



The Pastor's/Leader's Marriage Conference

Emotionally Healthy Spirituality

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Pre-Conference Workshop
April 29, 2010
www.emotionallyhealthy.org

Conference Schedule

10:00-10:20	WELCOME
10:20-10:50	Session 1: A Biblical Theology for Your Marriage and Your Sexuality
10:50-4:15	Session 2: Emotionally Healthy Skills for Great Relationships
10:50-11:30	<u>Community Temperature Reading</u>
11:30-12:00	<u>Stop Mind Reading</u>
12:00-12:45	LUNCH
12:50-1:10	<u>Speaking</u>
1:10-2:30	<u>Incarnational Listening</u>
2:30-2:45	BREAK
2:45-4:35	<u>Clean Fighting</u>
4:35-4:45	BREAK
4:45-5:20	Session 3: Marriage as Vocation: Developing a Rule for the Next Phase of Your Marriage
5:20-5:30	Closing Remarks

A Biblical Theology for Your Marriage and Your Sexuality

I. Male and Female – Image of the Trinity

(Father, Son, Holy Spirit -- Genesis 1:26-27; 1 John 4:8)

- A.** The Trinity is an eternal communion of persons who are relationally active, not static. They are an eternal exchange of giving and receiving love. They mutually give themselves to one another in love and service. Even before God's love for us, He is love in Himself in the relationship of the three persons of the Trinity. From the very foundations of eternity, we observe love as a "sincere gift of self."
- B.** This love has four distinct qualities: free, total, faithful and fruitful. Love by its nature desires to expand its own communion. God didn't need anyone else. The love of the Trinity is perfect and complete in itself. Yet out of sheer goodness and love, God wanted to create human beings to share in His own eternal "exchange of love."
- C.** God's eternal plan is that we share in the inner life of the Trinity. He stamps an image of His love and communion right into our bodies as male and female. The male and female anatomy make visible God's plan from all eternity that we participate in the life and love of the Trinity. Our bodies are not only a biological reality but they reveal our deep inner persons, that we are created for union and communion. Our differences are intended by God to unite us in life-giving ways.

II. Three Realities of Adam Common to All Human Beings

A. His Aloneness Gen. 2:18

- 1. Adam is alone in the world as a body-spirit person. He is different than the animals. Animals have bodies. Angels have spirits. Human beings are both. Human nature is both spiritual and physical. We are "embodied spirits" or "spiritualized bodies." We alone have the ability to know and love God through the body. In order to understand the meaning of life you must see the revelation of God in the body. The body makes visible God's plan to unite all people to Himself. A man's body doesn't make sense by itself. A woman's body doesn't make sense by itself.

Their bodies together are God's revelation that we were created for union and communion with God and one another.

Due to sin, we have split body and spirit and, therefore, fail to see God's revelation. We are an enfleshed, incarnational religion. Those who downplay the body are the antichrist spirit (1 John 4:1-3). We believe in the God who created flesh, came in the flesh, dies for flesh to redeem flesh, the resurrection of the flesh and the redemption of the flesh! All of creation is waiting for the redemption of our bodies (Rom. 8:23). God's mystery is revealed thru human flesh. And it is only through the body that we can love as God loves.

2. Adam is alone in having freedom. God gives Adam freedom to name the animals and create and shape the earth. More significantly, God gives Adam the gift of choice to love Him or not. We also have the same free choice. Without freedom there can be no love. Freedom, however, also carries with it the capacity to sin. God knew that without the freedom to choose sin, there could be no genuine love.

This freedom bestows dignity on human persons. Having been created for our own sakes, we are inviolable. i.e., not to be used, manipulated, possessed, dominated, or violated. Every human being is a unique, unrepeatable mystery

3. Adam is alone and aches for another person to love. He longs to make a sincere gift of himself in the way God has made a gift of Himself to him. He needs a "helper" to fulfill that vocation. Adam could not have communion with the animals because they are not body-spirit persons.

