

**Billy Graham Evangelistic Association
Communications – Cissie Graham Lynch
Fearless – Ep 136 – The Battlefield Has Arrived: How Proverbs Can Prepare Us
Final Transcript**

MUSIC STARTS

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:00:02 Hi, I'm Cissie Graham Lynch. Welcome to *Fearless*, helping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie:

00:00:21 Well, welcome back to today's episode of *Fearless*. And I'm excited because I happen to be here at The Cove, the Billy Graham Training Center, in Asheville, North Carolina. And to my family, The Cove is one of the most special places because this was the vision of my grandmother.

She wanted a place for people to come, for pastors and missionaries. A place to be restored and to renew and a getaway to just study God's Word. And so, I have a guest here who is no stranger to *Fearless*, and that is Gary Hamrick from Cornerstone Chapel in Leesburg, Virginia. Gary, you've been on *Fearless* multiple times, but it's the first time you and I have met in person.

Pastor Gary Hamrick:

00:00:58 And it's the first time I've been at The Cove. This is wonderful, and it's great to meet you in person finally, Cissie.

Cissie:

00:01:02 I know your ministry has been so dear to me over the years, and I've loved listening to you. I've wanted you here at The Cove for so many years—

Gary:

00:01:10 Thank you.

Cissie:

00:01:11 —and you're here. And, I will actually put more information, if you're interested. The Cove has seminars and conferences all throughout the year; Christmas, they have Christmas concerts, and I'll put that in our show notes of how you can find out more information about The Cove.

But Gary, this weekend, you're going to be teaching on Proverbs.

Gary:

00:01:27 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:01:28 And this, I think, it has been on your heart for a while, but of course, Proverbs is the book of wisdom.

Gary:

00:01:32 Right.

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Cissie:

00:01:33 It states the theme in the first few verses of Proverbs to be able to instill wisdom in God's people. And in the first verses it's written that Proverbs is to give prudence to the simple; knowledge and discretion to the young; and make the wise, even wiser; and that sounds like some good common sense.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]— Maybe our world lacks some good common sense right now—

Gary:

00:01:53 It does.

Cissie:

00:01:54 —when we look at everything going around us. But how does the book of Proverbs speak to us today?

Gary:

00:01:58 Yeah. I mean, the theme is of course, wisdom, and that's what we need. If ever we needed wisdom, it was in our day.

The word wisdom is actually found 51 times throughout the book of Proverbs. So that's the heavy theme. And I think a lot of times what we emphasize in our culture is knowledge. And knowledge is good, but knowledge is the accumulation of information; understanding is the interpretation of that information; but wisdom is the application. I don't think we lack for more information.—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—You know, we're living in the information age. We have all this information at the touch of a button on our phones. But it's wisdom. It's applying what we have heard or learned and knowing how it really applies to every aspect of life. So that's what I love about Proverbs.

That's what I'm excited about getting into this weekend at The Cove, helping people to understand here is what the Bible says about the practical ways we can address everyday issues of life.

Cissie:

00:02:54 When you look at Proverbs, what are some of the verses that speak out to you and what we're facing in our culture and in the world today?

Gary:

00:03:01 Oh, wow. Well, one is—and this is actually mentioned a couple times in Proverbs. I think in chapter six and again in chapter 24: "A little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands ... and poverty will come on you like a bandit and scarcity like an armed man." Now I don't think that only means poverty in the sense of, "If you're lazy, you won't earn a living." It does mean that, but I think it also speaks to the poverty we have right now: the poverty of truth, the poverty of the Gospel, the poverty of moral clarity. And why is that? Because we have become disengaged, "a little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands." We've checked out and therefore our culture now is adrift.

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And my passion is to really help the church, help believers, understand this is a time for us to be active, to be engaged. We can't check out. We can't fold our hands. And we can't decide that, you know, it's not worth the effort. If Christians don't get involved in the culture to be salt and light, who will? Who will make a difference? So that's one verse that really speaks to me. It just talks about—it spoke to me about the culture when I was reading through this in preparation for this weekend. Just how much there's the "little slumber, a little sleep, a little folding of the hands." People have checked out and then there's poverty of truth and moral clarity because of that. So that, that just spoke to me about the times in which we live.

Cissie:

00:04:28 Well, and to your point, my grandfather used to say—and I'm sure others say it, might not but I've heard it—

Gary:

00:04:34 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:04:35 —from him is that the Psalms would teach you how to get along with God, and the Proverbs teach you how to get along with man.

Gary:

00:04:40 I like that.

