

7/6/15
Week 28 WFL
Mark Gungor #1

James: I'm already prepared to laugh. I'm James Robison; I welcome you to *LIFE Today*. Betty and I are thrilled to have you. Mark Gungor has been here before, and he talks about marriage. Somehow he makes it funny. He makes marriage sounds like its fun. You think its fun?

Betty: I do. We have some fun times.

James: Yeah, well, some fun times! Way to go, Betty!

Mark: On occasion!

Betty: Thank goodness. Huh?

James: Yeah. We get in disagreements.

Betty: We have loud discussions.

James: We do. And people would not believe you get loud. Do you ever get loud?

Betty: Well, you're hard of hearing.

[Laughter]

James: Go, girl!

Oh, my goodness. What a girl I live with -- 52 years I've been married to this beautiful girl. You know what I just wish? I told you when I talk about the joy of marriage and family, I know some people say, "I'm glad," but at the same time they say, "I'm sad I can't say it." You don't have any idea how that breaks my heart. Really, it does. We care a bunch and we'd like to help you.

Imagine how much the Father wants to help and how able to help He is. Everything doesn't always get fixed. But we can have somebody close that loves us and we want that for you. We

pray that for you. Well, Mark Gungor deals with marriage a lot and he seems to help people have fun and understand. But he's got this book, *The Battle over the Rules*. It looks like they're having one of those discussions Betty just referenced. It looks like a loud discussion; it's got a lot of gestures. He's implying there are some rules and you can battle over the rules. Well, let's find out what he's talking about.

Welcome Mark Gungor, Celebration Church in Wisconsin.

Okay, Mark, are there rules?

Mark: Yeah, there are a few rules. Actually, this whole idea of *The Battle over the Rules*, just the idea of rules will create a lot of battles in any discussion, especially in the Christian faith because people get real sensitive by what do you mean by rules?

James: Yeah, I want to know if this is a book on legalism?

Mark: No, no! It's not about legalism.

James: Because I'm not really high on legalism. Jesus wasn't high on legalism.

Mark: Do I look like I'm high on legalism? [Laughing]

James: Wait a minute, I want to be sure you understand me.

Mark: I don't know where you got that idea from. Here's the thing with legalism. For me, the way I describe legalism is let's say the rule is: Children shouldn't play in the street. That's a good rule. But then a legalist will come along and say, "Well, then they can't play in the yard because if they play in the yard they'll be tempted to go into the street."

Then another legalist comes along and says, "Well, they can play inside the house but they can't look out the curtain because if they look outside the curtain then they'll be tempted to go into the yard and then end up in the street."

And another legalist says, "No! They've got to stay in the basement because if they go upstairs, they'll look outside, step into the yard, and they'll go into the street!"

James: Now this sounds like church.

Mark: Yeah! Hallelujah! So now the problem is now you've got a bunch of people living in the basement because of a rule don't play in the street. Well, then to correct that people come

along and then they want to remove all the rules. But no, it's a good rule, the original one -- just don't play in the street.

James: Because it is a boundary, it's a safety boundary. It is not like a wall that is a prison. It's actually a boundary of protection. You understand that?

Mark: I do.

[Laughter]

James: I feel so much better. I feel so much better because I really know a lot of people in the basement.

Mark: Yeah, they are, and I'm definitely not into the basement. But I don't want people in the street because they'll get hurt.

James: Why do you even go to the trouble of talking about *The Battle over the Rules*? You're implying that there need to be some.

Mark: Yeah, there needs to be some. Words have meaning. We use words today to help clearly communicate, for example, the gospel. But I think some of the phrases that we use aren't particularly helpful and they can actually become problematic. For example, the phrase is: God loves you just the way you are. Well, okay! But see I think a better way is God loves you despite the way you are.

[Laughter]

Really? Because it's like you have a child. I love you despite the way you are acting. See, that's one thing than to say I love you no matter how you act. Yeah, they're both kind of saying, look, God loves us. There is no question God loves us.

In fact, the Bible says demonstrated his love for us in that while we were yet sinners Christ died for us. So there's no question that God loves us. I just get uncomfortable with some of these phrases.

