Bob: Where do you feel like you fall on your spouse’s priority list? Ann Wilson says, if you feel like it’s pretty far down the list, that can produce a bitterness that gets toxic.

Ann: This is where it starts—with our attitude and our thoughts. I would remember thinking, “If he would spend as much time caring about me as he cared about his Harley, that would be amazing.” And then I would take that thought, and I would just stuff it inside. I would think: “Gosh! If he would get home in time to do the things I wanted to do instead of doing his thing, that would be nice.” I’d take that thought—I stuffed myself with bitterness, with anger, with resentment.

It would almost leak into my life, and it would make me numb. It stole my heart and my feelings. I would stuff it, because I wanted to use it as ammunition later.

Bob: This is FamilyLife Today for Friday, February 14th. Our hosts are Dave and Ann Wilson; I’m Bob Lepine. You’ll find us online at FamilyLifeToday.com. What does it look like in marriage for us to take bitter thoughts captive to make sure they don’t become toxic? We’re going to hear about that today from Dave and Ann Wilson. Stay with us.

And welcome to FamilyLife Today. Thanks for joining us on the Friday edition on Valentine’s Day. Happy Valentine’s Day to you guys.


Dave: What are you doing tonight, Bob? You going out?

Bob: All of us are together because, today, we’re on the Love Like You Mean It® marriage cruise—

Dave: We’ll look out on the water.

Bob: —so we will have a special evening. I have a special evening planned for Mary Ann.

I’m look at you. Ann was just talking here about you thinking about your Harley. You’re wearing your Harley shirt in the studio today. [Laughter]
Dave: Do I have it on?!
Ann: He does.
Dave: I might have a few of these shirts, Bob. You know what “HD” for Harley Davidson stands for; right?
Bob: No.
Dave: “Hundred dollars.” You walk in that store; you buy a keychain—hundred dollars.
Bob: Hundred dollars.
Dave: It’s crazy.
Bob: It’s all a hundred dollars. But you’ve got a few of them; huh?
Dave: Not Harleys, but t-shirts. [Laughter]
Bob: So have Harleys been a big deal for you?
Ann: They have. He has a few things that are special to him—his guitars—
Dave: Are we really going to talk about this? Is this what we’re doing?
Ann: —his Harley.
Bob: Do you ride on the back of the Harley?
Ann: Yes, I do.
Bob: And do you like it?
Ann: I do like it. I trust him; he’s a good driver.
Dave: I’m just laughing. I can’t imagine what people are thinking. They have this image in their head of us in our biker gear—my hair blowing in the wind—that’s what it is.
Bob: On Valentine’s night, if he says, “Here. Get on the back of the Harley,” would that be romantic?
Ann: Not in February in Michigan—it’s not romantic. [Laughter]
Dave: Not going to happen.
Bob: We do hope that you have special plans for tonight or for the weekend: if you’re a married couple, an engaged couple, if you’re dating. Hope it’s a lovely Valentine’s Day for you.

We’re talking about how to express love to one another in marriage without touching. This is a message you guys gave onboard the Love Like You Mean It marriage cruise a couple of years ago. You said the first way you do it—you use touch as an acronym; right?

Dave: Right.

Bob: “Talk” was the first point. We’ve heard you talk about the importance of communication already. As we pick up with the message, we’re going to hear the “O” and the “U” and the “C” and the “H” of how to express romance in a marriage without touching.

[Recorded Message]

Dave: Alright; let’s go to the “O.” We’ve got to fly! For guys, here’s what they want—it’s to open up. What’s that mean? I just put down, “Level Five: Share your heart/be vulnerable.”

Ann: Yes! For us, as women, we long for you guys—we long to know what’s going on inside. We want to know your hopes, your dreams, your fears. We want to know what you’re thinking about stuff.

Dave: I mean, Level Five communication. If you’ve ever been to the Weekend to Remember, we use a chart there, where Level One is like cliché/it doesn’t mean anything. But when you get down to Level Five—Level Five means I’m sharing my heart—I’m being vulnerable. I have discovered that makes Ann feel loved when I share with her my fears/my weaknesses—the things I struggle with—rather than hiding that. I don’t share that with any other woman on the planet—that’s wrong and inappropriate. But I’ve learned, over the years—man, when I go there with her, it makes her feel loved without touch!

