

spirit hope intimacy with God Jesus living in victory marriage & family missional living
prayer sharing your faith sin & repentance spiritual warfare transformation the Word
community destiny the devil discovering meaning Easter faith fear God's sovereignty
g in victory marriage & family missional living pain & suffering people & relationships
spiritual warfare transformation the Word of God worship adversity Christmas & New
aning Easter faith fear God's sovereignty grace the Holy Spirit hope intimacy with
g pain & suffering people & relationships personality type prayer sharing your faith
of God worship adversity Christmas & New Year church & community destiny the de
grace the Holy Spirit hope intimacy with God Jesus living in victory marriage & fan
rsonality type prayer sharing your faith sin & repentance spiritual warfare transform

by Berni Dymet



of God worship adversity Christmas & New Year church & community destiny the de
grace the Holy Spirit hope intimacy with God Jesus living in victory marriage & fami
rsonality type prayer sharing your faith sin & repentance spiritual warfare transform
Year church & community destiny the devil discovering meaning Easter faith fear

The Best of 2013

God's Word is mighty and powerful and sharper than any two edged sword. May this booklet bring you His Word, in due season for your life.

christianityworks



The Best of 2013

by
berni dymet

Published by Christianityworks

© Berni Dymet

1st edition – Published 2013

Except where otherwise indicated in the text, the scripture quotations contained here are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.

Cover design: Mariah Reilly, Sydney Australia

We gratefully acknowledge her creative contribution of the cover design of this book.

Printed by: Kala Jyothi Process Pvt. Ltd.,

Hyderabad, A.P., India

No part of this publication may be reproduced, stored in a retrieval system, or transmitted in any form or by any means - electronic, mechanical, photocopying, recording, or otherwise - without prior written permission.

CONTENTS

- | | |
|---------------------------------|----|
| 1. Women Need to Feel Cherished | 1 |
| 2. Before Time Began | 11 |
| 3. The Day I Gave Up Sugar | 22 |
| 4. Two Types of Love | 33 |
| 5. A Father's Father | 43 |

WOMEN NEED TO FEEL CHERISHED

The word 'cherish' is an interesting word. Often you'll hear people talking about 'cherished memories', perhaps from their childhood or the early years of their marriage. But let me ask you this: how often do you hear a husband talking about how much he cherishes his wife?

Husbands, one of the things our wives need more than anything else is to feel cherished. During the past year we looked at how to have a fantastic marriage, which is what every marriage should be. Sadly, most marriages aren't.

The inspiration for this chapter comes from a great book that I've been reading called *Kiss Me Like You Mean It* by Dr David Clarke – really worth a read. It's a book that's made me laugh, it's a book that's confronted me and made me think, and it's a book that's made me change some of the things that I do in our marriage – Jacqui's and mine.

So if you're a husband how much do you cherish your wife? Most of us men are a bit, well you know, we're more rough-and-tumble than our wives; a bit hardier. We Australians would call it 'blokey'. And maybe we don't even know what this word 'cherish' means. So what does it mean?

Here's what my dictionary tells me:

To hold someone or something dear, to protect and care for someone lovingly, to keep hope and ambition in our minds.

According to that definition, men, how much do you cherish your wives? It's easy in a busy life to become transactional in our marriages. It's about going to work and

bringing up the children and dealing with a million mundane details that seem oh, so important in keeping it all ticking over.

It's easy to one day wake up and wonder, *'What happened to the passion in our marriage? What happened to the wonder and the joy and the fun in our marriage?'* You can find more about these questions at our website, www.christianityworks.com in the series *Kiss Me Like You Mean It*.

In all the mundaneness we husbands find it particularly easy to forget to cherish our wives – to hold them dear, to protect them and to care for them lovingly, to hope in them and to hope for them and for the future of our relationship and our marriage.

Instead we roll over the top of them and crush their feelings. We forget to listen to them, to hear their anxieties and their pains, to feel their pain, to hold them and to love them unconditionally. Is any of this sounding just a bit too familiar? Just a bit too close to the bone?



In all the mundaneness we husbands find it particularly easy to forget to cherish our wives – to hold them dear, to protect them and to care for them lovingly, to hope in them and to hope for them and for the future of our relationship and our marriage.

.....

The Best of 2013

I want to share with you today some wisdom from the Bible about husbands cherishing their wives.

Husbands, in the same way show consideration for your wife in your lives together, paying honour to the woman as the weaker vessel since they too are also heirs of the gracious gift of life so that nothing may hinder your prayers.

(1 Peter 3:7)

Now remember this was written a couple of thousand years ago in a time and place where women had few if any legal rights. They couldn't own land or property; only men inherited things, not women. Women, at this point of time, were very much second class citizens and they were totally dependent on men; on their fathers or their brothers and later, on their husbands, for a home, for food and for everything. That's just the way it was back then.

