

## ***Complaint or Gratitude? A Life Changing Mindset (Phil. 2:14)***

*If you would, turn to Philippians 2:14. Now normally I like to give a set of notes because it is my habit to do that, but today I am not because I shifted my message just some hours back. The reason is I was giving a report to our all staff meeting last week about our vacation. Every year Diane and I go to Florida for three weeks every year in January. We came back to the all staff meeting and I gave a report and said that I so enjoyed our three weeks together. The reason I enjoyed it is because I enjoy my wife so much. She is so enjoyable; she is such an enjoyable person to be with. It is such a gift.*

*So a young couple was talking to me after that, and they said, “Wow, thirty-eight years of marriage and you still enjoy your wife.” They are newlyweds and they said, “We want to do that.*

*I said, “Good.”*

*He said, “We are stirred. We are going to enjoy each other.” They looked at each other, newlyweds still hanging on to each other.*

*So she said, “We are going to work on being interesting so that we are not bored. We are going to be very interesting.”*

*I said, “Well, this might surprise you, but that is not the number one reason why I enjoy my wife. It is not because she is interesting. She is, but that is not the number one reason.” I continued, “You would think, you know, if your spouse is good looking and interesting, and nice that, wow, it is all going to work. Actually there is another issue. It would be one of the most important issues.”*

*This young couple looked at me and said, “What is it?”*

*I said, “Well, guess.”*

*“Pray together?”*

*I said, “I believe in that. We do that. Some seasons we do it more than other seasons. Yeah, I like that, but that is not the answer.”*

*“Love God?”*

*I replied, “Well, yeah, that is good. I am really into that, but that is not what I am talking about.” They looked at each other. I said, “I am kind of drawing this out because I want it to get a hold of your attention. What do you think thirty-eight years later I would put at, right at the top of the list?” I said, “Well, I’ll tell you what it is. In our communication, in our relationship we have so little of the element of complaining in the culture of our relationship and communication.*

*The young, newly married gal exclaimed, “What? That is it?”*

*I answered, “Oh yeah, probably one of the very most important parts of your marriage, in the next years, is the measure, the level, of complaint that is in the culture and the tone of your communication together.”*

*She said, “Wow, I would have never thought about that.” She kind of had that look of being convicted. She asked, “Is that really the biggie?”*

*I said, “Yeah, that is the biggie. I mean, I like all that other stuff. My wife is interesting. And she is really cute.”*

*I mean she is so cute that while we are both sixty, she looks like she is in her forties. I look sixty. I have had a couple people comment, “Hey, your daughter...”*

*I say, “Ha ha ha!” They meant it. Okay let’s just end it that way, okay.*

*So I was talking to this young couple. I said, “Let’s talk about that a little bit. Did you know that when we were first married, thirty-eight years ago, we declared war on complaint, on the whole subject of complaining. We started our marriage out like that. We have not done it perfectly but we have done it diligently for thirty-eight years.” I mean we could have done it better, but we certainly have been diligently about this subject.*

*She said, “That is so interesting!” So I decided to lay aside what I was going to teach today. I was going to talk about the beauty of Jesus, to give us a reminder of the glory and the beauty of the Man we are connected with and the implications of that for our life.*

*Well, anyway, let’s read Philippians 2:14 to 15. It says, “Do all things without complaining, without disputing.” Verse 15, “That you may become”—now catch this, verse 15, this description of the life of the person who wages war on these little seeds of complaint in their life. Your life will—“become blameless and harmless.” You will be “children of God without fault in your life.” On top of that you will shine like light, you will stick out. People around you will be impacted because it will be different from the culture, even the culture of the Body of Christ, because light and darkness sticks out, and it is refreshing and helpful. Light in the darkness gives direction on how to go and how to make life work.*

*This one exhortation has this most remarkable fruit to it. I am going to read that again, “Do all things not complaining and disputing.” Now, complaining seems innocent. You know how Song of Solomon talks about the little foxes that destroy the vineyard of our life and it is in poetic language? The idea is that it is not just the big, scandalous sins that can damage and hurt a person’s life. Often some of the most dangerous things in our life seem to be somewhat small and not a big deal.*

