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SERIES: FAMILY DONE GOD'S

Speaker: Nat Crawford (w/*Arnie & Cara*)

Title: Family Done God's Way: A Word to the Wives pt. 2

As husband and wife you are to be teammates. Partners. Because of this you defer to each other's strengths. You defer to each other's spiritual gifts. To your passions and expertise. You are co-equals – both made in the image of God. God has made you both unique and valuable. Lean into this reality.

Submission does not imply obedience. It's NOT calling you to be a doormat. It's about being selfless. It is saying, "Let your husband lead and take the responsibility because this is what God has deemed as best." It's allowing you to lead in your strength areas and passions - to be the woman of God that you are called to be.

Notice that Paul does not define what each person is to do to fit a certain marriage role. Nowhere does it say, "wives, you cook, clean, wipe baby butts, etc." It doesn't.

Nowhere does it say, "men, be workaholics, be into fixing cars, and be able to fix stuff around the house." Why doesn't it say that? Because every couple will be unique.

Tiffany and I have been married for 17 years. Until the last 2 years or so, Tiffany, I think, cooked maybe a couple dozen meals during that first 15 years. I think she's maybe ironed 20 times. I have traditionally done these things. Why? Because I love to cook. And because my second love language is acts of service. So it makes sense for me to take the lead on these tasks.

Tiffany has always enjoyed outdoor work. She's been a hands-on person who loves to fix stuff. She's a perfectionist with it. I mean as we speak, I think she's at home working on our house as we're preparing to sell our current home. I've suggested we contract more of it out, but she wants to do it. She loves it. She finds great pleasure in it.

Now, I could feel inferior or inadequate because I'm not that way. I could feel like less of a husband because I loathe home projects. I could feel inadequate because I want to do projects in the fastest way, regardless of how it looks. Instead, I rejoice, because she gets to flourish where her strengths lie and in what she enjoys, and so do I.

I want to really hit this hard, because there's so much confusion about roles in marriage. There's so much unnecessary anxiety about submission in the marriage. Again, submission isn't about obedience. It's about deferment. It's about trusting God, and viewing every role as valuable and meaningful. It's about selflessness. When a husband is leading through service, when a husband is in submission to Christ as Lord, it makes submission to one's husband all the easier.

When Tiffany and I were first married, to be honest, I wasn't a good leader. I was pretty lousy. I made poor decisions personally, and for our family. For the first maybe two years of marriage, I wanted to play the godly husband on Sunday, but six days of the week acted like a pagan. So at about the three year mark of marriage, God graciously had a *come to Jesus* meeting with me. He lovingly told me to shape up and begin to lead the home spiritually. It wasn't easy. It was uncomfortable for Tiffany and me. But over time we grew into it. Again, it wasn't a *lording it over* her. It wasn't domineering. It was following God's plan for marriage, which meant mutual submission – mutual selflessness. It meant dying to myself to meet the needs of my family, just like Christ gave Himself up for the church. It meant taking time to know her better. It meant taking time to know God better.

It meant learning how we feel loved and appreciated, and then being willing to show that love to each other. Next week we're going to bring in studio Dr. Gary Chapman, author of the book "The Five Love Languages." He'll talk more about this in greater detail. But he identified 5 primary ways people want to receive love: gifts, acts of service, quality time, physical touch, and words of affirmation. This whole concept rests on what I call *the platinum rule*.

Friends, you know the Golden Rule, right? "Do unto others", I can hear you say it. That's right. *As you'd have done to you*. That's a great rule. That's why it's the Golden Rule. Jesus taught it. Another way of putting the golden rule is, treat others as you'd want to be treated. Again, good advice.

And when it comes to loving your spouse or showing appreciation, the *platinum rule* is the way to go. Why? Because we're all different. Our love languages are different. Our core needs are different. So that's why I suggest the platinum rule. The platinum rule says, "treat others as THEY'D like to be treated." Find out what the other person needs to thrive and to be appreciated, and begin to do it.

That's mutual submission. That's mutual selflessness.

