

Enjoying the Traits of our Mates

Ephesians 5:22-25 NIV

“Wives submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, His body, of which He is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”

Introduction:

Men - do you remember when you first saw her? You turned to your friend and said “whooooo is that?”

I remember the first time I saw Drusilla. I thought she was a walking queen and later found out her last name was Queen and I said to myself, “How fitting a name for her!”; I luuuuuved the way she walked. Men, do you know what I mean???

Do you remember meeting for the first time? You knew there was chemistry. You thought “Ohooo - I like this woman!” You were excited but trying not to show it.

As a matter of fact, I was so stupid and Naïve that I tried to give her away by telling the other guys about this beautiful girl who was going to come to Bible College.

Do you remember the first time your hands touched and instead of acting like it didn't happen, you held on to each other?

Do you remember the chills that went through you?

Do you remember when you stayed up late at night talking to each other, wanting to know everything you could about that person, not wanting that night to end?

Do you remember when you knew you were in love?

When you knew you wanted to spend the rest of your life with that person.

You were a team -- a good one. You made a commitment to become one forever.

(Let's stop right here and let you see a DVD clip of two characters in love, at least one of them – Some of you will remember them more than others!)

(Show Pepe Le Peu – Chapter 8)

What do you think? Do you think they were in love?

Well, let's get back to the sermon:

Do you remember when that person hurt you deeply.

But you not only hurt you began to doubt. You wondered what happened to that oneness. You might have wondered what happened to that feeling you once had.

But then you made up -- it was a good make up.

But again more **disappointments, more hurts.** And now here you are. You're here this morning and you feel maybe it's still a good marriage - But you know it's not as good as it could be. Now stay with me!

Or maybe it is a strained marriage and **you long to be one again.**

Either way, you're not alone.

- Every marriage sees some conflict.
- Every marriage has shared more pain than anyone outside that marriage knows.
- Every marriage is a journey of hills and valleys. Highs and lows.

Just as children go through certain developmental stages from birth to adulthood, **marriages go through similar developmental stages.**

Psychologists at the Minirth-Meier Clinic have identified **5 stages married couples pass through as they build strong, and deeply satisfying marriages.**

Five Stages of Building Strong and Deeply Satisfying Marriages

- 1) **The first stage is Young love -- the first 2 years of marriage.-- Where couples overcome idealistic notions of marriage and begin to become one family.**
- 2) **The next stage encompasses the 3rd thru 10th years of marriage; it is called Realistic love.**

This stage is often the most dangerous stage in the marriage.

- 3) **The 11th thru 25th years is the stage of Comfortable love.**

As one woman explained it, it's like oatmeal -- not exactly exciting, but comfortable, warm, and satisfying.

- 4) **The fourth stage is Renewing love --in the 26th thru 35th years.**

It is a time of accepting some inevitable losses, and having an empty nest, but it is also a time of recommitment and rediscovering each other.

- 5) **And The fifth Stage is Transcendent love -- the 36 year and thereafter.**

According to those who have made it this long, it is the best part of marriage.

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It is a time of achieving the oneness that Jesus talks about -- that “the two shall become one.”

But again, Let me take you back up to that Second stage of Realistic Love where so many marriages don't survive.

Researchers at Denver University looked at long-term marriages, and discovered that as a trend most marriages decrease in satisfaction the first 10 years then they rebound and eventually far surpass the years of Young Love.

Additionally, it has been discovered that the average length of marriage before most couples get a divorce is 6 1/2 years.

This pattern of falling in love and then drifting apart is as old as the beginning of time.

Let me take you back to the first book of the Bible where Adam and Eve did something that established a barrier to oneness that many have followed.

- First of all Genesis 2:20-23 makes it clear that Men and women were created for mutual companionship.

20 “So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field.

But for Adam no suitable helper was found. 21 So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man's ribs

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and closed up the place with flesh. 22 Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man.

23 The man said,

“This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man.”

- You see now – understand this - God, who is all-in-one, put part of who He is in the male and part of who He is in the female.
- We are similar but we're different.
- Guys – Can I hear you say “Amen!” to that different part!
- And it is our differences that attract us to each other (2:24-25).

24 “ For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.

25 The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”

- The beauty is in our differences. Wouldn't it be boring if men and women were all the same?
- I mean I just can't imagine what men and women want to do when they are gay.

But because of sin our first parents discovered their differences.

Isn't it interesting that after Adam and Eve sinned they covered the thing that was most obviously different from each other?

They were afraid of their nakedness and afraid they wouldn't be accepted by God.

And God said, *“Who told you that you were naked? Did you eat from the tree I told you not to eat from?”*

So often, we're afraid that we won't be accepted. Emotionally we cover ourselves with our emotional fig leaves.