*Complaining is one of the most damaging things that a person can have in their life, though it does not seem that way. It seems like, well, everybody complains, so it is not a big deal, or it is kind of innocent. As in, I am just kind of venting, getting it off my chest. Paul had a very, very different point of view.*

*For one thing, complaining does not get it off your chest. Complaining actually embeds the negative feeling stronger in you. It does not go away. It actually goes just one degree deeper in your mind and your emotions and in your relationships when you vocalize it. Complaining is a small thing. It seems innocent. It does not seem like a big deal. I want to assure you that it is one of the major enemies of your heart, your family, your friendships, and of your calling in God. It does not look that way and the enemy wants to keep it just that way.*

*I would compare it to the man who goes to the doctor, and the doctor says, “Boy, I’ve got bad news for you. You have just a little speck of malignant cancer. It is in you.”*

*The guy says, “Doctor, that cannot be. I feel great. You know I work out regularly. I have good energy. I do not feel anything.”*

*The doctor says, “I assure you that little speck will not stay a little speck. It may take a while depending on the type of cancer, but it is going to destroy your life for sure.”*

*The seeds of complaint seem small, innocent, mostly harmless, but the harvest is offended hearts, broken relationships, and damaged lives. It is not at all harmless. It starts small, but it has a harvest and the harvest is real. It is one of the most important things that Paul and the other writers in the New Testament address.*

*Now again verse 14, he says, “Do all things without complaining.” Paul is not exaggerating when he says, “all things.” He is saying, “Identify this mindset as one of your number one enemies. Identify it and go after it with diligence.”*

*That is what I want to bring to your attention. To this young couple I was talking to yesterday, I said, “Complaining is a giant enemy, not a small one.” A lot of folks would think it is small, because complaining is so natural to all of us, even just one thought of complaining. I have a few definitions of it I will give later. It is the idea that we are focusing more on the negative of what is happening in front of us instead of the positive. So we don’t complain when we see annoyance, and I am talking about complaining about small things. I am not talking about great crisis or events or life-changing disasters and having negative feelings about those. I am talking about the small, little ways of life and having a culture of complaint and allowing that to continue in our friendships, in our marriages, in our families, in our work relationship. It is a very, very big issue.*

*He says, “Do all things without disputing.” When he is talking about disputing, he is not talking about full-blown, full-grown hostility of disputes and of great conflicts and controversies. He is talking about the small nickel-and-dime disputing that happens in marriages, in families, at the work place, and in ministries. Paul is saying, “I want to encourage you to go after these two issues—complaining and disputing, the small ones, the small annoyances—and not allowing them to have an improper place in your heart and in your communication with the people that you live with, that you work with. Do not let the small things have an improper place in those relationships.”*

*The most natural thing is for them to have an improper place. Now we all come by complaining naturally; we are born in sin. You know, the little guy, he is born and right off the bat, “Wah, wah, wah! Give me more now!” We come by it honestly. We are born with a heart that is saying, “I want it, and I want it now.” It is the most natural thing to us.*

*So when we talk about this subject many people could say, “Yeah, but I grew up in a family where complaining, sarcasm, and anger was the communication style. Mom and Dad talked that way to each other, Mom and Dad talked that way to us as the kids, Mom and Dad talked that way about the neighbors and the church and the workplace. Sarcasm, complaint, and venting were just a normal way of life.” Most people grow up in that kind of environment.*

*So it is a bit odd that Paul put such focus on this. He said, as it were, “Literally remove it completely out of your family culture and your communication style completely.” Wage war on complaining. Before you engage in a small dispute where the energy ratchets up in your marriage, with your children, with your parents, with your siblings, in your ministry team, at the marketplace, and before you let that thing escalate, Paul says to take a step back and understand this is more damaging than you think.*

*Again some folks have the idea, “Well, I grew up with it. It is natural. I am venting. I am getting it off my chest. Once I get it off my chest, it is gone.”*

*It does not work that way. What you say with your mouth impacts your heart. You can complain for a year or two, just using an analogy, and the year or two afterwards complaining will be easier to do. You do not vent and get cleansed from it; you vent and you get more familiar with it. It becomes more normal; it becomes less alerting. I want to assure you that it is to your heart, your spiritual life, your family life, your calling, your ministry what a small speck of malignant cancer is to your body.*