Cissie:

00:04:41 And gives you like just the practical living, the wisdom we need in a day to day—

Gary:

00:04:44 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:04:45 —time to give us that strength of how to get along with people, even in the public square, and to do that, we need wisdom—

Gary:

00:04:52 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:04:53 —in the days that we're facing. But, I think we're watching currently where Christians are beginning to operate in a spirit of fear.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—Even when you listen to maybe Christian influencers who are out there and they're speaking and acting in a spirit of fear and we see in the state of the world around us and they listen to these popular voices of our time and it just begins this reaction in chaos—

Gary:

00:05:16 Yeah.

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Cissie:

00:05:17 —even in the Christian sphere, in the Christian world. And how would Proverbs encourage us to live differently than that?

Gary:

00:05:22 In James, it speaks about two different types of wisdom. There can be an earthly wisdom and there can be a heavenly wisdom. Which one will you be tapped into? Earthly wisdom is based on selfish ambitions, selfish pursuits, the worldly philosophies. Heavenly wisdom is from above. And so, Proverbs is stressing *that* kind of wisdom. Meaning, we have a responsibility to really press into the Lord, that all this fear that we're facing right now—because social media has a way of just really taking one little bit of information and blowing it up out of proportion and you don't even know if it's true half the time. And so, then there's all this confusion, chaos, fear, worry, and the book of Proverbs centers us and it reminds us we have to press into the Lord if we're going to sift through all of the nonsense, chaos, fear, all of this stuff—we've got to seek the Lord. So I think that's what Proverbs is emphasizing; you and I need wisdom from above, and that's only going to come when we press into the Lord, and that's what's going to cut through all the fear, all the nonsense, all the lies, all the pandemonium in our world right now.

Cissie:

00:06:29 And of course, Scripture says, "*The fear of the Lord is the beginning of wisdom.*"

Gary:

00:06:31 That's exactly right.

Cissie:

00:06:32 What's your definition of fear of the Lord?

Gary:

00:06:33 Ah, that's great. That's a great question. So, "*fear of the Lord,*" to me, is an awesome reverence of God. Not to the point where I think He's unapproachable, but to the point where I sin less. Now, you know being a Christian doesn't mean we're sinless, but it should mean we *sin less* and when you have a healthy fear of the Lord, you want to honor Him, you want to revere Him. And so to me, it's a balance because some people have such a fear of the Lord, they think He's unapproachable. And, you know, what was it to "Amazing Grace," "'twas [His] grace that taught my heart to fear / and grace, my fears relieved." So, it's like when I have a healthy understanding of grace, I will fear God, but at the same time, I won't be afraid of Him.

Cissie:

00:07:17 I've been trying to teach my kids that.

Gary:

00:07:19 Yeah.

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Cissie:

00:07:20 You know, I have a 10-year-old, an 8-year-old, and a 1-year-old, but the two oldest have asked, “What does that mean to fear the Lord?” And I’ve just simply tried to keep it in—

Gary:

00:07:27 Simple terms.

Cissie:

00:07:28 —simple terms: Take the Lord seriously.

Gary:

00:07:29 I like that.

Cissie:

00:07:30 You take Him serious.

Gary:

00:07:31 I like that. I like that.

Cissie:

00:07:32 But if “*the fear of the Lord is the beginning of [a] wisdom,*” how does this help us overcoming, especially in the months, with the fear-based messaging we’re going to have in our culture? We got an election coming up in a, you know—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—just a few weeks, a few months. How does that help us navigate that?

Gary:

00:07:46 You know, I mean, Scripture talks about how perfect love drives out fear. So, it’s a choice. I have to decide every day: Am I going to believe the lies? Am I going to believe the chaos? ’Cause it’s really easy for our hearts to get weighed down with all the anxiety and the worries and fears of the world. It really comes down to: if love, perfect love, drives out fear, if the Lord is perfect love, I have to have more of Him and less of my own worries and less of my own concerns about the world.

So, it all goes back to there’s one central theme the Lord’s been putting in my heart year after year after year and it just keeps growing the older I get: Press into Me, press into Me, press into Me. That’s our only hope because otherwise we will give in to every concern that faces the world and we have to be above that.

Cissie:

00:08:29 Yeah. I was, you know, talking to somebody I work with and it’s during these times, it’s created a hunger for me for the Lord.

Gary:

00:08:36 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:08:37 Just a hunger to spend more time with Him.

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Gary:
00:08:38 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:08:39 You have the world that would probably seek fortune tellers and the psychics—

Gary:
00:08:42 Right. Yeah.

