



Marriage Seminar

ANCIENT PATHWAYS *to* INTIMACY

SESSION TWO: EMOTIONAL INTIMACY

*This is what the Lord says:
Stand at the crossroads and look;
ask for the ancient paths,
ask where the good way is,
and walk in it,
and you will find rest for your souls.*

– Jeremiah 6:16

The Ancient Pathways to Emotional Intimacy

Introduction: A story of a young couple and the demise of their marriage.

The Prayer of Saint Francis

“O Lord, make me an instrument of Thy Peace!

Where there is hatred, let me sow love;

Where there is injury, pardon;

Where there is discord, harmony;

Where there is doubt, faith;

Where there is despair, hope;

Where there is darkness, light,

And where there is sorrow, joy.

Oh Divine Master, grant that I

May not so much seek to be consoled as to console;

To be understood as to understand;

To be loved as to love; for it is in giving that we receive;

It is in pardoning that we are pardoned;

And it is in dying that we are born to eternal life.”

I. What is emotional intimacy?

Definition: The relentless commitment to minister to your spouse's needs rather than manipulating to meet your own needs.

Dr. Willard Harley, in *His Needs, Her Needs: Building an Affair-Proof Marriage*, states (pp. 176-177):

The Five Basic Needs of Women are:

- Affection
- Conversation
- Honesty and openness (a solid basis of trust)
- Financial support (enough money to live comfortably)
- Family commitment (her husband must be a good father)

The Five Basic Needs of Men are:

- Sexual fulfillment
- Recreational companionship (having his wife join him in leisure activities)
- An attractive spouse (she tries to always look her best)
- Domestic support (he finds peace at home)
- Admiration

Dr. Lois Davitz underscores man's desire for companionship by citing the reasons why men divorce. "Four hundred divorced men between the ages of twenty and forty-five were asked why they thought their marriages disintegrated. Money (mentioned by 5 percent), sex (49 percent said sexual problems contributed), and child-rearing (42 percent) came in for a share. But what virtually every man in her study cited as decisive in the failure of the relationship was the lack of companionship" (Quoted in *Marriage Takes More than Love*, Jack and Carole Mayhall, p. 135)

"Women make friends based on the commonality of feelings while men make friends on the basis of commonality of activities. For her, communication involves sharing hearts. For him, communication involves discussing what has been done together. Because of this, one counselor suggests that when things seem to be getting rocky, a woman needs to make an extra effort to do things with her husband (p.136)."

Emotional Intimacy involves...

- A commitment to work towards understanding each other.
- An affectionate bond, the strands of which are composed of mutual caring, responsibility, trust, open communication of feelings, and the non-defensive interchange about significant events.
- Taking the risk to be close to your spouse and allowing him/her to step inside your personal boundaries and be transparent and vulnerable.

II. Key Scriptures: Philippians 2:1-8 and Ephesians 4:25-31

Philippians 2:1-8 (The Message) – If you've gotten anything at all out of following Christ, if his love has made any difference in your life, if being in a community of the Spirit means anything to you, if you have a heart, if you care – then do me a favor: **Agree with each other, be deep spirited friends.** Don't push your way to the front; don't sweet-talk your way to the top. **Put yourself aside, and help others get ahead. Don't be obsessed with getting your own advantage. Forget yourselves long enough to lend a helping hand.**

Think of yourselves the way Christ Jesus thought of himself. He had equal status with God but didn't think so much of himself that he had to cling to the advantages of that status no matter what. Not at all. When the time came, **he set aside the privileges of deity and took on the status of a slave**, became human! Having become human, he stayed human. It was an incredibly humbling process. He didn't claim special privileges. Instead, **he lived a selfless, obedient life and then died a selfless, obedient death** – and the worst kind of death at that: a crucifixion.

