

# FamilyLife Today® Radio Transcript

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## Persisting in Love

Guest: Shauna Shanks  
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**Bob:** When a husband says to his wife, “I’ve never loved you,” when he’s been unfaithful to her, it’s only natural that a wife would say, “My heart can’t heal from that”; but God asked Shauna Shanks to do something that was not natural / to do something supernatural. That was to keep her marriage together.

**Shauna:** I thought God has told me to do this thing, but I can never heal from this. I will never recover. Even if by some miracle my husband wants me back, I will never be able to let him touch me again—like—I was offended that God asked me to be kind to this man.

**Bob:** This is *FamilyLife Today*. Our host is Dennis Rainey, and I’m Bob Lepine. If God was going to save the Shanks’ marriage, He was going to have to do something dramatic in Shauna Shanks’ heart. We’ll hear about what happened today. Stay with us.

And welcome to *FamilyLife Today*. Thanks for joining us. When a husband or a wife hurts their partner, our natural response when we’ve been hurt by our spouse is not to respond with love. I mean that’s not my natural response when Mary Ann says or does something that is hurtful. We want to kind of get even; don’t we?

**Dennis:** Do you do that by lashing out or by withdrawing?

**Bob:** I’m more of a withdrawer than a lasher-outer; but I am in the back of my mind thinking about “How can I make this uncomfortable for you the way you’ve made it hurtful for me?”

**Dennis:** It’s interesting that Barbara and I have been married for 45 years and I wish I could say I never think that way and it’s just Bob. Because that’s Bob and it’s not me. [Laughter] I’m sorry.

A marriage that goes the distance that attempts to love as Christ loved the church has to lay aside rights and has to accept the other person. It’s one thing to do that when things are kind of normal with some normal humanity entering into the relationship between two imperfect people; but it’s quite another thing when, as we’ve been talking about this week, your spouse confesses that he’s no longer in love with you—

**Bob:** —and not attracted to you; and after ten years of marriage, he wants a divorce.

**Dennis:** Yes. That's where our guest, the author of *A Fierce Love*, Shauna Shanks joins us again on *FamilyLife Today*. Shauna, welcome back.

**Shauna:** Hi. Thanks for having me back.

**Dennis:** I just appreciate your honesty. Your husband did come to you some—like one month before your 10<sup>th</sup> Anniversary—

**Shauna:** Right.

**Dennis:** —and confess he's out of love / has no feelings / not attracted. Anytime I hear a story like this, I think, "So, who has his heart? What's going on here? Was there somebody else?"

**Shauna:** Yes. So, God had instructed me to go to 1 Corinthians 13. So, for two weeks, he remained in the home, initially, because I just asked him to because I didn't know what to tell the kids. So, we hadn't made any decisions; but he was living in the home and not really—we weren't really talking to each other, and God had instructed me to 1 Corinthians 13: "Be patient. Be kind [with him]." So, I was kind of exercising that and, really for the first time in my life, learning love as a discipline instead of just as a feeling or something that came naturally.

**Bob:** Were you thinking in the back of your mind, "Maybe, he'll snap out of this and this will just be a phase that he went through?"

**Shauna:** I don't know that I was because, honestly, it was not natural how I was responding. So, every single day, I was just like—"Be kind. He's around. Be kind. Don't say anything. Don't do anything that disagrees with what God's told me to do."

**Dennis:** I'm just curious. In those first two weeks, was there a moment where your commitment to 1 Corinthians 13 to live that out before God was really put to the test in a set of circumstances?

**Shauna:** Every single day. It was like—honestly, it was like a full-time job. He was just in a point where he did not want to talk to me. He was really kind of—if I tried to reach out and touch him, he kind of flinched. So, I woke up in the middle of night one night; and it was his night off. He works nights. So, even on his days off, he's up half the night because he can't go to sleep.

Something had awakened me in the middle of the night—and usually, I wouldn't do this—and I got out of bed. I saw that he was in the living room with the lights on. As I said, we weren't really communicating much; but I caught him in a mood where he was

willing to talk to me, and he wasn't being nasty. So, I sat down beside him; and in the course of that conversation, he admitted that he was having an affair.

I think that because I had those two weeks of practicing the love filter and learning love as a discipline, I was able to respond to him in a completely different way than I ever would have thought that I could.

**Bob:** If you hadn't had the love filter / if you hadn't had two weeks of that discipline, what would you have done?

**Shauna:** I think I would have completely lost it. That's why I am so thankful for the presence of God who drew near to me—because the Bible says, "He is near to the brokenhearted."

