

## **Fran and Jesus on the Job – Tough Counsel**

Air Dates: November 28 – December 2, 2022

### **Day One**

For many years now I've been telling this story of a workplace woman named Fran, who is forced back into the job market when her husband is suddenly killed. With two young children, Fran has faced many struggles as a single working mom, but through it all she is learning to practice the presence of Jesus. And that is the purpose of these stories—to encourage all of us to be continually aware of the presence of our Lord, because when we're born from above, he is with us always.

This is a busy week for Fran because her church is sponsoring a weekend retreat for the women, and she's in charge of registration. Drew and Alice are staying with her folks while she is away, and on Friday afternoon she leaves work a little early to take the kids over and get them settled. Then she meets some friends at the church, where they carpool to the camp grounds, about 30 miles out of the city.

Friday evening is a fun time, and Fran is well prepared to welcome the women and help them get settled. Over 150 have registered to come, and the fellowship is really wonderful.

Saturday morning they have a general session with great music and a wonderful speaker who talks about putting our past behind us. Afterwards they form small groups to discuss the topic. Fran begins the discussion by saying, "You know, even though it's been six years since Jim was killed, I still find myself living in the past and dreaming of the way my life used to be."

Her friend, Andrea, joins in. "I know; it just seems so hard sometimes to let go of the past, whether it's the good past or the bad past."

The conversation continues, but Fran notices that one woman in the group is very quiet. Her name is Cynthia; she's new to Fran, and she just seems to be miserable. As the group breaks up, Fran makes a point to walk with Cynthia and start a conversation.

"We're so glad you joined us for our retreat. Is this your first time?" Fran asks.

"Yes," replies Cynthia, but says nothing more.

Not knowing what to say, Fran finally asks, "Are you okay? Is there anything I can do to help you?"

At this, Cynthia covers her face with her hands and tries to control her sobs. Fran guides her to a secluded place where they can talk privately. Somehow Fran senses that God has ordained this meeting, but she wonders what in the world could be upsetting Cynthia so much.

### **Day Two**

Have you ever felt like God led you to someone just at a moment when they had a great need for a friend and a counselor?

“How did you know something was wrong?” Cynthia asks Fran through her sobs.

“Just the look on your face, I guess, Cynthia,” Fran replies. “Do you want to talk about it?”

“No, I don’t want to but. . .” Cynthia hesitates. “I think I’m going to burst if I don’t talk to somebody.”

“Well, I promise you I will keep this conversation confidential, if that helps,” Fran says.

“Yes, well, it does. It just seems funny talking about this to a complete stranger,” Cynthia says.

“But you know,” Fran assures her, “I don’t think it was an accident that God put it in my heart to talk to you.”

“Yeah, I guess so. And in some ways it’s easier to talk to a stranger about it. You see, I . . . I . . .I’ve been having an affair with a married man. . .” Cynthia’s words come out slowly with great pain.

“Umm, I see,” Fran replies, without alarm. “Are you continuing that affair now?” she asks.

“Well, I keep telling him that I’m not going to see him anymore, but as soon as he calls, I give in,” Cynthia answers. “You see, my husband left me with two kids five years ago and I guess I’m just so lonely. . .”

“Cynthia, do you want me to talk with you straight?” Fran asks.

“Yes,” Cynthia says, “I guess I need some straight talk.”

“Well, then, the first thing you have to do is absolutely sever this relationship, immediately, finally, forever, with no further contact of any kind. Whatever it takes to keep him from contacting you, that is what you have to do,” Fran advises. “Are you willing to do that?”

Cynthia is silent. Fran wonders if she was too strong, too hard on her. But she hears the voice of Jesus: “Don’t say anything, Fran. You’ve given her biblical advice that is right, so let her think about it. Don’t back off.”

### **Day Three**

The Bible teaches us to speak the truth in love, but that’s not always easy to do, is it? Fran finds herself counseling a woman she has just met at their church’s women’s retreat. This woman, Cynthia, seemed very troubled, and as Fran talked privately with her, she confessed that she has been having an affair with a married man.

Finally Cynthia looks at Fran and says, “But I think I may be pregnant with his baby.” It feels as though the floor has dropped out from under her as Fran thinks how to respond.

“Keep sticking with the truth, Fran,” Jesus whispers to her. “This doesn’t change the advice you gave her.”

Fran puts her arm around Cynthia and holds her for a minute. Then she says, “Cynthia, this may seem cruel, but the fact that you may be pregnant doesn’t change your course of action. He is a married man and there is no possibility that he will marry you, so you must break this relationship once and for all.”

“But,” Cynthia says, “I think if he knows I’m pregnant, he might divorce his wife and marry me.”

