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### **Presentation Transcript**

## **God-Based Marriage, Organizing Principle 5 – Having the Back of Our Mate**

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If we're smart, we know we need someone to have our back. Scripture reveals that God knew that Adam was not complete when He created Eve to be a support for Adam. Adam needed help. We see that Adam recognized this and was happy about what God had done.

We learn from the apostle Paul, also – in Ephesians 5 – that both husband and wife are to work together to accomplish the work God has given them. In our last presentation in this series – *The God-Based Marriage* – we focused on this issue: couples are heirs together of the grace of life – that is, they're a team working together to accomplish God's will for them – both of them to be in His Kingdom, in His family.

But there's another element that's even more personal to both a husband and a wife in marriage. This principle is another organizing principle for a God-based marriage. And that is, that husbands and wives are to have each other's backs. So what do I mean by that in terms of practical application. Well, that's what we're going to look at today.

Let's start with this: Nobody's perfect. You're not. Your mate, if you have one, is not. If you were mature when you got married, you knew this – that your mate had problems, weaknesses, deficiencies, as did you. And that is why God has provided you for your mate, and your mate for you. One of the scriptures we quoted was Song of Solomon 6:3:

**Song of Solomon 6:3** – *I am my beloved's and my beloved is mine.* I know this scripture, in context, is mostly about sexual attraction and sexual faithfulness, but that oneness grows out of faithfulness across the board among both people in a marriage – belonging to each other – a covering for the weaknesses of one another – not the sins, but the weaknesses, or the weakness to resist sin – two weak people together, having each other's backs.

Let's consider the example God gives us to show us how to truly have the back of our mate. Let's go to Ephesians 5:25. We've read this before in this series, but it's one of the fundamental scriptures of the entire series..

**Ephesians 5:25-27** – *Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her, that He might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the Word, so that He might present the church to Himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish.*

We talked about this in the last presentation – about being heirs together of the grace of life – but does this seem a bit superior? To think that a man is to consider himself responsible to make his wife holy? Well, first, it doesn't say that. And that's good, because he can't. It says that he is to *present* her to Christ – at the resurrection – holy and without blemish, as though he was proud of her. In other words, that is his desire for her. And, if that's true, who is to present the husband before Christ holy? Should the wife not be proud of him as well? So, if that's true, then why does God say it this way. Why didn't He say this to wife – that she should present her husband perfect – but only to the man? Well, quite often, in scripture, when something is emphasized like this, it's because that's where it's needed the most. Maybe it's because most men – being men – would not think of that, so He has to emphasize it. Or, maybe, even though we think of it, we would be so busy making a living, we would neglect so great salvation in this instance. In the same way... we continue in verse 28 now:

**V-28** – *In the same way husbands should love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, because we are members of his body.* So it follows that wives are to have the same care for their husbands as God tells the husband to have for the wife.

What else can we learn about how Jesus relates to His church? Well, we can observe that women are to be Christ-like, as well as men. So he doesn't explain why He said it that way, but I think some assume God is sexist in a pro-male kind of way, but that would be a false notion. God is a God of fairness. He loves males and females the same. However, He has assigned roles to each of them that are different. He assigned roles according to their capabilities. Any thought to the contrary is incorrect – born of human deception and just a deception of self.

Let's look at an on-the-ground example. In the ninth chapter of Luke, we can read that Jesus was headed toward Jerusalem for the last time, where He knew He would be killed. They came to a town and wanted a place to spend the night, but the town – a town of Samaritans, who didn't like Jews – turned Him away. James and John came to Jesus and asked if He wanted them to call down fire and consume them, and Jesus said, "I didn't come here to destroy lives, but to save them." But these two guys were so competitive about authority, seeking superiority over others. How did Jesus treat these guys who apparently were so seriously lacking in the right attitude here? Was He disappointed? Was He angry? Did He turn away from them? Did He demote them,

give them the cold shoulder? Well, we learn later that Jesus named these two *Boanerjes*, which means Sons of Thunder. So He made humor of them with a lesson in it. You know, they didn't have the power to do any of that, but they would have, if they had had the power – bring down fire. So He called them the Sons of Thunder, even though He criticized them to their faces for what they did. Later, however, we see that He told one of them – John – to care for His mother after His death. There they were, at the cross – or at the stake – watching Jesus die – John and Mary – and Jesus said, “Behold your mother,” to John. So he was to take care of her.