Cissie:
00:08:43 —for the future, but we have prophecy that has been, you know—

Gary:
00:08:45 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:08:46 —inspired by God, right? And we *know* who holds the future—

Gary:
00:08:48 That's right.

Cissie:
00:08:49 —and it's at our fingertips. You don't talk about the knowledge and the information world we're in, but *God's* information's at our fingertips.

Gary:
00:08:55 Yeah. We know how this Book ends.

Cissie:
00:08:56 Yeah.

Gary:
00:08:57 We know how the story ends.

Cissie:
00:08:58 So, I've had this like hunger, just such a peace in me of what we're facing, especially in the next few months. I love the political sphere.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—I love the good, the bad, the ugly of all the politics, but there's just a peace with this election cycle in my heart, you know, that God is on the throne and I've just—it's created more of a hunger for His Word. And so, for those who listen to *Fearless*, I say this almost every other episode, my favorite verse in Daniel is, "Those who know their God will be able to stand in strength and take action." And so, you know, that wisdom comes when we spend time with God—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—when we know it, because you were talking about a heavenly wisdom and an earthly wisdom, you know, throughout the Bible, it says, "Ask for wisdom and it should be given to you." And that's like—

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Gary:

00:09:39 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:09:40 —you know, tremendous benefit we have as Christians and I don't know if we always use it appropriately. So, how do we properly pray for wisdom and then *know* if we have received the godly wisdom, a heavenly wisdom you said?

Gary:

00:09:50 Yeah, and James 1 talks about that. He says, "Whoever lacks wisdom, let him ask," but then he adds, "... and let him not doubt when he asks for he who doubts is like a wave tossed by the sea. And he should not think that he will get anything because he's a double-minded man." So, the first thing that James instructs us in that regard is, when it comes to wisdom, pray and ask, and then we have to just trust the Lord that when we pray and ask, we will receive, and we don't doubt, then it becomes how do I actually see wisdom unfolding in my life? And the only way, Cissie, that I've tried to discern it, in answer to your question, over the years is, you just have to test it. And you have to just, you know, take those gentle steps of, OK, this may not make sense in some ways, but this is what I feel like is the wisdom from the Lord, and then you act on it, and when you see how it works out, it builds your faith for the next time.

So, you know, wisdom isn't always going to be obvious in the moment. In fact, I think a lot of times wisdom is the opposite of what, like, the natural response would be to something, but wisdom comes through prayer and asking for it, reading our Bibles, and just soaking in more of what the Lord has for us. And then as we apply it, as we, you know, step out and make little decisions here and little decisions there and watch how God will bless us with His wisdom.

Cissie:

00:11:07 I love the setup of Proverbs.

Gary:

00:11:10 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:11:11 We have 31 chapters.

Gary:

00:11:12 Yep.

Cissie:

00:11:13 It's a perfect setup to read one chapter—

Gary:

00:11:14 One chapter a day, yeah.

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Cissie:

00:11:15 —a day for the month. My grandfather used to read five Psalms a day and one Proverb on top of his daily reading. I can't say I do that. That's a lot of Psalms.

Gary:

00:11:25 I love that.

Cissie:

00:11:26 Sometimes I'll try one Psalm, but one Proverb—but when I am in the habit of doing one Proverb a day, it is amazing. As I said earlier, it gives us wisdom of how to live with man and how to get along with man.

Gary:

00:11:36 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:11:37 And it is. And it's the daily wisdom we need. I can't tell you, and I'm sure you can speak to it of how many times—I know one time my husband and I were kind of in this business ordeal that had gone wrong and how do we handle that? And I opened it up and that Proverb gave the direct answer that we needed, just to step away from that moment. And I read it to my husband, and we were both at peace of how we were to answer that. Or how, you know, when somebody has hurt our feelings or betrayed our trust. Proverbs—the Lord, the Holy Spirit speaks through that on a daily basis—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—so I encourage those listening, maybe start one a day on top of your daily reading.

Gary:

00:12:10 I've got a similar story if I could share.—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—When we first started our church 33 years ago now, the first seven years we were meeting in a school building and I just kept wanting an actual church building. I was like tired of the setup at a school—anybody, any of your viewers—

Cissie:

00:12:25 I've been there before.

Gary:

00:12:26 —or listeners—yeah, a startup church, you know, you're unpacking stuff and you're living out of boxes, and so I was just like I—Lord, I want us to have a building. Where's the building? And this is just how the Lord uses Proverbs in those everyday practical ways that would have meant *nothing* to anyone else in the moment. I open up, it's in Proverbs chapter 24, it's verse 27.