Ephesians 4:25-32 (NASB) – "Therefore, laying aside falsehood, speak truth each one of you with his neighbor, for we are members of one another. Be angry, and yet do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, and do not give the devil an opportunity. He who steals must steal no longer; but rather he

must labor, performing with his own hands what is good, so that he will have something to share with one who has need. Let no unwholesome word proceed from your mouth, but only such a word as is good for edification according to the need of the moment, so that it will give grace to those who hear. Do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, by whom you were sealed for the day of redemption. **Let all bitterness (bitter resentment) and wrath (fierce indignation that boils up and soon subsides again) and anger (agitation of the soul, impulse, desire, any violent emotion, but especially anger) and clamor (verbal brawling) and slander (speech injurious to another's good name) be put away from you, along with all malice (a vicious disposition of hate, ill-will, desire to injure, wickedness that is not ashamed to break laws). Be kind to one another, tender-hearted (having strong bowels), forgiving each other (give grace, cancel a debt), just as God in Christ also has forgiven you."**

III. Pathways – How do you cultivate emotional intimacy?

A. Pray: Lord, set a guard over my mouth (Psalm 141:3) so that...

1. I speak the truth in love. (Ephesians 4:15, 25)
2. I speak words that build up and do not tear down. (4:29)
3. I speak words that give grace and benefit my spouse. (4:29)

B. Practice: A lifestyle of gospel practicing

1. Modeling the gospel with your spouse by initiating and extending forgiveness (Ephesians 4:31-32). Memorize Ephesians 4:32...

It is perhaps not so hard to forgive a single great injury. But to forgive the incessant provocations of daily life – to keep on forgiving the bossy mother-in-law, the bullying husband, the nagging wife, the selfish daughter, the deceitful son – how can we do it? Only, I think, by remembering where we stand, by meaning our words when we say in our prayers “Forgive our trespasses as we forgive those that trespass against us.” We are offered forgiveness on no other terms. To refuse it is to refuse God’s mercy for ourselves. – C.S. Lewis:

2. Deal ruthlessly with those things that grieve the Holy Spirit (4:30-31). Respond to the Holy Spirit’s prompting and do not react to my spouse.
3. Deal carefully and quickly with the emotion of anger (4:26).

C. Know your spouse’s love language and speak it frequently.

- Quality time
- Acts of service
- Physical touch and affection
- Words of encouragement
- Gift giving

D. Become a student of your spouse.

1. You must take the initiative to know your spouse by asking thoughtful questions and listening. This work of communication is messy and takes time and effort, but you will be wonderfully rewarded.
2. Observe your partner for signs of satisfaction, frustration, and weariness and then act accordingly. Can you answer the following four questions:
 - What is your spouse's greatest concern right now?
 - What is his/her greatest need?
 - What is his/her greatest dream and hope?
 - What causes him/her pain and heartache?
3. Questions that foster emotional intimacy. See appendix.

E. **Men:** Ephesians 5:28 – What have you done lately to cherish your wife? To cherish means “to keep warm with tender love and care and to give your wife reason to hope.”

1. You actively cultivate her spiritual well-being and health by...

- a. Praying with and for her.
- b. Setting an example by consistently walking with God. Whatever virtue that you want to see in your wife and in your children must first be seen in your own life. Do you, with some regularity, talk with her about what you are learning from your own study and reading of God's Word? Do you ever read the Scriptures together? Are you growing in your ability to converse with her about the deepest, most intimate concerns and anxieties of your soul?
- c. Encouraging her to discover and use her spiritual gifts and unique strengths. Do you know what she enjoys and does well? Are you encouraging her to develop and use the strengths she possesses to serve Christ and His church? Or do you feel threatened by her abilities and successes?

2. You actively cultivate her emotional well-being and health by...

- a. Taking the initiative to know, understand and communicate with your bride (1 Peter 3:7). We must take the initiative to ask thoughtful questions and listen.
- b. Guarding and protecting her from your passions and from her emotions. Do you guard the purity of your relationship by making her the sole object of your stimulation and sexual excitement? Do you seek to shield your wife from unnecessary emotional pressure? Do you seek to guard her from those things to which she is especially vulnerable?
- c. Resolving conflict and discord biblically. Do you take the initiative to

resolve conflict and heal discord in your marriage relationship and in your family? Or do you sulk off into a corner in self-pity?

- d. Making decisions. You make sound and timely decisions after hearing her point of view and only after coming to a mutual agreement. Only on rare occasions should husbands use the trump card in the decision-making process. Some of us men need to pray that God would instill in us a greater boldness in making decisions and that we would not be immobilized by our fear of making a mistake. Others of us need to slow down and not be so impulsive and quick in our decision-making.