Now, here’s the “O” for men!

Ann: “Offer yourselves.” Women, offer yourselves. [Cheers]

Dave: Yes, men, you can cheer! [Laughter] It’s just what you think! We put in there, “Initiate sometimes.” It’s all about respect. “I want you!” over “I love you.” It’s more important to a man—am I right?! We’d rather feel wanted than loved. Don’t even give us love cards—we couldn’t care less! We throw them in the trash. If you give us “I want
you” cards or respect cards, we save those! Am I right, guys? It is like those are in a file right there: “Look at that one! She wrote, ‘I want you,’ on that one.”

**Ann:** And here’s the thing that I’ve realized. For Dave, that makes him a better man when he feels like—I said to him one time, “Tell me the top three phrases I can say to you.” He said, “I want you,”—number one—“I need you” and “I’m proud of you.” Ask your guys that. “What means the most to your guys?” I thought, “O my gosh, I may not feel like this, but I need to be intentional about this.”

**Dave:** Yes; I don’t think women/wives really understand how important this area is to a man, in the area of respect. We tend to think it’s just a need. “He has a need, and so I have to. . .” No, no, no! It’s so much bigger than that for a man—it is tied to our respect. When I feel like—and I’m not saying initiate every day—but every once in a while.

When Ann brings this up—I mean, one day—I’m a pastor at a church; right? We have 250 on staff. We’re in a meeting. I’m leading and I’m praying. “God wants us to take this thing and cast all of this vision.” While I’m doing that—I’m not kidding!—all of these staff are leaning in. “Here’s where we’re going! God’s going to do this!” I looked down at my iPad®—a little text comes in—it’s from Ann; and it says, “Get ready, Baby!” [Laughter] I’m like—nobody knows but me! I’m like, “Okay! We’re done! See ya!” [Laughter] I mean, just that text from her, saying, “I’m offering myself to you,”—it was unbelievable! [Laughter]

One time, I was doing a chapel service for the Lions—we have chapel on Saturday night in the hotel. It was my birthday—I got up to speak. I’m five minutes into the message; one of our players walks in late and he hands me an envelope.

**Ann:** It says: “Emergency! Open Immediately.”

**Dave:** Well, I was in the middle of my thing, so I just put it down and kept going. Luther, the player, came in and said: “Dude, no! You’ve got to open that right now.” I was like, “Oh, my gosh!” So, I opened it up. I do not know, to this day, why I read it out loud. [Laughter] I do not know! I just/thought—you know, my boys or somebody—I just ripped it open real quick. It said: “Hey, big boy! I’m up in Room 2027!” [Laughter] “Wait!”

**Ann:** Seriously! [Laughter] I just thought/I wanted him to have it so he’d be totally shocked—

**Dave:** Oh, my gosh!

**Ann:**—not ever, ever thinking he’d read it out loud.

**Dave:** When I closed the thing, the whole—was like—[Laughter]

Anyway, we’ve got to keep going!
Ann: I know.

Dave: So, you’ve got the “T” and the “O.” Now, we’re going to the “U” for women. What women want: “U’ before me.” That’s sort of a strange way to say it; but it’s the guy saying, “You are more important than me.”

9:00

It’s a selfish act to say: “You matter the most. I’m here to serve you as I serve Christ, not the other way around.”

Ann: And I think this has been really hard for us, to be honest. I have felt, a lot of times, like everything else is more important than me. I feel like, at times, Dave’s job is more important—his multiple jobs. And I feel like I’m kind of the last thought.

So even, sometimes, I would call him and say, “Hey, Honey, are you on your way home?” “Yes.” I would say, “Could you just stop and pick up some hamburger?” Here is, notoriously, what Dave would say—he would always come back with a question. “Now, what do you want me to do?” And then here is what I would say every time. “Forget it. I’ll just do it myself,” because, for me, it was saying, “No.”

Dave: Yes.

Ann: I wanted him to be like, “All of the time and energy I put into my work, and all of the people, and all of that, I want to put that into you.” That makes me feel loved! That, for me, says, “I love you. You’re the most important thing.”

