

Fran & Jesus on the Job - Convictions

Air Dates: September 4 - 8, 2023

Day One

For those who aren't familiar with the Fran stories, Fran is a young widow with two school-aged children, who has a job in a marketing organization. We've been following her story since she went back to work after her husband's untimely death, and several years have passed. Now she has a relationship with a man named Barry, who is a strong Christian, and their romance has brought a bright spot into Fran's life—as well as a few struggles and conflicts!

She and Barry work together and both are account reps with good track records and success. Their hard work and honesty have paid off, and they are held in high esteem by their management and coworkers. This Friday morning Fran is really excited for Barry, because she expects he will be awarded a big new national account. He's the right person for that account, and their manager, Marilyn, has indicated that she recommended him. The final decision is to be made today, so it's been hard for Fran to stay focused.

The phone rings just about lunch time, and it's her friend and fellow believer, Louise. "Hi, Fran," Louise says, "just wanted to tell you how sorry I am for Barry."

"What do you mean, Louise?" Fran asks with a lump in her throat.

"Oh, no, you haven't heard! Oh, I'm sorry. Barry didn't get the new account; it went to Lloyd."

"Lloyd? Why Lloyd?" Fran asks in bewilderment. "Lloyd isn't nearly as qualified as Barry - and Marilyn told Barry. . ."

"I know, I know," Louise says, "nobody knows why Lloyd got it instead of Barry. I just feel so bad for Barry."

"Thanks for letting me know, Louise," Fran says. "I need to find Barry. Talk to you later."

She hangs up and calls Barry; no answer. His office is up on the next floor, but she just can't sit still and wait any longer. So she heads for his office, taking the shortcut up the stairwell. As she's going up, Barry is coming down.

"Oh, Barry," Fran says, "I was headed for your office. Louise just told me. . ."

"Yeah, can you believe it?" He looks at her with a slight grin. "Marilyn told me Lloyd was selected because of his quote 'experience with entertaining large national accounts.'"

"What did she mean?" Fran asks.

"Oh, I think it's clear—somebody decided that I wouldn't be willing to wine and dine this client as they expect to be," Barry replies.

"You mean because you're a Christian and they know you don't carouse like some of the other reps do?" Fran replies. "Barry, that's discrimination. Didn't you protest to Marilyn?"

"Look, she feels as badly about it as I do," Barry says, "and she's a fairly new believer, so I'm not going to hassle her, Fran."

"You mean, you're not going to fight this, Barry?" Fran can't believe her ears.

"No, I prayed about it, and I have to trust God and let it go," Barry tells her.

Whoa, would you be willing to do that? Shouldn't Barry fight for what is rightly his?

Day Two

Have you ever suffered a setback in your career because of your Christian lifestyle? Fran's friend, Barry, has just had that painful experience. He was in line to be awarded a big new national account, but it was given to a less-qualified person. And the unspoken but clear reason for this decision by upper management is that Barry's Christian principles prohibit him from being a part of the acceptable "party and drinking scene" which this client seems to expect.

Fran is upset because Barry is not going to fight the decision. Driving home from work this Friday afternoon, after a long discussion with Barry which almost turned into an argument, she says to Jesus, "Lord, this is not fair. Barry should stand up for his rights. You don't expect us to just lay down and roll over when we're treated unfairly, do you?"

"Fran," Jesus quietly replies, "don't you remember what I said in the Sermon on the Mount?"

"You mean the 'turn the other cheek' part? Yes, but Lord does that mean we're supposed to be door mats? What kind of testimony is that?" Fran replies.

"Fran," Jesus continues, "you should know by now that as a follower of me, you don't live by the same rules as others. The weapons you fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds."

"Yeah, I know," Fran says, "but it's just so hard to accept it. I feel so bad for Barry. He's such a great guy and he would handle that account imminently better than Lloyd. It's just so hard. . ."

"Remember, Fran," Jesus says, "this is not the end of the story. Barry said he was letting go and trusting me, and you're going to have to do the same thing."

"He's a lot better at that than I am," Fran says. "It almost seems like he's a little wimpy. But I guess..."

"Don't confuse acceptance and submission with weakness, Fran," Jesus reminds her. "It takes a lot more character and strength to let go than it does to fight."

That evening she and Barry talk on the phone, and they agree this is a matter that only God can adequately resolve. So, they pray together about it, and Fran tells Jesus she will indeed let go of it.

"I really admire your ability to trust God, Barry," Fran says, "even in the midst of a disappointment. I've learned a lesson by watching how you're handling this."

"Gee, Fran," Barry says, "I don't feel like I'm handling it so great. It still hurts, but I believe if I fight it, I'll just mess things up worse. Have to tell you, though, I was already spending that additional income. There's something I want to buy. . . oh, well, in God's time."

Fran wonders what he's talking about, but she's afraid to ask!

Day Three

We're continuing our story of Fran and Jesus on the Job. Barry, Fran's friend, just lost a new account, and it's become obvious that he lost it because of his strong Christian principles. Fran has had more trouble accepting this than Barry, but after talking to Jesus, she realizes this is not a fight that can be undertaken with the weapons of the world, but it must be fought with prayer.

Now, this Saturday morning, Fran is thinking of what she can do to lift Barry's spirit, and she gets an idea. She calls Barry and says, "Hey, instead of going out to dinner tonight, let me prepare a quiet dinner for the two of us and we'll have our own little celebration, to celebrate the victory that God is going to win for you!"

"Hey, Fran," Barry says, "you're a doll to think of that, but did you forget—we promised Max and Claire that we'd have dinner with them and catch a movie."

