



Emotionally Healthy Relationships

Spruce Grove Alliance Church

Session 1 – Introduction

Connecting

When Larry Crabb, a well-known Christian counselor, hit 50, it dawned on him that he had not experienced “a full-fledged, dream-shattering, midlife crisis.” After experiencing a true midlife crisis, he came to these important conclusions

1. *Beneath what our culture calls psychological disorder is a soul crying out for what only community can provide.*
2. *We must do something other than train professional experts to fix damaged psyches. Damaged psyches aren't the problem. The problem beneath our struggles is a disconnected soul.*
3. *The greatest need in modern civilization is the development of communities—true communities where the heart of God is home, where the humble and wise learn to shepherd those on the path behind them, where trusting strugglers lock arms with others as together they journey on.*

What kind of connection is required for a small group of people, perhaps a family or a couple of friends, to become a healing community?

Healing Relationships

1. Every connection that we have with one another releases or transfers something of who we are and what we have to the other person.
2. Releasing the power of God through our lives into the hearts and souls of others depends entirely on our own connection and fellowship with Christ through His Holy Spirit in our lives. Our life with God and in Christ then spills over on to other people with the power to change their lives.

There is a power within the life of every Christian waiting to be released, a power that could lead to further and deeper healing, a power within you that could help someone else connect more intimately to the heart of Christ.

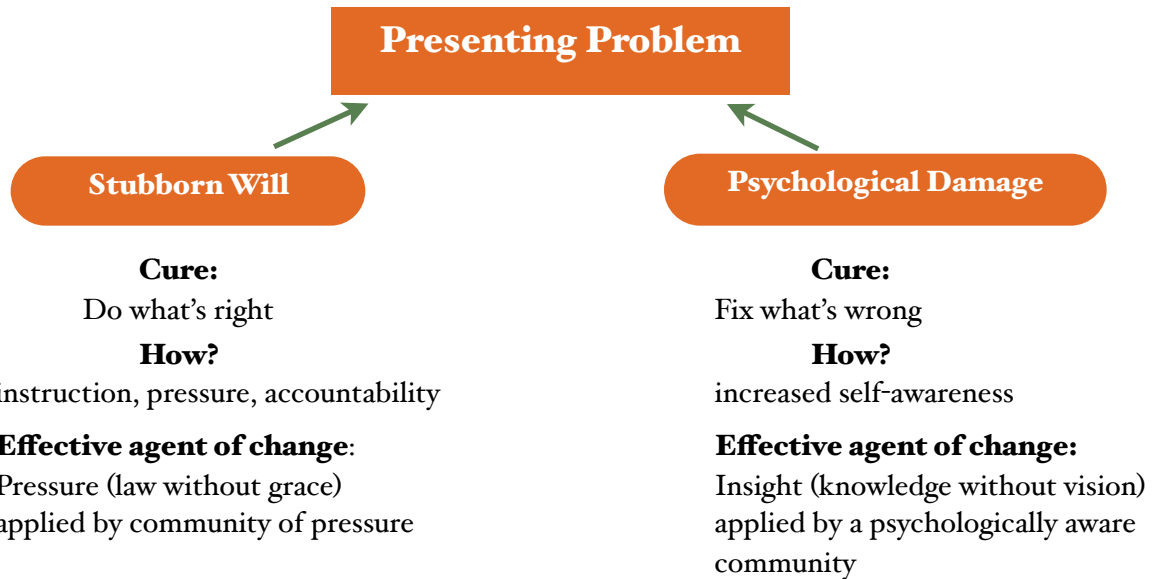
The healing pattern

- God doesn't fix us or pressure us. He doesn't say, “Do what's right,” nor does he improve the functionality of what's wrong. He reveals Himself to us.
- He reveals his delight in us.
 - He accepts who we are
 - He envisions who we could be
- God reveals the good he has put in us
 - remaining calm when badness is visible
 - keeping confidence that goodness lies beneath
- He intentionally exposes what is bad and painful
 - He exposes what we are convinced will make him turn away in disgust in order to amaze of us with his grace