“Cynthia, that would be heaping one bad decision on top of another,” Fran says with emphasis. “Do he and his wife have children?”

“Yes, two boys,” Cynthia adds, “but they don’t have a good marriage.”

“Oh, Cynthia, you can’t go there. Even suggesting that he break up another marriage to marry you—that is wrong and you’ll never forgive yourself if you do that,” Fran advises.

“But it’s his baby and he got me pregnant. . . if I am pregnant,” Cynthia adds.

“Wait a minute Cynthia, what about the role you played in this affair?” Fran asks. “Did he rape you?”

“No,” Cynthia replies quietly.

“You were a willing participant, Cynthia. You’ve got to take responsibility and refuse to make more wrong decisions and choices,” Fran tells her. “It’s time you did the right thing and make the best you can out of this mess. Besides, you don’t even know for sure that you’re pregnant.”

“No, I’m afraid to find out,” Cynthia says. “What will I do with a baby?”

“There are several good alternatives, and I promise we’ll help you, if you’ll just do the right thing,” Fran says.

Do you think Fran is giving Cynthia good advice?

#### Day Four

How do you help someone who has messed up her life and can’t see her way out? That’s the dilemma that Fran finds herself in as we continue the story of Fran and Jesus on the Job.

After Fran strongly advises her to sever the relationship with this man, Cynthia says to her, “But I’ve tried many times to stop seeing him, and I just can’t. I mean, I really love him and he really loves me.”

“You’re telling yourself some lies there Cynthia, and you need to know that” Fran says. “First, you *can* stop seeing him. You can block his phone calls and texts, move if you have to, go to another church if you have to, and simply say NO. So, don’t keep telling yourself that you can’t stop seeing him. Of course you can,” Fran continues.

“And it really doesn’t matter whatsoever whether you think he loves you or you love him. This relationship is wrong, it is sinful, and you have no right to steal this man’s affection from his wife.”

“I didn’t steal him,” Cynthia starts to object. “He called me.”

“And you could have hung up the first time he called and you’d never be in this predicament,” Fran says. “I don’t mean to be tough on you, Cynthia, but until you are willing to accept the responsibility that is yours and call this what it is—a sin against God—you’ll just continue to mire in this mess and make matters worse.”

Cynthia begins to sob. Fran feels like she has upset her with her tough talk, but Jesus says, “Fran, the truth often hurts. Let Cynthia hear what you’ve said.” So, they sit in silence for a few minutes.

“I suppose I could get an abortion,” Cynthia whispers. “Then it would be easier to break up with him.”

“Oh, Cynthia, no, no,” Fran begs. “Don’t even once let that thought enter your mind. If you are pregnant, that child is a life inside of you. You cannot take that life. No, Cynthia, no. You will never forgive yourself.”

“But Fran, that’s easy for you to say. You’re not in my shoes,” Cynthia looks at Fran.

Fran doesn’t know how to respond. It’s true, she’s never had to make that decision, but does that mean she can’t advise Cynthia to make the right choice? What do you think?

## Day Five

Fran thinks a moment then says to her, “Please, Cynthia, don’t let anything cause you to commit another sin on top of the adultery. You would be killing your child if you have an abortion,” Fran pleads.

“Well, not everyone believes. . .” Cynthia tries to justify herself. But she can’t keep it up. “Oh, Fran, I know that, don’t you think I know that. But what am I going to do with his baby?”

“Cynthia, let’s take it one step at a time. First, break the relationship, find out if you are pregnant, and then after you’ve crossed that bridge, we’ll consider your options if you are pregnant,” Fran says.

They talk for a couple of hours, missing lunch, but Fran gets Cynthia to agree to breaking off the relationship, blocking his phone calls, and refusing to speak with this man. Fran says, “When you’re feeling weak, like you can’t stand not to talk to him or see him, please call me, any time of the day or night. Call me first. I’ll help you; I’ll pray with you,” Fran assures her.

So they establish an accountability plan. Cynthia promises to take a pregnancy test first thing when she gets back home and let Fran know the results. “Oh, I hope I’m not pregnant,” she cries.

“If you are, Cynthia, you will have to live with the consequences of your wrong choices and your sin, but God can turn this into something good,” Fran assures her. “There’s a woman at church who has a grown son now, born out of wedlock, but she raised him to become a strong Christian and he is a blessing in our church. Whether you choose to raise your child or let some couple adopt that child, you can be a part of that wonderful miracle of producing a life that God can use.”

Cynthia has some very difficult days ahead of her, but if she will follow Fran’s advice and make herself accountable, if she will begin a daily diet of Bible study and prayer and get back in close relationship to the Lord, she can watch a miracle in her own life as God again does what he is so good at doing—turning our deserts into gardens and our ashes into beauty.