

# Kingdom Living Today

*Illustrating the WAY of God's Kingdom for a Modern World*

## 37. Are You Emotionally Supportive Of Others?

“LOVE EACH OTHER DEEPLY FROM YOUR HEART.  
AND, WHATEVER YOU DO, BE AT PEACE WITH EACH OTHER.  
FOR OUR GOD OPPOSES THE PROUD, HE HATES DIVORCE,  
AND HE WILL NOT FORGIVE THE UNFORGIVING.”

“Jan and I can’t thank you enough, Jack, for being preemptive last Wednesday night in discussing issues facing our marriages,” Harry declared with heartfelt gratefulness. The other men from their fellowship family who’d gathered at the restaurant for their Friday morning breakfast voiced their appreciation as well. Each man clearly recognized how much they needed the Biblical wisdom Jack had shared with them that night from a heart that cared deeply for each of them. (Proverbs 22:17)

Nate added with a chuckle, “I need to tell you that I was really tired the next day at work.”

“From talking about marriage?” Jerome asked dubiously.

“Not from our discussion at Jack and Dee’s, but the talk Jess and I had until 2 AM that night,” Nate laughed. “But I’m happy we kept at it. It wasn’t until after 1:00 that we had some real breakthroughs.”

Brett felt he needed to own up as well. “You weren’t alone in the wee hours, brother. Lacie and I finally fell asleep about that time ourselves. And like you and Jessica,” he added with a grin, “it wasn’t until we really got down to a heart level of talking that something wonderful happened. It was like the presence of our Lord fell on us both!”

Jack chortled vigorously. Noticing everyone’s puzzled expression, he responded, “What you two men have experienced with your wives involves a process of interpersonal communication that seems to be new to you. I’m sorry we haven’t talked about this before. Please forgive me.”

“We’ll forgive you only AFTER you’ve taught us this communication process,” Juan answered tongue-in-cheek.

When everyone’s laughter had subsided, Jack could see that all the guys eagerly wanted to pursue the topic. “We all have different levels of conversation each day. Most of them are what I call ‘newspaper talk’ where we just exchange facts with others. There’s little emotion involved in it because it’s not anything that really affects our lives personally.”

“Is this kind of conversation wrong?” Juan inquired, puzzled.

“No, not at all!” Jack replied. “Conveying facts or information is necessary, but it does nothing to strengthen our relationships.” He looked around at them and went on, “In other words, when you exchange information, your devotion to the person you’re talking to isn’t increased by the conversation. That’s because ‘newspaper talk’ chitchat is the shallowest kind of communication you can have.”

Nate pressed the question, “So what do deeper communication levels look like?”

“In the Scriptures you see the deepest level of discussion,” Jack continued. “It’s Christ-like in that the discussion pursues wisdom while at the same time it emotion-

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ally supports the dignity of the person you're talking with."(Romans 12:9,10)

"Hmmm," Jerome murmured, deep in thought. "I know the Bible not only offers us wisdom but also directs us to love others, which for sure means upholding their dignity.(Romans 13:8,9) And that encourages their heart so they'll keep communicating."

"Both of these are necessary," Jack agreed. "A while back we discussed that *knowledge* is man seeing things from his own vantage point. On the other hand, *wisdom* is taking the time to see things from God's vantage point. And we can't perceive God's perspective," he added, "unless we rely on the Spirit of Christ within us and apply His Word to the situation or decision at hand."(John 14:26)

"You mentioned emotionally supporting the person you're talking with," Harry noted. "How do we do that?"

Jack replied, "The intensity with which you emotionally support someone reflects how much you value them in your heart. They measure their dignity and how much you value them by the degree of emotional undergirding you give them."(Philippians 1:7,8) He added seriously, "If you don't convey a sense of emotional support, you can wreck intimate relationships such as marriage."

Several of the guys looked down contritely, recognizing how often they'd neglected this part of communicating especially with their wives.