Deploying His pattern in our relationships

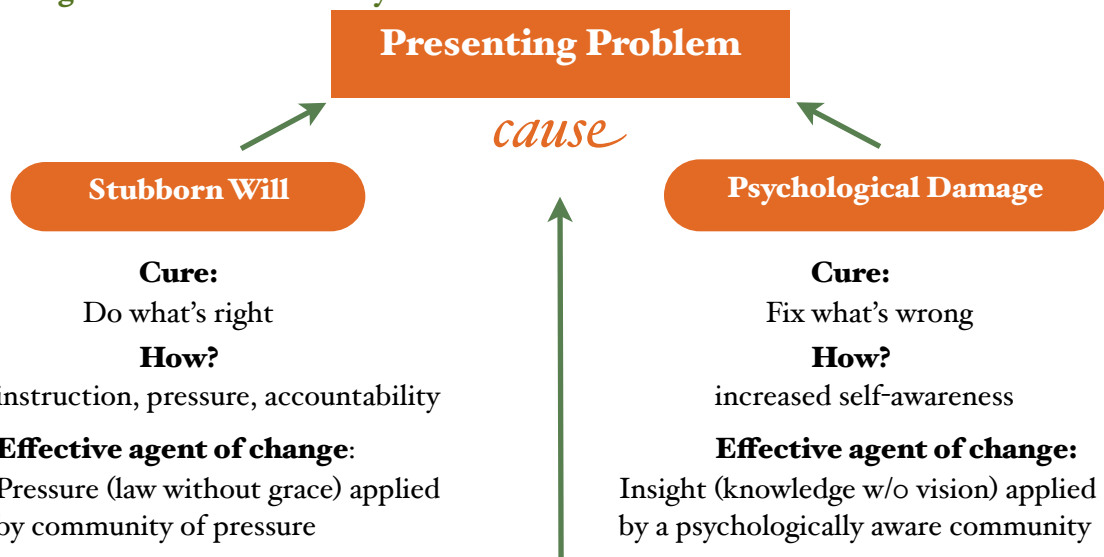
1. let the people in your life know that you take delight in them
2. eagerly look for goodness in someone's heart and identifying the passions that are prompting loving, strong choices
3. acknowledge in an engaging way the darkness in someone's heart, their sin and pain, in order to engage them more convincingly with the Savior's kindness



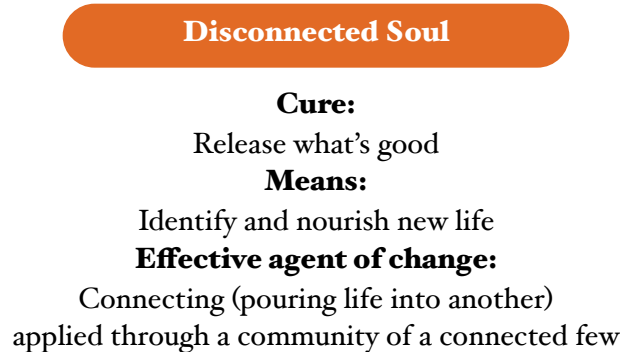
Although we are stubborn and damaged, fundamentally we are neither!

Crabb: "At the exact center of the human personality is a capacity to give and receive in relationship, a capacity or possibility that defines what it means to be alive as a human being. When that capacity is corrupted, when, rather than giving who we are and receiving others for who they are, we use others to gain what we think we need and to protect ourselves from the harm that others can inflict on us, then we are dead. We are subhuman. We give evidence that we have fallen to a level lower than our intended humanity.

Either we can live as unique members of a connected community, experiencing the fruit of Christ's life within us, or we can live as terrified, demanding, self-absorbed individuals, determined to get what we need at any cost.



What does it take to be a powerful person, someone who connects so deeply with another person that power comes out of my being that enables the other to rise up with a sense of vitality?



Is the terrifying longing for connection evidence of weakness or design?



Overcoming Our Deepest Fears--Session 3

The two deepest, core fears plaguing men and women

We fear being disconnected, and we fear not being in control (and therefore becoming helpless).

The Evil Dance That Comes From Our Fear

1. You hurt. What does your hurt look like? Confusion, sadness, disconnection, anger, confusion, worry, rage, frustration, horror, embarrassment. What are the words that describe your real-life hurts?

2. You want. When you hurt, you want a solution. You want things that will make you feel better. Sometimes you might think that eating will make you feel better, shopping will replace the hurt, focusing on the things that will make you forget your troubles, drinking will dull the pain. Do you have lists of things that you believe would satisfy your wants? Often your focus is on that one thing that you believe you need to feel satisfied: if only the other person would change so that you could feel better.

Without realizing it, you often expect that the other person will change to satisfy you and give you what you want. You see that person both as your problem and as your solution: You think, If only my spouse would change. Or, If only I had a different boss, I would get the promotion at work. Or, If only my friends would ... The end of that sentence is always: then I could be happy.

We could call these wants, **misplaced expectations**. When you expect people, places, and things to fulfill your wants, you will be disappointed. And anytime you put your expectations for help in the wrong place, the result is fear.