*So I determined I was going to wage war on this as a young man. I was twenty years old, and I became a pastor, which is kind of strange. A church out in the country, in the St. Louis area asked me to be their pastor. I said, “No way! I am twenty years old.” They were all like old people—they were like thirties and forties. I mean they were like way up there. I said, “I do not want to be your pastor.” I told them no.*

*I was at a Presbyterian church, on the youth staff, and I asked the leaders about it. They said, “No, go do it for a year. It will be good training.”*

*I said, “Really? Is that not illegal for a twenty-year-old to be a pastor? It seems like there ought to be a law against that you know, like doctors and dentists. You have to go to school or something, right?”*

*Well, I went and took this little church. It ended up about a hundred-member little country church. It was very challenging. I did not know anything about pastoring. Then the old people, again in their thirties and forties, a couple of them came to me and said, “Pastor.”*

*I did not even like that. I said, “Don’t call me pastor. Call me Mike.”*

*They said, “Pastor.”*

*I thought, “Ugh.”*

*They said, “We want to talk to you about our marriage. We are having sex problems.”*

*Now a married couple had never said the word sex to me ever in my life in a serious way. I said, “What?”*

*They said, “Well, you are our pastor.”*

*I said, “Uh, not really.”*

*They said, “Oh no, you are.”*

*I mean that was so uncomfortable, so intimidating. So I thought, “Man, I have got to hustle. I have got to figure this out somehow.” So there was a big seminar, a symposium for family life and marriage in the St. Louis area. This was 1977; it was thirty-eight years ago. So I went, and they had like fifty speakers and this whole week-long deal. I went and I took notes. I learned so many of these cool ideas and these terms. I was going back ready to pastor. I was excited! I had a notebook full of stuff, brilliant ideas about marriage and the key points and how it works.*

*Well, a month or so later I met Diane. Diane was a brand-new believer, just several months old in the Lord only. I was a mature “six-years-in-the-Lord” pastor. I had had this new information for about a month or maybe longer, this new information about marriage. So in my youthful pride and wanting to impress her I laid it all out, “Well, here is what I think marriage is.” She was dazzled and wowed by my insight. Of course I had to look at my notes. I was memorizing it just right before I talked to her. So I laid it out. I said, “Here is how a marriage should be built.” It was great wisdom because it was from really seasoned men and women of God at this symposium. I laid out these things I was committed to. She was wowed and thought I was so deep. I said, “Well, one tends to learn the Word after so many years.” She was won over.*

*Now I have told this story a little bit before, so some of you know where this is going. The part of the problem was that I said all of these wonderful ideals of marriage. We got married soon after; we had a short engagement. She was really counting on me doing these ideals that I memorized from this conference. I had never done them. I only memorized them just weeks before. So she was expecting something. The good news is that it was like a divine ambush. God trapped me into these ideals because again she was, you know, a few months old in the Lord and she was saying, “Let’s do what you said.”*

*I thought, “Ah. They are way harder to do than I thought.” I mean she was so cute like she is now, forty years later, and I thought, “Man, she is so cute, I can make all these principles work.” I want to assure you cuteness is not going to be enough to keep these principles intact, but it does not hurt anything.*

*So one of the issues was this issue of complaining. Now I was talking to her about this, and I said, “I do not want complaint or sarcasm anywhere in the culture of our marriage or our family.” This is something I am very*

*committed to and I have been for thirty-eight years. That is one of the most important decisions we made back then. Again we have not done it perfectly, but we have been diligent to go after this.*

*I will give you the four commitments I gave her. These commitments, and I will be real brief about them, work in relationships outside of marriage, they work. They are principles for parents and children, friends, leaders, and employer, whatever in the work place or ministry environment. These principles work far beyond marriage. So do not say, “Well, I am single, these do not apply. Excuse me.”*

*The first principle I learned at the seminar on which I waxed eloquent and told Diane so brilliantly is, “We are not going to discuss an issue when we are upset.” I think it was Tim La Haye who taught it; some of you remember him teaching the marriage seminars in the 1970s. He wrote a number of books on marriage. He said that when you are solving a tension in your marriage, wait until you are both at peace. Never discuss it until you are both at peace. One of you at peace is not enough; both of you have to be at peace.*