But when we discover that that is not enough, the blame game begins.

You see when God confronted Adam and Eve and asked why they were hiding from Him and why they were covering themselves from each other, they both said *“it's not my fault.”*

Adam said, “The woman you put here with me – she gave me some fruit from the tree ...”

Eve said, “The serpent deceived me, and I ate.”

Don't we do the same thing?

We haven't changed all that much.
We're still playing the blame game.

When our expectations aren't met, **we assume it must be the other person's fault.**

And when our differences, that first attracted us to each other, begins to get on our nerves and divide us, we blame the other person. Of course, it's not our fault – is it?

Since it is true that **marriage involves two imperfect people**, and since those two are so vastly different, **it is important to understand the specific differences and needs of men and women.**

Dru and I are similar in a lot of ways, but we are different in a lot of ways too. That's what makes it so challenging and interesting.

Let me give you just one example - **if we were to get some extra money.** Dru would be thinking, “Great, we've got some extra money to put into our retirement account.” Dru is a forward thinker more than me.

Me on the other hand starts thinking, **“show me the money, this is where we can spend it!”** I like to spend.

That difference is determined more by our personalities and family histories, but **many differences in marriage are because of our gender differences.**

We are different physically. I don't think I need to go there.

If I do, then you need more help than this sermon can give. Do you know what I mean?

Even when my daughter was 2-years-old she knew there was a difference. I remember when she was young she said “Daddy, boys have (I don’t think I can say that here.)

We are different psychologically too.

Studies of unborn babies have disclosed that female babies in the womb develop the left hemisphere of the brain faster than the male babies.

The left hemisphere is where the verbal skills originate.

In fact one study took a group of 2 to 4 yr. olds and recorded them at play.

The study found that almost 100% of the girl sounds were understandable verbal expressions, - while around 50% of the boy sounds were unintelligible noises, like Brummmm. eeerrrr. datatat (Tim Allen sound - RRRRR). You’re gettin’ it – aren’t you!

Perhaps author John Gray has spent the last few years on the best sellers list, because he hit the nail on the head when he acknowledged that

from a woman’s perspective **Men are from Mars** and from a man’ perspective **Women are from Venus.**

I had a different outline than the one you see in the insert. It was an acrostic.

I used the word “Mars” to describe the needs of men and the word “Venus” to describe the needs of women.

But the only “V” word that I could think of to describe the needs of women was “Visa.”

I didn’t want to cause undue stress here in this sermon, so I changed my outline to what you have now.

We’ll start with Guidance for Guys

I. FIRST: ASSIGN TOP PRIORITY TO YOUR RELATIONSHIP.

Ephesians 5:25 *“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave Himself up for her.”*

Revelation 2:4-5 *“Yet I hold this against you: You have forsaken your first love. Remember the height from which you have fallen! Repent and do the things you did at first.”*

Now this passage from Revelation was written to Christians about how they had forsaken their first love for God.

God’s advice is to repent and do the things you did at first.

Would you underline that sentence and put a star next to it.

- This is God's advice to restore our love for him.
- But it is also the best advice I've ever heard on restoring our love and our relationship with our spouse.

Now husbands - there are many scriptures that give us good advice on relationships.

This is going to be the key verse for the rest of this message.

Guys we need to put our relationship with our spouse back at the top of our priority list.

If you and I will learn how important that is – it will change you relationship with your wife.

Gary Smalley tells about going shopping for a blouse with his wife.

He says, **“I wasn't shopping for a blouse. I was hunting for a blouse! I wanted to track it down, shoot it, bag it, throw it in the back of the truck and take the trophy and go home.”**

- Men, we are like that aren't we?
- We are **conquest oriented.**
- It seems that once we conquer the courtship phase of a relationship, **we think the job is over** and we

become neglectful in our relationship once we think that way.

- **And any time we do show affection, it's because we are beginning another conquest. Do you understand what I'm trying to say?**

Guys, where do you think your wife would say she falls on your priority list?

- Does she compete with your work?
- Does she have to fight the TV for your attention?
- Does she feel left out of your day and your dreams?

When you were first dating,
when you were first married,
where do you think your wife would have said she falls on your priority list?

Probably at the top or she wouldn't have stayed with you.

You see – Husband – Guys - We need to Repent and do the things we did at first.

Start treating her like a queen again and you'll reap dividends you forgot you could get!

What you did to captivate your wife's love is the same thing you need to do to keep her love.

Let her know you are putting her back on top of your priority list.

And prove it by doing the things you did at first.