Understanding that context makes this verse from 1 Peter, about the way husbands regard

their wives, even more poignant; even more powerful. *'Husbands, sure you're the one with all the money; you're the one with the job, with the power, with the legal rights'*, that's what it's saying, *'so in all of that show consideration for your wives'*.

Interesting the word that Peter the Apostle, who wrote this particular letter in the New Testament, uses here – *'consideration'* (English translation). The original Greek word carries this meaning: *'Look, knowing everything you know about love and compassion and grace and mercy from God, being someone who gets that, use that wisdom and knowledge in living together with your wife'*.

Treat your wife with the wisdom and love that God has given you by showing her honour; value her, cherish her even though in this society, as it was back then, she is the weaker vessel. Now, of course, physically most women aren't as strong as men, although mentally and emotionally we know that women can be, and indeed are, very strong.

Emotionally though, and physically, my wife is much more delicate and beautiful than I am. It's as though she's like a precious delicate vase or figurine; the sort you might have up on your mantel piece; the sort that you value and you enjoy.

Treat that figurine or vase too roughly, knock it down on the floor and it's going to break. That's why you treat it gently and enjoy it; treat it with consideration and value it.

That's the sense the Apostle Peter is conveying here, about how men should treat their wives. And that, guys, is how we should treat our wives – with great honour and respect, with gentleness and kindness. Not rolling over the top of them, crushing their emotions and telling them that how they feel doesn't matter at all! Treat your wife with the wisdom of God. Show her consideration even though you may think that you're stronger than her.

You know this is such precious advice. Women need to feel cherished, protected, safe,

loved, valued. Husbands, this is such a deep need for them, we ignore that need at our peril. Let me tell you, a wife that doesn't feel cherished by her husband isn't going to be passionately, madly, head-over-heels in love with her man because one of her deepest needs is not being met.

Men, it's time for us really to put our wives on a pedestal in our marriages; to value them more than any other human being, more than any experience, job or career or thing to do on our 'to do' list or possession, more than anything in our lives.

Because when she knows that her husband truly cherishes her, when she feels that she is on that pedestal in her husband's heart, well, that makes her feel safe and it makes her marriage feel complete and right; the way somehow it was always meant to be.

What about it husbands? Are you ready to cherish your wife? The Apostle Paul writes:

Husbands love your wives and never treat them harshly. (Colossians 3:19)

There are three different original Greek words used in the New Testament which we translate into the English word 'love'. The particular one that's used here comes from the root word 'agape' which means: to love unconditionally, to welcome, to entertain, to be fond of, to love dearly, to be well pleased with, to be contented with. That's the definition! If we love our wives like that then it's impossible to treat them harshly, isn't it?

Down through the ages men have treated women harshly because of their brute strength, because of their possessions or relative power in society and culture, simply because they could. What a terrible indictment on a man, to treat his wife harshly. But many of us do, unwittingly perhaps, but that doesn't make it any easier for her.

Harshness, it seems to me, is the precise opposite of cherishing her. It's one or the other. And so seriously does God take this, that the

command to show wives consideration, unconditional love and honour comes with a sting in the tail.

Do this so that your prayer may not be hindered.

(1 Peter 3:7)

This is something that God takes very, very seriously indeed.

BEFORE TIME BEGAN

Most of us have a sense that there's some destiny out there that our lives are meant to fulfil. But what? Where do we discover what that is? Well, would it surprise you to know that not only do you have a destiny, but it began even before you were born?

If you were to ask yourself the questions: *Am I being the 'me' I was meant to be? Am I really fulfilling the destiny for my life?* ... How would you answer? On a scale of one to ten how would you rate your life against those questions?

Well the problem is that so many people can't answer them because they don't know

who they were meant to be in the first place, or where they're meant to be headed in life.

All they sometimes have is a nagging suspicion inside; a bit of an unsettling feeling that the answer is more a 'no' than a 'yes'; more a one or two than an eight or nine out of ten.

Am I being the 'me' I was meant to be? Am I really fulfilling the destiny of my life? They're really, really good questions to be asking ourselves.

I don't know how to talk about this except, at least in part, from my own experience, because discovering your destiny is a profound issue of life. I'd like to share with you part of my journey and something that began to answer those questions for me.

By global standards I was blessed. I grew up in a wealthy household, we had plenty of food to eat, a roof over our heads, and I had a good education. One of my physical attributes – as well as being short, as well as having some grey hair, as well as being short-sighted in one eye and long-sighted in the other – is that I have a

high IQ. As a result, I did really well at school and I had the choice of doing anything that I wanted to do: medicine, science, mathematics, law ...