Dave: Yes, and I actually wrote in there [the notes]: “Kick it in when you get home.”

It’s so easy for me, when I get home—I’m exhausted; I just want to relax. It is like, “No, no, no. That’s my real job!” I even put a drop-off point. I heard a guy tell me, years ago, “On your way home, think of it as, ‘I’m taking my job, and I’m putting it there.’” I had a mailbox on a road on the way home—just visually—putting my job there and picking up my real job. The most important job in my life is to love her, lead her, and to lead my boys, right?—that was it.

I had to change my whole mentality. It’s like, “It’s not about me. It’s about her; it’s about Him.” It had to be selfless to go home. I actually wrote down there, “Vacuum.” I heard a woman say this once: “When he turns on the vacuum cleaner, that’s foreplay.”

[Laughter] So I put it in there [in the notes]!

What does that mean?—“When he serves me...”?—“U’ before me”—it was telling her—that’s like a turn-on. It was just that picture of “U’ before me.” Obviously, this comes from Ephesians 5:25. Men, I hope you know this: “As Christ loved the church, so we will
love our wives.” What does that mean?—self-denial; die. We get married to die to ourselves—to live unto Christ and to live unto our wife.

So, it’s interesting—if you go over to the other side, what do men want? Guess what the “U” is?

**Ann:** The same thing.

**Dave:** The exact same thing.

**Ann:** And have you ever done this, as a woman, especially when your kids are in the home? It’s almost like they become more important; your job is more important, and then your husband gets the last of you, too.

My dad came to visit us one time. He was just observing some things. He didn’t live in our state. We were eating dinner, and he looks at me and goes, “Man, it must be nice to be your kids.” I thought that was a real compliment—like: “Wow! I think it probably is. Thanks!” He goes, “Too bad you don’t treat Dave as well as you treat them.” That night, in bed, I thought, “God, is that true? If that is true, I pray that you would confirm it.” That next week, my dad sent me the first letter I had ever received in my life from him. It was a “Dear Abby” article of a man leaving his wife because the children came before him. That was the confirmation.

I realized, for Dave to feel respected, I need to make sure that he feels like he matters, and he’s a priority to me, too.

**Dave:** And here’s the truth—Kevin said it last night—love and/or respect is not a feeling—it’s a choice. Selfishness is our DNA. It’s sin nature; it’s natural. Selflessness is not natural; you have to choose it. You’re not going to feel it—you have to choose it. Whether it’s the guy putting her before him or the gal putting him first, it’s the same either way—we just saw it!

**Ann:** And here’s what I feel like—I want Dave to feel like he knows how much God loves him by the way I treat him.

**Dave:** Yes.

**Ann:** Let me tell you, that is not happening most of the time, I would say. But wouldn’t that be awesome?—if Dave feels like, “I know how much God loves me by the way Ann loves me.”

**Dave:** Alright; let’s go to the “C.” Ann and I do a thing around the country called “Rock Your Marriage,” and it’s these two “C”s—we define love with the “C” word for women as “cherish.” The love word is confusing. We don’t even know what it means. I mean, people in Detroit say, “I love the Detroit Lions.” “No; you don’t!”
It is like, “I love ice cream.” “Do you really?” “No!” But cherish—guys get, because we cherish things. I have a couple of guitars at home. You’re not touching them!—right? You protect things you cherish. You polish things you cherish. You show off things you cherish. I think women want to be cherished more than they actually want to be loved. It’s like priority number one—you care for her; you know her; you protect her; you show her off.

It isn’t just that you think she’s beautiful. You think she’s valuable. That equals cherished or loved—beautiful plus valuable equals loved. It’s like everything else in my life can be more important than Ann, and she is not feeling cherished. It’s like other things make her feel cherished, right?

**Ann:** Yes, and I think what happens for us, as women, is we notice that. If I feel like Dave’s job is more important, I can start in my head—this is where it starts—with our attitude and our thoughts. I remember thinking, “If he would spend as much time caring about me as he cared about his Harley—that would be amazing.”