So, for me to realize that and realize He is good on His word / that He was near me, it was honestly like—I felt this invisible hand on my shoulder. I felt how I responded to him mattered, and it mattered to God because we had this thing going on me and Him. So, He just said, "Love is patient, Shauna. Be patient." So, I thought, "I need to respond this way."

**Bob:** Shauna, it's one thing to have your husband say, "I don't love you anymore. I'm not attracted to you. I want a divorce." That's one level of betrayal. Two weeks later, to hear that he's having an affair, that's kind of like the knife was in, and he just twisted it.

**Shauna:** Yes, I'm not saying for every single marriage; but for me, God had already directed me to 1 Corinthians 13 and said, "Do this." I was clinging to the Word of God. So, I thought, "Until He tells me otherwise, I'm just going to keep doing that. I'm just going to keep working through 1 Corinthians 13 and doing what He said and trust Him because my husband, at this point, has obviously shattered all of my trust, and he's broken my heart."

I was craving love from my husband, and I wasn't getting it; but I was getting it from God. So, it empowered me to be able to respond differently to him because even though I should have been completely broken, when you're receiving love from God's nearness like that, it was just really—it changed the course of my life. That's why I'm able to stand here, healed, talking to you today.

**Dennis:** At that moment, when he confessed the affair, what was going on in your mind? What were you thinking? What were you feeling? Did you melt down right there in the middle of the night? You were sitting right next to him.

**Shauna:** Honestly, I felt relief because I suspected that. Like you said, "Why else would you be acting like that?" But when someone denies something, it makes you feel crazy. So, it kind of—for a moment, I felt relief. Then, I felt nauseated. Then, I felt—I just heard the Lord say, "Be patient. Be kind."

So, it was almost like—and this sounds crazy when I tell people this—it was almost like the sacred moment in the living room because, not only did I know how I normally would have responded which would have been completely a jealous rage, my husband knows how I normally would have responded.

The fact that I didn't—I knew that God was with me in that living room helping me respond that way, and my husband knew it. We were both kind of just sitting there in awe like—"Look at us. Look at the Spirit of God must be here helping not to react that way."

**Bob:** You had to ask him—you had confronted him about an affair prior to this.

**Shauna:** I don't know if I did it out loud. I think I, maybe, said, "Is there someone else?" And he said, "No."

**Bob:** Yes. You had had the thought, "I mean why else would he want out of the marriage?" Did you have any suspicion? Was there—"I wonder if it's her. I wonder if it's her?" Was that going on in your mind?

**Shauna:** Not until I found out that he had an affair. Then, after I knew that he had had an affair, it put a whole other level to this love filter thing because one of the Scriptures also—as I said I was studying in God's Word every day—and one of the things that was really instrumental in my battle is 2 Corinthians 10:5. It says we take every thought captive.

So, after the affair, not only was I struggling to be nice, it was a battle in my thoughts not to repeat those imaginary images—whatever I imagined—because I didn't know who she was / I didn't know details.

When something traumatic like that happens, your brain—it's like it turns against you. It's like—"Rehash that. Bring that up. Think about her. Think about that. Think about her with him," which would have completely devastated me; but there are verses in the Bible that are set up to protect us. So, even though he had done this terrible thing to me, it is not going to be good for me to replay it over and over in my mind.

So, then, it became this journey of honoring God with my mind—"Where are my thoughts? If they are not on Your Word and not what You are saying about me, then I shouldn't be thinking them because it's not going to lead me to a good place."

**Bob:** When this news came out that he had an affair, I'm thinking that a lot of wives—the first reaction would be: "Who is it? How many times? Where?"—all the details. They want all of their questions answered. Did you want those questions answered?

**Shauna:** So, I absolutely did, but one of the mornings after I found out about the affair again, I was back in my son's bunk bed. I remember waking up, and there was this verse that was in my mind. It's Philippians 4:8. It says, "Whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is acceptable or praiseworthy, think on these things."

So, the night before, I found out the woman's name that had slept with my husband. So, I really, really desperately wanted to get on Facebook and find out who she was; but when I woke up with that verse, I thought, "Okay, but if I investigate that, those thoughts aren't lovely. That's not admirable. That's not praiseworthy. That's not going to be excellent for me."

It was like there was this fork in the road of doing what my flesh wants to do which is—which would be a normal reaction, I think—"At least, I deserve to know who she is"—or am I going to follow this verse and continue to guard my mind and think on those things? I literally remember having a moment with God where I was like—"No, I deserve to know who she is." I knew to go one way, and I went the other.