Our Wants

- 1.ACCEPTANCE—I want to be warmly received without condition.
- 2.GRACE—I want something good (e.g., forgiveness) that I don't deserve.
- 3.CONNECTION—I want to be united to others.
- 4.COMPANIONSHIP—I want deep, intimate relationships.
- 5.SUCCESS—I want to achieve or accomplish something.
- 6.SELF-DETERMINATION—I want to have independence and free will.
- 7.UNDERSTANDING—I want to be known.
- 8.LOVE—I want to feel attractive to others.
- 9.VALIDATION—I want to be valued for who I am.
- 10.COMPETENCE—I want to have skills and ability that bring success.
- 11.RESPECT—I want to be admired and esteemed.
- 12.WORTH—I want to feel important.
- 13.HONOR—I want to feel like a priceless treasure.
- 14.COMMITMENT—I want to have unconditional security in relationships.
- 15.SIGNIFICANCE—I want to have meaning and purpose.
- 16.ATTENTION—I want to be noticed.
- 17.COMFORT—I want to feel a sense of well-being.
- 18.SUPPORT—I want to be cared for.
- 19.APPROVAL—I want to be liked and accepted.
- 20.WANTED—I want to be sought after.
- 21.SAFETY—I want to feel protected and secure.
- 22.AFFECTION—I want to feel fondness and warmth.
- 23.TRUST—I want to have faith in others.
- 24.HOPE—I want confidence that I will get what I love and desire.
- 25.JOY—I want to feel satisfied and happy.

3. You fear. When a conflict stirs powerful emotions of hurt and want, it also touches specific fears. Think about your troubles in relationships. You want to connect, but you fear you're not attractive enough (or competent enough or smart enough or whatever). You want to be accepted, but you fear you're not good enough. You want respect, but you fear the other person will look down on you. You want to control your situation, but you fear you are powerless.

Do you see how your fears actually reflect your wants? When you feel your wants won't be fulfilled, you experience fear:

We can't live without _____ . So we fear _____ (You fill in the blanks)

Acceptance	Rejection
Grace	Judgment
Connection	Disconnection
Companionship	Loneliness
Success	Failure
Self-Determination	Powerlessness
Understanding	Being misunderstood
Love	Being scorned
Validation	Being invalidated
Competence	Feeling defective
Respect	Inferiority
Worth	Worthlessness
Honor	Feeling devalued
Dignity	Humiliation
Commitment	Abandonment
Significance	Feeling unimportant
Attention	Feeling ignored
Support	Neglect
Approval	Condemnation
Wanted	Feeling unwanted
Safety	Danger
Affection	Feeling disliked
Trust	Mistrust
Hope	Despair
Joy	Unhappiness

Even though we have listed twenty-five wants and fears here, all of our deepest desires stem from our desires for connection and control. Our deepest fears, then, are the fear of losing connection and losing control.

4. You react. If you are like most people, you—consciously and unconsciously—fall into well-worn patterns of reacting when someone pushes your fear button. You'll do anything to soothe your hurt. You'll do anything to avoid the awful feeling of want. You'll do or say anything to calm your fear.

More often than not, your emotions and thinking result in behavior that damages your relationships. When you fear that your wants will not be fulfilled, you react. You may fear losing control, so you try to seize control.

You may fear losing connection, so you try to seize connection. These reactions are your attempt to become the broker for your own wants. You desperately want your way—to be sovereign, to overcome your feelings of helplessness.

This means that it's not merely your core fear that disrupts and injures your relationships. It's how you choose to react when someone pushes your **fear button**. Most of us use unhealthy, ineffective reactions to deal with our fear, and as a result we sabotage our relationships.

NAOMI & RUTH

Grief, loss, and hesed

Ruth 1

Session 4 Emotionally Healthy Relationships

1. In the days when the judges ruled, there was a famine in the land, and a man from Bethlehem in Judah, together with his wife and two sons, went to live for a while in the country of Moab. 2 The man's name was Elimelech, his wife's name Naomi, and the names of his two sons were Mahlon and Kilion. They were Ephrathites from Bethlehem, Judah. And they went to Moab and lived there.

3 Now Elimelech, Naomi's husband, died, and she was left with her two sons. 4 They married Moabite women, one named Orpah and the other Ruth. After they had lived there about ten years, 5 both Mahlon and Kilion also died, and Naomi was left without her two sons and her husband.

6 When she heard in Moab that the LORD had come to the aid of his people by providing food for them, Naomi and her daughters-in-law prepared to return home from there. 7 With her two daughters-in-law she left the place where she had been living and set out on the road that would take them back to the land of Judah.