"Oh, right," Fran says, "I did forget. Bummer! I'd much rather have a quiet celebration with you."

"Yeah, me too," Barry says, "but Max and Claire are new at church, and we need to get to know them better."

So, Fran gets busy with all her Saturday chores and errands before time to go out. They meet Max and Claire at a nice little Italian restaurant and enjoy some good pasta and then leave for the movie.

"Hey, what movie do you want to go to?" Barry asks.

Max suggests a movie rated PG-13 and they agree it sounds okay.

But Fran has a funny feeling in her stomach. Hollywood isn't trustworthy and sometimes their PG-13s are more like R-rated, and she's concerned about this one since she doesn't know anything about it.

As they wait in line for tickets, Fran says to Barry on the side, "I wonder about this movie, don't you, Barry? What if it's no good?"

"We'll leave," Barry says quietly.

"Well, we can't just leave Max and Claire," Fran says, somewhat startled.

"We don't watch junk, right Fran," Barry says as he takes her arm and they go into the theater.

Well, Fran wanted a strong man with lots of character—I'd say Barry seems to be living up to her expectations!

Day Four

Did you ever find yourself in the middle of a compromising situation but you didn't know how to extricate yourself? Fran and Barry are about to find themselves in such a predicament. A new couple, Max and Claire, from their singles' group at church asked them to have dinner and go to a movie with them this Saturday evening, and wanting to build bridges of friendship, they agreed.

After a nice dinner, Max suggests a movie about an angel. Fran and Barry know nothing of it, but Claire assures them it's okay because it's rated PG-13. So, they get settled into the theater with their popcorn, looking forward to a lighthearted funny movie.

About ten minutes into the movie, Fran begins to feel nervous. This portrayal of an angel is about as far from a biblical angel as one can get. She can tell that Barry is not comfortable with it either.

After a few more minutes, Barry puts his arm around Fran and whispers in her ear, "We can't sit through this movie, Fran. This is trash—a fornicating angel. No way; we have to leave."

"I agree it's a rotten movie," she whispers back, "but wouldn't it be rather embarrassing to Max and Claire for us to leave?"

"I'll take care of that, Fran, don't worry," he says, and with that he whispers something to Max and then takes Fran's hand as they head out of the theater.

As they get to the lobby, Fran is flushed. "What did you tell Max?" she asks.

"I just said we were uncomfortable with the movie, and we'd meet them right outside the lobby when it's over. C'mon, let's go get a cup of coffee."

"But Barry, I'm not sure we did the right thing. These are new friends we're trying to build a relationship with; what must they think of us?" Fran asks. "I really think we should have discussed it first."

"Fran, how were we going to discuss it there in the movie theater?" Barry asks. "Would you want to be watching that movie if Jesus returned right now?"

"No," Fran says, "but I just feel badly for Max and Claire."

"Trust me, Fran," Barry says, "we did the right thing."

As they have a cup of coffee, the air between them becomes heavy. Fran feels Barry should have been more considerate of her feelings in this matter. Yet she can't deny that his decision was right.

Sensing her uneasiness, Barry says, "Are you upset with me? I didn't see any other options, Fran, and when you're with me, I consider it my responsibility to keep our environment above reproach. I believe I'm accountable to God for where I escort you, Fran. That's why I made that decision."

She looks at him in amazement. "I'm seeing a side of you I've never seen before, Barry," she says.

"I hope you like it okay," Barry says with a smile, "because I like every side I've seen of you, Fran."

How can she stay upset with a man like this? But what about Max and Claire?

Day Five

When doing the right thing causes an embarrassing situation, are you quick to chicken out? Fran and her friend, Barry, find themselves in such a dilemma. They agreed to go with some new friends, Max and Claire, to a movie, only to discover a few minutes into it that it's not the kind of thing they want to watch, even if it was rated PG-13.

So Barry rather abruptly and decisively informed Max that he and Fran would meet them after the movie ended, and they headed out of the theater. Sitting next door at the coffee shop, waiting for the movie to end, Barry and Fran have an opportunity to discuss whether it was right to cause that little

scene or just sit through the movie to avoid embarrassing their new friends. Barry is convinced that you never compromise your standards, and as they're finishing their coffee, they look up to see Max and Claire coming in.

"Hey," Claire says, "I thought we'd find you here. We decided to leave, too."

"Hi," Fran says; "I'm sorry about leaving so abruptly but. . ."

"It was my decision, Claire," Barry interrupts. "And I do apologize if we embarrassed you. I just felt the movie was so far off base, that it was nothing either of us should watch."

"Well, I thought it was pretty dumb myself," Max agrees.

"What bugged me," Barry says, "was that they were portraying this angel in such an immoral way. I don't think Jesus would watch that movie, do you?"

"No, I guess not," Max says, "I hadn't thought about that. . ."

"You know, what I've finally decided is that you have to set standards and then stick to them. Often as Christians we lower our standards a little bit here and a little bit there, and all of a sudden, we're on a slippery slope downhill."

And with that, a long discussion begins, giving Barry and Fran a wonderful opportunity to share and to encourage their new friends in their walk as Christians. It turned into a wonderful evening, actually.

On the way home, Fran takes Barry's hand. "I was so proud to be with you tonight, Barry. You were incredible. Thank you so much for taking that stand and handling it so beautifully."

"Thanks, Fran," he says, "but you weren't real sure at first, were you?"

"Well, you know me, I want to avoid conflict at any cost; sometimes you just can't do that, can you?" she comments.

"Not if you want to be a true disciple," Barry agrees. "And by the way, I was proud to be with you too. But then I always am."

She smiles at him. What a man! Quietly she thanks Jesus for the courage and character Barry showed.