

The POWER FOR MARRIAGE

Building a Marriage--part 2

October 25, 2015

DAY 1: Be filled with the Spirit.

Ephesians 5:18 ...but be filled with the Spirit.

1. Shortly after this verse, Paul begins his most elaborate teaching on marriage, including what the relational roles of a husband and wife are to be.

2. The Holy Spirit is the third member of the Trinity--God the Father, God the Son and God the Holy Spirit. The Holy Spirit provides the power to humble our hearts by seeing our need of God, and then releasing His power through us to be other-centered toward others. What are some reasons you can think of as to why we would need this kind of power in marriage?

3. A few verses later, right before Paul's verses on marriage, he tells us this.

Eph. 5:21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.

4. How would a husband and wife submitting to each other help a marriage?

5. Submitting to anyone is difficult. Our "natural" (and self-centered) reaction is to compare *our* submitting to how much *our spouse* is submitting. Is measuring our own submission based on our spouse's submission a valid reason? Look back at Ephesians 5:21.

6. What do you think it means to submit *out of reverence for Christ*?

7. What affect would there be if you saw spouse submit to something you wanted to do, not because he/she had to, but due to his/her relationship to God.?

8. What would it take for you to submit in the same way?

DAY 2: The role of service

Ephesians 5:25 Husbands, love your wives as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.

1. The example of Jesus Christ provides the pattern and power for marriage. Paul expands on this example in this next passage. In the following two verses, underline every aspect of how service looks to others:

Philippians 2:3 Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves.

⁴ *Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others.*

2. Paul gives us the ultimate example of service in Jesus, as written in Philippians.

Philippians 2:5 Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus,

⁶ *who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped,*

⁷ *but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant, being born in the likeness of men.*

⁸ *And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross.*

3. How did humility work in favor of Jesus being a servant? (v. 6).

4. Paul says Jesus "emptied himself." What do you think he means? Emptied himself of what?

5. What decisions did Jesus make about being a servant?

6. How would emulating Jesus Christ, by having the attitude and activity of a servant help build a marriage?

7. How would you rate your:

a. Attitude of humility?

b. Actions of serving?

DAY 3: The problem of self-centeredness

1. The gospel both humbles and lifts you up. The gospel breaks the illusion that we are "basically good" rather than foolish and self-centered.
2. But the gospel empowers us with a love and affirmation that we can find nowhere else! It means we learn to be less bothered by loss of our spouse's encouraging word, instead, being more bothered by our failure to be the source encouraging words.

1 Corinthians 13:4 Love is patient and kind; love is not jealous or boastful;

*⁵ it is not arrogant or rude. **Love does not insist on its own way**; it is not irritable or resentful;*

⁶ it does not rejoice at wrong, but rejoices in the right.

⁷ Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.

3. Jot down the last example you can think of where you "insisted on your way?"
4. Self-centeredness and love cannot co-exist. I cannot claim to be "loving" while I am pushing for my way.
5. When we are self-centered we become **blind** to how we fail to love.
6. Being self-centered can also be happening when we are:
 - a. Hypersensitive to the words of others,
 - b. Easily offended,
 - c. Defensive.
7. Have you responded in one of these ways lately? If so, briefly jot down what happened in the space above.
8. Ask God to raise your awareness of your own self-centeredness, and go to God for change.

DAY 4: Coming to grips with self-centeredness

1. Why is it so hard to see our own self-centeredness? There are a number of reasons, but one of them concerns past wounds. Pain is the great justifier of self-centeredness.

2. Pain "tells us" that we better do a better job of "looking out for #1." "Fool me once, shame on you. Fool me twice, shame on me."

3. It is not just the big pains of life that shape our self-preoccupation. Surprisingly, it's sometimes the "smaller" pains we experience that harden our hearts, and deepen our unconscious demand that my spouse respond to me like I "need."

4. This is a spiral that leads us down, down, down into ourselves, making it less likely that we will be loving and more likely that we will be critical of our spouse, on the lookout for future slights.

5. Instead, the surprising remedy is just the opposite of what we imagine. Self-denial is the paradoxical solution!

2 Corinthians 5:15 He died for all, that those who live should live no longer for themselves but for Him who died for them and was raised again.

6. It says, that no matter what kind of mistreatment I've had, my self-centeredness is a far deeper problem. Self-centeredness was alive in me long before any mistreatment came my way.

7. The core of every sin is a refusal to live for God and others. It is the determination to fill ourselves as first priority. (Matt. 22:37-40)

8. Young couples go through four phases.
 - (a) You've met Mr. Right or Miss Wonderful.
 - (b) Within a few weeks or months into marriage, you begin to see your spouse's self-centeredness! "I never knew he/she was like *that!*"
 - (c) And guess what! Your spouse has made the same discovery about you!
 - (d) It's obvious to you that your spouse's self-centeredness is a greater issue than yours.

9. Have you experienced these four phases? As you look back on this, what strikes you today about yourself, either back then, or now?

DAY 5: The surprising remedy to self-centeredness

Ephesians. 5:21 ...submit to one another out of fear of Christ.

1. Earlier this week we looked at this verse.
2. The "fear of Christ" means out of "reverence, praise, wonder or delight."
3. A lot of people come to marriage looking for something to "complete" us, to make us whole. We've all experience pain, and somehow think that our spouse will provide us with something very different!
4. We are looking for can only come from God. No human being can erase our doubts about ourselves, or make us feel like we want to feel.

Romans 5:1-2 Therefore, since we have been justified through faith, we have peace with God through our Lord Jesus Christ... and our hope does not put us to shame, because God's love has been poured out into our hearts through the Holy Spirit, who has been given to us.

5. What do you sense you are looking for, that you think a spouse can fulfill?
 - a. Love.
 - b. Respect.
 - c. Cared for.
 - d. Sense of importance, that your life matters to someone.
 - e. To calm the ache in our soul.
 - f. Other: _____
6. What our soul longs for can only be filled by God. While our spouse can occasionally touch that desire, the need can never be fully met by any human being.
7. How does that truth strike you? Are you drawn to the only One that can satisfy the deepest longings in your heart?
8. What I most need is to taste of the wonder of God's sacrificial love for me, and His continued pursuit of me even when, for years, I hardly gave Him the time of day. I matter to Him, no matter how my life is going. Only then, will I be able to love my spouse with a far greater love than anything I can engender. Only then, will my self-centeredness begin to wane.