DISCUSSION:

N: Okay. Let's pause here for a little discussion with Arnie Cole and Cara Whitney. I'm curious, what was your opinion on submission before you were a believer, and how has your opinion changed? And honestly, I'd love to know what changed it?

C: Slave and master - it was like the Thunder Dome. [There's a lot of people who say that]. Yeah, which I wanted no part of either. So I didn't want to be slave or master, because I didn't want to submit to anyone. And I had no desire to master anyone. I mostly just wanted to be left alone. I became a Christian and I gave my life to the Lord, and probably submitting to Him, giving up what I thought was control, which is a safe feeling for me. I mean, that's, I think with all this coronavirus and COVID stuff, really exposes how much you don't have control of. And I think that's where people are really struggling. You know, I had a health thing that was going on, and I just gave it all to the Lord. And I'll tell you when I did, it was just like the greatest relief, and Jesus amplified my spiritual gifts, and He made me want to be around people. I started serving Him, and I'm still a work in progress, but I'll tell you, not wanting to be a part of anything and just wanting to be left alone, suddenly I enjoy people. So, just submitting to the Lord, is awesome.

N: And I think that's such a key factor, is one your first and foremost, is your relationship with God; seeing yourself rightly in that, and submitting to Christ as Lord. But also you point out an important piece of a Christian's life, before and after Christ, there was a visible and internal change in who you were, before and after your relationship with Christ. So how you viewed marriage, how you viewed submission, changed in light of that, but it's a continual process of being conformed to His image. Excellent thought. Arnie, what about you?

A: You know, I think before I became a Christ follower, the submission thing was like, as long as it was convenient, and the big change for me, was actually my brother, who also was a late in life conversion as a Christ follower. He and his wife hated each other. Matter of fact, one of his *fleece*, if you will, that he *put out* there, was that God, if you can save this marriage, you are the God and I'll follow You.

And the Lord truly intervened in their relationship. But one of the things that came out, that my brother shared with me, was that you need to love your wife, like Christ loved the church. And when I was a nonbeliever, I thought, yeah, you're crazy. But then that story always stuck with me, how Jesus really changed my brother's life and changed their marriage radically.

N: I think it's evident to see that God really does care about our marriages, and He is willing to intervene on our behalf, when we are crying out to Him in a posture to do so. So that's a great story.

A godly wife is a wonderful teammate, an affectionate friend, and selfless. And there's one more way that is, to a man, probably the most important of them all.

A godly wife will be respectful of her husband. Look at what Paul says in Ephesians 5, beginning in verse 31. ³¹FOR THIS REASON A MAN SHALL LEAVE HIS FATHER AND MOTHER AND SHALL BE JOINED TO HIS WIFE, AND THE TWO SHALL BECOME ONE FLESH. ³²This mystery is great; but I am speaking with reference to Christ and the church. ³³Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must *see to it* that she respects her husband. (Vs. 31-33, NASB)

In 1967, Aretha Franklin made the song "Respect" an instant smash hit. But what people don't realize, was the original writer and performer was Otis Redding. He wrote that song in 1965. His version goes, "But all I want you to do is just give it...Respect when I come home. Respect is what I want from you. Respect is what I need. Respect is what I want. Respect is what I need."

That song summarizes the single greatest need of every man listening today. Do we want to be loved? Sure. Of course. We desire an affectionate friend. But what we want more than that is respect. But here's the problem. Wives think that respect is to be earned. Husbands think that love is earned, not freely given. And this creates the crazy cycle. When a man doesn't feel respected, he reacts and withdraws love from his wife. When a wife feels unloved, she reacts and withdraws respect for her husband. This is why Dr. Emerson Eggerichs calls it the crazy cycle. You withhold love or respect over and over again. But this isn't Biblical. Love and grace are to be freely given, just like God freely gives love and grace.

If you ask any man, would they prefer to be loved or respected, they will consistently say "respected." I am so thankful that Tiffany loves me. I'm really thankful that she is my affectionate friend. But I feel my best, I stand the tallest, when I know she respects me.