8 Then Naomi said to her two daughters-in-law, "Look, go back, each of you, to your mother's home. May the LORD show kindness to you, as you have shown to your dead and to me. 9 May the LORD grant that each of you will find rest in the home of another husband."

Then she kissed them and they wept aloud 10 and said to her, "We will go back with you to your people." 11 But Naomi said, "Return home, my daughters. Why would you come with me? Am I going to have any more sons, who could become your husbands? 12 Return home, my daughters; I am too old to have another husband. Even if I thought there was still hope for me—even if I had a husband tonight and then gave birth to sons—13 would you wait until they grew up? Would you remain unmarried for them? No, my daughters. It is more bitter for me than for you, because the LORD's hand has gone out against me!"

14 At this they wept again. Then Orpah kissed her mother-in-law good-bye, but Ruth clung to her. 15 "Look," said Naomi, "your sister-in-law is going back to her people and her gods. Go back with her."

16 But Ruth replied, "Don't urge me to leave you or to turn back from you. Where you go I will go, and where you stay I will stay. Your people will be my people and your God my God. 17 Where you die I will die, and there I will be buried. May the LORD deal with me, be it ever so severely, if anything but death separates you and me." 18 When Naomi realized that Ruth was determined to go with her, she stopped urging her.

19 So the two women went on until they came to Bethlehem. When they arrived in Bethlehem, the whole town was stirred because of them, and the women exclaimed, "Can this be Naomi?"

20 "Don't call me Naomi," she told them. "Call me Mara, because the Almighty [d] has made my life very bitter. 21 I went away full, but the LORD has brought me back empty. Why call me Naomi? The LORD has afflicted [e] me; the Almighty has brought misfortune upon me."

22 So Naomi returned from Moab accompanied by Ruth the Moabitess, her daughter-in-law, arriving in Bethlehem as the barley harvest was beginning.



Hesed—loyal devotion, kindness, compassion. Hesed is often used in the sense of God's love or kindness toward people and People's mercy or kindness toward others.

Such devotion requires extraordinary risks. What

Memory paints a picture

Our memory is not neutral. We store information on the basis of meaning. We take the data of our personal lives and we give it personal meaning that provokes certain emotions within us. Memory is not record of what occurred, rather it is selective, meaning driven and subjective. Memory is not so much like a photograph as it is like an impressionistic painting. Naomi in this passage gives a vivid picture of her pain.

Take time to understand what kind of impressionistic painting you are allowing pain and memory to paint in your life.

Write out or draw the picture.

Allow yourself and your memory to construct a picture of your pain.

Name Change

Naomi, as she returns to Bethlehem, must address friends that she has not seen for a very long time. She uses her arrival and greeting of her friends to be an expression of her deep despair. She tells them that grief has so changed her and her identity that she has given herself a name change. She changes her name from Naomi which means pleasant to Mara which means bitter. In the OT bitterness is a symbol of bondage and misery. In the Passover they eat bitter herbs to remind them of the misery and bitterness of their bondage in Egypt.

How has pain and bitterness led you into personal bondage?

In the NT, bitter describes a spiritual poison. Heb. 12:15 talks about a bitter root that "causes trouble and defiles many". Pain is not sin but it can lead us to be bitter. Has bitterness been a poison in your life?

Contemplate your painful and bitter memories. If you had to give yourself a name that reflected you in a time of pain and bitterness what would that name be?

The Hebrew word, hesed; means kindness, mercy, devotion or loyalty.

One of the major themes of the book of Ruth is that God provides people in our lives to display His kindness, mercy, devotion, His hesed towards us.

Ruth was the person that who displayed God's steadfast love, kindness and loyalty in Naomi's life.

The lifestyle of hesed requires, extraordinary commitment. The author stresses this idea by contrasting Orpah and Ruth. Without criticism the author writes of how Orpah returns to Moab and makes a life for herself. Her choice is not criticized but that is not *HESED*.

By contrast Ruth represents one who does the extraordinary, the unexpected. She was not content to just love Naomi. She committed herself Naomi, to her people, her God and her afterlife. She refused to seek a marriage for her own benefit. She sought that which would bring blessing to Naomi. Such devotion requires extraordinary risk.

