



**This Undone Life Together Podcast**  
Season 2 – Relentless

A God Who We Can Experience With Each Other  
November 17, 2020

*Are you aching for a love that will never leave, a presence that will push back the dark? If so, I have good news for you. God's love is relentless even when your faith isn't.*

Welcome to *Relentless*, a 15-episode podcast designed to give you a behind-the-scenes look at the stories and the biblical history that make up the pages of my newest book, *Relentless: The Unshakeable Presence of a God Who Never Leaves*. My goal is two-fold. First, to help you know you're not alone, but most importantly to help you discover evidence of God's presence in the middle of your story, because whether you can see him, feel him or not, he is with you.

Today, we are on our last episode in chapter 13, which is, "Living Stones: A God Whose Presence Is Experienced with Each Other." We've been talking about how we experience the reality of God in our relationships with one another to some extent, but we're going to dig in deeper here on what this looks like as we live this living stone mentality out.

There is a section of Scripture in the book of 1 Peter 2...1 Peter 2:4-5 and verse 9...that really helped me get the title for this chapter but is also the heart behind what we're talking about here. It's written by Peter. I pick up right here in verse 4.

**"As you come to him, the living Stone – rejected by humans but chosen by God and precious to him – you also, like living stones, are being built into a spiritual house to be a holy priesthood, offering spiritual sacrifices acceptable to God through Jesus Christ. [...]**

**But you are a chosen people, a royal priesthood, a holy nation, God's special possession, that you may declare the praises of him who called you out of darkness into his wonderful light."**

That section of Scripture really summed up everything we're talking about, because God is the living stone, but we are living stones testifying to *the* stone. We are very much a chip off the old block. Right? We are living stones, and when we establish our altar of God's presence in our lives (this memorial marking the reality of God's presence with us), we then become living stones that testify to the God who has seen us through our Jordan Rivers to this moment and who will see us the rest of the way home.

There is nothing more inspiring or compelling or exciting than watching somebody else's faith and belief just take off like fire. It's contagious. That's what being living stones is all about, but it requires us not only being a reflection of *the* living stone, Jesus the Cornerstone, but also operating with compassion with each other. How do we walk this out in relationship with each other? In *Relentless*, in this final chapter, I quote Henri Nouwen. I'm going to read it now.

"The word *compassion*, writes Henri Nouwen, is derived from the Latin words *pati* and *com* which together means to suffer with. 'Compassion asks us to go where it hurts, to enter into the places of pain, to share in brokenness, fear, confusion, and anguish. Compassion challenges us to cry out with those in misery, to mourn with those who are lonely, to weep with those in tears. Compassion requires us to be weak with the weak, vulnerable with the vulnerable, and powerless with the powerless. Compassion means full immersion in the condition of being human.'

True compassion is full immersion. To recognize pain and to refuse to walk past it. To sit down, get uncomfortable right there in another's writhing, and do what we can to bear it with them. Sounds like covenant. Like the pillar of cloud and fire. The incarnation. The cross. Doing this – doing what He did by entering in – will wreck us." And it will save us.

We are called to be living stones. What does true immersion mean? What does this true immersion mean to be human? What does it look like to immerse ourselves in the human condition? I've come up with three requirements of compassion to do this full immersion, to immerse ourselves into this.

1. *Compassion requires us to push into our own pain.* To not ignore what has wounded us. To not try to stuff it or numb it or ignore it or walk away from it but to push in to our own pain. To take it, all of its big ugly mess, and take it to Jesus. To be fully immersed there with him.

2. *Compassion requires us to trust and then experience God's presence in our pain.* If we are constantly raging against our pain or refusing to deal with it, we cannot experience God's presence in it. God's presence is where the pain is. God's presence is where the pain is. That's where he meets us. That's what the cross is.

Remember, it's the intersection of God's pain and our own. God's presence is where the pain is. If you and I are continually numbing it, walking away from it, refusing to deal with it, or stuffing it and raging against it, then we will miss out on the sweetness of God's presence right then and there. First, we have to push into our own pain. Then, we trust and experience God's presence with us in our pain. Then and only then...

3. *Compassion requires we enter into the pain of others.* We cannot help anybody with their pain unless we have dealt with our own with Jesus himself. As our pain, our wounds, and our suffering are held in God's hands, then we have space and capacity to hold space with the pain of others. We cannot minister to those when we haven't received the ministry of God himself ourselves. We need to push into our pain, trust and experience God's presence in our pain, and then enter into the pain of others.

A couple of episodes ago I read a chapter from Philip Yancey's newest book, *Fearfully and Wonderfully: The Marvel of Bearing God's Image*. He has an entire section on the language of pain. This is written by Philip Yancey and Dr. Paul Brand. In it, on page 136, Philip and Dr. Brand say,

"Tragically those who are struggling with divorce, alcoholism, gender or sexual identity, introversion, rebelliousness, unemployment or marginalization often report that the church is the last group to show them compassion. Like a person who takes aspirin at the first sign of a headache, we want to silence them without addressing the underlying causes.

