

What Men Wish Women Knew

Making Love Last a Lifetime:

Ephesians 5:21-24, 33

May 15, 2005

Wesley J. Gabel

This is Pentecost Sunday. On the fiftieth day after the Passover and seven weeks after the resurrection of Jesus Christ, God gave birth to a new creation. The wind of God blew into expectant humanity so that people were born again. Born a second time, they now were clothed with power from heaven. People receive a new heart that leads them into new lives.

On Wednesday some students write on a Confirmation test why Pentecost was needed, indeed, why the law of God became a problem for Old Testament believers. Part of the answer is that people did not have the heart to follow God's law.

One day I awkwardly explained to a 90 year-old woman that she needed to embrace a different form of ministry rather than Sunday School teaching. Her memory-loss interfered with her teaching. I was alone in this task because no one else responsible "had the heart" to tell her.

The problem with all our relationships, and in many cases our lack of achievement, is that we don't "have the heart" to do what is vital and wise. This is why love does not last a lifetime for many. We need divinely restored hearts. That is what unfolded on Pentecost and began the renewal of creation. God's renewing presence blew into the very souls of human beings so that we would have the heart to live out the potential and purpose for which we were made.

Since we were not created as machines but as children, God gives teaching to inform our choices. God teaches us that he made us male and female to complement each other through genuine, divinely authored love. Sin, however, confuses our minds, corrupts our hearts and causes our male-female differences to be grounds of conflict rather than gifts for completion.

Marriage is God's call and mission to meet important needs of another. We come along side another person so that he or she fulfills all of God's created purpose.

A few weeks ago, we discovered that human hearts are like bank accounts that grow with deposits and dwindle with withdrawals. The greatest deposit is the gift of God's Spirit. When God's Spirit is welcomed into one's heart, amazing things happen. Additionally, God's Spirit makes deposits into hearts through the actions of others. We husbands can grow the hearts of our wives when we demonstrate affection, attentiveness, become actively involved with children and home-life, and express appreciation. Also, single men can bless women in this way as long as their brotherly actions are appropriate to the commitments held by both. We men have a divine call that dovetails with our masculine nature. We are called to emulate the sacrificial and heroic love of Christ, especially in our relationships with our wives. We all are to dress ourselves daily for this important role of sacrificially loving and valuing another person.

Similarly, women can have an amazing impact on the hearts of men. Wives can grow the hearts and lives of their husbands. You wives can make terrific deposits that increase our hearts and love as husbands. Again, however, our created differences play a critical role. We are dealing with different currency, different needs. God did not make us unisex.

Adam Hamilton surveyed 1,000 men from his congregation to find the things they desire most from women. Around 850 husbands responded and shared what they most desire from their wives. The number one desire, especially for men in their twenties and thirties, is admiration. Men feel most loved when their wives take pride in them, demonstrate support, verbal encouragement and belief in them. (Interestingly, this desire seems to disappear when men reach their seventies.) In his book, *The Five Love Languages*, author Gary Chapman calls this the "words of affirmation" love language. Do you women dishonor God's creation of the

male human psyche when you speak derogatorily about the fragile male ego? Is it possible that God designed the male psyche to include the need to provide for, care for and impress a woman? Have you not observed in other parts of God's creation the role of male species that try to win the hearts of females by showing their colors, their spirit and their fight? Most of us men want to be some woman's hero, so that she will admire us or be proud of us. Will you women accept and honor rather than ridicule God's design of us men? This is a part of God's gift to you.

Another time men feel most loved is when their wives listen to them and encourage them to share what is important to them. Men truly want to talk, but not necessarily about feelings and relationships. They need the time, space and invitation to share things important to them. If they share their successes with others, it is called bragging. If they share their frustration, it is called whining. They need a mate who listens to, gets excited and celebrates their successes, and then offers reassurance and confidence when they share their frustrations and failures. Generally, they don't need to talk as much as women do; but they still need an empathetic listener.