So, I left that verse hovering in my son's room; and I went downstairs and opened up my laptop, and I looked her up. I showed my husband the laptop; and I said, "Is this her?" He said, "Yes."

In that moment, it was like the little bubble that God had been keeping me safe in just shattered into a million pieces. I think the eyes are the window to your soul. So, in my investigations, I just remember thinking, "She is the most attractive, beautiful, trendy looking woman. I can never compete with that." My confidence was shot. I was just devastated. Everything that should have hit me days before that I feel like God had sheltered me from—I mean it just devastated me.

**Bob:** Your love filter went away.

**Shauna:** It was gone.

**Bob:** Yes.

**Shauna:** Yes. That is what happens in disobedience. So, I remember grabbing a credit card and putting it in my back pocket and just leaving my house. My kids were home. My husband was home, and I had no plan. I don't know where I was going, but it was fall in Ohio.

So, it gets dark really early. So, it started to get dark. It started to rain, and it was really, really cold; and I'm just wandering around side streets and alleys just sobbing, thinking, "This is over. This is ridiculous. What am I doing?"

I thought God had told me to do this thing, but I can never heal from this. I will never recover. Even if by some miracle my husband wants me back, I will never be able to let him touch me again. I was offended that God had asked me to be kind to this man.

As I am kind of screaming at God and thinking, “I hate him. I hate her,” my Aunt Jan—she had kind of been my accountability in this season and my confidant in this season. She kept calling me, “Where are you? Where are you?” I let it go. I let it go. I kept not answering the phone. Finally, when I did answer it, I was belligerent; and I said, “I know what you are going to tell me to keep being obedient to God and do this and that. No, I’m done. Do you understand me? I hate him. I hate her. I will never get over this, and I’m done.”

She said, “I just want to know where you are so I can go with you.” I wrote a whole chapter in the book about that because when I finally came home, the credit card had fallen out of my back pocket. It was lost. Who knows who was using it? My eyes were swollen. I was sore from shivering, and—

**Dennis:** You’d been wandering the roads—

**Shauna:** For a while, yes—just sobbing.

**Dennis:** —on foot—on foot, not in a car.

**Shauna:** Not in a car—nope. I wasn’t prepared. I had left in a frenzy. So, when I came back to my house, Aunt Jan and Shannon, the other lady who walked this season with me, were waiting at my doorstep. They ended up staying with me that whole night.

It was just such a beautiful picture of what the Christian community can be for one another because they weren’t saying, “You need to stay with your husband regardless,” but they fear God. So, they said, “If God has told you to do a thing, don’t worry about anyone else; don’t worry about the circumstances; but obey God because your safety is in obedience.”

**Dennis:** I’m just thinking of the power of a friend and presence—not words, not a sermon, not a chapter and verse from the Bible. I was unprepared, probably, at—not as much as you in the moment—but for what she said to you, “I just want to be where you are.”

**Bob:** Yes, it’s got to be the right kind of friend because you can have friends around you who are feeding your flesh rather than friends who are pointing you back to God.

**Dennis:** I’m telling you, Bob. I fear, personally, within in the Christian community, there are too many “friends” who come alongside someone like Shauna and say, “Man, get the towel out, and I’ll help you throw it in. I’ll help you move toward divorce. We’ll make all this work out on the other side.”

**Bob:** “And we’ll show him.”

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** “We’ll take the”—

**Bob:** Did you have friends like that?

**Shauna:** Well, I didn’t tell anyone because I felt—and this is, again, I’m not saying this is for everyone—but one of the things in 1 Corinthians 13—it says, “Love protects.” I thought, “If we would get back together, he is—he works in the community. I didn’t want his name to be run through the mud.” At first, my first move was not to tell anyone except for these two women.

I know, now, having walked through it and having tried to counsel other women, it’s hard not to be like—“You deserve better”—because you want to tell somebody something that makes them feel good in the moment; but thank God, I had women who were like—“We don’t know the outcome.” They were not afraid to let me do the hard thing.

When I came home that night, Micah had gone to work. So, I would have been alone with the kids. They fed my kids. They bathed them. They put them to bed. They made me a bed on the couch. They were rubbing my shoulders and praying with me all night long, and both ladies had to get up and go to work the next day. When I got up, they were gone to work.

So, yes, just modeling that Christian community and not expecting you to just to go through it on your own but also kind of being willing to walk through the hard things together as a community.

**Bob:** Shauna, what did your kids know?

**Shauna:** Well, my kids were a lot younger. This was in 2013. So, the younger two—they were really oblivious. They didn’t know dad was still home. We weren’t like raging in front of them; but my oldest son—and there is a chapter in this book called *Suffer the Children*, and it tells about how my husband was going to leave one night. He couldn’t take it anymore, and he was going to leave. He was just going to sneak out.