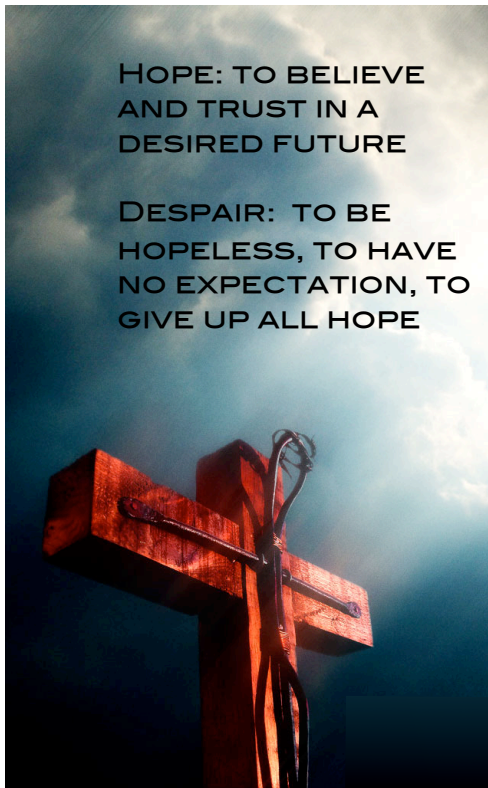
Who in your life has been Ruth to you and has demonstrated God's *HESED* to you?

Isaiah 62:4 tells of how the Israelites had been given names that reflected pain and despair. They were given the names, "deserted" and "desolate." As God gives them promises for a new Zion, He also gives them new names. Their new names were "Hephzibah" which means, "my delight is in you" and Beulah, which means "married to God". Allow God to give you a new promise, a new dream, and a new name that goes with that dream.

Hello
My name is:

HOPE: TO BELIEVE AND TRUST IN A DESIRED FUTURE

DESPAIR: TO BE HOPELESS, TO HAVE NO EXPECTATION, TO GIVE UP ALL HOPE



A study of 31,000 allied soldiers made some interesting conclusions about despair. The study investigated soldiers who were imprisoned in either Japan or Korea during the 1940's. The study showed that 8000 of the men died though they were offered sufficient food to sustain life. The doctor conducting the study concluded that the men died of despair!

The human heart can harbor a lot of pain and grief. The heart can expand to contain both pain and joy. The heart can survive pain, but the heart cannot withstand despair. Pain may numb the heart but despair begins to kill the heart. The heart requires hope to function and when all hope dies our heart can begin to die with it. Stop and reflect on where your heart has been dying because of a lack of hope....

Naomi suffered the loss of husband, children, and her status. Her losses are more than most of us can fathom. She left her home in a time of famine looking for food and provision for her family. What she found in Moab was a stripping away of all that she had known and loved. There are times when we need to grieve our losses. What do you need to grieve.....

When Naomi hears in Moab, that God has come to the aid of His people, in Bethlehem, she packs her bags and walks away from her old life and begins to prepare for a new life. She allows hope to surface. Some of us need to allow hope to be joined to our grief and pain. Some of us need to walk away from what Moab represents to us and allow that old life to die. And let hope lead us to a new place.

This exercise will require you to write a letter releasing your old dreams and visions for your life and to release yourself from the many losses that you have experienced. It is well within God's ability and right to resurrect those old dreams, but this exercise is to help you grieve, release and move from pain, and despair to hope.

Funeral letter guidelines:

1. To be effective you must tell the truth in the letter. Truth can only be discovered by a rigorous exploration of personal motives and emotions related to the pain and loss you have experienced.
 2. The purpose of the funeral and the letter is to bring some emotional closure to the loss that you have experienced. When you have closure you will have greater peace and growth.
 3. Closure will not be complete unless you accept your responsibility in the relationship and the situation. This does NOT mean blaming yourself for anything, but it does mean you accept your contribution, both positive and negative.
 4. Write the letter while you are alone.
 5. Write the letter in one session.
 6. Before beginning to write, sit down, close your eyes and take a few deep breaths.
 7. Begin by writing about your anger, frustration, resentment, blame, and bitterness that came from the loss.
 8. Next write about your sadness, hurt, pain, shame, reflection, and fear that came from the loss.
 9. Next write about your regrets over the loss. Write about the depression, loss of hope and despair that arose out of the loss.
 10. Finally write about your love for this person, church, job or dream. Say things like I love you...I miss you...I let you go...I say goodbye to...
 11. You can write as much or as little as you want. There is no limit. Just be sure to say all that you wish to say.
 12. You are finished writing when you can look at the situation, person or dream with a release from the pain.
- Funeral letter guidelines was written by Dixon Murrah

Session 5

The Power of Negotiation

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called sons of God."

What causes conflict?

- misunderstandings
- differences in values, goals, gifts, calling, priorities, expectations, interests, or opinions
- competition over limited resources
- sinful desires and attitudes that lead to sinful words and actions.