But here's the kicker ladies. Notice that the text says, "If he deserves it, then the wife must respect her husband." Oh shoot, it doesn't say that at all. It says, "*the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.*"

It's an unconditional respect. This is why the crazy cycle is so easy to return to. A husband will think his wife needs to earn his love, and a wife thinks that her husband must earn her respect. But that's not the case at all. Why? Because Jesus Christ doesn't operate this way towards us. *While we were yet sinners, Christ died for us. For we are saved by His grace. An undeserved gift.* Because we are recipients of His grace, we are to be grace bearers. Wives give your husbands free respect. Show them grace.

What would it look like today to show your husband respect? How could you tell him you respect him? Maybe he isn't the best at loving you. But is he a good provider? Tell him. Maybe he doesn't make as much money as you, but does he speak your love language? If so, tell him. Maybe he's always forgetting your anniversary, but he does remember to pay the bills on time. Tell him. And please, don't wait for your husband to act first. I know it's hard when your husband isn't doing all he could, as a godly husband should. But I promise you, showing respect will net you more positive results than being a nag ever will.

Listen to what 1 Peter 3:1-2 says, [“In the same way, you wives, be submissive to your own husbands so that even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, ² as they observe your chaste and respectful behavior.”](#)

Want to end the crazy cycle? Want them to be influenced to be the man that God desires? Peter says show them respect. Even when they haven't earned it. It will change them.

My marriage has been anything but perfect. Our second year of marriage nearly drove us apart. That's not an exaggeration. It nearly broke us. I was selfish. I was domineering. I was honestly neck deep in sinful behavior. Tiffany was overly critical, was often smothering me. We were relationally destructive.

But there's something Tiffany did that truly aided in the restoration and healing of our marriage. First, she prayed. She prayed hard and often for me, for her, and for us. And second, she showed me respect when I least deserved it. She had many good reasons to be critical of me, to be done with me. However, in a moment of grace through the power of the Holy Spirit, she wrote me a letter that cut me to the core. I've only been able to read it 3 times. But in it were words of forgiveness, affirmation and ultimately, respect. That undeserved respect changed me. And she has continued to be intentional with showing me her respect. When a husband feels respected, he will be in a better posture of loving you freely.

To be a godly wife, all you have to be is his teammate, an affectionate friend, selfless, and respectful.

Last, to be a godly wife, you need to be dependent upon Christ. Maybe I should have started here. But to be a godly wife, you need to be dependent on Christ. Here's the reality: you do each one of these things and your husband may not change. You can be a teammate, a friend, etc. and they may be stuck. Don't lose heart. Remember, you are not a godly wife to get a godly husband. You hope that. You pray for that. But you do it to be obedient to Christ.

So remember, what Philippians 4:6-7 says, [“Do not be anxious about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. ⁷ And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.”](#)(ESV) So don't worry. Don't fret. Instead, pray. God is watching over you. Nothing is out of His sight.

Isaiah 26:4 says, [“Trust in the LORD forever, for the LORD GOD is an everlasting Rock.”](#)(ESV) You may not be able to rely on your husband, but you can and should trust God. He will not fail you. He will not forsake you. He loves you and He is calling you to trust Him and be dependent upon Christ.

There you have it. To be a godly wife, all you have to be is his teammate, an affectionate friend, selfless, and respectful. Easy as brain surgery, right? No, it's not easy. It won't be natural, but it will be godly and right. And it is possible by God's grace.

Here's where I'd begin. Stop and think about the grace of God in your life. God, in reasons, only known to Himself, chose you as His child and saved your soul. That was unconditional grace. That should change everything. When you feel the weight of God's grace, it gets a lot easier to be a teammate, an affectionate friend, selfless and respectful.

It's overwhelming when you're in the crazy cycle. It's hard when your marriage is off course. Ask God for His grace, to allow you to be the change agent in your marriage. Identify just one of these 5 actions to do today. Of course, choose to be obedient to Christ – cling to Christ. But after that, if you want the home run, start with respect.

It's my prayer for each one of us here and online that if you are off course in your marriage, that in and by the grace of God, you will get back on track today.