I said, “Absolutely not. If you’re going to leave, I’m not telling your son. You tell him”—because I didn’t think he’d do it. He sat him down; and he said, “You know your mother and I—we’ve decided”—and he kind of gave this talk that seemed rehearsed or just really monotoned like something he had read on the internet—like, “Lots of parents do this”—just kind of walking him through what a divorced life would be.

My oldest son—it was really one of the most traumatic nights of my life because—he was eight—he stood in the doorway with both arms out and his little legs out crying / tears raining down his face. He just said, “I don’t understand why. Why, Daddy? Why?” So, there’s a whole chapter on how I reacted to that.

Eventually, my husband never did end up moving out. He came back home that night, but it was one of those things where I feel like—“Yes, we want to shield our kids”—but also, I kind of let him in just a little bit and said, “You know what? Do you think that the Devil is real?” He was like—“I guess so.” I said, “What do you think that we do when the enemy comes to attack us?” He was like—“I don’t know.” I said, “We can pray.” I said, “I’m going to pray for your dad, and you’re going to pray for your dad. We’re going to ask our friends to pray for your dad. Do you think God is not going to hear our prayers?” He was like—“I don’t know. I guess so.”

Even in that moment, I was explaining to him that the enemy is a liar, and he is out to destroy us. He said, “Mom, how do you know that the enemy is a liar and that he is lying to Dad?” I said, “He’s telling your dad that he doesn’t like me anymore. How could he not? I’m awesome.” [Laughter] So, this night that had started out so traumatically—I even got some laughs out of him—and it was like—“How good is God to even let that come out through my own pain?”

So, I was like—“You know what? I think that as much as my reaction is to shield my kids from things. They are going to have to learn how to suffer. They are going to learn how to do hard things. I want them to know that, in life, bad things are going to happen; but we don’t just fall apart. We are not like the world. We have recourse. We can go to the God of the universe and ask Him for help; and He may not give us exactly what we want, but He will not leave us alone either.” It’s important for me as a mom to know that my kids know how to go through that.

**Dennis:** Shauna, you had spent a good bit of your life in church; right?

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** As a little girl growing up?

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** Would you say your spiritual life took off growing at that sacred moment in the middle of the night when he confessed the affair and you felt that sacredness that God was there? Was that the beginning, or was it his confession that he didn’t love you anymore?

**Shauna:** Even as a little girl, I knew that God was real, and I could sense Him near; but there were about ten years of my life where I was really lukewarm. There are some ways that you can only know God through walking through it. I knew Him as this great



God of the universe and as a helper; but I didn't know Him as healer until I needed healing.

There are so many facets of God that when He asks you to walk through something, hang on and walk through it with Him because—yes, that's bad; but to learn God in these other facets is amazing. I even call this whole affair season a journey because I was on a journey of discovering, "Who is God," and seeing that He was competent to walk me through that and He was more than enough for my needs. I mean I wouldn't trade it for the world.

**Dennis:** I like the way you describe that because I think, many times, the spiritual embers that are in our hearts really can grow into flames in the midst of the dark valley / in the midst of having no where else to turn / in the midst of the pain that just drives you against God to say, "You have to be my refuge / my strength / my hope / my shield, because if you aren't, who will be?"

**Shauna:** And what it did for me was it grew my faith. So, before, in my mind, I knew God was real, now, when I need to trust God for something, I trust Him more and more wholeheartedly because I've seen Him walk me through these hard things, and I saw that He didn't leave my side and that He provided for me. It kind of went from move from this head knowledge to "Wow, God is real, and His Word is more than just beautiful poetry on paper. It's life-changing. It can change our lives if we let it."

**Dennis:** There are so many great lessons in your story, and I'm just thinking of friends who know someone who is going through what you're going through. You're friends with someone who needs the presence of a human being / who needs someone on a mission from God to wrap their arms around you and say, "You know what? I'm here."

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** No verses, no quick fixes—"How can I support you? How can I help you?" I think the other lesson is just what you've modeled, Shauna, which is a great lesson for all of us—every person—is to seek God; and when you fail and you get belligerent with God and you sound off, He's not threatened by that. Read the Psalms. David was irreverent. Imagine that. The guy who was used by God to write many of the psalms—he questioned God. God can handle our emotional upheaval. He made us. He understands.

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** But the point is: "Don't give up."

**Shauna:** Yes.

**Dennis:** “Don’t quit. Your marriage, your family, your legacy, and your life are all worth it.”

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