Married men in their forties and older indicated that one of the times they feel most loved is when their wives care for both their and their children's physical and emotional needs. Dr. Willard Harley calls this *domestic support* and Gary Chapman labels this the "acts of service" love language. Studies demonstrate that husbands live longer than bachelors and widowers because of the health that comes from these acts of services. I know it smacks of sexism and appears self-serving to speak glowingly of the domestic work you women do; and in these days of two-income-earners, we men must shoulder more household responsibilities. However, few of us seem as proficient at coordinating the activities and recognizing and meeting all the family needs as our wives. It may seem like we don't try; but in truth we by nature as much as choice are overwhelmed. We must express appreciation to you, as well as partner in the labor.

One of the five top ways that married men in their thirties, forties and fifties report feeling loved is sexual intimacy. Although husbands enjoy other acts of affection much like their wives, there is no fall off if it leads to sexual intimacy. Indeed, they experience a wonderful emotional bond through this kind of intimacy. For husbands this appears more a priority if there is a problem, and less if there isn't.

Finally, husbands feel loved when they spend quality time with their wives doing things. While women desire this time for sharing of feelings, men are looking more for a recreational companion. Although men love their children deeply, they crave separate times of fun and constructive activity with their wives. *Playboy Magazine*, hocking their imaginary, air-brushed substitutes and sewing a lot of destruction, tapped into more than the male appetite for sexual intimacy when they named their poster girls playmates. Men desire fun companions.

Although many husbands would change nothing about their wives, and some admit they are responsible for some of the things they find unattractive in their wives – like being stressed, husbands do appreciate wives who are more positive, encouraging and less critical.

Surveying the entire 1000 men reveals that men need women to know three things: that they require some “down time” to reflect and refresh, they need to be released from the expectation that they can sense what the one they love feels or thinks, and that they truly want to make a woman proud of them.

In the sermon insert, I share what 150 single men list as attractive and what they see as turnoffs. Although physical appearance is listed, and men are visual creatures so that provocative dress can turn our heads initially; it cannot keep our attention. The Proverb is true: **“Beauty is fleeting; but a woman who fears the Lord is to be praised.”** There is a powerful and lasting attractiveness that develops inside a woman first and then shows itself wonderfully.

God works that attractiveness in greater measure as people are filled with the grace of God's character and heart. We believers can be filled with God's Spirit. We can be filled continually. Deposits can be made continuously into hearts that grow us and make us attractive. That is the whole point of one of the most controversial biblical passages in the past thirty years. Paul's teaching on husband and wives' relationships in Ephesians is about how to be continually filled with God's Spirit. You see... we have a choice in this experience.

Although we may have experienced God's Spirit warming our hearts and giving us a hunger and love for God, we live in a world punctuated and even dominated by outbreaks of evil. To overcome, we must choose to be filled continually with God's Spirit rather than medicating our pain with wine and other things. Since God's Spirit works in the relationships we have with believers as well as directly in our hearts, we are exhorted to speak to one another, sing to the Lord and submit to one another in reverent acknowledgement of Christ's presence. This means we must see Christ at work in our marital relationships. God is giving wives protection and provision in their husbands, much like the head of a river nurtures with its water all that is below it; and similarly, God is honoring the husbands sacrifices with the trust and respect of their wives. We are not to perpetuate the curse of Genesis 3 where a husband rules over his wife as if she is his slave. Instead, a culture of honor is to be established where the actions of the mates are directed appropriately toward each other needs as tools of God's Spirit to grow one another in the wisdom and love of God. God increases the heart and life of the man through the submission and respect of his wife; and God increases the wife as the husband sacrificially loves her. In this way, they assist each other in overcoming evil and realizing the fullness of God's purpose.

Today, recognize the impact you can have on another person's life. You can make wonderful deposits in the heart of another, and you can be continually filled with God's Spirit.