

Issue 20 - Incarnate Presence: When Being There Isn't Enough

Messy story of the week

Saturday morning looked calm on the surface.

Everyone was home. Coffee was brewing. The kids were in the living room. He sat on the couch scrolling while the TV murmured in the background.

From the outside, it looked like a family at rest.

But beneath the quiet, something felt hollow.

One child tried to show him something she had built. He nodded without really looking. His wife mentioned a worry she'd been carrying all week. He replied, "We'll figure it out," and went back to his phone.

Later, she found herself folding laundry alone, fighting back tears she couldn't quite explain. She wasn't angry. She was tired of hoping.

He wasn't gone.

He just wasn't *with* them.

That night, after the kids were in bed, she finally said it:

"I feel lonely... even when you're right here."

The words landed hard. He had been telling himself, *At least I'm here. I'm not absent like my dad was.*

But something in her voice made him realize that proximity and presence are not the same thing.

Faithful God Then and Now

Jesus didn't merely arrive on earth. He *engaged*.

He listened. He noticed. He paused for interruptions. He looked people in the eyes and responded to what was actually happening, not what was convenient.

The incarnation wasn't just God showing up. It was God staying attentive.

And that same God is still near. Still attentive. Still responding to the hearts beneath the surface.

For families today, this matters deeply. Because being physically present without emotional engagement can quietly erode trust and connection. God's faithfulness invites us into something better. Not perfect presence, but *intentional* presence. Presence that sees. Presence that listens. Presence that stays.

What we can learn

- **Presence is more than proximity.**
Being in the room doesn't automatically create connection.
- **Emotional absence leaves wounds, even when no one means harm.**
Unmet hope can ache more than clear loss.
- **God isn't asking for perfection, but humility.**
Change begins when we admit we need help.
- **Small, consistent steps matter more than grand gestures.**
Faithful presence is built slowly.
- **Redemption is always possible.**
God restores what feels wasted when hearts turn toward Him.

Behind the curtain

In coaching, I often hear this quiet tension beneath the surface.

Men saying:

"I thought just being there was enough."

"I don't know how to be present when I'm exhausted."

"I'm afraid it's too late to change."

Women saying:

"I feel invisible."

“I don’t want perfection. I want connection.”

“I don’t know how to hope without getting hurt again.”

Most families aren’t dealing with a lack of love. They’re navigating a lack of emotional attunement. No one taught them how to *stay* with one another when life gets heavy.

The good news is this: presence can be learned. And God delights in helping us learn it.

Faithful Family Tools

If this stirred something in you, you don’t have to sort it out alone.

- [Marriage, Mayhem, and Mercy Podcast](#)
Ongoing conversations that bridge Scripture and real family life, including this two-part conversation with Dr. Justin Tilghman.
- [Faithful Families Free Community](#)
A growing library of teaching, tools, and encouragement for marriage and parenting, plus a community walking this road together.

These resources are here to support growth that’s honest, gentle, and rooted in grace.

Faith Step for the Week

Choose one moment each day to practice intentional presence.

Not fixing.

Not teaching.

Not multitasking.

Just notice. Listen. Respond.

If you’re a husband: tell your family when you’re practicing this so they know what you’re working toward.

If you’re a wife: bring your disappointment to God first, asking Him to steady your heart as change unfolds over time.

Bible verse

“So then, as we have opportunity, let us do good to everyone, and especially to those who are of the household of faith.”

Galatians 6:10

2-minute practice

1. Put your phone face down or in another room.
2. Sit with your spouse or child and ask one open question.
3. Stay present for the answer without interrupting, correcting, or rushing.
4. Silently pray: *Lord, help me be here.*

That’s it. Presence begins small.

Next week

Next week, we’ll zoom out and look at the bigger story God is writing across generations.

On the podcast, I’ll be joined by **Cathy Garland** as we talk about what happens when a generational curse is interrupted and a generational blessing begins. We’ll explore how faithful obedience, quiet perseverance, and the prayers of a grandmother can become a turning point for an entire family line.

If you’ve ever wondered whether your prayers still matter, whether your faithfulness can reach beyond what you can see, or whether God can redeem what’s been handed down through generations, this is a conversation you won’t want to miss.