It says, "Finish your outdoor work, tend to your fields, then build your house." And in *that* moment, it just spoke to me, which was—you know how Jesus said, "The fields are wide unto harvest, and pray therefore that the Lord of the harvest would send workers into His harvest field," so when I read that verse, to me, it spoke about how my more important role in the moment was to tend the fields, like, shepherd the people, make sure the Gospel's going out, don't worry about building the house just

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yet. Then if you're faithful as a shepherd to tend the fields to, you know, care for people, in due time, then you will build the house. And so, you know, a few years later we were able to buy, and then later, build a church. But the point is in the moment when you're dealing with something, it's amazing how you can just be reading a proverb and God will use that to speak to you uniquely in your situation, so—

Cissie:

00:13:37 Yeah, it helps us in that daily life.

Gary:

00:13:38 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:13:39 And like I said, we all need it. It seems like we're lacking in the common sense—

Gary:

00:13:42 We are.

Cissie:

00:13:43 —department in this world. You can just drive down the road and you see people lack common sense.

Gary:

00:13:47 A lot of smart people, educated, but where is the common sense these days? There should be a course on common sense. I don't know what's happened.

Cissie:

00:13:55 Read a Proverb a day.

Gary:

00:13:56 Yeah, read a Proverb a day.

Cissie:

00:13:57 OK. Just for fun.

Gary:

00:13:59 OK.

Cissie:

00:14:00 Maybe. Maybe it's not for fun. If you could give a Proverb, if there's a proverb or verse that sticks out in your mind that you would give—we've got a presidential election coming up—

Gary:

00:14:07 OK [chuckles].

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Cissie:
00:14:08 —to each presidential candidate—

Gary:
00:14:09 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:14:10 —is there a Proverb?

Gary:
00:14:11 Yeah, there's a few actually. One is out of Proverbs ... 29. I think it's verse two. "When the righteous rule, the people rejoice; when the wicked are in authority, the people groan." I'm tired of groaning, Cissie.

Cissie:
00:14:25 Yeah.

Gary:
00:14:26 I am, I am wanting and praying for, and, you know—the thing is, look, I don't want to put my hope in a man, in a woman, in a person. I want to put my hope always in the Lord Jesus Christ. But it is true when there are godly people in authority, then the people rejoice. When you have a wicked leadership, there's a sense of groaning. There's a sense of just a constant discomfort, you know, so that'd be one verse.

Another proverb comes to mind is, "Pride comes before the fall—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—and a haughty spirit before destruction," and boy, I pray that our leaders would be humble and, you know, "Righteousness exalts a nation. Sin is a reproof to any people," so may there be righteous leaders and may they be humble in their leadership. I think it's incumbent upon the church to be praying for our leaders, 'cause I don't think that's going to come naturally for them.

Cissie:
00:15:14 Well, your church is right outside of Washington, D.C.—

Gary:
00:15:16 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:15:17 —for those that don't know and who are listening, and I have appreciated you over the years. I've seen some pastors who have remained silent on issues that are not even political or cultural.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—I always dislike when people say, "Well, I don't want to be political, but ..."

Gary:
00:15:31 Yeah. Yeah, well—

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Cissie:

00:15:32 That phrase really drives me nuts.

Gary:

00:15:33 Yeah, it does.

Cissie:

00:15:34 But I've watched some people stay silent. Some Christian pastors who have gotten involved now have gone too far—

Gary:

00:15:40 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:15:41 —and have probably said too much things that are, maybe, tend to be unbiblical. What I've appreciated about you and your platform is you've kept your eyes focused on the cross.

Gary:

00:15:49 Thank you.

Cissie:

00:15:50 You haven't shied away from tough topics.

Gary:

00:15:51 Right.

Cissie:

00:15:52 You teach your congregation about what's going on in the culture and how to respond to it Biblically.

Gary:

00:15:57 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:15:58 But how do you keep that balance? To those who are listening, how do we keep that balance of we're fighting for our children, our family, for truth, but to not waver on the Gospel, to keep our eyes solely focused on Him?

Gary:

00:16:10 You know, it goes back to—I keep harping on the same verse about being salt and light. You know, salt has a penetrating aspect. Light, illuminating, you know, we need to be in the world, but not of the world. Christians need to have a voice. But to your point, you know, one of the things that sometimes people like you and me get accused of are being Christian nationalists, OK. Now they mean it in a disparaging way. If it were only to mean, "I love God and country," great, call me 'Christian nationalist,' but people are using that term these days to say, You just want a theocracy in your government and you want, you know, Christians to rule and reign.

