

CHRISTIAN MARRIAGE

Lesson 14

His Needs—Her Needs

Dialogue (Attachment)

Carol: You can see we are different -- very different

Jack: In the past this was a tremendous source of friction -- and still is at times. But we are learning that because God has made us different, with different needs, if we understand these differences it reduces the friction in our marriage and brings a smoother relationship and harmony.

Carol and I have not arrived in our marriage. We are two strong-willed people who have put themselves under the Lordship of Christ to make our marriage successful. If we don't acknowledge the Lordship of Christ our marriage experiences real difficulty.

We must work on meeting each other's needs and not demand that our own needs be met. We understand the failure of men and women to meet each other's needs is often due to ignorance of each other's differences and needs. While much struggle in a marriage is due to the sin of selfishness sometimes it is due to ignorance.

Each partner thinks the other has the same needs which is simply not true. God has created men and women differently and the more we understand the differences and seek to meet needs we will have a solid marriage for Christ.

Women were created by God to meet the needs of man. Man is commanded by God to love his wife as Christ loved the Church and this obviously involves meeting her basic needs.

This dialogue will be based on the book His Needs Her Needs by Willard Harley, Jr. He sets forth five needs of a wife and five needs of a husband. He claims that if these needs are met it will produce an affair-proof marriage as spouses won't seek to have these needs met outside the marriage.

During this dialogue you may be thinking about how your spouse is not meeting your needs rather than concentrating on how you can meet your spouses' needs. You must seek to change your heart for Christ and to change your behavior so as to sincerely and genuinely meet your mate's basic needs.

Carol: Not every man or woman will have these exact same needs, and we may omit some, but the majority of you will have these five basic needs.

SEXUAL FULFILLMENT (*His Need*)

Jack: The first basic need for a man is a healthy sex life. God has created most men with a very strong sex drive. One of the reasons we are in such an immoral age with so much sexuality permeating every aspect of our society is because man's greatest need is to have release for the sex

drive which God created in him. God says this must only be in a marriage union -- where this need can be met without shame, guilt, fear or disease.

If this need is not met a husband will (1) Look at other women and have an affair; (2) Secretly fantasize about other women wishing he was having an affair and feeling guilty all the while; (3) become bitter with his wife, get sexually uptight and become mean, angry and insensitive.

Usually men with strong Christian convictions take the last two paths, but then it is difficult to live with a man who is sexually frustrated.

A Christian man loves his wife and wants sexual fulfillment with the woman he loves. Part of her responsibility is to meet his sexual needs. If she does she will have a happier husband with less fantasizing on his part and he will certainly be more excited about meeting his wife's needs.

Carol: When a husband's sexual needs are not met he turns into a grump and acts like an animal. Often he will take out his frustration on the children. A wise woman will meet *his* need and realize how important it is to their relationship to have a sexually satisfied husband.

AFFECTION (*Her Need*)

Carol: On the other hand, a wife's greatest need is for affection. This is very, very different than the man's need for sex.

To most women affection symbolizes security, protection, comfort, and approval--tremendously important commodities to us. When a husband shows his wife affection he sends the message that she is important to him, he wants to protect and care for her, that he thinks she has done a good job and is proud of her. These messages help her to work harder at being a good wife.

Most women love to hug. We hug babies, animals, old people, teddy bears, and each other. And we hug without any sexual overtones. We love the feeling that we get from holding hands, touching, hugging, even kissing -- and to us it isn't intended to be sexual.

We cannot get interested in a sexual relationship without first having an affectionate relationship.

Hug and kiss your wife every morning.
 Tell her you love her often.
 Call her during the day to see how she's doing.
 Bring her a surprise once in awhile, flowers, candy, a card.
 Remember special days, birthdays, anniversaries.
 Help her around the house even if it's only for a short time.
 Cuddle her at night without ulterior motives.

Affection is the environment in a marriage and sex is an event. Plenty of affection will lay the proper groundwork for sex in the marriage. Women are not spontaneous, which is why courting is so important after marriage as well as before.

Jack: Men who are sexually uptight find it hard to give affection to their wives and wives who get no affection find it difficult to respond sexually to their husbands. This often becomes a “catch 22” situation. We must get off this merry-go-round and build a relationship of mutual caring, not mutual needing.