So what does that tell us about how you and how Christ feels about you? Is He disappointed in you because of your faults? Is He unforgiving of you? Or, is He instead tolerant of your weaknesses, because He has already fought that battle for you and won it? Now, He's not worried because He has made sacrifice for you. And through the rest of your life, He knows He's going to win and so will you, if you will only trust Him.

It's also interesting to note that even though Jesus was very well aware of John's faults, when it came to His mother, He knew John had His back. He expected John to step up to that responsibility. And John did. Imperfect people can have each others' backs. And it was, in this case, even possible for a human to have God's back. That's an interesting thought, isn't it? How would we do that?

One time an atheist friend of mine asked me why so many Christian men boast about running around on their wives. So here's a situation where God needs somebody to stand up for Him. Or, maybe He doesn't need it, but He at least gave me an opportunity to do that. So I told my friend that there were two answers to that question. First of all, I have *never* heard a truly Christian man do that in all my life. A Christian seeks to follow God and any such failure would be a humiliation rather than a point of boasting. And second, to date, there's only been one man who has ever been a perfect Christian, and that's Jesus Christ. All the rest of us are just working on it. And we don't do too good a job of it. And I didn't say it, but I'm sure that my friend got the point. And the point was to revise your definition of what a Christian is.

So backing our mate in failure is another area where we can have our mate's back. In 1 Samuel 25:1, we're told that after Samuel died, David, who was still running from Saul, went down to Paran, where he encountered the herders of a man made rich in the livestock business. His name was Nabal and his wife's name was Abigail. And we're told that this woman intelligent, discerning and beautiful, but her husband was harsh and badly behaved. And after a time, David sent ten young men to Nabal to politely greet him and tell him that they had been protecting his workers and his animals and to ask for some help with food and supplies, because they were, in a sense, on the run. And, instead of being appreciative, Nabal was sarcastic with them, asking, “Who is this David?” and “Who is this son of Jesse?” and “Why should I give food I have for my people to some unknown?” Of course, he knew good and well who David was and what he'd been doing. So when David heard this, his first response was, every man strap on his sword! And he took four hundred men and headed for Carmel where Nabal was – in a white heat, so to speak.

But unknown to David, Nabal's workers told Nabal's wife, Abigail, that Nabal had railed against David's representatives, and explained that David's men were very good to them, and while they were around, they suffered no harm, they didn't miss anything – nobody was taking anything from them when they were in the fields – as long as they went with them. And they told her:

**1 Samuel 25:16** – *They were a wall to us, both by night and day, all the while we were with them keeping the sheep.*

He also told her that her husband was such a worthless man.... And this took quite a bit of courage, I think, for one of his servants. He told Nabal's wife that he was such a worthless man that no one could speak to him. He then asked Abigail to consider what to do, since David had determined to do harm to Nabal and his house. So Abigail wisely gathered a large amount of provisions and packed them on donkeys, and told the young men to race ahead of her to David. And she did *not* tell Nabal what she was doing.

**V-23-25** – *When Abigail saw David, she hurried and got down from the donkey and fell before David on her face and bowed to the ground. She fell at his feet and said, "On me alone, my lord, be the guilt. Please let your servant speak in your ears, and hear the words of your servant. Let not my lord regard this worthless fellow, Nabal – so she's talking about her own husband now – for as his name is, so is he. You know, he is what he is. What is he? Well, Nabal means fool.*

It reminds me of that saying, "It is what it is," right? She begged David to hold off and to forgive the rudeness of her husband. And she explained that God would take care of him and his men, and that he didn't need to fight – God would fight for him – and that God would take care of Nabal.