Back then I was interested in these emerging things that they called 'computers'. So I left high school and I went to the Royal Military College Duntroon, the officer-training academy for the Australian Army; a bit like England's Sandhurst or the USA's West Point.

From there, I graduated with a degree in information technology, spent ten years as an officer in the military and after that, had well-paying jobs. I even owned a successful consulting firm for seventeen years in the IT industry. I travelled around and spoke at international conferences and lived the high life.

I basically had it handed to me on a silver platter. Okay, it had its ups and downs, I had to work hard, I had to strive for things. But by any standard I had it pretty good. I kind of enjoyed it ... but all along I found that nothing ever *really* satisfied me.

I was so concerned about being the best; I was so concerned about what other people thought of me, that I couldn't enjoy my life. I couldn't relax. I was successful on the outside, but inside I had a deep sense of inadequacy and failure. I felt I was being a fraud. That's how I lived my life, day by day for many years and believe you me, it's not a lot of fun.

Why was that? What was going on? I had this emerging sense that I wasn't being the me I was meant to be, and that there was some destiny for my life that I hadn't yet stumbled across. Despite all the good things that were happening in my life, I had this sort of vague distant belief in God, but even in my late thirties when I gave my life over to Him, when I became a Christian, there was still something ... well it wasn't quite right.

I look back on it now and I know there was something missing; something I didn't really understand. For me, the starting point of being the 'me' I was meant to be, was knowing where I'd come from and who I was meant to be. So many people in the midst of their lives aren't

really comfortable with who they are, or where their life's going. And so they don't have a real sense of security; they're more like a cork bobbing around in the stormy ocean.

We're going to explore that insecurity by looking through Psalm 139 in the Old Testament of the Bible. I come back to it again and again in my own life, because it reminds me of exactly who I am. What I love about this Psalm is that the writer starts in the middle of the dilemmas of life and works his way back to God to discover who he is. Ultimately he comes to this point:

God you created me in my inner most being. It was you that knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I'm fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful; I know that full well because my frame wasn't hidden from you when I was being made in that secret place. When I was being woven together in the depths of the earth your eyes saw my unformed substance and all the days ordained for me were written down in your

book of life before even one of them came into being. How precious to me are your thoughts O God, how vast is the sum of them.

Were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand. When I awake I'm still with you.

(Psalm 139:13-18)

There's something that really strikes me in there. This is one of those passages in the Bible that is beautiful and wondrous to me and as I said I keep coming back to it again and again. It's like my passport; it tells me who I am.

We all started life in our mother's womb; a dark hidden place in the depths of the earth as it were, and it was there that God created our innermost being. He knit us together in our mother's womb and so we indeed can praise Him, because we are fearfully and wonderfully made ... by Him!

I'm not sure what you believe and please understand this, I'm not here to force any of my beliefs onto you. I just want to share with

you how it was for me. After reading that Psalm, I had this sense of, *‘WOW! If God really made me who I am then who I am – my personality, my strengths, my limitations and my hair colour and my blue eyes and the way I think and react – all of those things are His choice.’*

There are bits about ourselves that we like and then, we have other bits that we don't like so much. Some people say, *‘I wish I was smarter. I wish I was taller. I wish I was better looking’* or ... *‘I wish I had blonde hair instead of that mousy brown colour mop on top of my head’*. You know what I mean!

But when I wrap my heart around this Psalm I think, *Wow! Not only has God made me who I am, each strand of my DNA according to the blue print of His great and mighty heart, He also planned every day of my life; all the days ordained for me were written in His book before any of them came into being.*

That's my passport; that's my compass; that's what's given me my sense of identity and direction in life. And hey! That's not such a

bad thing. No wonder the psalmist goes on, in wonder, to say:

How precious to me are your thoughts O God, how vast is the sum of them. Were I to count them they would outnumber the grains of sand. (Psalm 139:17)

Our lives aren't about being some karma or some vague sense of chance or destiny. Our lives have a plan, a purpose and a destiny. Before any of our days ever existed, every day ordained for you and me was written in God's book; God's blue print.

It was written in our DNA, who we are and what would happen; the number of hairs on our head, every thought, every desire, every dream, every hope, every hurt, every experience. He knit us together in our mother's womb and He set every day before us according to His plan.

We can choose to accept his plan, or to walk away from it. We can choose to cooperate with His will for our lives ... or not. That's true on



Wow! Not only has God made me who I am, each strand of my DNA according to the blue print of His great and mighty heart, He also planned every day of my life; all the days ordained for me were written in His book before any of them came into being.

.....

The Best of 2013

the macro scale, in the big choices that we make and on the micro day-to-day level.