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Look, I have no illusions. There will not be a perfect government until Jesus comes again. So keeping our eyes focused on Jesus is absolutely essential.

But I also take to heart, Martin Luther once said, If you preach the Gospel in every aspect without addressing the issues of your time, you are not preaching the Gospel at all. And so, I think it's important that pastors are preaching through the Bible, and, if you teach through the Bible, you're going to hit every cultural aspect out there.

Another thing that drives me crazy is when somebody says, You're being too political and not Biblical. Listen, the politics has hijacked the Biblical narrative. When politics starts talking about life, marriage, sex, you know, gender, that's all Biblical stuff. So, for me to talk about life and that there are actually two biological sexes and things like that, when people go, You're being political, it's like, no, no, no, actually God had a commentary on all those topics way before politics. So, we're just trying to stay consistent with Scripture.

But just reminding people, be engaged in your culture, be salt and light, don't waver, and keep your eye on the cross because if this isn't about Jesus, then we're doing it all in vain, and if we're trying to, just in our human effort, try to usher in something, then that's fruitless. So, it's all about clinging to the Lord, making Him known, staying true to our values, and our Biblical worldview.

Cissie:

00:18:16 I was talking to a friend and we're just sharing a story and he grew up as a young boy, you know, of course we just had the Olympics. I'm watching the Olympics and Bruce Jenner was his idol, right? He just had a poster of Bruce Jenner on his wall. He had the Wheaties box. And he said, Never could I have fathomed in my wildest dreams and in anything I could have imagine of what Bruce Jenner would become today—

Gary:

00:18:41 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:18:42 —and claimed to be a woman and dressed as a woman and name himself Caitlyn Jenner. He just said, "I couldn't even fathom that." And people often say, "I never thought I would see the day ..."

Gary:

00:18:50 Hmm, yeah.

Cissie:

00:18:51 Where do you find yourself saying that when you see our culture? It was like, "I never would have thought I've seen the day," or what's to come in the future?

Gary:

00:18:57 I mean, how many answers can I give to that question? There's been so many things in the last five, 10 years I never thought we'd see. Probably the one

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phrase that I'd finish that sentence with is, I never thought we'd see the day where sane people were believing insane things. Where people are just all of a sudden thinking something is normal when just a few years ago everybody would have known that's not normal, and so—you know, one of the things, Cissie, I hear sometimes when people come to Cornerstone, they say, We just like to come to church to know that we're not going crazy. Isn't that, that's sad, but that's also fun.

Because they want to make sure when they're hearing all these things in the world that they're supposed to be convinced are true, but they realize this isn't true, but everybody else is saying they're true. Please let somebody tell me I'm not going crazy. So it is the most chaotic and confusing time in which we've lived but here's the good news: This is also a very exciting time—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—because, you know, I could say 25, 30 years ago, a lot of people—I don't know if I should even say most—but a lot of people, Christian and non-Christian, were pretty agreed on what's right and what's wrong.

Now, there's very little agreement about what's right and what's wrong. It's all this, "your truth, my truth" relative. And so, now there's an opportunity to bring the Gospel in the ways that I think 25 or 30 years ago, people who, kind of non-Christians, who understood right and wrong were like, Oh yeah, yeah OK, the Bible, that's fine, but you know, I'm OK and I'm good, but now it confronts people in a way that it's never confronted them before, and so they have to make a decision: Am I going to believe the lies or am I going to believe this truth? So there's more opportunity, I think, today to—

Cissie:
00:20:47 Yeah.

Gary:
00:20:48 —speak into the culture when 25 and 30 years ago, the culture is like, You know, we're fine. We don't really need that.

Cissie:
00:20:52 Well, and you just said most people agreed on basic principles of truth and now we don't, and I think it is, to your point, is an exciting time also for Christians to be reminded Jesus hasn't come back yet—

Gary:
00:21:04 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:21:05 —so there's work to be done.

Gary:
00:21:06 That's right.

Cissie:
00:21:07 God still wants us to be bringing His children into the Kingdom.

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Gary:
00:21:09 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:21:10 And that means we have to be actively sharing the Gospel.