For example, and you hear this all the time. We -- I use it sometimes and I try and stop it now is God's unconditional love -- God loves us unconditionally. I know what people are trying to say, God loves us, but I just don't like the word *unconditional* because what it is creating is a sense that true love means there are no rules; that it doesn't matter what we do, and then whatever rules are there are superseded. It is kind of a version of anarchy and if there is one thing that is

trying to run rampant in America today is just anarchy. They don't want rules, they don't want restrictions, they don't want anything. The rules can be explained away.

One of the problems we have today is just in sexuality today; even with Christians you can say look, the Bible says you shouldn't commit adultery. But then someone says, "Yeah, but we really love each other." That doesn't change anything. Human love does not supersede God's rule.

James: In other words, you're saying that if they were having sex pre-marriage that would be a form of adultery.

Mark: That's another -- that's fornicating to me. Well, if someone is fornicating -- well, you shouldn't be fornicating. "Yeah, but we really love each other." People all the time just say that. Well, I understand that but see...

James: Sure, what difference does a piece of paper make? Like a marriage contract.

Mark: Because there are certain rules, if you will. They're not oppressive, they're lines.

James: "We really want to be together," they say. "God made us this way."

Mark: Just marry the girl!

[Laughter]

Fornicating makes no sense to me. I don't understand that. Adultery I get.

James: Why?

Mark: Because. Let's say you fall in love with someone who is not your wife, God forbid! Okay, there is no way you can fulfill that morally, and just the fact that you love her doesn't change anything. Or even people who are same sex people. They say they truly love each other. I feel bad. There's no way, biblically, you can make that right. They say, "Well, we love each other." That's the argument, as long as two people love each other. But love doesn't change -- human emotions doesn't change God's standard.

James: You don't ever move the standard to accommodate our failure or our rebellion. Right?

Mark: Yeah.

James: It's a rule. It's a command.

Mark: There are millions of Christians today, especially the young ones, who really think whatever rules there are need to be changed, need to be updated because we love each other or God just loves us unconditionally. And I know that they're trying to say, again, God loves us; there is no question about it. I just don't like the word anymore because it is just creating the sense that nothing matters. So what I'm trying to lay out in my book about relationships is there are rules. You've got to have rules if you're going to have a successful relationship.

My wife has rules on me. For example, I'm not allowed to date other women.

[Laughter]

It's a little repressive; you know what I'm saying?

[Laughter]

But those are one of the rules. There are people who literally think well, if you really love each other there should be no rules, and we're having that problem. There are people who are trying to raise their children today with no rules. "I trust my child, my six year old, to make the right decisions." Are you crazy?

[Laughter]

Who trusts a six year old to make their own decisions? I'm trying to get him to change his underwear, for heaven's sake!

[Laughter]

But there is this thinking that any kind of, that's repressive and oppressive. And people who -- teenagers, oh, good Lord! You have no rules for teenagers, they'll destroy themselves. I know people, good god-fearing people, God love them, they're just dumb as bricks. Pastors, who their daughter is in her bedroom with her boyfriend with the door closed for like four or five hours at a time. What are they doing? What did you say?

James: Homework.

Mark: Homework! Yeah! Yeah! Anatomy homework is what they're doing. And you challenge that and they say, "Well, I trust them." Really? Are you crazy? Because there is

actually the sense now that there is nothing. And if anybody comes with any kind of sense of, you know that's how the non-Christian world is just trying to beat up the church, if you have any standards about anything we're hateful. "You're hate-filled people!" Rr-rr-rr!

Mainly anybody, is there some basic rules? And once you talk about rules then right away people think you're talking legalism. I'm not talking legalism I'm just talking about basic --

James: I thought your definition of legalism in the basement was good.

Mark: Well, thank you.

James: No, it is really appropriate.

[Laughter]

And really, legalism puts you in a solitary basement confinement.

Mark: Yes.

James: No light, no joy, no peace -- and that is not what Jesus tried to put us into. He didn't shackle us. He set us free. But the boundaries are just like the walls that protected you from harm. And it is not a matter of keeping people in prison but actually keeping them secure, I say in the shelter or shadow, watchcare of the Father, God Himself.

Mark: Absolutely. So my argument is that actually, the opposite is true. Without some kind of rules or conditions, that's why I don't like the word *unconditional*. Say unmitigated, say unending, so unfathomable, just don't say "unconditional" because I think it's giving people the wrong idea.