But no matter what choices we've made, and what consequences we're living with, it is never, ever, ever too late to turn back to Him. To cooperate with who He made us to be and the plan that He has for our lives.

You and I are who we are because that's how He made us. You and I are living the lives we have because that's what He ordained for us. And even the bad things in life, the tough things that we've had to go through, the things that don't even seem to be fair – none of those are a surprise to Him.

That's the profound and wonderful beauty as so many people spend so much of their lives not liking themselves, when all along we are who God made us to be.

In His infinite wisdom and mercy and creativity, that's how He handcrafted us. He planned us, He knew us and He wrote down all the days of our lives before time began.

Let me challenge you today! Let me get right in your face with this. *Are you prepared to live every minute of every day in this wonderful knowledge, in this wonderful truth?*

Sure we've all made mistakes – there are consequences, there are scars, there are broken relationships – but fundamentally, who we are is no surprise to God. And He has the power to heal and restore; He is ready, willing and able to help us become all He made us to be!

What we're going through is no surprise to God and in the middle of that He wants to give us peace and rest and that's what we get when we accept who we are and where we are according to God's plan.

My friend, it's time to love who you are. It's time to thank Him and to praise Him – that honours God.

I praise you for I am fearfully and wonderfully made. Your works are wonderful and that I know full well.
(Psalm 139:14)

THE DAY I GAVE UP SUGAR

The day I came to the conclusion that my high consumption of sugar – like so many in our Western culture – was killing me, I emptied my pantry of everything that contained sugar.

Do you know what was left? Almost nothing!

I'm excited because I'm about to share with you my number one secret for losing 25 kg, that's about 55lb, and keeping it off permanently. The truly exciting thing was that it was relatively easy. It required a little willpower at the beginning, but in maintenance mode, almost zero willpower.

The consumption of sugar in wealthy, western societies like ours has skyrocketed over the last century. Back in the 1800's we ate about 7 kg or 15 lb of sugar per person, per year; today it's topping out at seventy 70 kg or over a 150 lb!

And the really crazy thing is that *we think that that's normal!*

Now before the early 20th century, the only way you could get sugar into your diet was (a) to fight the bees for their honey, (b) be near an apple tree when it was in season once a year, or (c) chew on a log called 'sugar cane' because 99% of sugar cane is a tough, fibrous log and only 1% is sugar. There was no farming or mass production of sugar as there is today. Honey wasn't mass-produced. And you couldn't get exotic fruits from around the world all year round.

The bottom line is this: sugar was in scarce supply and it was an occasional treat.

The incredibly high consumption of sugar that we now consider to be normal is, in an

historical context, grossly abnormal and it's our high consumption of sugar and other refined carbohydrates that, very clearly, is at the heart (pardon the pun) of so-called western diseases like obesity, cardiovascular disease (that's heart attack), stroke and diabetes.

Now the reason we're talking about this is because God's given you and me this amazing body; complex, brilliant and exquisite. Whilst in the 20th century, we've managed to wipe out many of the traditional diseases that killed us *en masse*, and as a result have increased life expectancy in most countries, we've also managed to introduce new ones, and not just in the western world.

As the western diet has crept into countries like India, especially with its high consumption of sweets, so too have the accompanying western diseases. India is now the diabetes and heart disease capital of the universe and I see these diseases as I travel around Africa as well. The research is very, very clear. It shows that within twenty years of the western diet (high in refined carbohydrates) making it into a

country, almost like clockwork, heart disease, stroke, obesity and diabetes appear.

But don't take my word for it. If you're online go to YouTube and watch the video called *Bitter Truth* by UCSF Professor of Paediatrics, Dr Robert Lustig. The highly refined carbohydrate intake isn't just killing us and disabling us, it means that many countries now have a problem with childhood obesity, previously unheard of.

Today in America, Australia, Canada and lots of other countries childhood obesity is a pandemic. For the first time in recent history, if current trends continue, it's likely that our children's life expectancy will be lower than our own. That's a scary thought!

So here is my number one secret for losing the 25 kg, which I've lost and I am now able to keep off without ever having to think about it. I have, as completely as possible, removed both sugar and refined carbohydrates (white flour, peeled potatoes, white rice, white pasta) from my diet.

I know that you think I'm crazy but hear me out.

As I said, when I came to this conclusion my wife and I went through our pantry and we removed everything that contained refined carbohydrates – BBQ sauce 42% sugar by weight; breakfast cereals (which we thought were healthy) 35% sugar; fruit juice, see, I thought that was healthy too; cake; chips; chocolate; cookies; white bread; Thai sauces are full of sugar; pretty much anything and everything that had been refined and prepared by someone else – and there was nothing left.

