

CA32 TFP3 Improving Marriage through Love and Respect (formally CA 33 TFP3)**Theme music**

FOSTER: Unless the marriage was prearranged, many of us reached the point in our dating relationship where we experienced that fateful day of meeting our future wife's parents.

Kyle met Brenda in college. As they moved to the dating stage, they planned to meet both sets of parents. Kyle met Brenda's parents first and all went well. Brenda's mom and dad approved of Kyle and were excited for the future. Then came Brenda's visit to see Kyle's parents. Kyle thought things went well, but even though Brenda's home life wasn't perfect, she was shocked by how Kyle's father treated his mother. "*Is this the way Kyle could end up treating me?*" She thought?

Welcome to Champions Arise. I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. If your son's future spouse observed how you treat your wife, would they see a godly example of love and support? Or would she see harshness and a lack of honor or support? Hopefully, your future daughter-in-law will witness Christ in your relationship with your wife. Today, as we continue our discussion from our last program, we'll look at other ways, God challenges us to love our wives as "*Christ loves the church and gave Himself up for her.*" So please stay with us.

Music in

FOSTER: Kent, in our last program we discussed how God created men and women differently, and how those differences can be used for God's glory, or to create division in a marriage.

KENT: We also saw how it is important for men to understand and accept two things: first that "loving our wives as Christ loves the church," as it says in Ephesians 5:25, is not an option for the man who claims Jesus Christ as His Savior and Lord.

Second, we must accept that **God** decides what "loving our wives" means. It's not our decision... or our father's, or friends, or coworkers opinion. **God** defines what loving our wife is. And in our last program we also discussed how communication and commitment are important to our wives.

FOSTER: Kent, sometimes I think we need to take a moment and think about when we fell in love with our wife-to-be for the first time? Do you remember the joy, and passion, and pleasure you felt just being around her?

KENT: Oh yes. And I think most of us do, but we forget how wonderful that was, or don't think we can ever get that deep love back. But with God's help, we can. My friend, if your marriage is struggling right now, we're glad you joined us today.

FOSTER: and we encourage you to listen to our last program titled, "Commitment and Communication in Marriage. You can find the program at championsarise.org.

KENT: That's a very good idea. But a note of caution for all of us. If you haven't been applying these godly principles to your marriage, it may take a little while for your wife to believe that the changes she sees in you are real and aren't temporary. So don't give up. Be patient, and continuously ask God for help.

Also, it's true that improvement in your marriage will happen more quickly, if both of you are working together to make the marriage stronger. But as men, we are called to take the initiative to make it better.

FOSTER: Do some men think it's their wife's job to save the marriage?

KENT: Sometimes, but I think the vast majority of men aren't aware of the differences that exist between men and women—that we discussed during our last program. I also believe that these men underestimate how important our efforts are to God. The prophet Malachi explained God's position on this.

Foster please read Malachi chapter 2 verses 13-16.

FOSTER: Sure. Malachi chapter 2 verses 13-16.

"Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. Has not the one God made you? You belong to him in body and spirit. And what does the one God seek? Godly offspring. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth. "The man who hates and divorces his wife," says the LORD, the God of Israel, "does violence to the one he should protect", says the LORD Almighty. So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful."

KENT: Thanks Foster. We see in these verses that our worship is not acceptable to God if we aren't treating our wives in a godly way.

Picture the Christian marriage as a triangle. God is at the top and you and your wife are opposite each other on the other points beneath. As Christians the three points of the triangle are connected in such a way that a faulty relationship with our wife, will affect our

relationship with God, and a faulty relationship with God will always affect our relationship with our wife. **But** as we draw closer to God, we will draw closer to our wife.

FOSTER: And our wives have a deep desire for us to draw closer to them. As we mentioned, we looked at a couple of ways to do that in our last program. What is another way we can strengthen our marriage relationship?

KENT: In the book "*The Four Priorities*", by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Krieder, in addition to commitment and communication, they list caring as very important to the marriage.

The Bible expects us to care for our wives at two times:

when we feel like it and when we don't. And I know that sounds like I'm putting it all on men, but if we were speaking to women right now, we'd be giving them ways to help and respect their husbands, as commanded by Paul in Ephesians 5:33. But now we're talking to men.

FOSTER: And we are talking to men on Champions Arise. I'm Foster Braun and I'm with Kent Darcie. Kent, please explain what you mean by caring. I want to make sure we are all thinking the same way about it.

KENT: When you think about caring, think of a young boy and his sick dog. That boy will take care of his dog by making sure he has water, is warm, and eats well. And the boy sees the sacrifice of his time and attention as worth it. And we need to care for our wives with that same heart.