James: Well, I do think God will never stop loving you. Even when you break all the rules, he still loves you. So you're saying --

Betty: A lot of that is because we have allowed society to redefine the words *unconditional*.

James: As politically correct words.

Betty: They've just destroyed them.

James: She wrote a journal thought about the new normal.

Mark: You're reading her journal?

James: Oh, yeah, she reads them to me. She writes and she reads it to me -- and I love it. I love it. I really do. It's a rule, we respect each other. We treat each other with respect.

Mark: I don't know how to journal.

James: You don't?

Mark: I don't want to hear what I thought earlier.

James: Maybe I need to talk to your wife and she'd write and you'd read it.

[Laughter]

The rule would be if she wanted you to listen when she read it, you listen to her.

Mark: That would be the rule.

James: So she was writing about the new normal. And the new normal is that we're just doing everything exactly abnormally in light of the standards of God and the principles of God. Just the new normal is there is no normal, it's just what everybody thinks is right; they do what's right in their own eyes. That is a biblical verse. I hope you like it.

Mark: I did. I approve highly.

James: Take that rule up with God if you didn't like it. God said that.

Mark: What I'm saying is without any rules love can't really flourish.

For example, in the beginning God creates this garden, everything is perfect but he is not done until he sets one condition. There's that one deal. Why? Why was it there? -- Because without some kind of condition love cannot flourish. Then the whole Old Testament can be pretty much summed up in Moses' admonition to the people. He said, "Look, if you'll do the right thing, God says he will bless you. If you'll do the wrong thing, he'll kick your butt." All right? And that's the whole New Testament.

James: That wasn't exactly the way he said it. Similar --

[Laughter]

Mark: It was worse than that! The plagues and the death and everything, kicking your butt is the nice version.

James: But you bring it on yourself. It's like playing in the street. He doesn't have to get the Suburban to run over you when you play in the street -- the Suburban's are running. Just don't put too much on God that you're bringing on yourself. When you break the rules, you made a mess. You got it?

Mark: I'm just saying there were rules. "Do the right thing I'll bless you, do the wrong thing I'll kick your butt."

James: If you break the rule you're kicking your own butt though. Please understand that.

Mark: Whatever! The butt gets kicked is the bottom line. Who kicks the butt I don't care!

[Laughter]

Avoid the butt kicking.

[Laughter]

So all the Old Testament is really that being played out -- the whole thing. Now everybody says, "Well, when we come to the New Testament, that's all gone. There's only grace." -- Not exactly because there's still conditions. I know people hate that word *conditions*, I don't know what else to use. I like that better than rules.

James: You said these things you should have done and not leave the others undone -- That's Jesus.

Mark: Yeah, and there's this great song: I'm a friend God. My nephew wrote the song. But it's not really accurate.

[Laughter]

Jesus didn't say "I call you friends." He said, "I call you friends if you obey my words." See what we've done is we've taken the if's out. We don't want the if's anymore. You want to draw close to God? You have to draw close to him -- all these things.

James: He'll draw close to you if you'll draw close to him. And he'll expose himself by saying he'll let you know what he is thinking. He'll guide you in all truth.

Mark: But if you want to draw close to God? What do you got to do?

James: Get close to him. Move toward him.

Mark: You want to get saved?

James: Move into the shadow -- close!

Mark: Brother, what must I do to be saved?

James: Repent, believe, trust.

Mark: Conditions -- conditions -- conditions!

[Laughter]

You're evil! So we're trying to lay out this idea that biblically -- there again, people say, "Well no, grace means it doesn't matter."

I know we're talking about hot button words here. And there's people already who are not hearing a word I say because, "He doesn't believe in unconditional love!"

James: Yeah, he doesn't believe in grace!

Mark: I believe in grace! Absolutely! But Paul said to Timothy, the grace of God has appeared to all men teaching us to say no to ungodliness and to live self-controlled lives -- those are the conditions; you see? If your version of grace does not include the word no you ain't got grace, you got grease.

[Laughter]

It's a whole different ball game. Then I hear these preachers, and I'm not trying to mention any names because I don't want to go to jail for a lawsuit. But all the people who -- preachers that are just obsessed with, we don't want anybody to feel guilt and shame. I understand there is this oppressive condemnation.