II. II. SECOND: DARE TO TALK ABOUT AND SHOW YOUR AFFECTION.

Proverbs 16:24 *“Pleasant words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.”*

Song of Songs 1:2 *“Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth -- for your love is more delightful than wine.”*

Have you ever heard guys today try to communicate their affection with other guys? To be honest – I don’t get it.

- “Hey ugly -- how you do’n?”
- “Good, fat boy. How bout yourself?”
- Could you imagine trying to use that on a girl?
- It seems like this generation is not so good at telling people that they care about them.

Do you remember what you did at first?

When you first married, you could tell your wife a hundred times a day, in **a hundred different ways that you loved her.**

I tell my wife that I love her at least a couple times a day.

Yesterday we were doing some menial tasks together and I said, and I looked at her, thinking how lucky I was to have her as my wife and she said, “Why are you looking at me like that?”

And I said, “Just because I Love you!” “You know, I think it all the time.” “And I just want to tell you whenever I’m thinking about it.”

And you know what she thought that was a good idea.

You know – I started getting her roses again for Valentines Day. A Card that said a bunch of nice pretties

Women not only like to be loved, but also to be told that they are loved. Husbands, you need to do that:

- Tell her when she looks especially nice to you.
- Compliment her often.
- Express appreciation for the little things she does that usually go unnoticed.
- Get off your recliner and go sit by her on the couch and scratch her head for her after a long day at work. Rub her feet.

You can use more than words to express your love.

If you want to get closer to your mate, be aware of the power of communication, just talking to each other about daily things that happen in your lives.

Some couples are literally “out of touch” with each other.

When you want to express your affection, use touch.

You know what – after 35 years we still hold hands.

Being affectionately in love does not have to go away.

Repent and do the things that you did at first.

III. THIRD: LISTEN TO UNDERSTAND, WITHOUT GIVING UNWANTED ADVICE.

James 1:19 “My dear brothers, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry”.

Proverbs 18:13 “He who answers before listening--that is his folly and his shame.”

A common complaint I hear in counseling from women is that their husbands don't listen to them and don't understand them.

The men, on the other hand, are bewildered and say, “I do listen to her.”

What is happening typically is that the woman wants to talk about a problem and share how she is feeling about it, and the man wants to get out of a problem and solve it.

It can go like this:

You're lying in bed and your wife says to you “I had terrible day at work.”

And you say, “Why don't you quit?”

She says, “I don't want to quit. I was just trying to tell you I had a hard day.”

You say, “If you didn't want my opinion why did you ask for it?”

She says, “Just forget I said anything.”

“I will.”

If I could give us all just one piece of conversational advice, it is **for the next month don't try to solve any of your wife's problems unless she specifically asks you.**

Instead **just listen** to her, **Affirm** her, and let her know that **you understand how she feels.**

You probably don't have to solve a problem. She can probably solve it herself.

She just wants her best friend to understand her and know what she is going through. And truthfully – isn't that what you want from her?

Guys, **Repent and do the things you did at first.**

- Remember the things you did at first?
- Remember listening to her and letting her cry on your shoulder if she needs too.

She could do that, if you as her husband makes her feel she could do it.

Be that place for her again.

A place where she can be cared for, not fixed.

A place where she can sympathize and not be criticized.

Now, finally, we focus on some more important stuff . . .

What women can do for men to meet their husbands emotional needs!

II. Wisdom for Women

1st: DO THINGS RECREATIONALLY WITH YOUR HUSBAND.

Ecclesiastes 4:9, 11 “Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work. . . . Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm alone?”

Relationship experts have discovered that women and men define intimacy differently.

- Women define and pursue intimacy as talking together.
- Men, on the other hand, define and pursue intimacy as doing activities together.

I love to be with my wife!

I wish we could be together more often.

You see Husbands want their wives to be their best friends.

They want to hang out with them.

They want their wives to share their interests, the things they like to do.

Dr. Willard Harley, a psychologist and marriage counselor, writes that **“during courtship, it’s not uncommon for women to join men in hunting, fishing, watching football, or other activities they would never choose on their own. They want to spend as much time as possible with men they love, and that means going where the men like to go. If a woman finds that she just can’t tolerate the man’s favorite activities, they generally break up. But if she can hang on and become his recreational companion, that friendship is likely to lead to a marriage. Without recreational companionship, few couples would ever fall in love.”**

After marriage, though, he continues **“wives often try to interest their husbands in activities more to their own liking. If the wife fails in her attempts, she usually encourages her husband to continue his own recreational activities without her and she begins other activities. Within a few years, a husband and wife often find themselves in completely different activities, with new recreational companions. I consider this a very dangerous trend.”**

Ladies, Repent and do the things you did at first.

Do you remember how you used to want to be with him doing nothing more than being with him?
Just enjoying your husband and nothing else.
Develop the intimacy that comes from having fun together.
Plan ahead of time to do things together.
Become your husband's best friend, by becoming his recreational companion.

