

## Marriage: The Tie That Frees • Part 4

### Communication • Ephesians 4:25-32 & 1 Peter 3:7

#### I. INTRODUCTION - 1 PETER 3

##### A. *Marriage Enrichment*

1. Marriage enrichment is a hot topic these days
  - a. several new books come out every year that seek to help couples find fulfillment in their relationship
  - b. on any given weekend there are dozens of marriage seminars and retreats offered around the country that promise to turn your marriage around and make it better than ever
2. I heard of one man who was so diligent to improve his marriage that he bought and read everything he could find on the subject.
3. Once, while racing to catch a plane for a business trip, he passed the airport bookstore
  - a. and wanting to get something to read on the flight, grabbed a book titled, *How to Hug*
  - b. it wasn't till 30 minutes into the flight that he picked up the book and began to read,
  - c. only to discover it was the 8<sup>th</sup> volume of an encyclopedia!

##### B. *The Route To Intimacy*

1. In our first study on Marriage we discovered the *purpose* and the *goal* of marriage
2. To recap:
  - a. the purpose of marriage is to solve the problem of *loneliness*
  - b. but the only way to do this is for marriage to move toward it's *goal*,
  - c. which is for two to become one through the *process of blending* we call *intimacy*
3. Today, we are going to take a look at the route to this intimacy that answers the need for companionship so deep in the human heart
4. When we talk about intimacy, we're talking about knowing and being known
  - a. that's what it means when it says at the end of Genesis 2 . . .

**{24} Therefore a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.**

**{25} And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed.**

- b. this is the kind of intimacy that God has planned for marriage -
- c. that a man and woman might *know each other* without the fear of *rejection*
- d. every marriage is an opportunity through the love and forgiveness God offers, to go back to the Garden and rediscover what it was Adam and Eve possessed before the Fall
- e. God intends marriage to be a *refuge* - a safe place, unmarred by shame and

- guilt
5. But if our marriages are ever to attain this kind of intimacy, there is *one* ingredient that's an absolute essential
  6. If husbands and wives are to know each other, what is the one thing they *have* to do?
  7. Communicate!
  8. Communication is the *route*, the *path* to intimacy

## II. HUSBAND - UNDERSTAND YOUR WIFE!

### A. 1 Peter 3:7

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered.**

1. In the verses prior to this, Peter had spelled out the role of the wife toward the husband
2. His words echo Paul's that we looked at last week in Ephesians 5, and show us that these things are indeed the instructions of the Holy Spirit
3. What we find in this verse is really quite startling when we realize the cultural context in which it was given
  - a. people today look at the instructions for husbands and wives that are found in scripture and consider them nothing more than the enforcement of an ancient male-dominated system that's old fashioned and out of date
  - b. what they fail to realize is that what both Paul and Peter say, especially to husbands, was *revolutionary* for the time
  - c. wives were considered as little more than servants in the Greek and Roman world
  - d. they were the ones by which a man raised legal heirs for the family name and fortune
  - e. but when it came to love and pleasure, many men kept a mistress or visited the local temple prostitutes
  - f. generally speaking, a wife had little standing in her husband's esteem
4. When *Paul* tells the husband to *love* his wife as Christ loved the Church, he is elevating the wife to a place she had never enjoyed before
5. When *Peter* tells a husband to *honor* his wife as he would a precious and delicate vase, this is nothing less than radical social revolution
6. No wonder the early Church was accused by its critics of upsetting the social order and turning the world upside down!
7. But most shocking of all is Peter's instruction to husbands at the beginning of v. 7

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding**

8. The idea that a man would take the time to *understand* his wife was completely new and novel
9. But Peter is restoring to men something that had been lost; and that was an understanding of the real purpose and goal of marriage

10. This verse is really very enlightening!
  - a. Peter tells husbands to understand their wives
  - b. but no where are wives told to understand their husbands
  - c. you know why?
  - d. because men are simple! A woman needs little effort to understand her husband
  - e. men on the other hand find it just about *impossible* to understand their wives
  - f. that's why Peter calls them to it - it's such a difficult task, many guys give up
11. Look at it again . . .