B. His Need for Communion Gen. 2:23

1. Adam's ache is to live in an exchange of giving and receiving love with another human being. He longs to make a sincere gift of himself in the way God has made a gift of Himself to him. He needs a "helper" to fulfill that vocation. Adam could not have communion with the animals because they are not body-spirit persons. When he sees Eve, he bursts forth "AHA, Here is another body-person! We share a common humanity." He sees the mystery of God's revelation through Eve's body. Their very distinctiveness and complementariness (i.e. male and female)

make this gift of union and communion possible. Eve receives him as a gift and gives herself as a gift to him.

2. Authentic communion sees and respects the freedom and dignity of the other. This is indispensable to healthy unity and oneness. All of married life is intended by God to be communion. The sexual embrace is meant to be the crowning glory and expression of this. It is not sex that drives us to communion, but communion is meant to drive us to sex. Our sexual differences are not only the call to join our bodies; we must see in it the call to communion. Animals can copulate but cannot enter a communion of persons.

C. His Nakedness without Shame (Gen. 2:24-5)

Adam and Eve are naked without shame because they see the body as the revelation of the person. There is total unity between the physical and spiritual in the person. Man and woman not only *look* at each other. They *see* into each other (intimacy = *in-to-me-see*). Their gaze does not stop at the body. As they see the body, they see the interior person. They look at each other as God looks at them – perfect love, total trust with no fear of being pressured or disrespected. As Augustine said, the deepest desire of the human heart is to see another and to be seen by that other’s loving look.

III. The Great Mystery Revealed: Our Eternal Marriage with Christ

For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh. This is a profound mystery – but I am talking about Christ and the church (Eph. 5:32).

- A. Sexual union, becoming one flesh, is a profound mystery pointing to something beyond itself. It points to the love of Christ for the church (Eph.5:32). The most widely used image of God’s love in Scripture is husband and wife, bride and bridegroom. The Bible begins with a marriage to reveal to us God’s eternal plan to marry us. The love of the Bridegroom is embodied when the “Word becomes flesh.” Christ comes as the eternal Bridegroom to give up His body for His bride that we might become one flesh with Him. Every longing and desire we have for intimacy with our spouse is a foreshadowing for union with Christ. We were created for this eternal bliss -- to be one with Christ, our perfect

lover. As much as earthly marital consummation is wonderful, it is not our ultimate satisfaction.

- B. Earthly marriage is only a pointer, a sign of our destiny, eternal marriage to Jesus Christ in heaven. This is why singles must beware of turning marriage into an idol and for marrieds to beware of turning the sexual embrace into an idol. Jesus, not my spouse, is my ultimate satisfaction.

IV. **The Problem of the Fall: Objectification, Using, and Being Used**

- A. As a result of the Fall (Gen. 3), our hearts are both twisted and disordered. When Adam and Eve decided do things their own way and not trust God, they lost their purity of heart. They lost their ability to see God's pure love through their naked bodies. Adam no longer looked at Eve as someone to love but as an object. Eve knew she was never meant be used. So she covered herself to protect her dignity. The fig leaves also were symbolic of covering the shame they hid in their hearts for doubting God's love.
- B. Lust is sexual desire devoid of love and connection. Instead of moving towards communion with our spouse, we blame, get angry, threaten, pout, withdraw, complain, shut down, appease and engage in power struggles. Sexual union is a renewal of the wedding vows to love freely, totally, faithfully and fruitfully. If it is not free, it is not love. We are called to a transformation of the heart so we can experience the true freedom of self-giving united to the "nuptial meaning of the body."
- C. To split the body/spirit and no longer see our spouse's body as the revelation of the person is to miss the great mystery. This is what makes pornography so destructive. Instead of giving oneself, it is about taking from another person as an object. For this reason, it can properly be said that the opposite of love is not hate but using someone or being used.

V. **God's Call for Us: New Hearts with New Desires**

- A. Jesus came to transform our hearts. Jesus came not for more rules but to give new hearts that desire the good, the true, and the beautiful. Jesus came to raise dead bones to life. We now have the Holy Spirit in us to

make our disordered, fearful, impure hearts pure. Christ sets us free from the domination of lust.

- We are able to return to the integration of body and spirit (no longer splitting the two).
- We are able to have a free, not a suspicious heart.

