

## **FM: Growing a Strong Marriage Creates a Healthy Family 7: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HUSBANDS DEEPEST NEEDS**

*“A man should fulfill his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other’s needs.” 1 Corinthians 7:3*

As I mentioned last week, the primary source for much of the information contained in last weeks and this weeks sermons come from a book titled: His Needs Her Needs, by Dr. Willard Harley. He was the director of a group of mental health clinics in Minn. I don’t always agree with everything he says, but I resonate with his discussion of human need! Your needs may not be in the exact order as these I am about to present, but I hope you will see yourself somewhere in this list.

Many young (and some not so young) couples have a basic misunderstanding that often leads to unnecessary conflict in the early stages of a marriage. Most young men and women think that their young spouses have the same needs they do. They don’t, and our purpose today is to try to help us understand the unique needs that men have, and ultimately to provide some practical ways wives might meet those needs for their husbands.

Following our wedding 32 years ago, Susan and I stood in a line to greet our guests. We received some wonderful advice from loving family and caring friends...and we heard some nonsense too! The most amazing thing said to us came from one of our great uncles, who told us: “try to live your life out pleasing each other.” At the time I wasn’t sure what that meant, and it’s taken me the better part of 32 years to figure it out. I’m sure I still have much to learn; but I think what he was saying was a very accurate description of exactly what our text today defines marriage to be. When a young (or not so young) couple comes to this or any other altar, what they are declaring to the world is that they are consciously and willingly agreeing to replace the primacy and superiority of their own needs with the needs of their spouse.

That message doesn't sell well in this "looking out for # 1 culture", but in my mind is exactly what a Christian marriage, is all about! I suppose there exist any number of happy and satisfying marriages in the world today, but I rather doubt that any two people living without the example and strength of Jesus Christ in their marriage will be able to make the conscious, self-denying choices, required to put their spouses needs ahead of their own.

Last week we discovered that a wife's basic needs included: Affection, Conversation, Openness and Honesty, Financial Security and Support, and a Commitment to the family. Today we're going to try to figure out a husband's deepest needs:

#### **1. MY HUSBAND NEEDS SEXUAL INTIMACY**

*"The wife has no longer full rights over her body. She shares them with her husband. In the same way the husband's body doesn't belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not cheat each other of normal sexual relations unless you both decide to abstain temporarily to make special time for prayer. But afterwards you should resume relations as before or you will expose yourself to the obvious temptations of Satan."* 1 Cor. 7: 4-5

Big surprise here huh?? Aren't you just 'blown away' that this is number one? We don't have time to delve into the common debate about the frequency of sexual relations, or the techniques. Two loving adults ought to be able to find the ability to settle on some compromises in these areas. Two loving adults committed to each other ought to be able to figure out how to make this important area of their relationship work out for mutual pleasure and benefit.

What I do want to consider for a few minutes is how strong this need is in most men. It is not that all men are lusting pigs; it's that God has created us to need this intimacy in our lives. Women, wives, you can despise this need in your husband, but most of us are no more able to live without sexual intimacy than you can live without affection and conversation. Remember this: For a man, love is communicated physically, sexually!

When a man chooses a wife he makes a commitment that says to her, "I will look only to you to meet my basic needs. I am committing myself exclusively to you." Most of the needs we will discover a man has; can legitimately and legally be met outside the marriage relationship, but this one, cannot!! I remember some years ago, Eldon Reich spoke to us at a Men Alive rally and warned us men that our wives are the only woman in the world with whom we can have a guilt free relationship. Strong, but probably true!

Notice what typically happens in a lot of relationships. The honeymoon lasts 6-12 months, typically. Then they get busy paying off debts created by overzealous commitments, maybe one or both take a second job, and soon they are stressed for time alone, and romantic tenderness. Then throw into the mix a kid or two, a mortgage, a second car, or worse yet a "Mini-van" and you see this beginning to happen.

