

## Third Session

- 1) Prayer.
- 2) "Any questions for me?"
- 3) Review "dumb questions," 3 loves, points from Genesis/Mark Bible study
- 4) Discuss Tony Campolo's love chapter
- 5) Discuss the three basic misconceptions about marriage.

### Three Basic Misconceptions About *Christian* Marriage

#### Misconception Number One: What is the *purpose* of marriage?

Remember Genesis 2? God said, it is not good that man should be \_\_\_\_\_. Remember? So God created a \_\_\_\_\_ fit for him.

The basic purpose of Christian marriage is **to meet the need for companionship**. You and I were created to be in relationship. God made us social creatures from the very beginning.

It is not just to propagate the species.

In this day and age, we do not seem to need to be married to do that...

It is not just for legitimized sex.

In this day and age, we do not seem to need to be married to do that...

It is not just for economic benefit (2 live cheaper than one.)

In this day and age, we do not seem to need to be married to live together.

The basic purpose of marriage is to meet the need for companionship. All other reasons come out of that.

When you take a marriage vow, you are vowing to *provide companionship* for another person for the rest of his or her life!

#### Misconception Number Two: Whose needs are being met?

Note that you are not vowing to RECEIVE companionship. You are vowing to PROVIDE companionship for another person for the rest of his or her life! The statement, "*I'm not getting what I wanted out of this marriage*" is nonsensical. You do not enter into marriage to get something for yourself. You marry to *GIVE* something to your partner!

(Look at the marriage vows - read them - Ask: "Do you see anything here that promises you'll get anything?")

If you marry for what you can get out of marriage, that's not love. It's LUST. Literally, that's the difference between love and lust! Whose needs are being met? Your partner's! If not, Don't you DARE get married!

### **Misconception Number Three: Marriage is a Contract.**

No, it isn't. Contracts can be broken. Christian Marriage, according to the Bible, is a covenant. In the Bible, that's the word used for the most solemn and most binding agreement known to humanity.

#### **Marriage is a Covenant of Companionship!**

It is a covenantal agreement to meet your spouse's needs for the rest of your life. It is, therefore, a FINAL act. A lifetime commitment. (Genesis 2 - the man "CLEAVES" to his wife. The two become one.)

Because, as we all know,

Optional: look at Ezekiel 16:8f. (Thereto I plight thee my troth)

Troth = most solemn oath available.

#### 6) "How to be Good and Angry!"

- a. Bible study on James/Ephesians/etc.
- b. workshop on anger - what it is, why it's a failure to communicate, how to keep from hurting your partner's feelings WHEN (not "if") you get angry .

James 1:19-20

You must understand this, my beloved: let everyone be quick to listen, slow to speak, slow to anger; 20for your anger does not produce God's righteousness.

James 3:1-12

Not many of you should become teachers, my brothers and sisters, for you know that we who teach will be judged with greater strictness. 2For all of us make many mistakes. Anyone who makes no mistakes in speaking is perfect, able to keep the whole body in check with a bridle. 3If we put bits into the mouths of horses to make them obey us, we guide their whole bodies. 4Or look at ships: though they are so large that it takes strong winds to drive them, yet they are guided by a very small rudder wherever the will of the pilot directs. 5So also the tongue is a small member, yet it boasts of great exploits. How great a forest is set ablaze by a small fire! 6And the tongue is a fire. The tongue is placed among our members as a world of iniquity; it stains the whole body, sets on fire the cycle of nature, and is itself set on fire by hell. 7For every species of beast and bird, of reptile and sea creature, can be tamed and has been tamed by the human species, 8but no one can tame the tongue--a restless evil, full of deadly poison. 9With it we bless the Lord and Father, and with it we curse those who are made in the likeness of God. 10From the same mouth come blessing and cursing. My brothers and sisters, this ought not to be so. 11Does a spring pour forth from the same opening both fresh and brackish water? 12Can a fig tree, my brothers and sisters, yield olives, or a grapevine figs? No more can salt water yield fresh.

Ephesians 4:25-32

So then, putting away falsehood, let all of us speak the truth to our neighbors, for we are members of one another. 26Be angry but do not sin; do not let the sun go down on your anger, 27and do not make room for the devil. 28Thieves must give up stealing; rather let them labor and work honestly with their own hands, so as to have something to share with the needy. 29Let no evil talk come out of your mouths, but only what is useful for building up, as there is need, so that your words may give grace to those who hear. 30And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with which you were marked with a seal for the day of redemption. 31Put away from you all bitterness and wrath and anger and wrangling and slander, together with all malice, 32and be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving one another, as God in Christ has forgiven you. 5:1Therefore be imitators of God, as beloved children, 2and walk in love, as Christ loved us and gave himself up for us, a fragrant offering and sacrifice to God.