- B.** As the bride of Christ, we are invited to receive the gift of Christ's love and to remain in that love. It is impossible to love others if I don't have the love of God. I can't give what I don't possess. Jesus was able to love us from the cross because He was abiding in the love of the Father. *As the Father has loved me and so I have loved you. Now remain in my love...Love each other as I have loved you. Greater love has no one than this that he lay down his life for his friends* (John 15). In the same way, we are to give ourselves as a sincere gift like Christ (*I lay down my life freely; no one takes it from me*). All else is a twisting of God's original design of a marriage relationship.
- C.** Paul describes the interior battle of our hearts in Romans 7. But he also speaks of the redemptive power of Christ at work within us able to do far more than we ever think or imagine (Eph. 3:20).
- D.** There is both ecstasy and agony in becoming one flesh. Love always involves suffering. We see this in the cross and Jesus' death for His bride, the church. The union of husband and wife is placed at the center of the great struggle between good and evil, between life and death. No wonder Ephesians 5:21-32 is followed by a call to spiritual warfare in Ephesians 6:12-18. Spouses cannot live their sexual union except through the power of the Holy Spirit who purifies, strengthens, and transforms our heart to such an extent that our earthly sexual love actually brings us in touch with the love of our heavenly bridegroom.

Session 2: Emotionally Healthy Skills for Great Relationships

I. Community Temperature Reading (Adapted from Virginia Satir)

A. Appreciations or Excitements

Appreciations are about the positive aspects of life together –what is good about others or what they have done.

Excitements give us a chance to express that which delights our souls.

e.g. “I’m excited about having this week off to chill.”; “I’m excited that my work project will be finished this week.”; “I’m excited to begin a work project this week.”

B. Worries, Concerns or Puzzles

People often do not express worries or concerns for fear of appearing inadequate or stupid. We hold them inside ourselves and then make erroneous assumptions about people and situations. Puzzles are closely related to worries and concerns. It is easy to jump to negative interpretations about events going on around us. Expressing a “puzzle” enables us to avoid assumptions and negative interpretations.

e.g. Instead of saying: “Who didn’t do the dishes last night?”, we say “I’m puzzled as to who was supposed to clean up last night.”

e.g. Rather than say, “You should have called me,” we can say, “I’m puzzled as to why you didn’t call me if you knew you would be late.”

C. Complaints and Recommendations

The purpose of complaints and recommendations is to help each person be aware of and take responsibility for the small irritations and annoyances that arise every day. Here the person with the complaint takes responsibility for coming up with a possible solution. We invite you to use the format,

“I notice..... and I would prefer...”

e.g. “I notice that you often turn the thermostat up and I would prefer if you talk to me before you do that.”

e.g. “I notice you are putting dishes in the sink and I want to ask that they go directly into the dishwasher.”

D. New Information

This can take many forms –events, appointments, new decisions, achievements, opportunities, activities. Relationships can only grow when people know what is happening in each other’s lives – the trivial as well as the important.

e.g. “I got a 97% on my test,”

e.g. “We moved this past weekend,”

e.g. “I have a board meeting on Mon. night.”

E. Hopes and Wishes

This moves to the immediate future. Sharing hopes and wishes are windows into your unique soul. Family life, in particular, becomes richer as we support and listen to each other’s hopes and dreams.

e.g. “I hope I get that new job that opened up in our company.”

e.g. “I hope I get a good grade in social studies next week.”

II. Stop Mind Reading

You shall not give false testimony against your neighbor. (Exodus 20:16)

Acting on assumptions, without checking them out, is a common source of confusion and conflict in relationships. So often we are unaware of the havoc it creates.

A. Examples of “Mind Reading”

My spouse seems distant at dinner....
My spouse goes to bed without kissing me good night....
If I take a nap today, my spouse will be upset.
If I want to go away for the weekend, my spouse will be upset.
You greeted Jane and Richard but you didn't greet me...
My colleague waited two days to return my phone call...
My supervisor will be upset if I ask to leave work early.
Joe shows up late for work....