N: Now let me turn again to Cara and Arnie. Cara, for the women listening today, who feel the weight of having a non-believing husband, what encouragement do you have for them?

C: I would say that I'm living proof, as someone who spent a greater part of her life as a nonbeliever, that anything is possible. Keep praying, doing all the things that you Nat have been suggesting. As a Christ follower, you are supposed to be trying to be as Christ-like as you can. That's what we're told to do. So do that and pray. Although there are no guarantees, I would say if you're living the life that you're called to live, the chances are really great that they're going to come to know Christ through you.

N: Absolutely. Yup. How we live really does matter. And we see that as taught in Scripture, Arnie, you and your wife, Shar, really are a team and it's neat to see. How did that develop?

A: You know, it took a lot of years to develop. I think a lot of it had to do with listening to each other, being very truthful about our feelings. And then as both of us got into ministry, it was really defined roles that helped tremendously as well. I mean, when we first got together, she'd say, Oh, you try to be CEO of the world. But now as years have gone by, we both lead ministries, and I respect her role. She respects mine. There's that camaraderie and just growing together. And I think the more you do together, the more you realize that you don't know a lot of the answers for the other person; you just have to respect them and love them through some of these very tough decisions.

N: Sounds like a lot of openness to each other. And also a lot of encouragement of each other as well. Cara, how does a wife's respect or even disrespect for her husband impact the family as a whole?

C: I've spoken on it before, where there was a period of time where I thought my kids were disrespecting my husband. And so I actually looked at myself, because I wondered if I was giving the impression that that was okay, or maybe it was some way I was communicating with Dan that was giving them the idea of, that's how we talk to him. So what I consciously started doing, is correcting them in front of my husband, and telling them, do not say any disrespectful thing to him, because you're messing with a team here. Like, you don't talk to him like that. He's my husband. So I always say to myself, that my kids came to live with us, so my husband's first. If I disagree with him, it's going to be not in front of them. And I try to make things about Dan first and the kids second. That's a balance though, because I always want my kids to know they

can come to me, that I'm going to fight for them. But I think that in the long run, that by showing them the respect I have for their father, my husband, that is probably going to play out in a more positive way in the long run.

N: Yeah. I did that this weekend, where one of our kids, they talked back to Tiffany, and I lovingly pulled him aside and said, "Look, you don't talk to my wife that way. You know, I love you. I respect you, but you've got to understand. I love my wife before you, because God gave her to me first and foremost." And so I try to model that, but I tell you, I'm sure they didn't, you know, come to that completely naturally. I'm sure they probably picked it up from something I've said or done in the past, which again, gave me a moment to pause, reevaluate even myself, but to have a teachable moment for them as well as me. Arnie, have you had times when you've had to get back on track in your marriage, and what helped you? We'd love to get the inside scoop and even a little bit of dirt.

A: Oh yeah. [Oh boy.] [Come on], Nat, I get off track a lot, because I'm a highly focused individual. So probably the thing that has, or not probably, the thing that has helped me the most, is feedback, honest feedback. And Cara was talking about respect. And one of the things I see with a lot of men, even men in ministry, is their lives are really limited, because their wife doesn't respect them anymore. And so I've seen it where it's lost, and once you lose it, it's very hard to get back. And so I've always cherished her respect and work towards it. So she has a way of telling me, "Hey, you can't go to Africa for three weeks. That's just not good." Or, "You just got out of the hospital, you can't go back to India for a week." So instead of arguing, and maybe, as you get older, you become more dependent on each other, especially if you have health issues, it's just like, "Oh, okay. This is someone who loves me. Maybe I should listen to them and get back on track and get back with the program." So, lots of gruesome stories that I won't bore the two of you with.

N: I think one of the key factors that we can take away from this is, Wives, what wife would not want to respect a husband who is so open to feedback and to growing, to become the man of God that he has been called to be? And the same is true for wives. What husband wouldn't want to love his wife, when she's so open to God's very best? So I think that's something we can all hold onto today. Thank you guys for sharing.