this or deny this. Nope, it's happening. She's feeling unloved. I'm feeling disrespected. Maybe we ought not to, as I say to Sarah, if I was perfect and I could walk on water, I wouldn't be personalizing that as disrespect; give me some grace here. But we have to get in tune with that. And rather than saying, "No, you're so unloving; that's why I'm reacting disrespectfully." "Well, I'm reacting into some unloving ways because you're such a disrespectful contingent," we can go that way. Or we can say, "You know what? I'm not trying to be unloving here, but I'm feeling a little disrespect that I shouldn't." "Hey, you know what? I know I shouldn't have reacted in that disrespectful way, but I was feeling a little insecure about your love for me."

And that takes a little while to practice that. But here's what I say. If that's the issue, when *the issue isn't the issue* and we just simply ignore it, then we're not going to really address what's going on. At some point, we have to realize we're vulnerable, and one of the ways we get off the crazy cycle is by recognizing that we're on it. And also by saying, "I'm not; I know I just came across as unloving, but that's not my intent. In fact, when you said this, I was feeling this," and somehow we have to take a few moments just to talk about that, without telling the other person you ought not to feel that way. And Sarah and I, we, as we say, we get on the crazy cycle every

week, because she looks at the world through pink, and I look at it through blue, and it comes at us sideways.

And to the point about your purchasing of a home, what we have a tendency to do, is to say to the other person when their idea differs, “your idea is wrong,” [Right] Your idea is wrong. No, no. Their idea’s less better. We're not talking about moral issues here. “Should we have contemporary or traditional?” “Well, you're wrong to want that”. No, he's not wrong. [Right] This is what we call a comparative statement, not a qualitative statement. His idea is less better. But once we in our conversations, begin to say to the other person, “you're wrong”, because I want them to know how right I feel about my decision, you're going to enter the crazy cycle real quick, because the minute you tell your husband he's wrong, when he doesn't feel that he's wrong, and also he's feeling judged, he's going to feel disrespected, and now you're going to see his spirit deflate, and you've now entered the crazy cycle. Does that make sense?

Nat: A hundred percent, a hundred percent. You know, and I think you pointed out something really important there. This is completely normal. That doesn't mean that it's an excuse to stay on it, or to engage in the practice of it, but it's normal. When we were early married, we went to a Young Marrieds Without Kids class. I remember being so ashamed to be there, because I thought, man, we’ve got all these problems. But what we came to find out was, as we talked through, the problems we were facing were the exact same as everyone else. We just were in this denial that it could actually be happening to other people, you know? So we finally admitted it, and then once we got some of these tools that you talk about here, you actually then are prepared to start moving off. And that's actually what happened last night, is I recognized that I had started to deflate my wife in this discussion, because our desires are different in the house, and I recognize it. And I went up to her in the hallway, made sure the kids were aside, you know to interrupt. But I just said, “Look, I recognize that I was not sensitive to what you wanted to express. Your desires are just as valid as mine. And I did not give you the proper outlet to express that. And I'm sorry. So I just want to let you know that I love you, and I'm listening to you, and I'm taking all this into consideration, as I know you are.” And we got off the crazy cycle, so it really does work, if you work it.

Nat: Again, joining me today is bestselling author and speaker, Dr. Emerson Eggerichs. You've given us so much to think about, and we've got so much more to cover, but I know that there are women listening right now, who are thinking to themselves, “Look, how on Earth can I respect a

man, who doesn't deserve it?" What do you say to people who are saying that right now?

Emerson: Well, we have to understand that the effects of the culture, everybody would say love is unconditional, right? But we don't necessarily think through what we're saying, when we're saying that. But instinctively love is to be given, no matter what. No matter how I am as a woman, you ought to love me. And she feels that as the recipient, she feels that desire to give back. But the culture says respect must be earned. Respect must be deserved. And that's where the culture lands. But that's not where the Bible lands. And so we have to then figure out, well, what are we saying here? When we talk about actually unconditional respect, I mean you see the unconditional respect in First Peter Three, verses one and two, apparently the wives wrote Peter, *my husband's disobedient to the Word*. So in verse one of Chapter Three of First Peter, *my husband's disobedient to the Word*, and Peter says, *you can win him without a word*. And then he says, *by your respectful behavior* [Right]. We have to land on this idea that's unconditional respect. He does not deserve respect. He's disobeying Jesus Christ. It's comparable to Hosea was, *Go, love a woman who's an adulteress*. That was Gomer, his wife. *Go love a woman*. She didn't deserve that. So here's what we say. Hosea was being called to be a loving man. Unconditional means there's no condition, there's no situation, there's no circumstance that can get me to hate you. Unconditional. It means there's no condition, no situation or circumstance that can get me to stop loving you. You may be unlovable. You may not be respectable, but this is who God calls me to be, independent of who you are. Unconditional means no condition can get me to stop obeying and trusting what God has called me to do.