B. Exercise

1. Reflect on something you suspect the other person thinks or feels but has not told you.
2. Ask them: “Do I have permission to read your mind?” Or “Can I check out an assumption with you?”
3. When permission is granted, ask:
 “I think that you think....”
 or
 -- “I noticed that you did not return my phone calls for a few days. That’s unusual for you, so I’m wondering if you are upset with me?” Is that true?”
 -- “I noticed that you greeted Jane and Richard but ignored me. I’m wondering if I said something or did something to annoy you?” Is that true?”
 -- “You have showed up late for our lunch three times in a row. Are you feeling like our times together are a drain on you?” Is that correct?”

III. SPEAKING

To speak is an incredible privilege given to human persons, who made in the likeness of God, are to use their voice as an expression of their dignity. We are all meant to speak in our own behalf because we are only experts at ourself. Declaring yourself is to be faithful to your God-given, unrepeatable life.

A. Four Essential Criteria

1. Be Respectful (tactful) – take feelings of other person into consideration

Disrespectful – That's a ridiculous idea

Respectful – That's an interesting idea

2. Be Honest – say what you mean and mean what you say. You have permission to feel your feelings and think your thoughts and say them too.

Dishonest - I don't mind if you are late tonight

Honest - I'd like to ask you to be home by 6pm.

3. Be Direct – make questions questions and statements statements; don't beat around the bush

Indirect - There is a great movie playing at the theatre but it's miserable out.

Direct - I would really like to see a movie tonight, and even though it is miserable outside would you go too?

4. Be Clear- give all the details

Unclear - I'd like you to cook dinner sometimes.

Clear - I'd like you to cook Tuesdays and Thursdays and be responsible for all ingredients.

B. Exercise:

In the last few days when has your speech or someone else's not been clear, direct, honest and respectful?

IV. Listening

“Being heard is so close to being loved that for the average person they are almost indistinguishable.”
David Augsburger

We are wired to receive love by having someone “attuned” to us. Attunement is indispensable for true communion between one another. Attunement means not just listening to the words but even more importantly the non-verbals – eyes, facial expressions, tone of voice, gestures, body posture, timing, intensity of response. Our non-verbals reveal us more directly than our words. When body and words are split the body usually reflects our true state whereas the words reflect what we think we should “think” and “feel”.

A. Theology

The life of Jesus teaches us the three dynamics about mature listening through His model of the incarnation. It involves:

1. Leave Your World
2. Enter Another’s World
3. Hold On to Yourself (Get in their shoes without taking off your own)
4. Hang between Two Worlds

B. Incarnational Listening Exercise

As the Listener

1. Give the Speaker your full attention (Don’t be thinking about your rebuttal).
2. Step into the speaker’s shoes (Feel what they are feeling; then get back out).
3. Avoid judging or interpreting.
4. Reflect back as accurately as you can what you heard them say
5. When you think they are done ask “Is there more?”
6. When they are done ask them “Of everything you have shared what is the most important thing you want me to remember?”

As the Speaker

1. Speak in the “I”.
2. Keep statements brief.
3. Stop to let the other person paraphrase.
4. Include feelings.
5. Remember: Be honest, clear, direct, and respectful.

V. Clean Fighting

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A “Clean Fight” is a negotiation between two people for the sake of the relationship. The person asking for the “Clean Fight” recognizes that it is their issue. Negotiating in relationships, and particularly in marriage, is extremely important for the good will of the relationship. The person bringing up the issue cares enough to take responsibility for something important to them, rather than projecting blame on the other. The person listening to the issue cares enough to consider what is important to someone they care about. They are willing to negotiate.

A. Dirty Fighting Tactics

Silent Treatment	Sarcasm
Manipulation	Complain
Blame/Attack	Deny
Accuse	Ignore
Threaten/Intimidate	Distract
Put downs	Avoid
Criticize	Hitting/Violent
Lie	Yelling
Escalate	Escape into Addictions
Anger/Rage	Controlling through passivity

1. Put a **check** next to three you use with your spouse.
2. Put an **X** next to three you think your spouse uses with you.
3. Share your results with one another.

B. Clean Fight Worksheet

- Decide on a specific, concrete behavior that you have a complaint about.
- Write out the answers to numbers 1-4 below. Stick to one issue.
- Share this first with a person with whom you do not have the conflict.
(This will help you eliminate any dirty fighting and ensure greater clarity around the issue).
- Return to your partner. Choose who will be speaker/listener. Go through all steps.
- Listener incarnates and reflects back what they hear the Speaker say (paraphrase) after each sentence stem.