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding**

- a. this means that the husband is to *live* with his wife in such a way that he makes her the *object* of his constant attention
  - b. she becomes the focus of his attempts to understand
  - c. he is to make it his aim to know her and what makes her tick
  - d. what are her moods - and how is he to react to each of the 43 of them?
  - e. what are her dreams, her desires, her passions, her fears
  - f. what drives her, what calms her?
12. Peter's words here convey the idea that this isn't just some weekend project
    - a. he doesn't give her a test or ask a few questions - and then he figures her out
    - b. it's a lifelong process of living with her and understanding her as a person who lives, loves, and changes with time
    - c. their living together is to be marked by a diligent application of his mind and heart to *know her!*
  13. Ladies, there's something you need to know about us men; We find you to be a mystery!
    - a. right about the time we think we've got you figured out - you go and change on us
    - b. while we have 2 moods - happy and sad / you have dozens
    - c. when we're happy, we want to play - when we're sad, we want to pout
    - d. but you - sometimes you seem happy, but you want to be alone
      - 1) other times you seem down, but you want us around
      - 2) then there's the "I don't know how I'm feeling so leave me alone but let me just cuddle" mood that drives us nuts!
  14. David Moore has some great insights on the differences between men and women that can help a husband and wife better understand each other
  15. But what I want to focus on today is how Peter calls husbands to make knowing and understanding their wives a priority
  16. And men, the chief way you do this is by *communicating* with her!
  17. You've got to talk to her, spend time with her, open up!

**B. Men, Women, & Communication**

1. I don't know how many times I've heard it said that women are better communicators than men

2. But the more I've looked at this, the more convinced I am it simply isn't true
3. The ones who say that are women!
4. It would be more *accurate* to say that generally speaking, women and men communicate *differently*
5. For instance:
  - a. here's 2 women talking about a visit to the hair salon
    - 1) You got a haircut! That's so cute
    - 2) Do you think so? I wasn't sure when she gave me the mirror. I mean, don't you think it's too fluffy looking?
    - 1) Oh gosh, no! It's perfect! I'd love to get my hair cut like that, but I think my face is too wide. I'm pretty stuck with this style I think.
    - 2) Are you serious? I think your face is adorable. And you could easily get one of those layer cuts - that would look so cute. I was actually going to do that except that I was afraid it would accent my long neck.
    - 1) Oh- I can't believe you said that. I would love to have your neck! Anything to take attention away from this two-by-four I have for a shoulder line.
    - 2) Are you kidding? I know girls that would love to have your shoulders. Everything drapes so well on you. I mean, look at my arms - see how short they are? If I had your shoulders I could get clothes to fit me so much easier.
  - b. here's 2 men talking about the same subject
    - 1) haircut?
    - 2) yep.
6. While there *are* exceptions - men usually want to get to the bottom line as quickly as possible, while women like to talk round a subject and develop all the background first
7. John got home from work one night to discover a large dent in the front bumper of his wife's car
  - a. when he asked Mary how it happened,
  - b. she began the story at the point when she got out of the shower that morning
  - c. it took her 45 minutes to tell of her entire day, then she ended with,
  - d. "And then on the way home from the market an hour ago, at the light on the corner of 5<sup>th</sup> and Main, this guy just backed into me for no reason."
  - e. the whole time John was listening, he was wondering why she was rehearsing her entire day
  - f. when he asked how the accident happened - he meant, "Who, when, and where?"
    - 1) he's a bottom liner
    - 2) Mary is a story teller
    - 3) to her the accident was a part of her day, and as such, it's connected to every other part of her day
  - g. John knows from experience that if he cuts her off and asks her to just get to the bottom line, she reads it as a lack of care on his part
  - h. so he quietly bides his time and listens to her as she relates all the details