Carol: Jack has learned over the years that I respond best to him when he helps with the dishes, vacuums, takes me out to dinner or a movie or calls me on the phone to tell me he loves me -- all of which he has done this past week.

Jack: But we also had an argument over this message which brought Carol to tears!

CONVERSATION (*Her Need*)

Carol: The second need I want to mention is the need for husbands to talk to their wives.

Women want to talk about the events of her day, people she may have encountered, what went on with the family, and how she feels about them. She wants verbal attention.

During courtship a couple spends long hours talking about everything. But after the wedding men often come home from work, read the newspaper or watch TV and usually aren't interested in entering into dialogue with the wife over dinner.

The wife feels like she is being taken for granted, that he isn't interested in her and that he really doesn't care about her. In a survey done by the director of Miami University's Family and Child Studies, couples married over 50 years were asked why they thought their marriages had lasted so long. The overwhelming response: good conversation and communication.

How do long-term couples make communication work? They do more than settle quarrels amicably. They share activities and keep romance alive. They express their commitment to each other through the good times and the bad times. They tell each other, “You're important to me. I'm not taking you for granted.”

Most women fall in love with men who have set aside time every day to exchange conversation and affection with them. They stay in love with men who continue to meet those needs.

RECREATIONAL PARTNER (*His Need*)

Jack: Why is it that when a man courts a woman she is interested in such things as sports, fishing, playing tennis and recreation, but after marriage she loses interest in these things? I want to spend time with my wife doing things I like. My wife encourages me to have activities apart from her and I need time to bond with other men, but I also like my wife to be with me and enjoy doing things together. When we recreate together, it certainly helps me have some common ground for conversation.

If my wife is not interested in all the activities I do I feel she is not interested in me. The couple who plays together stays together. I fear that if my wife goes her way and I go my way we will grow apart.

Carol never fished or went to sporting events until we were married. Now she does because she knows I enjoy those activities.

Carol: Jack takes me out every week on a date -- to Sea World, a movie or even Disney. It was the best thing that happened to our marriage because we started having fun together.

HONESTY AND OPENNESS (*Her Need*)

Carol: I have been blessed with a totally honest husband. At times almost TOO honest! One who is faithful, open and trustworthy.

A woman has a great need for her husband to be honest with her. Mistrust will kill a relationship and destroy a marriage.

When we ask each other how we feel, we must tell the truth. When a wife hears the truth from her husband about what he thinks, what he plans, where he has gone and where he wants to go she can respond to him with security and confidence.

No marriage can survive a lack of honesty.

AN ATTRACTIVE SPOUSE (*His Need*)

Jack: I married my wife not because she was the most attractive woman in the world but in my eyes she was beautiful and I wanted to spend my life with her. I did not fall in love with a movie star or some other fantasy but with my wife.

By attractive, I mean a woman should take pains to look something like the woman her husband married, who takes the care for her appearance as she did when they were dating.

Some of the most attractive women I have ever met don't have what our culture would call beauty but they become stunning in appearance by making the most of what they have.

This does not mean a woman must be eternally young, but getting older is no excuse for letting her weight creep up and up, not fixing her hair or dressing sloppily. A husband wants his wife to dress for him.

When a man looks at his wife and is disappointed with her appearance he starts thinking of other women, which makes him feel guilty. However, when a man has an attractive wife it makes him feel good about himself in taking pride in his wife. It gives him a sense of confidence and poise. It says to him that he has the appeal and talent that deserves someone of her caliber. It may sound immature and selfish but most men find it nearly impossible to appreciate a woman for her inner qualities alone.

FINANCIAL SUPPORT (*Her Need*)

Carol: A woman needs the security of knowing she will have enough money to meet the needs of

her family to live comfortably. This doesn't mean financial hard times won't be part of a good marriage, as Jack and I have had a lot of hard times.

But when a husband is working to provide for his family it sends a message of loving and caring to his wife.

In Genesis God declares that the husband is to work to provide for his family. I think that is why it is so hard for women to endure the joblessness of their husbands. When Jack was out of work for 9 months looking for a pastorate it was the worst time in our marriage.

Even today it is hard for me to see Jack idle. He may have just mowed the lawn, washed the car, cleaned out the garage and gone over his sermon, but when he sits down to watch TV it bugs me to death.

Wives need to see their husbands working at providing for their family.