Gary:
00:21:12 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:21:13 And I think that is something we've been so comfortable in the last, I don't know, 20 years, 25 years—maybe that's just for my perspective—but that we've been so comfortable. We didn't need to share the Gospel directly, but *now* it's urgent. There is an urgency that we *have* to share truth, and I just encourage that because I had this encounter with a girl at a salon this summer—and to make a very long story short—if I was to judge by looks I would think she was so liberal and so far out there, but I always look for creative ways to get my foot in the door—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—and something just happened to come up about Pride month and I just found a very compassionate way—it's like, I'm going to test the waters here.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—And I said, "Yeah, you know, my daughter, she's 10, but she wanted to know why is Pride month a whole month? Why do they get a whole month and not just—

Gary:
00:21:56 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:21:57 —one day?" So just, you know, she goes, "I know, right?" I said, Well, here we go. And, but she wasn't a believer. I was able to get the Gospel in there and was like, "Well, how do I share this with my kids and teaching them compassion doesn't need to spill over into compromise?" And she goes, "I've never heard that before." And she was just asking, she was hungry for questions. And the point to all of that is, I think there's a world out there that—I *know* there's a world out there—they want to hear truth. And we as Christians have failed because we don't want to offend, and we just want to love, and we don't want to hurt, but there is a world out there that wants to hear it.

Gary:
00:22:28 You're absolutely right. And if I could just piggyback onto that, there's a fear of sharing because we're going to be labeled haters, bigots, whatever it is, because truth sometimes by itself is offensive. You know, when truth confronts me—I mean even to this day, I've been a believer since I was 15, so I'm 61 now—I open up my Bible, there are times it confronts me and truth stings, but it's what we need, and so I just want to encourage your listeners, because they might be timid to share the Gospel because, Well somebody's going think that I'm judging them. Like what you know you were talking about your example. It's like, listen, this is an urgent hour. If a building was on fire, you would want to rush in if you could and rescue anybody who needed to be rescued. We got to see the world like that. The world's on fire—

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Cissie:
00:23:16 Yeah.

Gary:
00:23:17 —and people need to be rescued.

Cissie:
00:23:18 And just pray that the Lord will give you creative ways—

Gary:
00:23:21 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:23:22 —and loving ways to just get your foot in the door and to be bold.

But, going back, you do live in Loudoun County, Virginia, which is outside of D.C., as I stated, but interestingly, I didn't know your church is on Battlefield Parkway.

Gary:
00:23:34 Yeah.

Cissie:
00:23:35 That's the name of the street.

Gary:
00:23:36 That's the name of the of the street. We're actually the—it was a brand-new parkway that was built and we're the *only* building in Leesburg on Battlefield Parkway. I had to fight for that address, because I actually wanted it. When we were first being assigned an address and I guess actually the fire department gets to decide because they have to know where to go in the event of a fire. We had to convince the fire department we want a Battlefield address, because we're in a battle and I and I just—

Cissie:
00:24:00 But this is how many years ago? How long have you been in this building?

Gary:
00:24:02 Oh, we only built this building seven years ago.

Cissie:
00:24:04 Oh, OK.

Gary:
00:24:05 Yeah. And so Battlefield Parkway is relatively new in Leesburg. And, so we front three roads, and they wanted us to have an address of a different road, and I'm like, "No, no, no, we're also facing Battlefield. I want that Battlefield address." Because we're in a battle, it speaks to, you know, what our mission is. This is a spiritual battle that we are in, so ...

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Cissie:

00:24:23 Well, the battle came to your front door—

Gary:

00:24:25 It did, yeah.

Cissie:

00:24:26 —over the last four years.

Gary:

00:24:27 Maybe I shouldn't have asked for that street name.

Cissie:

00:24:28 You do have to be careful what you pray for and ask for. But the battle did come to your front door.

Gary:

00:24:35 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:24:36 The woke culture just came knocking and trying to tear down everything from critical race theory to the moms going to the school board meetings, and they label terrorists—

Gary:

00:24:44 Yeah, that's right.

Cissie:

00:24:45 —domestic terrorists. A man that attends your church, I believe, was let go from his job because he refused to use preferred pronouns. So, you have found yourself in the middle of all of it—[Gary: Mm-hmm]—you and your congregants. When you're talking to your congregation during these times like this, how do you help them make sense of this? How do you encourage them to get involved but not discouraged? What's your heart from there?