There was meat in the freezer, eggs in the fridge, some cheese and vegetables and some fruit. But that was it! It was really quite demoralising. And the first week for me was hard not having any sugar because we're addicted to the stuff. I used to kid myself that I wasn't, but I was. Do you know that researchers bred some rats without taste buds? They put two clear fluids into their cages, one was water with sugar the other was water with

cocaine, each rat chose the sugar and became addicted to the sugar solution.

The change in our diet was radical when we did this because just about everything out there has sugar and flour in it. I became a bit like our friend, Bill, who is a celiac. He always has to check everything before he eats it and now we're the same. I check the label, I ask the waiter and I will not allow refined carbohydrates to get into my mouth.

I know, you think I'm nuts, right? Well, let me tell you what happened. The weight just fell off me. I eat butter, cheese, eggs, bacon all high cholesterol – things that conventional, 21st century medicine tells you are bad for you. And the real kicker is that my Doctor is absolutely over the moon with my blood test results.

I eat as much as I want, whenever I want and I lost 25 kg.

You may think I'm crazy or maybe I'm lying or both, but truly, that's what happened. And I

didn't have to starve myself or ever, ever go hungry. Here's why.

Because the moment I removed all those refined carbohydrates, I lost my appetite – I just wasn't hungry much anymore. The withdrawal from sugar lasted about a week for me and then I was fine. Here's the science behind it.

When you eat refined carbohydrates with a high glycaemic index your body digests them very quickly. In an instant your blood sugar spikes, so now your body is pumping masses of insulin into your bloodstream to deal with the sugar because insulin is the stuff that processes the blood sugar into energy and carries the surplus into fat storage areas.

A sharp spike in your blood sugar produces a correspondingly strong insulin response and the insulin does such a good job of mopping up your blood sugar quickly and effectively, that now your blood sugar plummets and you are left with a very low blood sugar level. And what does that tell your body?

I'm hungry. What's your response? To eat!! And you'll eat something that will give you a quick fix and this deadly cycle begins again. So your blood sugar is rapidly going up and down, up and down, your insulin is pumping way too high and there you have the beginnings of insulin resistance, metabolic syndrome and diabetes.

Removing sugar and other refined carbohydrates from your diet stops the spikes and troughs in your blood sugar and the result is that most of your hunger goes away. That's the secret; that's the reason I can eat *whatever I want whenever I want*, because I now want less food and I want it less frequently. I can do that as long as I don't have refined carbohydrates and, my friend, that's it in a nutshell; that's how I lost 25 kilograms. And for the very first time in my life *ever*, I've kept it off without having to try. All I do is I avoid refined carbohydrates.

These days, as I walk past those sweet muffins at the café, right at eye level – that



Removing sugar and other refined carbohydrates from your diet stops the spikes and troughs in your blood sugar and the result is that most of your hunger goes away. That's the secret; that's the reason I can eat whatever I want whenever I want, because I now want less food and I want it less frequently.

.....

The Best of 2013

look and smell stunning – there is not a single twinge of desire in my body to have them, because I’ve broken the habit, I’ve been through the withdrawal and the desire is gone.

What I’ve just told you may sound completely counter-intuitive. It did to me at first. Please remember I’m not a doctor and I’m not qualified to give you medical advice. But you know what I’ve noticed? Truth is almost always counter-intuitive. God’s truth invariably flies in the face of conventional wisdom.

Now, here are three resources that I access frequently to wrap my mind around this stuff. The first is in fact two books by lawyer and author David Gillespie who, like me, was grossly overweight and given his gifted legal mind, applied his forensic skills to the problem of weight loss; something I’ve greatly benefited from. His two books are *Sweet Poison* and *Sweet Poison Quit Plan*. Buy them on Amazon, Kindle and iBooks or at your local bookstore.

The second of those videos that I told you about is by a Professor of Paediatrics

specialising in childhood obesity, Professor Robert Lustig. Just search for *Bitter Truth* on YouTube.

And finally there's a great blog and website by brilliant young Doctor Peter Attia called www.theeatingacademy.com.

All three are brilliant and if you were a person whose lifestyle and waistline and blood tests aren't what they should be, it's time for you to wrap your mind around all of this. Remember my Secret Number One – get rid of the sugar and the other refined carbohydrates in your diet (without restricting fat or protein in any way) and the weight will just drop off you.

It really is that simple!

TWO TYPES OF LOVE

There are two types of love in this world: unconditional love and conditional love. Which one of these do you prefer to receive? Which one of these do you most often give to others? Now that's a scary thought.