3. You actively cultivate her physical well-being and health by...

- a. Non-sexual touching with words of tenderness and affection.
- b. If you haven't already, let me encourage all of you husbands to develop some terms of endearment for your wife. If you read the Song of Solomon, you will note that one of his terms of endearment was: "O most beautiful among women." The book of Proverbs supplies us with another: "The wife of my youth in whom I delight." Better yet, come up with your own... words that are strictly between you and her that immediately let her know how much you love her.
- c. Working diligently to provide financially for your family's needs (1 Timothy 5:8).

F. **Women:** Do you honor and respect your husband?

Ephesians 5:33, Proverbs 31:12

Respect means to notice, regard, honor, prefer, venerate and esteem, defer to, praise, love and admire exceedingly.

Self-assessment (taken from *The Excellent Wife* by Martha Peace)

1. Do you listen carefully to your husband's opinion, trying to understand him?
2. Do you bring up his shortcomings to others?
3. Do you inappropriately contradict him in front of others?
4. Do you speak to your husband in a condescending manner?
5. Do you compare him unfavorably with other men?
6. Do you treat your husband in private as respectfully as you do your pastor, your neighbor, or your friends in public?
7. Does your countenance show your disrespect by angry looks, looks of disgust, crossed arms, etc.?
8. Do you talk for your husband or interrupt him?

9. Do you try to intimidate or bully your husband by making threats, verbally attacking him, crying, or in some other way manipulating him to have your way?
10. Do you respect his position in the home so much that he can depend on you to do as he asks even when he is not home?
11. Do you respect his requests by trying to do as he asks, even if it doesn't seem important to you?
12. Would your husband say that you have a meek and a quiet spirit? If you do, it will be apparent in how you treat him.
13. Are you obeying God by being respectful to your husband?

IV. Roadblocks: What are the roadblocks to emotional intimacy?

- A. See your spouse's sin as greater than your own. It is easy to make light of your own sin and make much of your spouse's. Blame and shame. We call attention to the sins and weaknesses of our spouse rather than cover them. (1 Peter 4:8)
- B. Place more of a priority on your children and on your friends than on your marriage.
- C. Discuss problems in harsh, angry tones. Refuse to discuss problematic areas of your relationship and persist in unwillingness to change.
- D. Criticize one another publicly. It is important to save constructive criticism for when you are alone. Also discern when your spouse is most receptive for feedback.
- E. Refuse to give one another undivided attention in a relaxed atmosphere to share thoughts, desires, feelings, and dreams.

Take Home Questions:

1. What is one thing I do which makes it difficult for you to share your heart with me?
2. What is one thing we could do this summer to cultivate emotional intimacy between us?
3. I feel most like communicating with you when...
4. Men, ask your wives: How can I better cherish you?
5. Women, ask your husbands: How can I better show you respect?

Appendix

Questions that Foster Emotional Intimacy

1. If you could keep just one memory (of an event or a period, of time) which one would you keep? Why?
2. As you think back, what have been the three most romantic times we have had together? How about when we dated? What made these times so special? How can we keep the romantic side of our marriage alive and exciting?
3. What do you think are the five most important milestones we have passed together? Why was each so important to you? List as many as you can. Pleasant memories are fun!
4. In what single way would you most like to see me grow personally in the next 12 months?
5. What two or three problems (if they were solved) would really make a positive difference in our marriage and family?
6. What do you see as the three most important decisions we need to make in the next six months to one year? Why? What is your perspective on each decision? What are the three main things holding us back in life today?
7. How would you describe your ideal day... Your ideal evening... Your ideal weekend... Your ideal vacation?
8. If you could spend one uninterrupted hour with any person alive today, who would it be? What would you do or discuss? Why?
9. What are three specific ways in which we could improve our “day in and day out” communication? Where do we hit snags? Where are we strong in our communication?
10. How would you live your life if you had just six months to live? What would you do? Where would you want to go?
11. What three needs are you most troubled by in the world, saying to yourself, “something must be done about this!”
12. What specific part of your work responsibilities do you find most frustrating? Most fulfilling?
13. What three things produce the most stress in our lives? Our marriage? Our family? What is your greatest area of stress right now? How can we overcome it?
14. What pops into your mind in the following areas? Your best day ever... Your most cherished gift... Your most meaningful compliment... Your best job... Your favorite relative... Your favorite toy as a child... Why?
15. What dreams have you thrown away or kept secret because no one has encouraged you to try it or you feared you would fail? If you could do anything in the world (without fear of failure), what would you do? If we became richer than either of us could imagine today, what would you like to do with some of the money?
16. What’s heavy on your shoulders? Where do you feel you are “going under?” Is there any way I can help? How can I make your life easier or better? How can I help you really “win” in life?