Not all conflict is bad--some conflict is natural and beneficial.

Our response to conflict makes all the difference.

Responding to conflict

1. How can I honor God in this situation?
2. Will I look at myself first and take responsibility for my role in this conflict?
3. How can I lovingly serve others by helping them take responsibility for their contribution to this conflict?
4. Will I forgive from the heart and demonstrate the forgiveness of God, while seeking a reasonable solution to this conflict?

The commitment of forgiveness that leads to reconciliation.

- I promise that I will not dwell on this incident.
- I promise that I will not bring up this incident and use it against you.
- I promise that I will not speak to others about this incident.
- I promise that I will not allow this incident to stand between us or hinder our personal relationship.

Being reconciled to one another.

Forgiveness is not the same as reconciliation.

Trust must be restored in the relationship.

What are my expectations of the other person in the conflict?

- Do I expect the other person to earn or deserve my trust?
- Am I harboring a desire to punish this person for their offenses?
- Am I demanding a guarantee?
- Am I continuing to have unrealistic expectation of this person or of people in general?

Using Conflict To Move Forward in Intimacy

- How can I glorify God in this conflict?
- How can I serve the one or ones that are involved in this situation with me?

Gal 6:2 Carry each other's burdens

Gal 6:1 Brothers, if someone is caught in a sin, you who are spiritual should restore him gently.

1 Tim 4:12 Set an example for the believers in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity.

- How can I grow spiritually and emotionally through this conflict?

Rom 8:28 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. 29 For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the likeness of his Son...

Resisting the passive and taking an active approach

- Conflict in your life is not an accident. It is an opportunity for your character to manifest. Your response to conflict, and your appropriation of the resources that God has given you demonstrates where you are in the journey.
- It is imperative to realize that only God can control the outcome of a conflict, and the active approach to conflict focuses on your dependent obedience on Him, not on the results.

What is my responsibility?

- We have limits.
- I can control what I say and how I say it. Is what I'm saying loving? Is what I'm saying truthful?
- God has taken the responsibility to defend you.
- Will God change the other person?

Coming together after conflict

- Confession.
- Forgiveness.
- Reconciliation

The Issue of Family Law

Every family develops a set of rules to govern the relationship and especially for conflict. These rules in some way make the members of the family feel safe. Some of the rules are conscious and intentional. Some are not...

1. **Negotiate** to resolve the issues in the conflict
2. In a meaningful way communicate affirmation and acceptance of the other person
3. Seek to understand and communicate the other person's interests and purposes (Interests-concern, desire, need, limitation, values, and fears)
4. Reach an understanding using creative solutions.

PRAYER OF *agreement*



1. BE BRIEF
2. BE BOLD
3. BE BIBLICAL
4. BE BELIEVING
5. BE SPECIFIC
6. BE A BLESSING
7. BE UNIQUE
8. WORSHIP GOD
9. SING TOGETHER



10. BE FILLED WITH THE SPIRIT
11. PUT ON THE WHOLE ARMOR OF GOD
12. ONCE A WEEK USE THE LORD'S PRAYER PATTERN

✠ Learning to Pray together



“Truly I tell you, whatever you bind on earth, will be bound in heaven and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven. Again, truly I tell you, if two of you agree on earth about anything you ask, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven. For where two or three are gathered in my name, I am there among them.” Matthew 18:18-20

HIS POWER AND PRESENCE PROMISED TO YOU

- Together you have been given the power of binding and loosing. (v.18)
- When you pray as a couple, you have a special power as you come into agreement in prayer. (v. 19)
- As the two of you pray, you have the assurance of Christ's presence. (v.20)

1. THESE ARE AMAZING TRUTHS
2. THEY ARE PRACTICAL FOR YOUR LIFE, YOUR MARRIAGE, AND THE GOVERNING OF YOUR EVERYDAY AFFAIRS
3. THEY ARE BIBLICAL AND FOR EVERY BELIEVER
4. THEY ARE ACCOMPLISHED THROUGH PRAYER
5. THEY ARE ACCOMPLISHED BY UNITING IN PRAYER
6. THEY REQUIRE AGREEMENT AND A HARMONY
7. AGREEMENT IN PRAYER SECURES ANSWERS TO PRAYER
8. GATHERED IN HIS NAME WE HAVE ASSURANCE OF GOD IN THE MIDDLE OF OUR MARRIAGE
9. AS WE BIND AND LOOSE WE ARE TAKING UP THE KEYS OF THE KINGDOM AND LEARNING TO HAVE RULE AND DOMINION IN THE SPHERE GOD HAS CALLED US

Maximizing the Relationship Experience

Life Together, D. Bonhoeffer

“Just as surely as God desires to lead us to a knowledge of genuine Christian fellowship, so surely must we be overwhelmed by a great disillusionment with others, with Christians in general, and, if we are fortunate, with ourselves.”