But 1 Peter 3 verse 7 says, "Husbands, likewise, dwell with *them* (our wives) with understanding," In order to care for our wife, we need to understand her.

What ministers to your wife? What encourages and strengthens her? What **are her** fears and struggles? How can you help? When we don't know the answers to questions like this, we need to ask.

FOSTER: I'd also say that part of caring is allowing our wives to care for us.

KENT: Yes and sometimes men don't like this. We feel like we're being mothered and our pride gets in the way of our wife ministering to us.

And again, what we're sharing may not be easy for many men. That is why we need God's supernatural power to do this. But when we learn to truly care for our wife, our marriages can be much stronger.

And there are four parts to caring:

- Mutual acceptance and respect
- Mutual responsibility
- Concerted initiative
- Unconditional love

FOSTER:

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- Mutual responsibility
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Let's look at these one by one—acceptance and respect. How do these affect caring?

KENT: When we were married, we declared to God, and the witnesses at the wedding, that we accepted each other and we would love and respect each other—as commanded in Ephesians 5:33.

Mutual responsibility is reflected in the marriage triangle we looked at earlier. Only this time when our **wife's** connection to God is weak because of issues like low self-esteem, fatigue, time pressure, loneliness, lack of romantic love, or financial difficulties, we strengthen our relationship with God to help her while she's weak. And ideally if we let her know we are struggling with something, she can do the same for us.

FOSTER: And concerted initiative?

KENT: A concerted effort gathers all available resources to overcome an obstacle or to get a job done. When we see our spouse struggling, a caring heart will do what it takes to help.

And the fourth part of the caring puzzle is unconditional love.

At some point, every married person behaves in unlovable ways. Or has times when they are unpleasant. And I'm not just talking about crankiness. I'm talking about being sick with a cold and you're just too weak to move around? A caring husband supports his wife during these difficult times.

FOSTER: Okay Kent. So caring is very important to strengthening the marriage. What is the last thing?

KENT: Courtship

FOSTER: you mean dating all over again?

KENT: in some ways, yes. Think of it this way; we know that if we don't keep up the spiritual disciplines of prayer, Bible study, and meeting regularly with other Christians that our relationship with God can suffer.

It's the same with marriage. Kids, jobs, **and** busy schedules can rob us of the time we need as a married couple to keep our marriage relationship strong. The lover in the Song of Solomon warned about this in chapter 2, "*Catch all the foxes, those little foxes, before they ruin the vineyard of love!*"

If we aren't careful, those "little foxes" (what we would call distractions today) can cause our marriage to get stale. So we need to take intentional steps to keep our love fresh. Sharing special times with our wife is a great way to apply commitment, communication, caring and courtship. But there are others. Ask your wife what would be a blessing to her. And be prepared to do it.

FOSTER: Kent, this has been very interesting. Is there anything else we need to know regarding strengthening our marriages.

KENT: We just touched on a few things, but one important thing to remember, is many of us didn't have good role models to follow. If our parents divorced, or stayed together in a miserable marriage, we may assume all relationships end up that way, but this is not true. If you seek the Lord and His word, He will guide you to the truth. Truth like we find in Colossians 3:12-14:

"Since God chose you to be the holy people he loves, you must clothe yourselves with tenderhearted mercy, kindness, humility, gentleness, and patience. Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others. Above all, clothe yourselves with love, which binds us all together in perfect harmony."

Truth like this can really help you to have the healthy marriage relationship God desires for you and **your wife**.

➤ **FOSTER:** That's great information Kent. Thank you. Can you give us a brief review of what we have covered?

KENT: Sure. Today we looked at how being caring and pursuing courtship can add life to a struggling marriage and make a good marriage better. We also discussed that you can't be a godly Christian man, and not want love your wife as Christ loves the church. They go together. We also saw that God doesn't recognize our prayer or worship when we aren't honoring and loving our wife

FOSTER: Thanks again Kent.

My friend, if you want a healthy marriage, you need to apply what we've learned about commitment, healthy communication, compassionate caring, and continuing courtship. These helps are well within the reach of most men. However, since we are all self-centered by nature, none of these actions come naturally. We need God's help and need to work on them every day. So we challenge you today to be a godly husband God's way.

Program Close

FOSTER: Thank you for listening to Champions Arise where men are equipped and strengthened to meet their God-given potential. Today we discussed the importance of strengthening our marriage through Caring and Courtship. This material was based on chapter 16 in the book "The Four Priorities," by Dr. John Tolson and Larry Kreider which is published by "The Gathering USA" in 2007 and used by permission. You can learn more about this book and listen to any of these programs at our website championsarise.org. I'm Foster Braun with Kent Darcie. Thank you for listening to Champions Arise. May God mold you into the man He knows you can be.