17. What do you see as my three greatest strengths? How do my strengths compliment yours?
18. If something unexpected happened to you, which 5 to 10 people would you want me to go to for wise counsel... Want me to avoid... Why in each case?
19. What would be the three most important things we could do with each of our children during the next 12 months? Before the children leave home? What are the three most important values we want to teach our children before they leave home?
20. In what single area do you most want to grow personally in the next year? Why? How can I help you?
21. If we were stranded on an island for one whole month, what single thing would you most like to discuss at great length? Why? What would you want to have with you besides the necessities of food, shelter, clothing? What would you hope would result from a month of being stranded?
22. Which three people do you admire the very most in life? Why? Who are your 3 to 10 closest personal friends? Why?
23. If the house were on fire (and the children were safe), which three things would you want to save? Why?
24. What questions would you really, in your deepest heart of hearts, like me to ask you, or would you like to ask me?
25. Why do you think/feel we are still happily married while so many of our friends are unhappily married or divorced?
26. How can I improve our sex life? What do you wish I would or wouldn't do? What do you enjoy most about our sex life? What is the key to 'turning you on' that I have been missing? What have I been getting As in?
27. How do you view God? How do you imagine heaven?
28. How do you feel when we pray together? Read the Bible together? Give money to Christian workers? Go to church?
29. In what way would you most like me to pray for you in the next month? Why?
30. What would you want said at your funeral about you? How would you most want to be remembered? What do you want to be said about your life's contribution? Your character? Your family?
31. Describe your life at 70 (If you were 70, then add 10 years). What do you want to be like? What do you see us doing? Any steps we need to take today to get there?

From *The Questions Book: Communicating Your Heart: A Great Marriage Builder*, Dennis and Barbara Rainey and Bobb and Cheryl Biehl.

Marriage and Family Book List Recommendations

Marriage

When Sinners Say "I Do," Dave Harvey*
The Meaning of Marriage, Tim Keller*
Each For The Other, Bryan Chapell
God, Marriage, and Family, Andreas Kostenberger
What Did You Expect?, Paul Tripp
Sacred Marriage, Gary Thomas

General Parenting

Give Them Grace, Elyse Fitzpatrick*
A Mother's Heart: A Look at Values, Vision, and Character for the Christian Mother, Jean Fleming*
Family Shepherds, Voddie Baucham*
Shepherding A Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp
Grace Based Parenting, Tim Kimmel
Gospel-Powered Parenting, William Farley
Peacemaking for Families, Ken Sande
How a Man Prays for His Family, John Yates
Your Home: A Place of Grace, Susan Hunt

Bibles for Children

The Jesus Storybook Bible, Sally Lloyd-Jones*
Gospel Story Bible, Marty Machowski
The Child's Story Bible, Catherine F. Vos

Discipling Your Children

Big Truths For Young Hearts, Bruce Ware*
Parenting in the Pew, Castleman*
Instructing A Child's Heart, Tedd Tripp
Long Story Short, Marty Machowski
How Our Children Come to Faith, Stephen Smallman
Ignite the Fire: Kindling a Passion for Christ in Your Kids, Barry & Carol St. Clair
What a Daughter Needs from Her Dad, Michael Farris

Parenting Teenagers

Like Dew Your Youth: Growing Up With Your Teenager, Eugene Peterson*
Age of Opportunity: A Biblical Guide to Parenting Teens, Paul Tripp*
Parenting Today's Adolescent: Helping Your Child Avoid The Traps Of The Preteen And Teen Years, Dennis and Barbara Rainey
And Then I Had Teenagers, Susan Alexander Yates
An Educated Choice: Advice for Parents of College-Bound Students, Frank Brock

* **Books to read first.**