*The husband should assure the wife, “We are going to wait until we are both at peace.” Now I mean just some hours later, five hours later, twelve hours later, the next day, that kind of thing. I do not mean a month later. The husband should initiate and bring it up, even if he is going to get in trouble. He needs to bring it up and finish the conversation. Then her heart will be at peace that you do not have to talk while you are in stress and under agitation. She will have the confidence that it is going to be talked through, so she knows it is not an avoidance tactic. I thought it was brilliant, so I told Diane that.*

*Well, in the first week of marriage while still on the honeymoon I did some really insensitive things. I thought she was just being overly sensitive. She thought I was insensitive. So we got to do this right off the bat. You are asking, “Well, what did you do?” I don’t really want to tell you what I did because it was not one time; it was like ten and it would take too long to tell. So we got right in the middle of this.*

*We had this deal. I said, “We are going to wait a few hours.” So much damage happens with parents to children, friends to friends, leader to the people in the team, in the ministry and the marketplace, so much damage happens when you solve a tension when one of the parties is agitated during the conversation. I have learned, it is absolutely just not good. Many good relationships have been damaged by the complaining tone that happens in a relationship or the agitation of this simple thing of timing, instead of waiting until you are both at peace. Five hours later, one day later, it makes all the difference in the world. Well, we got to figure that out week one of the marriage.*

*The second thing that I committed to her from this seminar—here again I just met her, she is wowing me, I am wowing her. This was straight from the notes of the seminar—I said that in small domestic issues in our life like what we eat, when we eat, where shopping takes place, mowing the lawn, the dishes, fixing the house, who we socialize with, what restaurant we go to, hundreds of those things, mowing the lawn, calling the plumber, cleaning out the garage, all of those thousands, there are so many different categories—I said, “Here is what I am going to do. I am going to do what you want because they are all small issues.” They are not the two or three really major issues that would happen in a marriage in the first year or two or three, because in those big ones I wanted us to be in complete unity. I said, “On the small things I will do what you want to do 100 percent of the time, the rest of my life.”*

*“Wow,” she said, “Yes.” Now she was a brand-new believer and she thought that I was really deep in the Word. She did not realize I just went to a seminar and I was memorizing it.*

Now you can do that one principle in a whole bunch of other relationships, as in your attitude you can give up a lot and make concessions on a lot of things you would prefer to be different in small things. You can apply this in other relationships as well.

She asked me to do the dishes—yes. She said, “Let’s do this that way... Hey, go do this... let’s go do that.”

I said, “I will do it. I will do it, really.” I mean the little things, for example a few times we went places that I was not really interested in going. I think, “Ugh. Do we really need to go there and do that event?” She says we do, so I smile on the outside. My heart is not there yet, but I go. You know what? Your heart does not have to be there on the front end, but just do not have a complaint and a tone of complaining in the process. It might take a while for my heart to catch up, but at least I had the fake smile and the nice words, and that works.

Sometimes she says, “I know you are not happy, but I will take the smile. I will take it. It works.”

I thought, “I have got to find that guy from that seminar and tell him how life really works.”

The third thing the guy said at that same big symposium, “The husband is the leader of the home and that means he has responsibility when there is tension to be the first one to apologize every time. The husband is to initiate the apology conversations by apologizing for whatever he can find in any way he contributed, even his insensitivity and non-attentiveness. Anything, he must begin it.” So I told her that, and that ended up being like “oh man!”

The fourth principle was about making an appeal. There is a place to speak the things that annoy you in a marriage, in a job, in a business, in friendships. There is a place to talk about what annoys you. The three points I like to make about making an appeal are tone, timing, and ratio. They are really important. So we agreed that we would speak about the things that annoy, when she annoys me in this way and I annoy her in that way. Those things happen over the years and that is in all kinds of relationships. Finding annoyance is not a problem. You know parent-to-children, friend-to-friend, co-workers in team ministry and all that kind of stuff.

We agreed that when we made those appeals, when we made those things known, we would not use a complaining tone and no sarcasm. Tone is one thing; timing is another thing. Meaning if she is under pressure or agitated or I am, timing-wise we just wait until we are at peace. It is a very simple point, but it will change so much in relationships.