Proverbs 15:1-2

A soft answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger. 2The tongue of the wise dispenses knowledge, but the mouths of fools pour out folly.

7) "The Heart of Communication" (WE WILL DISCUSS THIS NEXT TIME, SO BRING IT BACK WITH YOU!)

## THE HEART OF COMMUNICATION

We are experienced by other people in two ways: for what we do, and for who we are. These two statements express the objective and subjective levels of relationships. Whenever the focus of attention is on what you do, you are being treated on the objective level. Whenever the content of a relationship focuses on who you are, you are being treated subjectively.

The tendency in our culture is to treat people as objects rather than subjects. Our conversations center around questions like "Where do you work?", "How many children do you have?", "What neighborhood is your house in?", and "What are your hobbies?" All of these are "doing" questions rather than "being" questions.

In many of our life situations it is appropriate for others to treat us objectively. In fact, in all of our relationships there will be an objective side. With the people that we are closest to, it is important that our relationship is not exclusively objective. If these relationships focus only on what we do or what we contribute, we will begin to feel like objects rather than subjects, like things rather than people.

Perhaps the greatest frustration in marriage comes when you feel like an object rather than a person. Commonplace statements in a counselor's office include, "All I'm good for is bringing home the paycheck. Nobody really cares about my problems." "Everything that I do for this family could be hired out - laundry, cooking, cleaning. If this family had a maid, I don't think they would miss me at all." "I feel like just an object, a body, when we have sex." These statements express one disappointment: "I have become a thing rather than a person in this relationship."

In most relationships the turning of people into things is not intentional; it is more a matter of neglect. The way we connect up with one another at the subjective level is through sharing communication. Sharing communication involves who we are more than what we do. The content of sharing

communication that we have the most difficulty with is feelings. There is a great hesitancy in our culture to share feelings, particularly on the part of men. Our competitive society and rigid stereotypes discourage the expression of feelings, since this kind of communication tends to make us vulnerable - the last thing you want to be in a "dog-eat-dog" society.

Your coming marriage offers the opportunity to set a new standard of intimacy by your willingness to share feelings and emotions. The time and risk that you invest in this process will add significantly to the depth and stability of your marriage relationship.

When you are attempting to share your feelings with another, you will be more successful in being heard if you use "I" messages rather than "you" messages. The sharing of feelings breaks down when the other person feels indicted by what you are saying. When the phrase "You make me feel" is used it sounds like an accusation. Besides sounding like an accusation, the phrase "You make me feel" is actually not true. No one can make anyone feel anything—that is, no one has control of our feelings unless we give it to them. It is more accurate and less accusatory to say, "I feel this way when ...." Using this method you are sharing your feelings rather than making a judgment of the other person.

When you are attempting to hear and understand another's feelings, your attitude is perhaps the most important ingredient to successful communication. This attitude includes several facets. First, it is crucial that you listen to the sharing of feelings and emotions from a nonjudgmental perspective. Statements like "You shouldn't feel that way" or "How could you possibly feel that way" will shut the other person off right away. These statements indicate that you have rejected the other's feelings as if it were a moral issue. Feelings are neither moral nor immoral in and of themselves - they simply exist. How we respond or take action based on our feelings may take on rightness or wrongness. So, when you are listening to another, don't judge, work hard at understanding.

If your goal is listening to understand, you can also feel a relief from the pressure to "fix" your loved one's feelings. More often than not, an individual is not asking for you to fix his/her feeling, only that you receive and accept it. Many times we avoid hearing the feelings of our loved ones because we are afraid we will not be able to make them feel better.

If the feeling expressed by your partner is directly related to you, try not to become defensive as you listen. This is not an easy task. If your partner has reacted to something you have done with feelings of sadness or anger, it is difficult not to defend your actions. If you can avoid this defensive response and respond with a question to further your understanding of the feeling that has been expressed, your communication will be enhanced.

Attempting to listen from the other person's point of view is another critical factor in receiving another's feelings. Sometimes your partner's feelings do not seem to make sense to you. This is because you have not entered his/her frame of reference as you have listened. You will know that you are listening from her/his point of view if the feeling that you hear makes sense.

When you share your feelings, use "I" messages. When you are receiving the feelings of another, listen nonjudgmentally, be relieved of any pressure to "fix" your partner's feeling, try not to become defensive in your listening, and work at listening from the other person's point of view.

8) Homework - try it!