When it comes to unconditional respect, which in the culture is an oxymoron, it's a contradiction of words. It means the same thing. As a wife, here's what you've got to do. The Lord is saying, "Hey, apart from this condition, you're going to be a woman of dignity and respect. You're good. There's no situation, circumstance or condition, that can get you to show contempt to your husband. You are being called to be this type of woman." Why? Because everything within your spirit becomes contemptuous and disdainful when you feel unloved. And you know, women will say, "I don't know what you mean by respect." I say, "Well, do you have disrespect down?" "Oh yeah, I got that down". And so too, the men may say, "I don't really know how to be as loving as I ought to be." "Well, you know how to be unloving." "Yeah, yeah, that's pretty natural to me."

So the challenge for that woman who's listening, I get it. We're not talking about respecting evil *behavior*. No great male leader among other men would ever honor bad behavior. We honor the *man*, who conducted himself badly. We say, Joe, I believe in you, more than you believe in yourself. For the life of me, I can't understand why you would behave that way, in light of who I believe you to be. We always distinguish his behavior from his spirit, and we honor his spirit, like Jesus did with the three disciples, Peter, James and John, that fell asleep in the Garden of Gethsamane. He said, *your Spirit's willing, but your flesh is weak*. Your spirit is willing, but your flesh is weak. Jesus did not show contempt toward the individuals who failed him at the major of his own moment in that garden. And so too, every wife needs to be encouraged that you're not forsaking the feminist team. You're not losing power, you're not losing influence. Peter is saying you can actually win your husband's heart through this, just as Hosea won Gomer.

Nat: And that's actually exactly what my wife did with me. Early in my marriage, I did not deserve respect, but she was obedient, and she led by her example, and it did win me over. Amazing how this works if you work at it. Okay, I know though there are men right now who are listening, and they're saying, "Okay, Dr. Emmerichs, you don't understand, how do I love this woman who doesn't respect me?" So what do you say?

Emerson: Well first of all, is she really trying to be disrespectful, or is she feeling insecure and unloved by something you did earlier, and she's reacting in a way that appears disrespectful, but that's not her deepest intent. You're going to have to ask yourself, did I marry Hitler's distant cousin? And if you didn't, then we need to give her the benefit of the doubt. But I want to empathize with you. No one talks to you the way your wife does. So you have to understand that your wife is going to... ... The University of Washington studied 2000 couples for 20 years, and one of the things they talk about, is the gestures of contempt that women will display: hand on the hip, a scolding finger, the rolling of the eyes, the sighs, the eyes darken and the face sours. The head goes back and when estrogen kicks in, the word choice of contempt is incredible. And women chuckle at this, because they know this is the proclivity within them, their propensity to react that way when they're upset and feeling insecure.

So the first thing we as men have to do is ask ourselves, is her mission to diss me? Is that really what this is all about? Because again, there is no man in your world, or anybody, who talks to you this way. So it'd be very easy that she's picking a fight, trying to provoke you, trying to tell you that you're not man enough. And that's really not true. That's really not the case at all. She is much more insecure, and that reaction is rooted in the fact that you have a strength that she needs. She has a need that you're the only one that can meet. And she's reacting this way, because she's needing you to reassure her. In most cases, that's what's going on. So this is not a complaint. It's a compliment, but she doesn't know how to word herself. She knows only really kind of, use the look of disrespect, the words of disrespect, and get this, to try to motivate you to be loving. But we say to the women, you cannot motivate a man to be loving by dissing him, any more than you're going to be motivated to be respectful on the heels of his harshness and anger. So gentlemen, what you have to do, is you have to step back and ask yourself, is this a good virtuous woman? Does she have goodwill, and she gets nasty, but is it because she's insecure about your opinion of her?

Now, at the same time, ladies, I will tell you that many of you think that your husband doesn't think that you're good enough, that he doesn't love you. No, his negative reaction, his defensive reaction is rooted in this thought. He's insecure about what you think of him. He's not saying you're not good enough; he's feeling that you're thinking he's not good enough. And this Nat, I think illustrates just how we are like two ships in the dark. We're missing each other completely. Our defensive reactions appear offensive. Let me say that again. Our defensive reactions appear offensive. And then what we do is we take up offence, over a spouse who has goodwill, who's feeling insecure, who's feeling defensive, and who's really reaching out to meet a need that they have, because we're the only one that can do it. And at the end of the day, it's one of the greatest

compliments that can be given to us, but we completely misread it.