James: There is!

Mark: But that's not what I'm talking about. But this obsession -- here's the thing. You know who never feels guilt and shame? -- A psychopath!

[Laughter]

A psychopath can take a cat and stick him in a microwave, turn it on and watch it blow up and it doesn't bother him in the least. Jesus did not say go into all the world and create a bunch of psychopaths, people who never feel guilt and shame. I have this odd, strange concept that if you do something guilty you ought to feel guilty. If you do something shameful, you ought to feel shameful. But we're like breaking our necks making sure nobody ever feels bad about anything. So we avoid any kind of godly sorrow which leads us to repentance. And then we have a sense of just this anarchy today and people want to know why their relationships are failing.

James: Do you appreciate Mark? He's an interesting guy.

You know here's the thing. Where I sit, and this is an amazing thing because I have been -- let's say I've had my sails stretched to catch the fullness of the spirit of the living God to help us to understand Him and His ways and His will, and understand that we can swing the pendulum totally out of balance very, very easily. So sometimes if you've got a sound that's loud here, you need a little bit louder sound here to try to get everything back to center. But we always have a tendency to pick that sound or that sound rather than the sound of the spirit to bring us into harmony with his heart.

That's what we're about, Mark. I think you realize that.

By the way, the preachers who preach grace, who understand grace, they would appreciate what you're saying. Because the real grace understands what Mark's saying. But there is this tendency to keep people living as though God is running around with a club all the time rather than knowing God is trying to give them boundaries so that you don't get hurt when you get out there. And he's trying to keep us in the shelter and shadow of his will and that is grace too, if we understand that. So there doesn't have to be the tension. We're going to talk some more tomorrow.

What I want you to understand is, I'm a peacemaker and I don't compromise one word in His Word period -- not going to -- not knowingly. Now I miss the mark and you know what the mark does, Mark? It tells me to straighten up, get back to the standard. I don't move the standard.

Appreciate this guy? Just say thanks to him. We're going to have a little bit more; we're going to talk to him more. And I want to get real specific, Mark, the very definite aspects of marriage where people mess up because they don't have responsibilities and they don't assume responsibility and even give up their rights for their spouse, which is critical. So we have them sign a contract that means, "I guard my rights." We literally guard one another.

I want to show you something, Betty, I think is as moving in the right way as anything you'll see. I pray it will be. I want you to watch and I really want you to try to get into the setting, right into the situation because a lot of times in your life you wish something would correct an issue in your life or your family. And if there were a way to correct it, you would be so grateful. Well, there's the perfect correction for what you're going to see -- perfect! And you're a part of that perfect solution. Watch it very closely.

On the mission field

Announcer: There's little stronger than a mother's love -- a deep desire to protect, to nurture. That feeling of peace as your child walks through that front door safe from every danger. But what if they weren't safe? What if the greatest danger lies in the most basic substance? Water! This reality has haunted Trimang every day since it took the life of her youngest daughter and continues to threaten this precious one who remains.

Open captions:

>> If I could buy clean water for my children, I would. But it's too far away and we can't afford it. I feel so much anguish for my children. When I went to the health center the nurse blamed me for giving bad water to my kids.

Announcer: It's hard for us to imagine something so essential being so difficult to obtain. But for Trimang it is practically impossible.

Open captions:

>> When my daughter died, I wanted to die as well. But my husband told me I need to be strong. I do not want anything except good health for my children.

Announcer: For now clean water is but a distant dream in Trimang's village -- whether it remains so is up to you.

End of clip

In the studio

James: I don't know what all you think about when you're watching that. Because we've been speaking and doing the program, my voice was a little dry and I actually got a sip of water while I was watching that. I just thought how precious that would be to her, and something so simple and so obvious.

And that beautiful little girl, I really fix my eyes on that precious little girl a while ago and I wanted to take her little face and say honey, we're going to get you some clean water. And I wanted to say, "Mom, we're going to let you do what you want you want to do for your little girl. I'm sorry the nurse said that you maybe contributed to your child's death when you didn't have anything else you could give."

Betty, we can give them water if we're just willing.