Facing our disillusionment -- Making our wish dreams conscious

“By sheer grace, God will not permit us to live even for a brief period in a dream world. He does not abandon us to those rapturous experiences and lofty moods that come over us like a dream... Only that fellowship which faces such disillusionment, with all its unhappy and ugly aspects, begins to be what it should be in God's sight, begins to grasp in faith the promise that is given to it.

The sooner this shock of disillusionment comes to an individual and to a community, the better for both. A community which cannot bear and cannot survive such a crisis, which insists upon keeping its illusion when it should be shattered, permanently loses in that moment the promise of Christian community. Sooner or later it will collapse. Every human-wish dream that is injected into the Christian community is a hindrance to genuine community and must be banished if genuine community is to survive. He who loves his dream of a community more than the Christian community itself becomes a destroyer of the latter, even though his personal intentions may be ever so honest and earnest and sacrificial.”

Your human wish dream is not of God.

- We are only brothers and sisters through Christ Jesus
- The ground and the strength and the promise of all our fellowship is in Christ alone

“God hates visionary dreaming; it makes the dreamer proud and pretentious. The man who fashions a visionary ideal of community demands that it be realized by God, by others, and by himself. He enters the community of Christians with his demands, sets up his own law, and judges the brethren accordingly. He stands adamant, a living reproach to all others in the circle of brethren. He acts as if he is the creator of the Christian community, as if his dream binds men together. When things do not go his way, he calls the effort a failure. When his ideal picture is destroyed, he sees the community going to smash. So he becomes, first an accuser of his brethren, then an accuser of God, and finally the despairing accuser of himself.”

How are your wish dreams keeping you in disillusionment?

- | | |
|---------------------------|---------------------------|
| 1. Romantic notions | 10. Shyness |
| 2. Idealism | 11. Mood swings |
| 3. Templates | 12. Over reaction |
| 4. Performance standards | 13. Discontentment |
| 5. Erotic imagery | 14. Unable to be thankful |
| 6. Perfectionism | 15. Bored |
| 7. Critical spirit | 16. Disrespectful |
| 8. Complaining, murmuring | 17. Anxious |
| 9. Insecurity | 18. Driven-Ambitious |

Maximizing the Relationship Experience

Understanding Expectations

Intrinsic

Unconscious, unstated assumptions of how things should be
*Negative attention

Extrinsic

Conscious, stated or agreed upon standards of performance
*Negative attention

Delight

Unexpected fulfillment of a need or desire
*Positive attention

Experiencing the Power of Agreement

Matthew 18:18

18. "I tell you the truth, whatever you bind on earth will be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth will be loosed in heaven.
19. "Again, I tell you that if two of you on earth agree about anything you ask for, it will be done for you by my Father in heaven.
20. For where two or three come together in my name, there am I with them."

Some Important Questions

1. Have I really forgiven?
2. Do I really understand this person?
3. Do I know their motives, intentions, and purposes?
4. What they mean by what they say?
5. Is my wish dream in the way of the relationship that I can have with him or her?
6. Am I maximizing their faults or am I maximizing their needs?
7. Are my needs known and understood?

"Even when sin and misunderstanding burden the communal life, is not the sinning brother still a brother, with whom I, too, stand under the Word of Christ? Will not his sin be a constant occasion for me to give thanks that both of us may live in the forgiving love of God in Christ Jesus? Thus, the very hour of disillusionment with my brother becomes incomparably salutary, because it so thoroughly teaches me that neither of us can ever live by our own words and deeds, but only by the one Word and Deed which really binds us together--the forgiveness of sins in Jesus Christ. When the morning mists of dreams vanish, then dawns the bright day of Christian fellowship."

Relational Satisfaction and Fulfillment

Healthy relationships produce joy in an atmosphere of fun.