Then I would take that thought, and I would just stuff it inside. I would think: “Gosh! If he would get home in time to do the things I wanted to do instead of doing his thing—that would be nice,”—and I’d take that thought. I stuffed myself with bitterness, with anger, with resentment, and then I would have this unforgiving heart. It would almost leak into my life, and it would make me numb. It’s like it stole my heart and my feelings. I would stuff it, because I wanted to use it as ammunition later. When he hurt me, I would take it out and I would accuse him of all these things. Dave didn’t even know what to do with that.

**Dave:** All I know is I’ve learned—and I’m still learning—she longs to be cherished. When she knows there’s nothing more important in my life—to her, she feels loved. For married women—

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** —that’s it. That is her number one love language: “Jesus is it, and you’re next. It isn’t my job and all of these other things—it is you,”—that’s cherished.

And then, for the guys, it’s “cheer.” What does respect mean? It means: “I cheer you,” “I brag about you,” “I speak life into you,” “I stop criticizing you. I’m not your mom,” No guy wants to marry his mom; right? We don’t want that! We had enough of that! “Please respect me enough to not tell me everything I need to do!” Cheer, minus critique, equals respect.

We shared that story last year about how I felt she had booed me. That’s where that whole thing comes on—it’s like I can walk in the house, and felt like everybody else cheered me, but she was booing me. Now, she doesn’t do that anymore to me. She
really doesn’t. She affirms me. You thank me; you respect me. It’s unbelievable! I don’t even deserve it. She’s like, “You are an amazing guy!” And I’m thinking, “No; I’m not.” You know? [Laughter]

And yet, I’ve watched, over the years—women, you need to understand this. When she would say I was “this guy,” and I sort of thought I was “this guy,” I started to become the guy she said I was. Women don’t think that’s how it works. “If I say that, it’s like I’m lying; and he’ll think he’s that guy and he’ll never get there.”

No, it’s the opposite with men and boys. It’s like, when you believe in us, we rise up to it! Again, I’m not saying I’m an amazing guy, but I am a better man today because she believed I was already that man.

**Ann:** You are better! [Laughter] You’re amazing!

**Dave:** Yes, I am! Aren’t I? It’s Valentine’s Day; yes!

**Ann:** Yes, yes, you are!

**Dave:** Alright; this is good! We’re done. [Laughter] We’re done! We’ve got to go! [Laughter] It’s like I’m turning on the vacuum cleaner right now. [Applause]

Last one, and we’re out of time, so we’ve got to say this. For her, what a woman wants is to be [“H”]—held. Am I right? And it’s sort of a way to say affection/non-sexual romance.

**Ann:** Yes!

**Dave:** Just to touch her—Ann has told me so many times.

**Ann:** You guys, pursue us! Keep pursuing us! Be affectionate with us—hold our hand, put your arm around us. We love that!

**Dave:** She’s told me a million times: “Right there, don’t move. Just right there! Hold it right there.” That’s non-sexual. It’s just like, “There’s no agenda here” but to cherish, and hold her, and love her.

**Ann:** So, ask your wives, “What would it look like for me to pursue you?”

**Dave:** And then, for the guys, it’s “help” him. It’s that simple. He needs a partner. I always say this. I’ve said it to my church a lot: “Men have LATS.” You’re like, “LATS?” Yes, of course, they do.” No! They’re Lonely, Angry, Tired, and Stressed. Be his partner. Help him carry the things he’s carrying.
So, here’s the last thing we’re going to say—to be able to do that—because we can tell you: “Okay, go do it!

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** “TOUCH her,” “TOUCH him.” You know now what TOUCH means; it doesn’t mean, literally, touch her—it means talk and open up; right? You could try to go out of here and do that—like it will *never* work. Do you know why?—because you and I don’t have the power to do any of this. We can do it for a moment, but we can’t sustain it. Why?—because we need the power of God to do it.

We try to find life in our marriages, horizontally, from our spouse. Guess what? We all end up disappointed; am I right?

**Ann:** Yes.

**Dave:** At some point, you’re like, “Oh, my gosh! She’s not”/”He’s not giving me what I thought!” And here’s what most people think: “I married the wrong person. I’ve got to find the right one, and then I’ll…” No. They’re looking in the wrong place.