The wife feels like she is being slighted in the affection department, her #1 need...or the husband feels he is not receiving what he needs physically. What happens? As soon as you feel your needs are not being met, you begin to withhold what you know your spouse needs. Wives getting insufficient affection begin having more frequent 'headaches'. Husbands not getting enough sex, find more projects to do in the garage. You create a downward spiral, a cycle, a whirlpool behavior of unmet needs till you both think your marriage is on the rocks, or you married the wrong person, or you settle for unfulfillment, thinking that this must be the 'better **or worse**' part! You want to know what to do if this describes your current situation? STOP IT!!! Stop withholding and start meeting your spouse's needs again. Remember it's easier to act your way into a feeling, than to feel your way into an action?

## **2. MY HUSBAND NEEDS RECREATIONAL COMPANIONSHIP**

*"Live happily with the woman you love through the fleeting days of life, for the wife God give you is your best reward down here for all your earthly toil." Eccl. 9:9*

That sounds rather tawdry and cheap doesn't it? Sounds like Dr. Harley is advocating that husbands need their wives to be playmates. No, that didn't sound right! That's not what I mean. What I mean is that husbands need their wives to be apart of their leisure time activities. Think about this. The goal of marriage is for the husband and wife to become holy as God unites their distinctive lives together, making them friends. How can this happen if there are no shared interests? If all the husbands' interests are in a circle over here, and all the wife's interests are in a circle over here, where do you see that leading? Apart! Our circles have to overlap at some point as we share some mutual interests.

I'm not just talking about sports, but ways in which you spend your leisure time together. I am amazed at how many couples do all kinds of things together when they are dating, but after the wedding, those same things become repulsive to their mates. Susan and I have had to work hard during our years to find mutually enjoyable activities. Being a city girl, it was fun for me to teach her how to play in the dirt, gardening. Being a farm boy, she has taught me that there are different kinds of music besides what's played on the Country Stations!

Wives this principle means it might be a benefit for you to learn more of the intricate details of Football. Husbands, you know this is a need in your life, and it might mean that to get it met means you take a dance class together, or go to the symphony, or a play, you may never learn to love opera, but do you love your wife?

### **3. MY HUSBAND NEEDS AN ATTRACTIVE SPOUSE**

*"Man looks on the outward appearance, but God does not!"* I Sam. 16:7

Do these all sound weirder than a woman's needs, or is it just me? "Hear me!" "Hear me you wives!" I am not saying that you all must look like Bo Derek, but you shouldn't look like an oil derrick either! Your husband married you, he didn't marry any of those models or actresses, or cheerleaders you see on TV, he married you!

All Dr. Harley advocates is that women look the best they can; men appreciate that! All that most men really want is to know that their wives make an effort to look their best, for them, once in awhile; not always just for work, or for someone else.

Notice our verse: "Man looks on the outward appearance". Do you know which 'sense', of all our senses most women are most responsive to? Yes, the sense of **touch**. Do you know which 'sense' of all our senses most stimulates men? Ya, all of them! But primarily men are stimulated by the sense of **sight**! Men are more prone to be tempted, aroused, intrigued by things that they see. Women are not, though I guess this rule is changing lately. I am not saying that you as a wife; must dress or make up to try to compete, just do your best with what God has given you.

This is not to say men are completely off the hook...There are a lot more men who look 9 months pregnant than there are women! Men have an amazing ability to think that 50lbs overweight; and bald heads are still sexy! Guy's, just because your wife might not be turned on by what she sees, doesn't mean you have license to let yourself go!

For men, their wives are in some sense an extension of themselves. When a man thinks his wife is attractive, he thinks and feels better about himself. That sounds dumb to most women doesn't it? But it seems to be true. It may not be your responsibility as a woman to elevate his self-esteem, but to understand the depth of this need in most men. Wives don't have to be beautiful, but if you're neat and well kept, and dressed as attractively as you can be with the budget you have, then he feels like more of a man. Stupid I know, just the way we are!

Some women have used this verse as a weapon against their man! "*Man looks on the outward appearance, but God does not!*" Well, wives, I hate to be the one to break it to you, but your husband is not God.