Speaker: Ask permission to do a clean fight

1. State the problem. “I notice...”

e.g. I notice when you arrive home ahead of me your car is not pulled to the end of the driveway. This means I cannot pull my car all the way in and it blocks the sidewalk.

2. State why it is important to you. “I value...”

e.g. I value an unobstructed sidewalk. For me it communicates respect for people’s safety. Kids on bikes, people with baby carriages, and others don’t have to go into the street.

3. Fill in the following sentence: “When... I feel”

e.g. When our car blocks the sidewalk, I feel anxious because maybe I don’t want people to think we are inconsiderate but I also really value being considerate and respecting their safety.

4. State clearly, respectfully, specifically and directly your request.

e.g. I would like to ask that you pull your car to the very end of the driveway when you arrive home first. If you forget, I would then like to ask that you take responsibility for moving both cars in all the way within the hour.

Listener

5. Consider the request. Briefly share your perspective on it.

e.g. I had no idea it bothered you. For me it is no big deal to block the sidewalk. I never even think about it.

6. Are you willing to do all of it, part of it, or none of it?

e.g. I am more than willing to move my car all the way in –and both cars if I forget. I have one adjustment though. I would like to ask that you remind me if I forget to do it within the hour.

Speaker

7. Agree on request

OR

Offer an alternative (not more than 3x)

e.g. It's a deal!

8. Together –write agreement – go over in 2-4 weeks

Name _____ My understanding of the agreement is:

Name _____ My understanding of the agreement is:

Coaches Guidelines for Clean Fighting

- Enforce Clean Fighting - no dirty fighting.
- Make sure they are speaking in the “I”.
- Make sure they stick to ONE issue.
- Make distinctions between thoughts and feelings.
- Respectful tone and body language.
- No advising or fixing. Offer suggestions through questions.
Have you thought about...?
I wonder if this might be another way to say that...?
- Make sure their “complaint” and “request” are clear and direct. Specific!
- Give them praise for clean fighting.

Session 3: Developing a Rule of Life for Your Marriage

I. Introduction

A. Marriage is Your First Vocation, a Specific Call to God, a Particular Mission to Do God's Will

B. The Obstacles

The following story and questions are meant to help you discern what may be getting in the way of developing a way of life that keeps you closely connected in your marriage:

Parker Palmer, in *A Hidden Wholeness*, relates a story about farmers in the Midwest who would prepare for blizzards by tying a rope from the back door of their house out to the barn as a guide to ensure they could return safely home. These blizzards came quickly and fiercely and were highly dangerous. When their full force was blowing, a farmer could not see the end of his or her hand. Many froze to death in those blizzards, disoriented by their inability to see. They wandered in circles, lost sometimes in their own backyards. If they lost their grip on the rope, it became impossible for them to find their way home. Some froze within feet of their own front door, never realizing how close they were to safety. Many of us are wandering amidst the blizzards of life and have easily lost God's purpose and vision for their marriage.

In your time alone with God, consider the following questions:

1. What is the nature of the blizzard around your marriage at this time? What contributes to your blizzard? What does it look like? Feel like?

2. What tends to obscure the priority of marriage for you? What gets "lost"?

C. Rule of Life - Practical Steps

A Rule of Life enables us to organize our lives around everything that has to do with our vocation of marriage.

1. Each rope is actually made up of a series of smaller, intertwined threads. In light of your life at this time, what “threads” do you want to make up your rope so that your marriage can grow in the union and communion God intends?

Consider Personal Areas:

What do you need for yourself to love your spouse well? (e.g. work less, time for yourself to recharge, develop spiritual life, sleep, practice the skills, therapy, etc)?

Consider Areas Together:

What do you believe you can do together that would help you stay connected to your spouse and keep your marriage growing and healthy daily, weekly, monthly, yearly? (Sabbath together, meals together, weekly soul connection, go away overnight, practice the skills, do counseling together, books, conferences)

2. Share with Your Spouse