2nd : BE YOUR HUSBAND'S BIGGEST FAN.

Ephesians 4:29 "Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs. . ."

Let me pose a question to you wife: If your friends only knew your husband by what you said about him, what would they think?

Unfortunately, many women prefer to **complain about their husbands instead of complimenting them.**

Wife - Your husband has deep needs to be admired.
He wants to know

- if you value him,
- if you respect what he does,
- if you are proud of him.

This has nothing to do with a weak ego; even God asks to be admired.

Rather, **Admiration is a God-given way to give and receive love.**

Conversely, negative talking hurts deeply. Your very actions and responses to your husband sends a message loud a clear.

Marriage experts have concluded that negative comments are the most predictable cause for divorce.

Negative comments can be deadly to a relationship. They have even far more power than positive comments.

For example, imagine you were to give a speech to 200 people.

And you got 199 positive responses and 1 negative one. Which one would you dwell on?

You know the answer – We all want 100%

You know - **It takes your husband many, many positive statements to recover from one of your negative ones.**

My self-confidence in every area of my life is affected by the way Drusilla sees me. **She is biggest fan!**

Remember to Repent and do the things you did at first.

Remember how you could find so many ways to compliment and encourage your husband.
Do that again.

Find ways to express how much you value him.
Be sensitive to the times and situations when your man needs your admiration most.

When you get together with your girlfriends, don't rag on your husband. Get over that!

Stay off the phone telling them negative things about your husband.

Instead brag on him in public.

Remember – He's unique – He's better at some things than other guys. Know what they are and let them know about it.

Say good things about him to others.

Don't be cutting him down all the time.

Your husband needs your compliments, he needs your good words, he needs your applause, he needs you to say, and **“You're really good at that.”**

3rd : PROVIDE A PEACEFUL PLACE.

Proverbs 17:1 “Better a dry crust with peace and quiet than a house full of feasting with strife.”

Would you say that your home is stress-reducing or stress producing?

I know that it is difficult to create a peaceful, loving environment, especially in this society of two career families, and moms who are isolated from extended family.

And in no way am I implying that it is the wife's sole responsibility to turn her house into a home. It is a team effort. Guys – you've got to pull the load too

Some guys actually believe that in the beginning God created man, and then God noticed clothes lying all over the garden and created a woman to pick them up.

One woman said that her husband's idea of helping is to lift his feet when she is vacuuming.

But I'm not really talking about chores here, I'm talking about atmosphere.

Ladies, as far as it depends on you, try to create an environment that says to everyone in the home ... **“the world may be crazy out there, but this is a place of peace and love.”**

Just remember this principle: **Repent and do the things you did at first.**

Remember what you did to make your home such a safe and peaceful place to be.

A place where your husband enters into - not a place he wants to escape from.

Brainstorm with your husband on how you can each make your home a peaceful place.

CONCLUSION

It is a popular opinion that most brides stand in the back of the church trying to remember just how the ceremony goes . . .

“Okay, I walk down the aisle, stop at the altar, and pledge my life to him.”
So, she walks down to the front saying over and over . . . aisle, altar, him . . . aisle, altar, him, ... I’ll alter him!

Instead of attempting to alter one another, we need to understand one another.

1st - IT’S YOUR JOB TO LOVE YOUR MATE –

IT’S GOD’S JOB TO CHANGE Him.

2nd : EVERY PERSON IS UNIQUE.

BE AN EXPERT OF YOUR SPOUSE AND LEARN HOW TO LOVE HIM/HER EFFECTIVELY.

Take this outline and before you even leave the parking lot, ask your spouse,

“What can I do for you to help build you up?”
“What are the things I did at first that helped to capture your love that I can do again to help keep your love?”

3rd : **SUCCESS IN MARRIAGE DOES NOT DEPEND ON FINDING THE RIGHT PERSON BUT ON BEING THE RIGHT PERSON.**

FOCUS ON YOURSELF.

Philippians 2:4 “Each of you should look not only to your own needs, but also to the needs of others.”

It would be a huge mistake to take the information from this and point fingers at each other, saying,

“Our marriage stinks because you don’t meet my needs.”

Besides demonstrating poor communication skills, you’re mate is only part of the problem.

4th and LASTLY, THE ONLY PERSON WHO CAN MEET YOUR DEEPEST NEEDS IS JESUS CHRIST.

If you are looking for a man or woman to supply all your inner needs, you’re looking in the wrong place.

God is the only one that can do that for you.

There is only one other person that needs to go above your spouse on your priority list.

That is God.

Your spouse should not feel threatened by that because the more you love God the better you will be able to love your spouse.