Nat: That's a lot to think about, but all so good. Let me ask you one more question about this particular topic, and then we'll wrap up our time. In your book, you say that wives can actually motivate their husbands to love them in a way that meets their needs on a deeper level. How so?

Emerson: Well, there's no absolute guarantee, but what we say is, God wouldn't tell us to love our wives or respect our husbands, if he's a cosmic killjoy who wants to just laugh at us, and at our feeble attempts to do something that will prove ineffective. So we have to trust that the key to motivating another person is meeting that person's deepest need. As a woman, what would you feel and what would you do, in response to your husband, who committed on a consistent basis to love you regardless? And to truly express that to you and show that on a consistent basis? It's very difficult for you, as a woman, to close off to that, unless you're having an affair. I mean, if you've got goodwill in your body, you know you're going to soften when he comes to you and says, "I'm so sorry. Will you forgive me?" I mean you just will melt. And women will say, "I fell in love with my husband all over again." I've heard that 1,050 times in the last two days. I mean, that is a common expression that women will state.

So too gentlemen, if you want to motivate your wife, you can't deprive her of her deepest need, to motivate her to meet yours. So each of us have to come to a point though, where we don't see this as a formula. This is not some little ... there's a fine line between manipulation and motivation. What we're talking about is meeting a person's deepest need, end of story, whether they respond or not. But the irony, or the paradox, the joy, is it usually kicks in reciprocity. You know, the Golden Rule is not something that you do in order to get. It helps you understand how you should treat another human being, in a way that pleases Christ. But in all probability, when we apply that, usually there's reciprocity. Usually another person is going to respond. So if you meet your husband's need to feel respected for who he is, apart from his performance, that you say, "I want to say this respectfully, help me. I don't want to be disrespectful here; help me right now. You're an honorable man who would die for me, if I don't kill you first. But how do I communicate this to you? Because you're an honorable man." And my prediction is that he'll soften. You're motivating him. Now you can't do this to control him, because this is not a formula, but in most cases, if I was a betting man, I would bet that he would soften and move toward you to connect. Just as I'm a betting man, who'd say, if you came to your wife on the heels of doing something like you did the other day, is that, "I'm sorry I shouldn't have reacted that way. Will you forgive me?" you will see her shoulders droop. It's almost axiomatic, and so we say that God has hardwired us to be influenced, to be motivated, to be energized by love and respect. Though you don't apply this as a formula, because if you do, you then show that this is not sincere.

Nat: Right. And what wife wouldn't want to respect her husband, when he is so unconditionally loving her, and what husband wouldn't want to love his wife, when she's respecting him unconditionally. It's such a beautiful thing, and it's amazing what God will do, when you simply are obedient to Christ. No matter the outcome, God will do amazing things. And I've seen it in my life, and I've seen it in the lives of the people I've counseled, and the people I've given this

book to.

So as we close up, I just want to give you an opportunity to talk a little bit more about the *Love & Respect* message. Because your book has given hundreds of testimonials from couples whose marriages have been dramatically transformed from this teaching. My marriage has been dramatically transformed, couples that I've counseled and I know so many more. Why is it that this message of love and respect has such a huge impact on people?

Emerson: Well, personally I wasn't raised in the church. I came to Christ later. I believe this is from Abba, Father. This is His message to us, that He has revealed this truth. Paul said in Ephesians Three, *that which has been hidden in ages past has been revealed to his Holy apostles and prophets in the spirit.* And Jesus said, *man shall not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds out of the mouth of God.* And I believe that this is God's wisdom and knowledge. And when we act on it, as you were pointing out, in trust and obedience, and when ultimately we do this unto Jesus Christ – as unto Me, He said - as we do it unto Christ, Christ stands beyond the shoulder of our spouse. Why would I want to love Sarah who is not lovable or respectful? Because Jesus is standing beyond her shoulders. There's a word picture that ultimately I show my love for Christ, as I love Sarah, and Sarah shows her reverence for Christ, as she puts on respect. This has been one of those points that has really taken root in a lot of Christ followers, because it gives us the motivation to do it in the face of a situation that isn't energizing to us. But I think the reason that *Love & Respect* book is really a systematic theology on marriage, I looked at everything that applies, I think to the Christ follower, and I tried to put it together in a book. It's a systematic theology for laity. And why does it work? Because I'm irrelevant. This truth was there before I was born. It'll be there after I'm dead. And it just works because it comes from the heart of Abba, Father.

Nat: What a good and godly perspective. I can hear that pastor at heart coming out. Emerson, thank you for your time today.

Emerson: Thank you Nat.