In fact, he is just a man, created with some deep; and certainly interesting needs, one of which is to have an attractive spouse. Did you hear about the conversation between God and Adam? After God had created Adam he noticed that he looked very lonely. He decided to help. He said, "Adam, I've decided to make you a woman. She'll love you, cook for you, be sweet to you, and understand you." Adam said "Great! How much will she cost me?" The answer came back, "An arm and a leg." "Well," said Adam "what can I get for a rib?"

One more thing. There is no cure for the aging process; even liposuction and cosmetic surgery are only temporary solutions to the aging progress. All I'm saying, to both of you, is be the best you can be, for each other.

#### **4. MY HUSBAND NEEDS DOMESTIC SUPPORT**

*"Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife."*  
Proverbs 17:1 *"Women are to love their husbands and children. Be sober minded, to keep themselves pure, to manage their households well, to be gentle, to be respectful of their husbands authority, all this to insure that God's message should not fall into disrepute."* Titus 2:4-5

Dr. Harley discusses a typical male fantasy. "Many men fantasize that his wife will greet him at the door when he comes home at night, lovingly and pleasantly. He dreams about well-behaved children, who likewise, act glad to see him and welcome him to the comfort of a well maintained home. This fantasy continues as his wife urges him to sit down and relax, before taking part in a tasty dinner. Conversation at dinner includes nothing even remotely controversial or upsetting! Later the family joyfully agrees to go together for an early evening stroll and they return to put the children to bed with no hassles. Then he and his wife relax, talk together, (about their feelings), watch a little TV, and go to bed to make love at a reasonable hour." Does that sound like life at your house? Mine neither!

I am certainly not faulting all wives or women if this is not the reality in your home. I am just trying to make the point that most men need a sense of stability and peace in their home! For most men, and a growing number of women, our homes need to become a haven of joy and peace against a tumultuous world where the rats seem to be the only ones winning! Men often get beat up at work, get put down from superiors, get raked over the coals in a competitive market place that puts more and more pressure on their earning power; that threatens their manhood and masculinity. They, we, I, need to know that when I get home, I will find some sense, some semblance of peace, stability, calm.

Remember what I said last week. There is no such thing as woman's work anymore. Men must play a role in maintaining the semblance of order at home. Men, we must be careful not to allow our need in this area to drive our wives crazy trying to make a perfect home that exists only in our fantasies or on Leave it to Beaver! Especially when children enter the picture; and women enter the work force! We must each do our part. Wives and husbands, never forget that kids are more important than an immaculate house. Also never forget how you communicate love to your husband, by trying to maintain a stable household.

##### **5. MY HUSBAND NEEDS MY ADMIRATION**

*"Let the wife see that she respects and gives reverence to her husband, that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, and esteems him and that she defers to him, praises him, loves and admires him exceedingly." Eph. 5:33 (amplified)*

Honest admiration is a tremendous motivator for most men. I am not ready to say this is the number one need in my life, but I know it's higher than #5. To know that you as a wife think he is wonderful, that he's capable, that he is doing a good job can motivate him to do far beyond what he would do if you disapprove or do not admire him.

I fear that what happens in a lot of situations is that we become disappointed that our mate is not meeting all our needs so we begin to focus on that which disappoints us, and once again we have created a cycle, a spiral. I would challenge you as wives to do two things:

1) Look for the **good** in your mate. Look for those things you can admire and respect and esteem. Concentrate on those, praise him for those, and watch and see if he doesn't begin to improve in some other areas as well.

2) If changes do need to be made in your husband, concentrate on changing **habits**, not personality **traits**. It is difficult to change traits. It is much easier to change his habits. If you think your husband is not spending enough time with your children (meeting your need for family commitment) don't say: "You're a bad father, why don't you spend time with the kids?" That is an attack on a character trait. Try instead to say something like: "It would mean a lot to me, and be a great help to me, and I know the kids would really enjoy it if you read to them 2 or 3 nights a week before they go to bed." Now you're talking about habits. It's hard to change traits, but habits, if we concentrate, can be worked on.