Then ratio, you should only give—this is not a scientific number—one correction for every ten affirmations. That is not again scientific, but if you are pointing out negatives at a one-to-one ratio of affirmation you have given to that child, to that friend, to your husband or wife, that relationship will be toxic and it will be injured. Something needs to be different; you need more affirmation than correction.

You may feel, “Well, I am only telling him or her because it is going to help him or her.” It is true that you are telling them to help them. But if that is what you are committed to doing, then tell them the negative and help them, **and** give them ten more affirmations—the vitamins—because you want to help them. Help them all the way, not just with the negative.

Well, let’s read it again. I find that Paul said it so well. Philippians 2:14, he said, “Do all things without complaining, without disputing.” Again the disputing, the small nickel and dime push-backs that you do not let go of, the “it is better if we do it this way” but it is really not that big of a deal if we do not. It is better, but there is a bigger storyline in our life than this issue. Paul said to let it go then.

“Well, but it is better if we do it this way.”

*In the big storyline of your life and of that relationship there is something bigger to accomplish, so let that one go. That is called disputing. Paul said to get rid of all of it.*

*I am talking about the tone of complaining. I am not talking about acknowledging something is bothering you or giving an insight about something that needs to be improved; that is not what I am talking about. I am talking about speaking with a tone of complaining and holding the line on the attitude that “I want it this way because the program will be better.” It is not really that big of deal; we should not have a war over this. We just should have a concession. Paul said, in essence, to yield on it and really yield on it. Stay connected to the larger narrative of what is happening in your life.*

*Well, what is complaining? Complaining is not a personality style or a personality type. Some people say, “Well, I was raised with complainers.” Almost everybody is raised with complainers, most of the human race. Complaining is a mindset. Complaining is a mindset that anybody can change. It is a way we process information. Complaining is when the negative information has an inappropriate prominence over the positive information.*

*See, we can point out the negative in a right tone and a right timing and with a right ratio. But when the negative has a greater prominence in the conversation and in the relationship than the positive, it is going to end up with a broken relationship and damaged lives. Think of the children; the damage of family cultures in which complaining is allowed instead of seen and identified as an archenemy to their spiritual life and their family life. The children get really hurt.*

*Complaining is when we emphasize what we do not have instead of focusing on what we do have. Now we can acknowledge what we do not have and what we want to see fixed. Again, timing, tone, and ratio really matter. We will talk more about this next week. There is a big picture of God’s goodness in our life. Think about it. We might say, “I want this issue fixed in this one department or this one relationship or this one issue at home. I want this issue fixed.” We need to realize, “I am part of a big narrative, a big story with God, and so are you. I am part of this family, I am going to have a resurrected body forever, and so are you.”*

*The smallest, most insignificant, unnoticed deeds that I do, such as giving someone a cup of cold water, are remembered forever by God and rewarded. That means every day of my life is important in the small, little things that nobody thinks are important. The Lord would say, “It is important.” God delights in us. He enjoys the relationship He has with us. He has freely forgiven us everything.*

*So, yes, in my life I would like the money to be better. I would like my body to feel better. I would like the relationship to be easier. I would like more honor in this issue or that. I would like this to flow easier. But I am not going to let those be the primary narrative of my life. I am part of a big story of God’s goodness in my life. The person who is annoying me—whether it is my wife, my friends, my coworkers, the neighbors—you know my neighbor is John Chisholm; he is literally next-door. His dog barks, can you believe that? I mean in the middle of the night. No, not really. Though there is a dog barking down the road and I always tease him. I say, “I know that is your dog. You are hiding it somewhere.” Really, he does not have one—When we lose the picture of the big story of God’s goodness, we lose the virtue of the person who is annoying us because the truth is that the guy who is annoying us has many virtues in their life that are positive that are contributing to God’s kingdom, to your life, contributing to others around you. But the annoyance becomes front and center.*

*What Paul is saying is do not take the little annoyance and let it escalate to a dispute. You are losing sight of the virtue of that man or that woman you live with whether it is a spouse or child or parents. You are losing the bigger story of their virtue. All you see is the annoyance right now and that dominates your mindset. Paul said not to do that, take a step back, take a deep breath, and get a part of the bigger storyline.*

Now the good news is that being a complainer is not a personality type you are stuck with because you are born with it and you cannot get out of it. It is a mindset. It takes time to change it. It takes time to cultivate the bigger picture, but it can be done. Your emotions will feel very different. Your relationships will become very, very different, impacted in a very different way.