Gary:

00:25:06 Yeah. Well to your point, the battle came to us. We didn't really go looking for it. So, I found myself on the back end of it, you know, not having to encourage people to be involved but actually helping them to navigate now that they are and a couple of the people in our church were arrested at a school board meeting for like, you know, public nuisance. The parents at our school board meeting, they were the ones that Merrick Garland, the attorney general, called domestic terrorists. Those are parents from our church who were at school board meetings fighting for their children because of this policy that Loudoun County public school board came up with called policy 8040, which allows students to determine whatever gender they want to be and force teachers and fellow students to acknowledge those kids by whatever pronoun they wanted. The guy you're referencing is Tanner Cross, who

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was a P.E. teacher—spoke out against it. They fired the guy. Alliance Defending Freedom had to fight; they won the case, got his job back.

Cissie:

00:26:01 And I think it wasn't at school, he was at a meeting—

Gary:

00:26:04 Well, he was at a school board meeting where the public could go and voice their opinions. So that's where he was, and they still, Well you're a P.E. teacher, so we're going to fire you. So the whole thing just is a mess. And so, I found our congregation just up in arms about what was happening in our world, in our state. So just had to help them navigate, like stay strong, stay true, keep speaking truth, and we're going to trust the Lord through all this.

Cissie:

00:26:29 How about you during that time personally, you know, behind the scenes, because wow, that was just a lot to take in—

Gary:

00:26:36 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:26:37 —within a short few months of discouragement. I can't imagine, you know, the letters and everything—

Gary:

00:26:42 I got some letters, yeah.

Cissie:

00:26:43 —that's come your way.

Gary:

00:26:44 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:26:45 How did the Lord meet you in that moment?

Gary:

00:26:46 You know, the Lord was so gracious because, whenever you—and this is true for anybody, right—whenever you stand for what is true and right, God's going to defend you. In fact, I think I remember your grandfather once saying he never needed to feel the sense to defend himself because God was his defender. And, I just always thought that was great advice. It's like, I don't need to defend myself. God's my defender. None of us has to defend ourselves when we know what we're doing is right and true. We're speaking truth and make sure you speak the truth in love. There's an abrasive way to communicate truth and there's a gracious way. And I hope we always err on the gracious way of communicating truth.

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And, yeah, I made *one* comment that went viral. The Daily Wire picked it up and it went viral. But it was a statement that if you affirm a child for a pronoun that they want that is not their biological sex, but you're going around saying, Yeah, yeah, you can be ... I said, That's emotional child abuse, and that went viral. It's like, but I wasn't the one who came up with that. Dr. Michelle Cretella, who I think was the executive director of the American Pediatrics. She's an M.D.—[Cissie: Mm-hmm.]—She said, all of this—gender surgeries and mutilation of bodies and stuff—she said that's emotional child abuse. I was just quoting her, but they thought I came up with that phrase. And anyway, the world will come unglued and it's OK. Keep your peace. Just know that you're serving the Lord. Speak truth and let the chips fall where they may. God will take care of you.

Cissie:

00:28:15 We, of course, live in a world of turbulent times. We have wars going on overseas.

Gary:

00:28:19 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:28:20 We're in an economic crisis here in our own country and fighting these cultural wars. As a pastor, what has the Lord laid on your heart for your congregation to lead them during this time?

Gary:

00:28:30 You know, our focus is always the Word, and the Word is going to help us to sort through all of the chaos. I just try to encourage people. You know, there will be wars and rumors of wars. There will be economic hardships. There will be times when the world is a mess. You know, Jesus—you look at Matthew 24, and He gives us all of this information about the signs of the times and what to expect. And so, it's just a reminder, look, we know who's victorious at the end. We're on the right team. Make sure we're on the Lord's side, and just fight the good fight of the faith. You know, it's just a matter of being consistent in your faith, consistent in your walk with the Lord, staying close to Him, and God's going to take care of everything else.

Cissie:

00:29:17 Yeah, I think that's a good reminder to parents out there. I'm a parent to young children right now—

Gary:

00:29:23 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:29:24 —and I have so many friends that just the worrisome of the world—

Gary:

00:29:26 Yeah.

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Cissie:

00:29:27 —can get them very worried for the future of their children, but that’s consistent in your faith.—[Gary: Mm-hmm.]—

Speaking of children, and before we close, I do want to touch base on this because I thought it was pretty fascinating. Your church just started a school—

Gary:

00:29:39 Yeah, we did.

Cissie:

00:29:40 —after we’re talking about those board—

Gary:

00:29:41 Mm-hmm, yeah.

Cissie:

00:29:42 —or school board meetings. That is a huge undertaking, and I’m sure you’ve even learned more of what it was of an undertaking even after the fact and continue to do, but why did you feel the urgency—

Gary:

00:29:51 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:29:52 —to start a school?