"The amount of emotional support you give them especially in regard to their aspirations, values and goals is the measure by which they feel you uphold their dignity. And, from their perspective," Jack added forcefully, "that's a measure of your devotion to them."(1John 4:11) From the soberness of his tone, each man knew this was a piece of vital truth he needed to both hear and purpose to put into action.

Brett looked around at all the other guys before he spoke. "I think we're all guilty here in that respect. I know for sure that many times I've fallen short of what you're telling us. In fact," he sighed, "inside I know that I've let Lacie down when she's needed more concern for how she was feeling than I was giving her. And that wasn't loving her the way Jesus wants me to love her."(1Peter 3:7)

"Tell us what we need to do to love the way Jesus does. PLEASE!" Jerome implored.

Jack was stirred by the conviction of heart of these brothers in Christ and their desire to please their heavenly Father. "The deepest kind of conversation that causes your wife to experience your loving devotion calls for sustained, heart-to-heart give and take until ALL the concerns and issues, including the emotions that lay deep within, are brought out and respectfully addressed."(2Corinthians 6:11-13) He smiled kindly. "I know this is new ground for you men. But I bet this is what Nate and Brett experienced the other night. In the end it brings forth a peace that passes understanding(Philippians 4:7), indicating the work of the Spirit of Christ in a humble heart."

Brett was the first to respond. "You're right! What was going on inside us didn't come out until much later in the conversation. It took awhile for me to drop my defensiveness—feeling like Lacie was blaming me." Nate nodded that the same thing had happened between him and Jessica as well.

"Is that what most of us men have been doing?" Harry asked with sorrow. "Have we been cutting our wives off in order to avoid emotional issues?"

"What do you all think?" Jack shot back.

Again Brett took a moment to look at the others, then responded, "I think we've

all been quick to shut down conversations with our wives. Whether it's due to not wanting to be blamed or just avoiding the emotions of it all, I don't know. But in either case, we've done our wives wrong."(Colossians 3:19)

"Is there a Biblical example that describes the kind of wisdom and emotion you're talking about?" Juan probed. "I don't want hurt Lita any longer like that."

"There's a good example in John, chapter 11, where Jesus talks with Martha after her brother Lazarus had been dead a few days," Jack replied as he and the men opened their Bibles to that passage.

He continued his point. "Keep in mind that Jesus needed to share the wisdom of God with Martha, while at the same time supporting her emotions. That required some back and forth dialogue." He went on, "In verses 21 and 22 Martha confirms her confidence in Him: *'Lord, if You had been here, my brother would not have died. But I know that even now God will give You whatever You ask.'*"

Nate jumped in, "I can see that Jesus takes her to a higher wisdom when He says, *'Your brother will rise again,'* and then moves her toward the Reality Who's standing right in front of her: *'I am the resurrection and the life. He who trusts in Me will live, even though he dies; and whoever lives and trusts in Me will never die. Do you believe this?'*"

Jerome climbed on board. "We can also see that she affirmed her broader understanding of Jesus and her faith in Him when she replies, *'Yes, Lord, I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who was to come into the world.'*"

"So the wisdom issue is pursued through dialogue until the ultimate wisdom our Lord wanted her to embrace was achieved," Jack summed up. "And out of love He would have kept up this dialogue until she saw beyond her own brother's loss. And that leads us to the emotional issue," he added. "Here we've got a dead man in the burial cave, a man whom both Jesus and Martha loved. Let's look at verses 33 through 36: *'When Jesus saw her weeping, and the Jews who had come along with her also weeping, He was deeply moved in spirit and troubled. 'Where have you laid him?' He asked. 'Come and see, Lord,' they replied. Jesus wept.'* Because He's fully human, Jesus feels deeply!"

"I never thought about the emotional sensitivity of our Lord before," Juan commented, moved himself by that awareness.