You look vertical. When you go vertical and find life from Christ, He fills you up, and then you can come to your marriage to *give* rather than take. You don’t *need* her to respect you. You don’t *need* him to cherish you. It would be *nice*, but that isn’t where you’re getting life. You’re getting that from an unconditional God, who gives it through your relationship with Christ—then it overflows.

So, here’s the last thing I’ll do—I’ll give you a visual. Here’s how most of us live. It’s like, if you want to live out the Christian life—you want to go live this thing—Ann’s going to pretend like this is what happens. [Ann using a pitcher and water] When you come to Christ, He fills you up with the Holy Spirit. Got it? Right? So, it’s beautiful; it’s pure. everything is *awesome*, right?

But that isn’t how life works. You start, in your marriage—you get a little sin in your life. I went to the Guy Burger joint and stole these today—I’m going to take them back. I got a little Tabasco. You know, you got sin in your life; you’ve got anger in your life. By the way, Ann’s going to drink this in a minute! [Laughter] You’ve got—

**Ann:** —resentment.

**Dave:** —a little ketchup in there; a little mustard in there. Now look at that! That’s what a lot of people think the Christian life is—right there.

They even think that’s what Christian marriage is: “I thought it was this beautiful, pure thing; and now it’s not like that.” So, how do we clean this up? If I said: “Okay, just go love your wife”/”…respect your husband, it will work,”—it won’t work!
It’s really interesting—remember I said Ephesians 5? Paul said, “Be imitators of Christ.” How do you do that?—be filled with the Spirit. Here’s, literally, what he said: “Don’t get drunk on wine, because that’s a waste of time; but be filled with the Holy Spirit.” Some of you know that. It’s really interesting—the comparison—“drunk on wine.” Why does he use that comparison? Because when you’re drunk on wine, what controls you?—the wine or the alcohol in the wine. He says: “Don’t do that. It’s a waste of time. Be filled—or drunk—with the Holy Spirit.”

The word, “filled,” in the original Greek actually means “keep being filled over and over.” It’s not a one-time thing—it’s daily. Keep going back to God to fill you—to replace the sin and the junk in your life and fill you. It’s like you come back to Christ. This isn’t one time. This is over and over.

Watch what happens when you get filled by the Holy Spirit of God. That’s what happens; right? [Applause] I mean, it’s like, that’s what it’s supposed to look like! So, when you drink this, it’s like crazy; right?

Now here’s the thing about Christian marriage. Do you know why we’re filled with the Holy Spirit? Because we’re supposed to take our marriage and show the world what it’s like. So, it’s like—[sound of spitting clean water out and audience laughter]—we are supposed to be like that!—right?! We’re supposed to be contagious, right?! We’re filled with the Holy Spirit—it’s supposed to get over our neighborhood! Am I right? Do you want some more?

Ann: No! [Laughter]

Dave: Okay! Enough of that—you don’t need that. That’s what it’s supposed to look like. Oh, my gosh! God fills us together with a power we don’t have—to love her, to respect him—in a way we could never do it; right?

Ann: Yes.

Dave: So that’s how it works! [Applause] It will never happen any other way.

Last thing I’ll say—we’re done. The only action step we have for you tonight, before you crawl into your bed—and this is, obviously, totally up to you. We would implore you—get on your knees and surrender again. We did it on our wedding night. We did, as many of you know, on our ten-year anniversary when she said she had lost her feelings for me. The only chance you and I have is Jesus—so surrender. When you surrender, you’re saying: “Fill me. Fill me. Fill me with the power I do not have to be the man and woman we can’t be apart from You.”

Jesus, I pray for these couples—that they would allow You to fill them over and over again to be the men and women—the
husbands and wives/the moms and dads—who will literally change the world by spreading the contagious Spirit of God in them and through them to impact the world for Jesus Christ. That’s why You gave us marriage—to make Your Name known through our marriage. In Jesus’ name we pray, amen.

Ann: Amen!

[Studio]

Bob: Alright; we’re listening to a fired-up Dave and Ann Wilson. You were fired up!

Dave: I guess I was.