We're looking at what it means to live the sort of life that leaves behind a lasting legacy of love. It's something we all want to do. Okay, it's not always at the forefront of our minds in the busy lives that we lead. We get up in the morning, get our kids off to school and ourselves off to work, we race around all day like mad men and women trying to get everything done. Then, when we get home, we

flop on the sofa exhausted at the end of the day. We're probably not thinking about the legacy that our life is going to leave behind, I'll grant you that.

But ask anyone who has a lot more time on their hands; someone who can't get out much, who no longer works; an older person perhaps who's retired and maybe living on their own. When I ask them what they think about, one thing at the top of their list is the significance of their lives. What impact have I had? Are people better off for having known me? What legacy will I leave behind once I'm gone?

Those are questions that actually occupy much of what they think about. They ponder those questions perhaps more than any others. It's funny how our perspective changes as we get older. The less time we have left on the planet, the more the important things become really important. One of those really important things is the impact, for good or for bad, that our lives would have had.

The problem is when you're older, when you have far fewer days left on this earth than you once had, well it's not necessarily the best time to start thinking about all these things, right? Because by then many of the opportunities to have a positive impact, to leave a lasting legacy of love will have already passed us by ... and then what?

That's why we're spending time thinking about this very thing today, because the life that you're living today and tomorrow and next week and next month and next year, is the very life that's going to determine the legacy that you are going to leave behind.

And one of the strongest indicators of how good or not, how powerful or not, how long-lasting or not that legacy is going to be, is the quality of love that we give to other people. As I said before there are really only two types of love – conditional love and unconditional love.

Now, giving *unconditional* love is actually quite hard work. It involves sacrifice. It involves time and effort. So you have to ask

yourself: *is it really worth it?* Well to answer that question, I think we need to look at conditional love first.

Conditional love, quite simply, is love with strings attached. We place conditions on the party whom we're going to love. I will love you if you do this; and I will love you if you don't do that. Provided that you hold up your end of that bargain, I will love you. But if you don't, I won't.

Now on the surface that sounds just a bit reasonable. After all, if the other person is difficult, if the other person is a pain in the neck, if the other person isn't going to play the game, why would we love them? Let's just cut them off! Let's be done with them, move on. And of course that's what many people do. That's precisely what divorce is all about.

Other times we can use conditional love to manipulate and control other people. Husbands try to control their wives; wives try to control their husbands by withholding love and affection from them. It's a terrible thing

and the more you and I think about it, the less we want to be on the receiving end of conditional love. Am I right?

And the reason is, we know we're not perfect. We can be stubborn; we can be difficult and prickly. Our weaknesses sometimes give us a distorted perspective on reality and so we can be overly touchy about this or that and so we need people to love us. We need people who are prepared to love us *despite our weaknesses*, despite the fact that we fail them sometimes, despite the fact that we won't always come up to their expectations of us. If we can't find people like that we are not going to be secure in who we are and where we belong.

I'm a pretty secure kind of guy but I know that I need people to love me just as I am, without putting any conditions on me, because I need to belong to a family. And yet all too often the love that we ourselves crave is not the love that we give to others. How often have you allowed another person's weaknesses or



Husbands try to control their wives; wives try to control their husbands by withholding love and affection from them. It's a terrible thing and the more you and I think about it, the less we want to be on the receiving end of conditional love. Am I right?

.....

The Best of 2013

failures to cause you to withdraw your love, your friendship, your support from them? *'Well you know, if that's how you're going to be then...'* We've all done it haven't we?

We may not say it out loud but we certainly think it and certainly do it. It's like pulling the rug out from under someone else's feet. They are relying on your love to support them and all of a sudden you pull it out from underneath them and they fall flat on their face.

There was a time in my life when I was difficult to love. I'd gone through a rough patch and a few people, one in particular who should have been there to love me unconditionally, failed me and withdrew their love and support. I was left completely alone in this world. Anybody who has ever been there – being completely alone – will know what a terrible thing that is.

At that time some friends came out of the woodwork; people to whom I'd never been particularly nice, and they loved me unconditionally. They gave me somewhere to

live, they wept with me, they held me, they encouraged me. This truly was unconditional love. Those people know exactly who they are. Those people have given me a lasting legacy of love; they've shaped who I am today.

Each time people around the world benefit from something I say on radio, or write in booklets like this, they're actually benefiting from what those friends did for me back then in the tough times. Their legacy has rippled out to countless more people. Why?

Because the most precious love of all is the love that we don't earn or deserve. That's the sort of love that will cause your life to leave a lasting legacy – unconditional love, the very sort of love that God gives to anybody who believes in Jesus Christ His Son.

Back in the Old Testament the agreement between God and His people was conditional. Basically it went like this. 'I will bless you', said God, 'if you keep my commandments but if you don't I'll punish you'. Hmm. Israel copped rather a lot of punishment because somehow

they couldn't manage to obey God's commandments. Sound like anyone you know?

