

# Issue 19 - When Love Comes Close: Learning Presence from the Incarnation

## Messy story of the week

James sat in the driveway a little longer than usual, engine off, scrolling his phone while the car cooled. Through the living room window, he saw toys scattered, the lamp glowing, and the shadow of his wife moving back and forth.

He already knew the scene waiting inside: a child melting down over homework, another still in pajamas, dishes waiting by the sink, and a wife weary in a way deeper than sleep.

He loved his family, but most nights he felt like a guest star in the chaos instead of a main character. His unofficial motto had become: *"Just survive until bedtime."*

That evening he drifted into the kitchen, phone in hand, offering half-answers while his wife tried to share the weight of her day. One child called, "Daddy, watch this!" but he barely looked up.

Later that night, his wife said gently, "I feel like I'm doing this alone... even when you're here."

Her words sat heavy in his chest. He had been *physically* present most nights, but emotionally distant. Detached. Absent.

A verse he'd heard the week before echoed in his mind: *"The Word became flesh and dwelt among us."*

Jesus didn't love from a distance. He moved into the neighborhood. Into the ordinary rhythms, the noise, the emotions, and the interruptions of real life.

James realized he'd been living outside the "neighborhood" of his own family—even while eating dinner at the same table.

---

## Faithful God Then and Now

John 1 tells us something breathtaking: the eternal Word of God didn't send love from afar—He *became flesh* and lived among us.

He entered human exhaustion, hunger, long days, misunderstandings, tight quarters, and real human pain.

And that same God still draws near. He meets you in the laundry piles, the tantrums, the late-night arguments, the tension you don't know how to resolve.

The incarnation shows us that love is not distant. Love doesn't hide in another room or escape into a phone. Love moves *toward*.

For husbands and fathers, that means leadership begins with presence. For wives, it means trust begins with God—even when marriage dynamics feel uneven or unclear.

For all of us, it means our homes can become places where Christ dwells, one small act of humble presence at a time.

---

## What we can learn

- **Presence is a ministry.**  
Jesus' nearness shows us that love requires attention, not just attendance.
- **Leadership looks like Christ, not control.**  
Real headship is patient, self-giving, and attentive—not forceful or self-protective.
- **Children learn the character of God by watching their parents.**  
Imperfect parents aren't a threat to God's plan, but absence—emotional or spiritual—leaves a deep ache.
- **Most husbands feel unprepared, and that's normal.**  
The incarnation reminds us: God enters our weakness and empowers growth.
- **Misplaced trust creates disappointment.**  
When we expect a spouse to carry what only God can hold, we strain the relationship. Trust belongs first in Him.

---

## Behind the curtain

In coaching, I see the same ache over and over—on both sides.

Men often feel:

- “I don’t know what leadership is supposed to look like.”
- “I’m so tired already—how do I give more?”
- “I want to do better, but I don’t know where to start.”

Women often feel:

- “I’m carrying everything alone.”
- “I want him to lead, but I don’t know if I can trust it.”

Most families aren’t struggling because no one cares. They’re struggling because no one taught them how to move *toward* each other.

John 1 gives us a starting point: **God Himself showed us what love looks like—He came close.**

Many families begin healing the moment someone decides to do the same.

---

## Faithful Family Tools

Here are the two best places to stay connected, learn, and grow:

[Faithful Families Free Community \(Facebook\)](#)

A warm, encouraging space where you can receive biblical teaching, support, and practical tools for marriage and parenting.

[Marriage, Mayhem, and Mercy Podcast](#)

Ongoing conversations exploring how Scripture speaks into the real-life mess of family, relationships, and spiritual growth.

Both spaces give you steady encouragement, grounded truth, and a sense that you're not walking your family journey alone.

---

## Faith Step for the Week

If you're a husband: **Choose one intentional moment to be fully present this week—no phone, no multitasking, just attention.** Tell your family, "I'm here, and I want to be with you."

If you're a wife: **Bring one desire about leadership in your home to the Lord before bringing it to your husband.** Ask Him to anchor your trust in His character, not your spouse's consistency.

---

## Bible verse

*"And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us, and we have seen his glory, glory as of the only Son from the Father, full of grace and truth."*

**John 1:14**

---

## 2-minute practice

### 1. Slow your breathing.

Inhale: *"Jesus, You came near."*

Exhale: *"Help me come near too."*

### 2. Identify one place where you're physically present but emotionally absent.

### 3. Choose one tiny practice to bring embodied presence into that space:

- Put your phone in another room.
- Ask a real question and stay with the answer.
- Sit beside your spouse or child and say, "I want to hear you."

Small steps shape sacred habits.

---

## Next week

Next week we continue our conversation with Dr. Justin Tilghman in **Part 2**, moving from theology to real-life practice.

We'll explore:

- what incarnational leadership looks like day to day,
- why a “present but absent” parent can wound deeply,
- what to do when you feel like you’ve already blown it, and
- how small, consistent acts of presence can transform the atmosphere of a home.

If Part 1 gave us the *why*, Part 2 offers the *how*. You won't want to miss it.