As soon as he starts doing them, admire the socks off the guy! The more you admire him the more he is motivated to change. Don't wait until he's completely mastered the habit before you start telling him how much you appreciate the effort he's making to change. Compliment him the first sign you see. It will encourage him to go on.

In the old days at weddings the couple used to say something like this: “I will love, honor and obey...” I have had a number of couples that have actually asked me if we could omit that phrase from the liturgy. When I inform them it already has been; they are relieved. These last two sermons could stand on that one little phrase; ‘love, honor, obey. Love reflected in the self-sacrificial example of Jesus Christ. Honor that grows from a deep respect and appreciation for one another, and obedience grounded in knowing, understanding and desiring to meet one another’s needs. We all have needs; different, you bet. Legitimate, absolutely! Impossible to meet, not a chance! If each of you, with the best of your ability, knowledge, and understanding will do all you can to look to each others interests and needs; living your life to out please each other, you are in for a lot of fun. Amen

## FM: Growing a Strong Marriage Creates a Healthy Family 7: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HUSBANDS DEEPEST NEEDS

*"A man should fulfill his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs." 1 Corinthians 7:3*

"try to live your life \_\_\_\_\_ each other"

### 1. MY HUSBAND NEEDS \_\_\_\_\_

*"The wife has no longer full rights over her body. She shares them with her husband. In the same way the husband's body doesn't belong to him alone but also to his wife. Do not cheat each other of normal sexual relations unless you both decide to abstain temporarily to make special time for prayer. But afterwards you should resume relations as before or you will expose yourself to the obvious temptations of Satan."*

1 Cor. 7: 4-5

### 2. MY HUSBAND NEEDS \_\_\_\_\_

*"Live happily with the woman you love through the fleeting days of life, for the wife God give you is your best reward down here for all your earthly toil." Eccl. 9:9*

### 3. MY HUSBAND NEEDS AN \_\_\_\_\_

*"Man looks on the outward appearance, but God does not!" 1 Sam. 16:7*

A woman responds primarily to the sense of \_\_\_\_\_ a man to the sense of \_\_\_\_\_

### 4. MY HUSBAND NEEDS \_\_\_\_\_

*"Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife." Proverbs 17:1 "Women are to love their husbands and children. Be sober minded, to keep themselves pure, to manage their households well, to be gentle, to be respectful of their husbands authority, all this to insure that God's message should not fall into disrepute." Titus 2:4-5*

### 5. MY HUSBAND NEEDS MY \_\_\_\_\_

*"Let the wife see that she respects and gives reverence to her husband, that she notices him, regards him, honors him, prefers him, and esteems him and that she defers to him, praises him, loves and admires him exceedingly." Eph. 5:33 (amplified)*

1) Look for the \_\_\_\_\_ in your mate.

2) Concentrate on changing \_\_\_\_\_, not personality \_\_\_\_\_.

## **FM: Growing a Strong Marriage Creates a Healthy Family 7: UNDERSTANDING YOUR HUSBANDS DEEPEST NEEDS**

*"A man should fulfill his duty as a husband and a woman should fulfill her duty as a wife, and each should satisfy the other's needs." 1 Corinthians 7:3*

### **Study Guide**

1. Look up and read Ephesians 5:21, and discuss what it means to submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. How might "out pleasing one another" fit in with that?
2. Guys, put these 5 needs in the order they might occupy in your life. Add other needs that you have that are not mentioned here. Then spend some time discussing how your spouse is doing at meeting your needs.
3. Discuss the unique pressures created by trying to balance these basic male needs when both spouses are working, sometime more than one job. How do you share duties and responsibilities with children, house, etc?
4. Discuss some behaviors your wife does (or you wish she would) that make you feel admired. Is it a sign of weakness in men that their need to be affirmed is so high? Why in this day and age might this need be even more important to men?
5. Talk about changing behaviors instead of trying to change 'traits'. Maybe even role play some conversations that would reflect a focus on specific behaviors that need to be changed.