"Few of us do in this culture," Jack rejoined. "The stoic influence of Hellenism has robbed especially us men of paying attention to our emotions and those of others. If we look at the Bible just as facts to learn, we miss the emotion-grounded commands like love, mercy, and compassion."(Colossians 3:12)

Jerome reiterated slowly, "Pursuit of wisdom and support for the emotional needs of others.(2Corinthians 6:11-13) This is going to take some patience and practice."

"Let me give you a few more pointers that may help," Jack voiced. "It normally takes no less than four or five give-and-takes in which each person interacts with what the other one said. Then you can begin a discussion to pursue wisdom." He went on, "It takes that much probing before feelings can be addressed. Less than this is only knowledge-based chitchat—you're just conveying facts."

"So what you're saying," Harry interjected, "is that quick chitchat only deals with the problem as you see it. But it takes more back and forth dialogue to have God's wisdom. That's the only way you can get His view on your situation."

"So how do you keep going deeper?" Nate interrupted, eager to learn.

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"You ask questions. You simply ask questions," Jack answered sincerely. "Make sure your wife is completely satisfied that everything is out on the table, including any emotional issues that may be connected to your conversation. And," he added, "show patience and genuine concern for her."

"Can you talk a little more about the emotional stuff?" Juan asked shyly.

Jack's heart was delighted. He could see that these younger men didn't want to go on hurting their wives. "As I said, it takes deeper levels of dialogue before you really begin to bring out the emotional issues relating to the points you're discussing." He said penetratingly, "You may find that the first emotion your wife reveals isn't the only one or even the one that really matters to her most. So you may need to do some digging. You need to show loving concern and allow her adequate time until the entire scope of emotions has surfaced if your relationship is to be strengthened by your discussion."

"We really need your help," Harry pleaded. "I know we don't want to just change our behavior. We want to truly reflect the love of Jesus through us for our wives."

Pursuing Harry's thought Jack responded, "I recommend you camp on Ephesians 5:25, '*Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the called-out ones and gave Himself up for her.*' The only way you're really going to have Christ-like motives is to ask the Spirit of Jesus within you to help you love your wife as He would."

"We all want to do this, Jack," Brett said, not needing to look at anyone before he spoke. He could sense the heart determination of each of them in wanting their wives to be loved with the love of Christ.

"Jack, are there also different levels of pursuing wisdom?" Nate asked, not sure if he was phrasing the question correctly.

"I think so," Jack answered. "There's the wisdom we seek when we deal with everyday problems and situations. But I think a higher wisdom flows from Martha's affirmation we read earlier, '*I believe that You are the Christ, the Son of God, Who was to come into the world.*' It has to do with how intense our focus is on spending eternity with our Lord, (2Corinthians 4:17,18) AND on our heart's yearning to bring many with us." (2Corinthians 5:18-20) He looked intently at them. "I think this is the highest pursuit of wisdom we can seek—eternal matters and our loving responsibility to our Lord."

"That's a vital life framework for you and Dee, isn't it Jack?" Harry inquired. "Am I right that your determination to see others embrace our Father's Covenant is intimately connected with how your marriage has developed Christ-likeness?"

"That's a wonderful observation Harry," Jack smiled warmly. "Dee and I found that it's easier for the Spirit of Christ to change us when we make what truly matters for eternity the focal point of our marriage." (Colossians 3:1,2)

Jerome commented, "When you think about it, everything we see now will someday come to an end. (1Peter 1:24,25) But eternity with our Lord Jesus and bringing others with us is the ONLY thing that will matter forever!"

"That's a good summary," Jack affirmed. "With this eternal goal in mind, consider it all a joy as you and your wives face the challenges of having your marriage increasingly reflect the character of Jesus. Pursue all varieties of Godly wisdom together, and emotionally support each other in the same way our Lord would if He were you. You'll enjoy the blessing of that both now and for eternity!" (1Thessalonians 4:17,18)