DOMESTIC SUPPORT (*His Needs*)

Jack: A man has the need for his wife to "take care of things" -- especially him.

Men work long and tedious hours to support the family. Many men experience a high level of stress and depression. They want to get off the treadmill so when they come home they want a little peace and quiet. They want to unwind from a hectic day on the job. Right or wrong most men want their wives to simplify their lives through domestic support -- taking care of the house and children, laundry, and cooking.

Even husbands who have wives with careers still desire their wives to simplify their lives and this presents problem because the wife has many of the same needs for peace and quiet.

When both partners work there must be an identifying and division of tasks which must be done in a family if life is going to be made easier for each spouse. House chores and children responsibilities must be divided fairly. Sometimes women must do what is commonly called a "man's job" and men have to do "women's work." The goal is to simplify life so the husband and wife can have time to cultivate their marriage. Without mutual support a marriage will fail.

Carol: Men desire to have a wife to take care of their domestic needs. Learn to cook, learn tips on cleaning, pray that God will take away the procrastination in your life when it comes to housework and laundry so these basic needs of your husband will be met.

FAMILY COMMITMENT (*Her Need*)

Carol: We hear a lot about family values lately, but women have had the need for her husband to be a good father to her children since Adam and Eve.

A father has a profound influence on his children and a woman must have a husband contributing to the well-being of these children.

James Dobson made the statement that young children need mothers for nurturing but adolescents need fathers for moral development. Most men view fatherhood as a demanding role -- sometimes too demanding. Not only must they act as good husbands providing their wives with affection, conversation, honesty and financial support, now they must become good fathers too! Many just turn this role over to their wives. But this places the marriage in jeopardy. God has planned that it takes two, a father and a mother, to raise a family well. And a wife never resents the time a husband spends with her children.

When our boys were little Jack would romp and wrestle with them on the living room floor, he would go to their sporting events, he coached them in Little League and went to their performances in plays and band concerts. We would sit around the dinner table for hours talking as a family, and Jack would listen to them. Because of this Jack is loved and respected by his four sons today and they seek his advice in raising their own children.

ADMIRATION (*His Need*)

Jack: Honest admiration is a great motivator for most men. When a wife tells a husband she appreciates and respects him it gives him more satisfaction than he receives from his paycheck.

A woman needs to appreciate a husband for what he already is, not for what he could become if he lived up to her expectations and standards. Admiration also helps men gain confidence and believe in themselves.

A woman who creates a negative environment of carping, complaining and criticism against her husband places her marriage in jeopardy.

Wives do not need to fake admiration or lie when they can't admire, but they can stay quiet and say nothing, praying for their husbands, trusting God for what He wants for them. Most likely there are a good many characteristics for which she can praise her husband if she looks for them -- they were there when she married him. It's a matter of where she puts her focus, on his good traits or bad.

A man thrives on admiration and appreciation. Many men who have affairs stress that they began because of being admired and that admiration from their lover acted as a warm spring breeze in comparison to the arctic cold of their wives' criticism.

A man needs his wife's admiration as much as a woman needs her husband's praise. Admiration makes a man feel important, needed and significant.

Carol: It says in Eph. 4:33, "Wives, see to it that you respect your husband." I used to think it was my job to deflate Jack's ego. I thought ego was wrong. Then through marriage counseling I learned that a man's ego is all wrapped up in his self-esteem, and that ego is good.

God showed me that I was to respect Jack, to lift him up, to glorify him as the Holy Spirit glorifies the Father. And the more I did that the more Jack became a man to respect.

It's up to me -- whether I'm going to obey or not. If I choose to obey, God blesses me by having Jack become the man that meets my needs, the man who loves me, the man of my dreams.

Jack: I have definite needs. If these needs are not met I feel unfulfilled, insecure and insignificant.

I am learning that the best way to get my needs met is to aggressively meet Carol's needs. I must give 100% to meet her needs whether she responds to me or not.

Yet it has been proven that if I meet her needs as I'm commanded to do so by Christ, she goes out of her way to meet my needs, which she was created by God to do.

Carol: God is in the business of redeeming and restoring relationships. There isn't a marriage on earth that God doesn't have the power to bless. Trust Him to bless your marriage as you seek to fulfill the needs of your mate.

Jack: Carol and I have experienced this in our marriage and we praise God for it.