- i. as he listens, he tries to discern how she's doing and if she's shaken by the accident
    - 1) was there something that happened earlier in the day that caused her to lose attention while she was driving?
    - 2) is she fearful?
    - 3) what can he do to provide her the love and security she needs right now?
  - j. Mary, on the other hand, needs to remember that John is a "bottom liner" and so she needs to keep her story telling as brief as possible so she can get him the information he's looking for
8. But John and Mary will only learn these things about each other if they take the time to talk *about* communication
  9. Many couples struggle with this issue because they rarely if ever take the time to talk *about* talk - to converse about conversation - to commune about communication
  10. Men, one of the most important things you can do for your marriage, and it goes right to the heart of what Peter says here, is to ask your wife how communication is in your marriage.
    - a. does she see evidence that you are trying to understand her?
    - b. does she have the confidence of knowing that when the two of you talk, you *really* listen to her
    - c. does she feel like you two are *connecting*?
  11. A mature-looking woman had an appointment with a marriage counselor, and told him flat out: "I would like to divorce my husband."
    - a. to this, the counselor replied, "Well, do you have any grounds?"
    - b. she answered, "Why yes. We have almost an acre."
    - c. the puzzled counselor asked her, "You don't understand. What I want to know is do you have a grudge?"
    - d. the lady answered, "Actually, we don't, but we do have a nice carport."
    - e. the counselor shook his head and said, "Ma'am, I'm sorry, but I just don't see any reason why you should divorce your husband."
    - f. the lady looked at the counselor and said to him, "It's just that the man can't carry on an intelligent conversation."
  12. Peter says,
 

**Husbands, likewise, dwell with them with understanding, giving honor to the wife, as to the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life, that your prayers may not be hindered**

    - a. he makes a connection between your diligence in knowing and honoring your wife,
    - b. and the effectiveness of your life and ministry
    - c. the man weak in communication with his wife will find his communication with God also weakened
    - d. and the reason for this is obvious - God lays on him the obligation of being intimate with her in this most important part of their relationship - communication!
  13. To the ladies, let me say this . . .
    - a. it isn't that men are poor communicators

- b. it's just that they communicate *differently* than you
  - c. the average woman *needs* to say about 30,000 words every day
  - d. the average man doesn't *need* to say any but typically will utter about 15,000
  - e. reminds me of the two women who were flying from LA to Chicago
    - 1) one said to the stewardess, "Will you please ask the pilot not to fly faster than the sound barrier? "
    - 2) the other woman added, "You see, we'd like to talk."
  - f. and while most women are content to just sit and talk, men tend to communicate best when they are engaged in some kind of an activity
    - 1) women will invite each other over for coffee and just sit and chat
    - 2) they go to showers and parties and love to gab
    - 3) but two guys sitting on the couch yaking? Uh-uh!
    - 4) they meet at the party, and while dipping the chips in the dip they set up a day of golf or racquetball
    - 5) it's then that they talk - while engaged in some activity
  - g. wives think of having a meaningful conversation with their husband and they picture themselves sitting on the couch together staring into each other's eyes
  - h. that scares most men to death!
  - i. in that setting they feel intimidated - like they're being reprimanded
  - j. so they clam up, they lose their train of thought, they get confused, their palms get sweaty, their heart begins to race, they blush and look guilty
  - k. ladies, you may find it a lot more productive to talk with your husband while the two of you are engaged in some activity; like going for a walk or drive, working in the yard together, washing the car, watching the NCAA Basketball Finals!
14. And ladies, try to say what you mean - don't make us try to figure it out - please
15. Guys, women do often speak in code: Here's some of the code they use . . .
- a. yes = no
  - b. no = yes
  - c. Maybe = no
  - d. I'm sorry = You'll be sorry
  - e. We need = I want
  - f. It's your decision = The correct decision should be obvious by now
  - g. Do what you want = You'll pay later
  - h. We need to talk = I want to complain
  - i. I'm not upset = Of course I'm upset you louse!
  - j. Do you love me? = I'm going to ask for something expensive
  - k. I'll be ready in a sec = kick your shoes off and find a good game on TV
  - l. You need to learn to communicate = Just listen to me
  - m. Are you listening? = Too late, you're dead meat
16. But to be fair, men sometimes speak in code too
- a. I'm hungry = Let's eat
  - b. I'm tired = I'm tired
  - c. what's wrong? = What meaningless self-inflicted psychological trauma are

- you going through now?
- d. Yes, I did notice your hair = It's on top of your head where it's supposed to be
  - e. Let's talk = I'm trying to impress you by showing you what a deep and sensitive person I am
  - f. Okay, let's talk = Sure, and I just love to have a root canal too
  - g. (while shopping) They all look good = Pick any stinking dress and let's go so we can visit the tool department at Sears