**V-32-33** – *And David said to Abigail, "Blessed be the LORD, the God of Israel, who sent you this day to meet me! So his anger was turned away. Blessed be your discretion, and blessed be you, who have kept me this day from bloodguilt and from working salvation with my own hand! So he was going to go down there and solve the problem, the way he saw it, and she convinced him that God would take care of him.*

**V-35-38** – *And he said to her, "Go up in peace to your house. See, I have obeyed your voice, and I have granted your petition." So here's the guy that's going to be the next king of Israel obeying a woman's voice – listening to her. You know, I don't think, if you read the Bible much, that happened too often, but usually when it did happen, it was usually with people that God was working with. And Abigail came to Nabal – we're told – and behold, he was holding a feast in his house, like the feast of a king. That's what it says. So he was drunk and she told him nothing about what had happened until he sobered up in the morning. In the morning, when the wine had gone out of Nabal – as it says – Abigail told him what she had done, and it says: and his heart died within him, and he became as a stone. Have you ever seen people that have had a really serious cerebral hemorrhage? Well, they're completely non-communicative and non-responsive.*

And it says: *And about ten days later the LORD struck Nabal, and he died.*

So Abigail did what she could to have Nabal's back. It wasn't her fault that he was beyond help. She did what she could. And, if we think carefully about this, having our mate's back is *always* a good thing. But it's even better when we can buffer them from serious errors.

You know, when I think about the times my wife has had my back, and some of the times when I've had hers, and when I've heard stories about people having each other's backs, usually it's because of time pressure. Most of us have more to do than we can do. We're overscheduled. I know Elaine and I both feel this kind of pressure a good bit of the time, and anything we can do to help each other with time pressure always feels like someone has our backs. We use Apple computers to run our business – I'm giving an example now – that's why I'm talking about Apple computers.... But the Apple version of QuickBooks, which is the software we use to keep books for our businesses, is really not as good as the PC version. The only part that's up to par between the two is the price. So we use a program on our Apple computer that creates a space in memory that imitates a PC. And that allows us to run the PC version of QuickBooks on an Apple computer. Now, the whole system is seriously flawed, but is better than it used to be when we started. But it's still pretty buggy. And the developers charge a premium price, but under too much time pressure to do it right. So, from time to time, Elaine will send me a text at work, and tell me that the system is not behaving, and she's so frustrated because she has so much work to do. So, when I get home, I try to look at what's going on right away, so that she can continue in the morning. And she really appreciates that, because she has so much to do that's time sensitive when it comes to doing the books. So I try, as best I can, to have her back on this. And, at the same time, she has my back as well, because I need to see the data she's processing – sometimes while I'm working with clients.

So, are there things that *you* could do to help your mate with things that are causing a lot of stress for them because of time pressure? Sometimes it seems like a small thing, and yet – I don't know about you – but when I've got too much to do, that's when I really feel the pressure of it. It's always good, if we can, to have our mates' backs. Usually, we feel very much appreciation when that's done for us, unless, of course, we're like Nabal, who was the center of his own universe and didn't really – I don't think – express much appreciation to Abigail for the things she did.

Also, most of us understand the importance of family. So when our family needs us the most, it's usually in a crisis with little warning. And that puts the family under stress – when our mate's parent has a stroke, as an example – perish the thought! – that can often necessitate time off work, plane tickets, car rentals, packing suitcases, taking care of somebody for extended periods of time – a perfect time to have somebody's back, even if it's just the realization that a loved one far away needs some of our time on a regular basis. So what can we do? Well, when our mate steps up to help us at times like this, we are always so appreciative and it's so meaningful to us – unless, of course, we're like that guy, right?

So what else can we think about? Well, doing things for others that they can't do for themselves – like taking care of us when we're sick, or stepping in to solve a problem when we can't find an answer for it. One of the things I've noticed in my life about caring for others is this: When we do something for someone that they could do for themselves, two things tend to happen. We're enabling learned helplessness and they never appreciate our efforts. But when we do something for others that they *cannot* do for themselves, they are more likely to appreciate it and it does one other important thing that's especially important for a married couple. It tends to create an emotional bond between the help and the helper. And that's really important. Those are golden opportunities for us to build a relationship – when we can help our mate do something that they, for whatever reason, can't do for themselves right then.

So that's it for *Having the Back of One's Mate*. One way to develop a closer relationship – which, by the way, is the next organizing principle about a *God-Based Marriage* – is a close emotional bond. So part of that comes from having one's back.

Don't forget to look at the previous presentations in the series on our Website or at the Apple Podcasting store.

Until next time, this is Bill Jacobs for LifeResource Ministries serving children, families and the Church of God.