Betty: James, my heart was relating to hers in that as a mother, I felt like she was saying, "I would if I could. I would give her fresh water." You could if you would give her fresh water. Help us drill the water wells.

James: Yeah, you could if you would. That's exactly right. I believe you will.

Father, I pray everyone watching who can help at whatever level they'll understand it's huge. It's important. It's just a cup of water, you said, it's special. Lord, we can help give wells of water. Please move on people's hearts to do it; in Jesus' name I ask it for the sake of those beautiful little children and their families.

There is a telephone number there on the screen and we have a challenge from the missionaries to drill 500 more wells this year in areas they've located the need and the confirmation that there's water. A lot of times they know that because people have dug a hand hole, a bore hole, and they find water but it gets contaminated because of things falling in it, or more people getting out of it and everything gets in it; there's no way to protect it. That's why we drill a well. We case it. We give them a manual pump. It can't be electric because the electricity is unreliable in most of the places where they desperately need the water. So we give them a pump that children can pump.

In school settings, where kids come, we've actually given them a merry-go-round where they can go around and we built holding tanks in those areas where they're actually pumping water up into the tank, and then the water will flow out of a spigot. So we do everything we can with simplicity but in love and we're always sharing where the love comes from -- it comes from God.

We're asking you to dial the number, take your bankcard or go online, LifeToday.org. That's the easiest way. Take your bankcard, make the largest gift you can. \$4800 per well; we're going to drill 500.

Would you help with one? Could you do that? Maybe you could drill several. There are people who do that -- thank God for that! But most people give by giving \$1200 or \$2400 and pray others join them. Most of the support comes from people giving \$48, which gives ten people water or \$144 which gives 30 people water the rest of their life. There's a level at which you can help. Would you do it?

We have some gifts we want to send you to bless you, to say thank you. But we're asking you right now to express the love of God by giving fresh clean water and changing everything for people in very difficult circumstances. When we give them Water for Life, they're always glad to hear about the water of life because they've seen his love. Thank you for helping us share it.

Begin video clip

Announcer: Every day millions of children are forced to make a dreadful choice: drink filthy, polluted water filled with deadly disease or die from thirst. No child should ever be faced with this decision.

The good news is there is a solution! *Mission Water for Life* is one of the most exciting and viable demonstrations of God's love in the world today. Suffering can end because clean water changes everything.

With your gift today we can establish and drill 500 water wells for remote villages in over 12 different nations. Your gift of \$24 will help provide clean water for 5 people. A gift of \$48 will help provide for 10 people; \$72 will impact 15 people. And \$144 will help provide fresh, clean, disease-free water for 30 people for a lifetime!

With your gift you'll receive the "Every Day a New Day" devotional broken out into the four seasons of the year. This daily devotional features scriptures, inspirational thoughts, a Bible reading plan, and a place for you to journal each day.

With your gift of \$100 or more, you may request "The Names of Jesus" pen set; one inscribed with the names of Jesus found in scripture and the other reflecting the gifts of the spirit.

Finally, please consider a gift of \$1200 to help provide water for 250 people or a gift of \$4800 to help sponsor a complete well.

And request this beautifully framed canvas print of "The Forest Chapel" by Thomas Kinkade.

Please call, write, or make your secure gift online today!

End of clip

In the studio

James: Betty and I do express our gratitude, our thanks for your help. The beautiful "Names of Jesus" pens, we'll send you two of them when you make that gift of \$100 or more, any gift. "Every Day a New Day," every season of the year, one for each season of the year -- they're beautiful! And you've got a devotional every day and a study guide, and then you've got a place where you can journal.

If you'd like to have Mark Gungor's book, *The Battle over the Rules*, you ask for it. Say, "I'd like to have that."

I like this guy. I like what he's saying. I believe he can bless me, bless my life, my marriage, my future." Be sure to ask for it if you'd like to have it.

Would you like to say thanks to Mark for coming and sharing? He's going to be back with us.

Mark, you come back and we'll discuss these rules some more.

Mark: Yes, sir!

James: Thank you so much for watching. Stream.org -- go to stream.org every day. Let's get understanding of the times. We can make a difference.

Announcer: Be sure to visit stream.org, a rich and lively source for breaking news, analysis, and entertainment! Stream.org