I am going to have Diane come on up. You are thinking, “Oh boy, here we go!” Where is Diane? Oh, there she is. I just want her to make a couple comments. Hello, sweetheart. We just got back from vacation.

**Diane:** I will start by saying this man is enjoyable as well as he thinks I am enjoyable. Seriously, though...

**Mike:** Wait a second, since we got you on a roll, you are really cute. Come on! Come on! Okay. I thought we were going somewhere. Okay, go ahead.

**Diane:** I really want to be serious. I want to say this: that he has not exaggerated when he described to you the things that he has implemented in our marriage from the beginning days. I was a brand-new believer when we got married, and I am so grateful to God that one of us had a little bit of life in God as we came together as a married couple.

**Mike:** You were like six months old in the Lord when we got married, and I was six years older [in the Lord].

**Diane:** Right, and he did wax eloquent.

**Mike:** I did.

**Diane:** And wooed me and wowed me and still does today. Beyond waxing eloquent, he actually does what he says, and that in and of itself has won the respect and love and admiration of my heart. You know the choices that he has made, and I mean he really does kind of let me make most of the choices on small things. Not like how we are going to spend a big pile of money or anything like that.

**Mike:** Because we do that in unity, but she gets to win on those little things. I don't like all of them.

**Diane:** He does not, but he is agreeable. So yeah I can literally count on one hand how many times in our thirty-eight years of marriage that he has flat-out said, “No, no, we are not going to do that. No, I do not want you to do that. No, we are not going to do that,” because he has made the choice to prefer my choices in those things. That wins your heart; that wins my heart and that causes me to just enjoy life with him, so yeah.

The other thing I just wanted to say is that early in our marriage one of the things that I became aware of that was that I did not know how to be a believer and how to be a wife and all these things. I was learning it as I went along. So I was trying to figure out how to say, “I do not like something” or “Help me do this.” I did not know how to have that communication.

**Mike:** We were declaring war on sarcasm and complaining.

**Diane:** Right.

**Mike:** So she was saying, “How can I tell you that you are bugging me?”

**Diane:** Exactly.

**Mike:** And I said, “Oh, you can tell me. Just say it sincerely at the right time.”

**Diane:** I was wanting to be pleasing to the Lord, and I knew that nagging and complaining is not pleasing to the Lord, but I just did not know the way forward. So I decided that if I would just slam pots and pans around in the kitchen then he might think that I have a problem and maybe come see what is going on, you know.



**Mike:** So she was, and I came walking in. I said, “Is something wrong?” I looked at her face and I thought, “Oh, I am in trouble.” She replied, “Yes!”

**Diane:** Here is what he answered. He said, “Honey, if you want me to do something, then do not expect me to read your mind.” That hit me like, “You know what? I am wanting that. I want you to read my mind. That is what I want.”

**Mike:** And do it too! She wanted me to discern it and do it.

**Diane:** I want you to figure it out and then do it.

**Mike:** And be happy.

**Diane:** Honestly I did think “and be happy about it.” That is right.

**Mike:** And consistent.

**Diane:** Because, because I thought, “I can read his mind, so why cant he read my mind?” You know, we women honestly have a bit of an intuition and we kind of think we understand what they are thinking, and we expect that as well. So he said, “Do not expect me to read your mind.” So I digested that, and he followed it up with, “But if you will just ask me or tell me what it is you need, then you will find that I will be glad to help you.”

