



Courage to Love

Adapted from "Courageous" series by Wayne Murray

There is an all-out war on families in America. In every relationship, we must learn to navigate many of life's roads. We must learn to navigate roads such as forgiveness, integrity, tragedy, fatherhood, and family dynamics to name a few. It takes courage to walk in a relationship with the kind of love that Jesus models.

Consider the following from thoughts from an article by Gary Chapman:

He sat in my office and said, "I just don't love my wife anymore. I wish I did, but I don't. I've even asked God to give me love for her. But I just don't have any feelings for her anymore."

This husband was absolutely sincere, but he was misguided in his understanding of love. He pictured love as warm, emotional, romantic feelings for his wife.

Since these did not exist, he could not manufacture them, and even God was not providing them, he concluded that his marriage was over. Thousands of men and women in our society have come to the same conclusion.

True love, the kind of love that keeps a couple together for a lifetime, is not a feeling but an attitude. It says, with the help of God, I'm going to do everything I can to enhance the life of my spouse.

This attitude leads to words and actions that are beneficial to your spouse and often stimulate warm emotions inside the spouse's heart. If this person reciprocates with words and behavior that express his or her love for you, warm emotions may also return to you.

One of the great tragedies of Western culture is that we have equated love with warm emotional feelings. In fact, these warm romantic feelings are the result of love, not the essence of love. This is why love can be commanded, as in Ephesians 5:25: "Husbands, love your wives"; and love can be taught and learned, as noted in Titus 2:4, where the older women are instructed to teach the



younger women to love their husbands. God doesn't command emotions, but He often commands attitudes and behavior.

The good news is that whatever God commands, He enables us to do.¹

¹ Gary Chapman, *How to Truly Love Your Spouse*, <http://www.focusonthefamily.com/marriage/strengthening-your-marriage/how-to-truly-love-your-spouse> (accessed September 5, 2017).

COURAGE

C1: Describe a time in your life when you wanted to do something but for whatever reason, you would not do it.

C2: Why do you think it takes so much courage to build or rebuild a healthy relationship in your home?

C3: The quality of your family relationships will be determined by the quality of your words. Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 4:29 (ESV) Let no corrupting talk come out of your mouths, but only such as is good for building up, as fits the occasion, that it may give grace to those who hear.

- What can you learn from this verse about the courage to love?
- On a scale of 1-4, with 1 being very well and 4 being not very well, rate the quality of the words you speak to your family. Write out a plan to improve.

STRENGTH

S1: Read and answer the following.

Proverbs 16:24 (ESV)

- From this verse, what can you acquire about relationships?
- Describe a time in your life when you did not say what you needed to say. Why did this happen?
- Why do you think it takes a tragedy before certain things are said?

S2: Read and answer the following.

Ephesians 4:26 (ESV)

Proverbs 12:18 (ESV)

- From these verses, what can you gather about relationships?
- Describe a time in your life when someone asked you to forgive them. What were your feelings and thoughts?
- Have you ever needed to ask someone to forgive you and you could never ask? Why?

- Someone has said, “If you could ever understand the power of an apology, you would abuse it.” What kind of power do you think an apology has? How quick are you to say “I am sorry, please forgive me?” Why?

S3: In the Old Testament, the concept of giving a blessing is a big deal. Read and answer the following.

Numbers 6:24-26 (ESV)

- From these verses, what would the priests do over the people of Israel?
- Why do you think this would be done? Do you think it was something powerful? Why?
- Do a Bible study on Abraham, Isaac, and Jacob near the end of their lives. Each one of them blessed their children? Why do you think they would speak a blessing over them?
- Have you ever spoken words of affirmation over your spouse? Your children? Why or why not?
- In the next thirty days, meet with three men and discuss speaking words of affirmation. What did you gather from this conversation? What are some powerful phrases or words you can speak over your spouse and children?

ENDURANCE

E1: Read the book of **Ephesians** and answer the following.

- What is a relationship principle you can ascertain from each chapter?
- Why do you think spoken words are so powerful?

E2: Describe a time in your life when you did not say or do what you needed to. What held you back?

E3: In the next thirty days meet with three men to discuss this lesson. What did you discover from this time together?

E4: For one week, spend thirty minutes of your lunch break asking yourself and writing down your thoughts to the following:

- **What** do you need to say to a member of your family?
- **When** will you say it to this member of your family?
- **How** will you say what you need to say to this member of your family?

E5: In the next sixty days, speak a blessing (what you desire to see come to pass) over your spouse and children. Describe what happened.