You can read the contract, or the covenant if you will, in Leviticus chapter 26 – it's worth a read. Of course the Lord our God always knew that this bi-lateral, conditional arrangement wasn't going to work, so eventually He sends Jesus His Son to die on that cross to pay for our sins.

For by grace you have been saved through faith and this is not your own doing, it's a free gift from God, not as a result of works so that no one may boast.

(Ephesians 2:8-9)

The reason that God's love towards you and me is so precious is that it costs us nothing, but it cost Him everything – the life of His precious Son, Jesus. *In Christ, God's love is completely unconditional in every way.*

No matter what I do, no matter how badly I fail, I can always be forgiven if I turn back to God. I am always forgiven because my trust is

completely in Jesus and what He did for me. And the same, the very same is true for you if your trust is completely in what Jesus did for you.

My friend, if you would leave behind a lasting legacy of love, then the sort of love that you need to give today is the very same love that you've already been given through Christ the Son of God.

It's called unconditional love. It's a Jesus thing!

A FATHER'S FATHER

Here's what I think: So many people are so busy living their lives that, well, you know, it's hard for us to connect with the amazing love of God.

Amidst the clamour and the clanging of this world we don't take the time to stop and listen to the gentle, strong heartbeat of God – a heart that beats for us. And this goes on for so long that we actually forget that we can experience a deep, personal, intimate relationship with Him.

But that's not the way it's meant to be!

An intimate, real, personal relationship with

God is available to each one of us no matter how old or how young we are. No matter where we live, what the colour of our skin is, whether we're rich or poor, whether, in the world's eyes or by the world's standards, we're successful or not.

God is here for each one of us, and He has this amazing Father's heart for each one of us. Now it's one thing for me to tell you that, but when you look at your own life, it's easy to imagine that all this talk about God's incredible Father's heart is just that – it's all talk. *'Not in my life, I've never experienced that. What's this joker on about?'* Good question, good question.

I remember years ago hearing people talking about God and His love and thinking to myself, *'Yeah, well, you know, what's that based on?'* Because all I ever saw of Christians were the grumpy old men they put on TV in the short eight-second grabs on the evening news. Men who told us we shouldn't be doing this and we shouldn't be doing that. In fact my overwhelming impression was that here were a

bunch of party poopers – people who seemed to be intent on telling us all the things we shouldn't be doing. And yet, when I looked at them, they didn't seem to be enjoying their life, and they never actually, none of them, brought any joy into my life.

Now you might find that a little offensive and maybe that perception wasn't entirely accurate, but that was my perception. And that perception is, in fact, what many people still have, looking from the outside in. And so it jarred with me, all this talk of God's love.

I remember when I was a teenager; it was all the rage to have these brightly coloured, psychedelic, neon 'Jesus Loves You' stickers on everything. It seemed to me that all this talk about God's love was a recent fabrication. I knew that being a Christian, well it was about religion and boring and interminably long Church services. It was about following rules, about being austere and not having any fun. I knew exactly what this Christianity thing was all about.

But it turns out that God isn't some recent invention and His love isn't just the fabrication of some recent public relations campaign. It turns out that the Father heart of God has been around for a long, long time, for eons before human history even began.

Jesus popularised the term 'My Father'. In fact, most often He actually said, 'My Dad' in referring to God. That was totally radical. That was considered sacrilegious at the time. Back in the Old Testament days people didn't even utter God's name, they so revered Him.

But interestingly, the words 'God' and 'Father' appear in the same sentence over and over and over again in the Old Testament. Just not in the same intimate way that Jesus used them. Instead, back in the Old Testament, it was God saying about Himself, 'I am the God of your father'.

There was a time when Isaac, Abraham's son, was going through a bit of a rough patch:

That very night the Lord appeared to him and said, "I am the God of your father

Abraham. Do not be afraid for I am with you and will bless you and make your offspring numerous for my servant Abraham's sake. I am the God of your father.” (Genesis 26:24)

Now, why did God say that? Why did He make that claim of being the God of Isaac's father, Abraham? Why is God pointing backwards in history? Here's what I think. Because so often it's hard to believe in this mighty, amazing Father heart of God in the midst of the maelstrom of our lives.

So often, with everything that's going on, with all that life's throwing at us, with business, or loneliness, or frustration, or fear, whatever it is, it is so hard to believe that God is in this place with us. It is so hard to believe that God's great and mighty Father Heart beats for us.

Have you ever felt that way? You know the theory. You know that God's *supposed* to be a Father. You know what He's *supposed* to be like. You know what He's *supposed* to do and that He's *supposed* to show up. That's the theory, but



So often, with everything that's going on, with all that life's throwing at us, with business, or loneliness, or frustration, or fear, whatever it is, it is so hard to believe that God is in this place with us. It is so hard to believe that God's great and mighty Father Heart beats for us.