Ann: He was preaching.

Bob: It was kind of like locker room/game time, “Let’s go! Let’s take the field! Let’s win this one!”; right?

Dave: It was. I did not think I was going to spit water all over the crowd. [Laughter]

Bob: Some things just come to you in the moment.

Dave: I don’t know if that’s good or bad.

Bob: Are there some things that come to you in the moment, and later, you go, “I wish that hadn’t come to me.” [Laughter]

Dave: Oh, yes; oh, yes. That’s why I like that we can edit in the studio.

Bob: Yes; the point that you’re making here about the importance of relational intimacy—for a husband and wife to try to be one without being relationally intimate with one another. These five points: the touch, the talking, and the holding, and the cheering on, and cherishing—all of the things you unpacked here. This is the glue that holds a marriage together; isn’t it?

Ann: I think we underestimate the power of a strong marriage—how contagious that is. We were just doing a FamilyLife® conference not too long ago—a Weekend to Remember. I was forgetting the hurt in the room—how people are desperate for answers and hope and help. It really does come from Jesus.

Dave: That was obviously a conscious decision to say: “The only way to end this talk is—we don’t want couples walking out, saying: ‘I’m going to try harder. I’m going to hold her,’/‘I’m going to cheer him,’—that’s important; those are practical steps—but if you
don’t have the Spirit of God giving you power to do things you really can’t sustain, good luck!"

“But with God/with Jesus at the center of this thing, He can literally—and I’m not using ‘literally’ wrong here—He can literally transform you; then you’re a transformer of others.”

**Bob:** You guys have written about this in your book, *Vertical Marriage*, which is also now a small group video series that we have, here at *FamilyLife Today*. Our listeners can go to our website, FamilyLifeToday.com, to find out more about both the book and the video series.

This week, we’re making copies of this book available to any of our listeners who can help with a donation to support the ministry of *FamilyLife Today*. Your donations are what make this daily radio program possible for you, and for your friends, and for your neighbors, and for people who are listening all around the world: people who are downloading this as a podcast/people who are telling Alexa to play *FamilyLife Today*. There are more people who are engaging with us in more different ways than ever before. You make that possible when you support this ministry.

If you’re able to make a donation today, we’d like to say, “Thank you,” by sending you a copy of Dave and Ann Wilson’s book, *Vertical Marriage*, as our thank-you gift for your support. You can donate, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call to donate at 1-800-FL-TODAY. Again, our website is FamilyLifeToday.com; you call to donate at 1-800-358-6329—that’s 1-800-“F” as in family, “L” as in life, and then the word, “TODAY.” If you have any questions about the *Vertical Marriage* video series, you’ll find information, online, at FamilyLifeToday.com; or you can call with any questions or to order by phone at 1-800-FL-TODAY.

Let me ask you to be joining us and praying for thousands of couples who are going to be with us this weekend, Valentine’s weekend, for one of our *Weekend to Remember* marriage getaways. We have couples joining us in Appleton, Wisconsin; Charlotte, North Carolina; Colorado Springs; Hershey, Pennsylvania; Hilton Head, South Carolina; Montgomery, Alabama; Napa, California; Norfolk, Virginia; and Tulsa, Oklahoma. Pray for those couples who will be at one of our getaways this weekend.

Thanks to those of you, again, who support this ministry; you make these getaways possible. God does a great work in the lives of couples who show up for these events. Be praying for them; will you? We hope you have a great weekend too. We hope you and your family are able to worship together in your local church this weekend.

I hope you can join us back on Monday. Ron Deal is going to be here with Dr. Gary Chapman. For years, Dr. Chapman has written about the five love languages. Ron and Gary have just written a new book about how the five love languages work out in a
blended family. We’re going to talk about that Monday, so I hope you can join us for that.

I want to thank our engineer today, Keith Lynch, along with our entire broadcast production team. On behalf of our hosts, Dave and Ann Wilson, I’m Bob Lepine. We will see you back Monday for another edition of *FamilyLife Today*.

*FamilyLife Today* is a production of FamilyLife of Little Rock, Arkansas; a Cru® Ministry. Help for today. Hope for tomorrow.

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