But let all who take refuge in you be glad; let them ever sing for joy. Spread your protection over them, that those who love your name may rejoice in you. Psalm 5:11

It is a bad world, an incredibly bad world. But I have discovered in the midst of it a quiet and holy people who have learned a great secret. They have found a joy that is a thousand times better than any pleasure of our sinful life. They are despised and persecuted, but they care not. They are masters of their souls. They have overcome the world. These people are the Christians - and I am one of them.
Saint Cyprian (200-258)

The Fountain of Living Water

John Piper of Desiring God ministries once asked, ***“How do you magnify a fountain? You drink of it, and you drink only of it. This shows that the fountain is enjoyable and satisfying..”***

The Woman at the Well

Jesus replied, “If you only knew the gift God has for you and who you are speaking to, you would ask me, and I would give you living water.” “But sir, you don’t have a rope or a bucket,” she said, “and this well is very deep. Where would you get this living water? And besides, do you think you’re greater than our ancestor Jacob, who gave us this well? How can you offer better water than he and his sons and his animals enjoyed?” Jesus replied, “Anyone who drinks this water will soon become thirsty again. But those who drink the water I give will never be thirsty again. It becomes a fresh, bubbling spring within them, giving them eternal life.”

- ☺ This woman, Jesus pointed out, had experienced 5 marriages and a current live-in
- ☺ She was finding no permanent satisfaction in these relationships
- ☺ She had an unquenchable thirst that she was trying to satisfy in different relationships
- ☺ The water he offered her would satisfy

Why commit to one fountain?

Truth #1: Casual sex impairs the ability to establish a lasting emotion bond. When natural human emotional responses are repeatedly denied, the person is hardened and the capacity to bond is weakened. Dr. Donald Joy published groundbreaking research in the early 80s and has updated it periodically in the intervening years. He chronicles the ways that intimacy produces bonding. His research indicates that human beings respond to sexual intercourse by bonding, and they are driven to make that bond permanent and exclusive. Dr. Joy reported on the work of a researcher at a hospital clinic in Detroit who worked with 1,000 couples for 10 years studying their marital problems and recording their sexual histories. He concluded that sexual intercourse is constructive only within marriage. His evidence is overwhelming that one or the other of the partners in casual sex (usually the girl or woman) experiences immediate emotional pain even in the absence of acknowledged injury. The experience of casual sexual intimacy produces memories that can contaminate future relationships and create lingering problems later on, when the person eventually marries. When the married couples in his research had problems, he said, "The pain in the marriages was rooted in their promiscuity."

A Lasting Bond

Challenges	Rewards

Truth #2: Casual sex leaves people alone and lonely. Counselors tell us that sexually active girls are three times more likely to be depressed than their abstinent peers. Among the boys, sexually active ones are depressed twice as often. Sexually active teens are more likely than their abstinent counterparts to attempt suicide (girls 15 percent to five percent and boys six percent to one percent). But the most telling fact is that the majority of teenagers, 72 percent of the girls and 55 percent of the boys, acknowledge regret over early sexual activity and wish that they had waited longer to have sex. So much for the cultural mantra that "sex is no big deal!"

Intimacy and Commitment

Affection	Friendship
Sexual Exploration and Stimulation	Romantic Attachment and Involvement
Sexual Intercourse	Marriage

Premarital and extramarital sex destroy trust.

Rom 6:12 Therefore do not let sin reign in your mortal body so that you obey its evil desires.

13 Do not offer the parts of your body to sin, as instruments of wickedness, but rather offer yourselves to God, as those who have been brought from death to life; and offer the parts of your body to him as instruments of righteousness.

Lord Jesus, I renounce all these uses of my body as an instrument of unrighteousness, and I admit to any willful participation. I choose now to present my eyes, my mouth, mind, heart, hands, feet, and sexual organs to You as instruments of righteousness. I present my whole body as a living sacrifice, holy and acceptable. I choose to reserve the sexual use of my body for marriage only.

I reject the lie that my body is unclean or in anyway unacceptable to You as a result of my past sexual experiences. Lord, thank you that you have totally cleansed and forgiven me and that you love and accept me just the way that I am. Therefore, I choose now to accept myself and my body as clean in your eyes. Amen.

1 Corinthians 7:1 Now regarding the questions you asked in your letter. Yes, it is good to live a celibate life.[a] 2 But because there is so much sexual immorality, each man should have his own wife, and each woman should have her own husband.3 The husband should fulfill his wife's sexual needs, and the wife should fulfill her husband's needs. 4 The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband gives authority over his body to his wife.5 Do not deprive each other of sexual relations, unless you both agree to refrain from sexual intimacy for a limited time so you can give yourselves more completely to prayer. Afterward, you should come together again so that Satan won't be able to tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 6 I say this as a concession, not as a command. 7 But I wish everyone were single, just as I am. But God gives to some the gift of marriage, and to others the gift of singleness.8 So I say to those who aren't married and to widows—it's better to stay unmarried, just as I am. 9 But if they can't control themselves, they should go ahead and marry. It's better to marry than to burn with lust.