### **C. Ephesians 4:25-32**

1. Paul lays down some specific guidelines for communication in Ephesians 4 that we need to take a look at

**{25} Therefore, putting away lying, "Let each one of you speak truth with his neighbor," for we are members of one another.**

2. It is so easy to shade the truth so that we can avoid getting in to trouble
3. But a good marriage is built on trust and when deceit of any kind enters in, it harms that trust
4. Resist the temptation to lie and shade the truth even a little
5. Make honesty the policy for your relationship as husband and wife

**{26} "Be angry, and do not sin": do not let the sun go down on your wrath,**

6. Paul quotes the Psalms here - and the context is this -
  - a. we cannot help being angry
  - b. but we can control how that anger is expressed
  - c. there are appropriate and inappropriate ways to express our anger
  - d. violence is never appropriate!
  - e. unkind and hurtful speech is never appropriate!
  - f. when angry, we need to go to the Lord first and ask what the root of our anger is
    - 1) is it just that we're mad because we didn't get our way?
    - 2) or is our anger justified because of a genuine injustice?
  - g. then we need to make sure that we don't just stuff our anger
  - h. he says, "Do not let the sun go down on your wrath"
    - 1) in other words, resolve the issues that caused the anger
    - 2) if it's an anger with not getting our way, the best thing to do is repent and ask for forgiveness
    - 3) if there is a legitimate reason for our anger, we need to take it to those involved and deal with it before today turns into tomorrow
  - i. far too many husbands and wives have let years of unresolved anger drive a wedge of bitterness between them
    - 1) rather than deal with the issues that prompted the anger,
    - 2) they stuffed it, hoping it would go away
    - 3) but anger doesn't just go away
    - 4) when stuffed, it turns into bitterness
    - 5) and bitterness, further harbored, turns into hatred
  - j. Paul reveals a principle of communication here we'd better all heed -

- 1) don't just stuff your anger
- 2) get it under control,
- 3) but then resolve the issues that led to it!
- 4) and do it before today turns into tomorrow
- 5) because if you don't something truly terrible might take place . . .

**{27} nor give place to the devil.**

7. The enemy will take advantage of any opening we leave him
8. And he will use unresolved anger to stir up strife and dissension

**{29} Let no corrupt word proceed out of your mouth, but what is good for necessary edification, that it may impart grace to the hearers.**

9. Be careful what you say!
10. Profanity, loaded words, vicious criticism that's only meant to hurt; all these are inappropriate and ought not ever leave the lips of the married man or woman in the direction of their spouse
11. A good test is this: How would I speak to my mate if Jesus were here? HE IS!!!!!!!!!!

**{31} Let all bitterness, wrath, anger, clamor, and evil speaking be put away from you, with all malice.**

**{32} And be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**

12. Some of the marriages here this morning need this last verse more than anything else we've looked at today

**Be kind to one another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God in Christ forgave you.**

### III. CONCLUSION

#### A. A New Start

1. How did God forgive you?
  - a. partially - conditionally?
  - b. no - completely, and the only condition was faith in Christ
2. This is the same way we must forgive one another, specially in marriage
3. If your marriage is one of those marked by a lot of bad history -
  - a. if it's seen a lot of trouble and testing
  - b. if there has been a lot of distrust
  - c. a lot of vicious and hurtful speech
  - d. poor communication
  - e. stuffed and unresolved anger
4. That can all change *this instant* if you will but take your marriage and yourself to the Cross of Christ and ask Him for a *new start*
5. Tell me - what is keeping you from being *kind* to your mate?
  - a. *why* is it impossible to be tenderhearted toward him or her?
  - b. why can't you forgive?
6. Jesus said that if we have genuinely received God's forgiveness, we *will*

forgive those who have sinned against us, but if we don't forgive others their debts, then it casts doubt on whether we have truly been forgiven [Matthew 6:12-14]

7. Let go of the past - put your hope, not in your mate's ability to change, but in God's power to heal
8. And ask Him to make this day a new start for you and your mate
  - a. a new start doesn't mean you won't both repeat the failures that have marked the past
  - b. but it does mean that you stop keeping a record of those things and instead you work together at finding and living God's will for your lives and marriage
9. Pray together before you leave today!