**Mike:** I am going to just throw one more phrase in.

**Diane:** Yeah?

**Mike:** Because for those folks out there, I always add the word, “Ask me with sincerity, not sarcasm.”

**Diane:** Yeah.

**Mike:** Don’t use the wrong tone. Just say, “Hey, I want you”—in this case—“to turn off the football game and help me with what is going on in the kitchen.” She was thinking, “I am slamming doors, and you are supposed to figure out it is not working.” I said, “I didn’t figure that out. If instead of when I walk in saying, ‘Can’t you figure it out it is not working in here?’ I said, ‘If you would, say it directly: turn the TV off, come in here and help me.’” Now it was a playoff game, and our team was winning, and it was the fourth quarter. I had this thing going on, and I waxed eloquent. Then I said, “So what do you want?” “I want to put this up here and fix this.” I said, “Okay, is there a better time to do it?” She said, “No. No, it is really right now, the time to do it.”

**Diane:** There is timing.

**Mike:** So I did do a little of “doing it” and looking back toward the living room, you know. Because she said, “You said that you would...”

**Diane:** Tone and timing, he mentioned both of those. I have gotten better through the years with both of those and understanding how to utilize a right tone and right timing.

**Mike:** Hey, we won that game just by the way, 1981. Okay, go ahead.

**Diane:** The other issue that has profoundly produced good fruit in our marriage, and when I say good fruit in our marriage, I mean the fact that thirty-eight years later we like each other, which you know it takes Jesus for that to happen and that hearts that are willing to go to the distance with Him. It was this one issue. It was that he would refuse to argue with me when I was heated, when I was upset. I wanted to have this conversation NOW because it takes two to argue. I wanted to argue, and he would not. He insisted on both of us being, as he says it graciously, both of us being at a place of peace. It was me most of the time who had to come to the place of peace.

**Mike:** *That was because I was the one getting in trouble, so I was already at peace. If she was happy, I was happy. I am the guy who did the dorky thing that was being talked about.*

**Diane:** *So what that forced me to do, it forced me to exhale and go be before the Lord with my agitated heart and my frustration and my demanding spirit. It forced me to go to Jesus and pour it out to Him and work that muscle of “help me, Lord.” You know I need help in this...” and come to a place of peace. I tried to fool him a few times. I went in the other room for a few minutes and came back and said...*

**Mike:** *Like five minutes later.*

**Diane:** *“I am at peace. Now could we have that conversation?” He would be like, “No, I don’t think so.”*

**Mike:** *I said, “Let’s wait a couple hours.” She said, “I am at peace.” I said, “We are going to be in trouble if we have this conversation right now.”*

**Diane:** *So I just want to say that there is so much power in choosing these principles that he laid out. There is so much fruitfulness that happens not just in a marriage, but also with your children and to the generations that are beyond, with your work environment or whatever it would be. We need the Lord and we need Him to help us with the unselfishness of our heart. So I just commend you to seek Him in those ways.*

**Mike:** *You know one thing about that: we were so committed to doing it. Again it takes time because you do not do it right at first. If you are committed to it, eventually you get more and more right. Not that we have it totally right right now, but we do care about this subject. I said that I wanted to have a family culture where sarcasm and complaint is not in our family culture. So I would not come home from the church, from the offices, and talk about annoying and disturbing things in the lives of the people of the church, of the staff, the neighbors and the whatever. I did not want my children to hear that. I did not want them to think that is normal to talk about people that way.*

*One thing that just blesses us greatly thirty-eight years later, both of our sons Luke and Paul—they are in their mid-thirties, and we have observed this, which is one of the greatest things I see when I look at them; yes, they love Jesus, yes, they have those other four or five things that I care about—do not have sarcasm and complaint in their communication style. We have talked about that over and over. We said, “Isn’t this beautiful” when they were eighteen and then twenty-five and thirty and now thirty-five. That is one of the things I am the most pleased about.*

*Beloved, it is not too late to turn it around. You say, “Well, you know, I have been married for so long, and we have done it for so many years.” Start today! Today is a new beginning. This principle works with friends, it works with marketplace, it works with neighbors, and it works with your parents, not just your marriage. These things work with all the relationships. We need to be serious about the mindset of complaining, waging war on it, the being comfortable with small little disputes happening instead of letting it go and tapping into the big picture.*

**Diane:** *So if you learned complaint as you were being raised...*

**Mike:** *Which we all did...*

**Diane:** *You can unlearn it. You can learn a better way. I am living proof that you can learn a better way. The Lord will help us.*

**Mike:** *Thank you, sweetheart. Amen, let’s stand.*