.....

The Best of 2013

the theory is such an incredibly long way away from the practical reality that we live out day by day, when things are happening in our lives.

And that's what was happening for Isaac around this time when God appeared. There was a great famine in the land. That meant that people were starving to death. Isaac wanted to flee down to Egypt yet God called him to stay and plant a crop in the ground, despite the famine.

And he went and he had to re-dig the wells that his father had dug years before because people had come along and filled them in. And so he slaved away at re-digging those wells but masses of people came from all around to claim the water. So he'd dig another well and that would cause arguments and contention. So he went and dug yet another well and he was exhausted and dejected and frustrated.

My hunch is, each one of us, in our own way, finds this story more than just a bit familiar. We know what it's like to live life like that. It's tough! It's demoralising! Can you

imagine re-digging wells over and over again? In the middle of his pain and frustration and exhaustion, God comes alongside Isaac and says:

*I am the God of your father Abraham.
Don't be afraid. I am with you, I'll bless
you and make your offspring numerous for
my servant Abraham's sake.*

Now, why does God say that? Because Abraham made it through! Abraham had a tough life and he made it. No doubt Abraham had sat around the camp fire at night with young Isaac and told him the stories of God's faithfulness.

Like when he'd been on his long journey that lasted a quarter of a century; of the promise of land; of the seemingly impossible promise of giving birth to a son, even when he and his wife were old and barren; of the night when he cried out to God in frustration, isolation and fear, the night when God showed up:

The word of the Lord came to Abraham in a vision. "Don't be afraid Abraham, I am your shield, your reward shall be very great". But Abraham said, "O Lord God, what will you give me for I continue childless and the heir of my house is Eliezer of Damascus?" And Abraham said, "You have given me no offspring and so a slave born in my house is to be my heir."

*But the word of the Lord came to him. "This man shall not be your heir. No one but your very own issue shall be your heir." God brought Abraham outside and said, "Look toward the heaven and count the stars if you're able to count them." Then He said to him, "So shall your descendants be."
(Genesis 15:1-5)*

How beautiful and tender and wondrous was God's love and God's faithfulness to Abraham. And that's what Isaac needed to know that night in his restless sleep. He needed to know deep in his heart that this God isn't some 'Johnny-come-lately'; the love of God is

real. It was real for *his* father and it was real for *him* and it's real for *you and me*, here and now.

And when we're in that place, when you're in the place that Isaac was in, I want to encourage you to pick up your Bible and read about the God of your fathers – the God who's been faithful and loving, down through the centuries, in ways that completely blow us away.

And when we read those stories of old, in them we'll hear the strong gentle heartbeat; the sound of the mighty Father heart of God.



ABOUT THE AUTHOR

Berni Dymet is a contemporary Christian communicator with a passion for sharing the Good News of Jesus right into the middle of life. He comes from the perspective that this Christianity thing - it isn't just a faith that lives in our heads or even our hearts, but that it actually works right here in the middle of our lives.

Christianity actually works when we dare to accept Jesus Christ into our lives!! Not just as Saviour, but also as Lord.

Millions of people around the globe tune into Berni's radio programs each week. The Lord has given him a special gift for sharing the Gospel in a truly practical way. In a way that really connects into the hearts and lives of real people in real places, transforming their lives. That's what the ministry of Christianityworks is all about. Leading people into a dynamic relationship with Jesus Christ.

But Berni's passion, his enthusiasm and his insights into the day to day realities of life are simply tools in God's hands. The real change agent is God Himself.

And to Him - and Him alone - be all the glory.

.....

Christianityworks

Australia:

PO Box 1729 BONDI JUNCTION NSW 1355
p: 1300 722 415

United Kingdom:

PO Box 201 CHESSINGTON KT9 9BX
p: 0800 078 6565

India:

PO Box 1602 SECUNDERABAD - 500 003
Andhra Pradesh
p: 91-9866239170
e: india@christianityworks.com

w: christianityworks.com
e: info@christianityworks.com



Berni Dymet

The Best of 2013

Each year, Christianityworks broadcasts over 500 separate episodes of radio programs on over 1,100 radio stations around the globe. We do what we do, to see the power of God's Word transform countless lives, one by one.

This booklet contains articles based on just a handful of the most popular programs from throughout this year. We believe that God's Word is as practical as it is powerful. That is why we've selected messages that deal with real, practical issues that we all face from time to time.

May you be blessed as you receive God's Word into your heart. May your life be transformed, as the Holy Spirit brings healing and hope, power and peace, glory and grace into your life.

christianityworks.com