Gary:

00:29:53 Yeah, it was one of those things that was not on my radar, but it was because of what was happening in Loudoun County Public Schools where these different policies and we had other things going on too which ended up in lawsuits. A girl was sexually assaulted in a restroom by a guy who, under the guise of “I identify as a girl,” got into the girl’s restroom and sexually assaulted her. And then the school board covered it up and took that guy, put him in another school where he assaulted another girl. So, all this kind of stuff was going on and then these woke policies and I—

Actually, Cissie, quick story. This is what happened. I was looking at a building in our town for the purpose of maybe opening a homeless shelter. Loudoun County is one of the wealthiest counties in the country, but it also has its share of homelessness. And I’m standing at this building with our realtor, and I’m looking at it, and I’m like, “You know what? This would be a better school. It’s a little too big for a homeless shelter.” And, the guy said, “If you want a school, I got a school.” I’m like, Well, I wasn’t really looking for a school. I’m just talking out loud. He took me—so it’s about 20 miles from our church. It was a school that closed during COVID on 90 acres, has about 150,000 square feet of building, tennis courts, high school gymnasium, I mean the whole thing, but they had closed during COVID. And when I walked on that campus, the Lord just kind of whispered in my heart, “I want you to offer a solution

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and not just talk about the problem.” And so, we bought it. Our church board was on board with it quickly, no pun intended. We bought the property, we renovated it, and last year we opened it up with 550 K-8 students. It was the largest grand opening of any Christian school in the history of ACSI, the Association for Christian Schools International, and it was all just because the Lord kind of dropped it on our laps. That’s the way He’s always operated with me. I’m not the most visionary, but God just kind of drops stuff on our laps, and we walk through the door, and God’s done the rest. He does.

Cissie:

00:31:50 Oh, well, one last question—

Gary:

00:31:52 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:31:53 —before we close. We got some crazy weeks ahead—

Gary:

00:31:54 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:31:55 —and I’m sure as we’re sitting here talking, it’s going to just get crazier—

Gary:

00:31:57 Yeah.

Cissie:

00:31:58 —with the election coming up. What is your last bit of encouragement as a reminder to those who are listening today with the weeks ahead?

Gary:

00:32:05 It is. It’s so crazy. I’m looking at the news every day. I’m just like, “What is going on in our country?” My encouragement is look, first of all, always keep our eyes on Jesus. Jesus is not on the ballot, so we’re not going to elect a perfect person, but I tell our congregation every election cycle, vote your values, for the person who most closely aligns with your Christian, Biblical worldviews. There’s not a perfect candidate, but to sit it out is even worse. And no matter who occupies the White House or the governor’s mansion of your state, keep your eyes on the throne because Jesus still occupies the throne. That’s my encouragement.

Cissie:

00:32:48 Gary, thank you. Thank you for using your platform at Cornerstone, the pulpit, to point people to truth during times where people are really searching for truth and not wavering. You and your church have been great supporters of Samaritan’s Purse over the years. All the time I’ll have volunteers come up and say, “Oh, we go to Gary Hamrick’s church.”

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Gary:

00:33:09 Oh, bless their hearts.

Cissie:

00:33:10 They've been sweet, or we get letters, and notes saying—whenever you're on *Fearless*—"Oh, he's our pastor." "Oh, we listen to him from afar." And so, I'm just speaking for many. Thank you. And just praying for you and your church and the leadership of the church and the people of Loudoun County because the world always watches Loudoun County, outside of D.C.

Gary:

00:33:28 Thank you, Cissie. You're very kind. We appreciate everything you're doing too. And yes, I love Samaritan's Purse. Love what your dad's doing. Love Billy Graham Evangelistic Association. The whole thing that God has been doing through your family is just such an amazing work of God. And so, I'm happy to just be a tiny little part of knowing you and knowing what's going on here. Thank you.

Cissie:

00:33:47 Well, thank you. And it's been a pleasure to finally meet you.

MUSIC STARTS

Gary:

00:33:49 Thank you. You too.

MUSIC TRANSITION

Cissie Graham Lynch:

00:33:54 Once again, thank you for joining Gary and I on this episode of *Fearless*. And I want to remind you to go to TheCove.org to check out, to see if there's a seminar or a weekend you would like to come visit The Cove. And often at Christmas, there's Christmas concerts. It's a great time to get away with maybe a weekend away with a spouse or a group of friends to be refreshed and renewed.

Once again, thank you for joining me on this episode of *Fearless*, hoping you have a fearless faith in a compromising culture.

CLOSING MUSIC

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