Someone once asked John Wesley's mother, 'Which one of your eleven children do you love the most?' Her answer was as wise as the question foolish: 'I love the one who's sick until he's well, and the one who's away until he comes home.' That, I believe, is God's attitude toward our suffering planet." Jesus always stood on the side of those who were suffering. He came for the sick and not the well, the sinners and not the righteous.

My friends, I am honored to be counted among the sick and the sinners who Jesus has come for. I am not well or righteous, not even on my best days. I am merely a sick woman Jesus has chosen to come alongside and to heal. That's it. No more. No less. And it's enough. This is what true compassion looks like.

When we start to understand that God has entered into our illness, our sickness, and our sinfulness, and offered himself, when we are able to be recipients of that kind of healing and that kind of mercy, then we can make space for those around us who are also sick and sinful, who are unwell and desperate, who are lonely and needy and broken and dealing with addictions and challenges and problems that are very unseemly but not uncommon for the likes of us.

At the end of *Relentless*, I shared a story of when I stood on the edge of a place called *Gwennap Pit*. It is an old abandoned mine. They believe it was a mine that caved in on itself. It has a dip in it. It's an outdoor amphitheater. I went to visit in when I was in Cornwall for a speaking engagement.

Generations of my family came full circle in that moment because about 300 years ago, my great-great-great-grandparents lived in Cornwall and were likely at Gwennap Pit to hear John Wesley deliver a sermon there. Here I was in 2017, and I stood at the edge of Gwennap Pit knowing my ancestors were likely there.

I felt so strongly in that moment that God was helping me see that he's the same yesterday, today, and tomorrow, and the same God who pursued my relatives and my ancestors back then is the same God who pursues me now and is the same God who will pursue the generations that come after me, because he is relentless in his affection and in his desire for his creation.

He is relentless in his love and his desire to be with his people. Period. It has nothing to do with us and has everything to do with just the nature of his heart and character. That moment at Gwennap Pit I realized the greatest thing I have going for me is not any writing ability or speaking ability or mothering ability or any talents I have or any goodness I try to muster.

The greatest thing I have going for me is God's presence in me. The greatest thing I have going for me (the only thing that gives me any kind of glory) is the fact that the God of the universe calls me by my name. He has made me his own. I can't explain it. All I can do is accept it, and I do.

The same is true for you. God's presence and not our performance is our glory. The good news is our performance is highly unpredictable. We can be good and holy and righteous one day, and we can blow it before 8:00 a.m. on the next. Our performance is highly unpredictable and

highly disappointing. Yet, God's presence is guaranteed. "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you," he promised. Before we wrap up, I simply want to read from Revelation. We started in Genesis. We will end in Revelation. It seems appropriate. This is what is coming.

**"Then I saw 'a new heaven and a new earth,' for the first heaven and the first earth had passed away, and there was no longer any sea. I saw the Holy City, the new Jerusalem, coming down out of heaven from God, prepared as a bride beautifully dressed for her husband.**

**And I heard a loud voice from the throne saying, 'Look! God's dwelling place is now among the people, and he will dwell with them. They will be his people, and God himself will be with them and be their God. "He will wipe every tear from their eyes. There will be no more death" or mourning or crying or pain, for the old order of things has passed away.'**

**He who was seated on the throne said, 'I am making everything new!' Then he said, 'Write this down, for the these words are trustworthy and true.' He said to me: 'It is done.'" That sounds eerily like Jesus saying, "It is finished," doesn't it? **"It is done. I am the Alpha and the Omega, the Beginning and the End. To the thirsty I will give water without cost from the spring of the water of life. Those who are victorious will inherit all this, and I will be their God and they will be my children."****

My friend, this is the one glorious golden thread throughout the entire Bible from Genesis to Revelation, and it is the one thread that has been consistent from your birth to your death. God is with us. God's desire is not to browbeat you into obedience, to beat you up, and tell you how you need to be so much better.

His aim, his heart, and his goal is to let you know how recklessly and relentlessly he loves you, and he has given all of himself (everything he had) to make sure you know that more than anything his desire is to be with you forever. God's goal from day one was presence. Everything (the garden, the covenant, the cross, and the Spirit) was all God pushing in,

because he knew that those who were wounded by this life and those who were wounded by relationship would only be healed in relationship, and the one relationship we needed most of all was God himself.

My friends, I know this doesn't answer all of the questions and solve all of the riddles or resolve all of the mystery. That was never my goal. My hope is that maybe in the last 15 episodes and in the reading of the book and your own study of the Bible that you would come to understand that this life can be beautiful but it can also be really hard, but even when it's downright excruciating there is a God with us in the middle of it, and he is not going to leave us alone.

He is with us even now, and there will come a day when he will come for us and take us home. Like Revelation said, he's making all things new. All things new! Don't stop searching, friends. Our God wants you to find him. Thank you for being with me on this 15-episode journey through *Relentless: The Unshakeable Presence of a God Who Never Leaves*.

Jesus said, "I will not leave you as orphans. I will come to you." In spite of years of wrestling, I can tell you without a shadow of a doubt I believe him, and that, my friends, is something really worth living for.

*Are you aching for a love that will never leave, a presence that will push back the dark? If so, I have good news for you. God's love is relentless even when your faith isn't, and the circumstances you fear might drown your faith could become the stones giving testimony to it. Join me, and let's find evidence of him together.*