

11 One Flesh (Sharing)

The following excerpts are taken from part two of "Building a Joyful Marriage." The full message is available on FoodForYourSoul.net



The Oneness of a Body

The other crucial aspect of one flesh unity we see in Scripture is in 1Corinthians 7:4, when Paul was writing about the physical union in marriage, he said **The wife's body does not belong to her alone but also to her husband. In the same way, the husband's body does not belong to him alone but also to his wife.** If that's true of your body, certainly it's true of the rest of you – your heart and soul and mind.

A big part of one flesh intimacy, then, is sharing absolutely everything in your life. Whatever you have belongs to your spouse. Physically, your body. Spiritually, your spiritual gifts. Mentally and emotionally - your thoughts.

Remember, the purpose of all this oneness in marriage is to display the oneness between Christ and His people.

Ephesians 5:30 we are members of his body.³¹ "For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh."³² This is a profound mystery-- for I am talking about Christ and the church.

Think of the sharing that takes place between Christ and the Church. Everything that is His is yours. All His riches are yours, His kingdom, His house, His family, His wisdom, His heaven, His creation, His inheritance, his angels.

Romans 8:32 He who did not spare His own Son, but gave Him up for us all, how will He not also, along with Him, graciously give us all things?

Everything He has is yours. And everything you have is His. All your sorrow, all your fears, all your anxiety, all your worry – He'll take it all. Even your sin and your punishment He bore on His body on the tree. Everything that's His is yours and

And the two will become one flesh

everything that's yours is His. That's the kind of sharing that marriage is supposed to reflect.

That is not reflected by a man and wife with separate bank accounts – his money and her money. You're one flesh and you have one home and one set of resources, not two. You share everything.

Money is a huge part of life, and so the couple that strives to live up to their one flesh status must function as one with their money. Husband and wife should not have separate bank accounts, and neither husband nor wife should make any non-routine purchase without discussing it with the spouse.

Some husbands may balk at this point, imagining that their headship exempts them from having to discuss decisions with his wife. But remember, leading is when you conceive of a good direction, and you help those under your care to see the goodness of that direction, and then when they are on board you set the pace in going in that direction. If you are incapable of showing your wife the goodness of the idea, maybe the idea isn't actually all that good.

One sign that something is way off in your one flesh relationship is when you start concerning yourself with privacy rather than intimacy. Privacy is the killer of intimacy. Privacy says "keep out" and intimacy says, "come on in." If it would bother you to find out that your spouse has opened your mail or read through your emails, that's a very bad sign. A body has nothing to hide from itself.

The first response to the fall was to exchange intimacy for privacy. Adam and Eve went from naked and unashamed to fig leaves - intimacy gave way to privacy.

Think of what ridiculous concept privacy in marriage is. Hide something from your own flesh? Privacy is the enemy of intimacy. This isn't to say you don't need some time alone – you do. It is to say, though, that no part of your life is off-limits to one another. One flesh union means sharing everything.

Loving Communication

One of the most important treasures you must share with your spouse is your thoughts. Just as your body does not belong to you alone but also to your spouse, so it is with your thoughts. If the hearts of two people are to have fellowship, the only way that can happen is if that which is in one person's heart is transported into the heart of the other and vice-versa. And that can happen only through communication.

The way to improve communication, however, is not by studying communication skills. Most people already have perfectly adequate communication skills. What is usually needed is not greater skill in communication, but greater love. Most communication techniques taught in marriage books are tricks for making it seem like you love your spouse. A better solution, however, is to actually love your spouse.

The typical couple can communicate very clearly when they are willing to. A couple goes in for marriage counseling and has a fight on the way. They had an argument and both

misunderstood the other. But when they explain the issue to the counselor, husband, wife, and counselor all understand just fine. The problem was not lack of ability to communicate clearly; the problem was lack of *willingness* to be clear (lack of love). Speaking to the counselor they are willing to go through the trouble of being clear, but they wouldn't extend each other that courtesy.

Talking

One of the most common ways couples express hostility toward each other is through the silent treatment. But if there is a moment when the loving thing to do would be to talk, then at that moment it is unloving not to talk. The silent treatment or the laziness that is difficult to engage in conversation are sins. Talking may not always be the loving thing to do, but when it is, then it is sin not to talk. Using silence or short, terse speech to take out your anger on your spouse is sin.

And if you think, "Well, he should have picked up on my body language," that is not only unloving, but it is silly. Why should he have to interpret your body language when God gave you a mouth? Sending messages through body language would make sense if we were animals. But why revert to such an inaccurate, imprecise means of communication when God has given us mouths? To communicate in cryptic, vague, ambiguous forms when God has given us the ability to communicate with clarity and directness is both foolish and unloving.

And it is ungodly. God does not communicate like that. The ability to talk is part of what it means to be in the image of God. Despite what it looks like in the movies, no animals are capable of language – only human beings. Even the most intelligent animals are nowhere close to the level of intelligence required to have the language skills of even a 3-year-old child. In the beginning was the Word – the communication from God. God is a speaking God and bearing His image means having the high privilege and responsibility of using language.

If you need some time to be alone and think, then lovingly say that to your spouse – "I need some time to think about this." If you don't have time to talk about it right then, lovingly say that. If you don't know how to put your thoughts into words, lovingly say, "I'm sorry, but right now I'm not sure exactly how to put my thoughts into words." But don't ever just clam up to punish your spouse. Don't ever just walk away.

What is it in the flesh that wants to stay silent when a few words could avoid a big crisis? When you are angry or irritated there are times when you could say two sentences to clear something up, but in your flesh you think, "I shouldn't have to clear this up. He should have understood it the first time, or he's not listening to me, so I'm just not going to say anything else. I'll just let him be confused."

That is pure wickedness.

And this is a problem with both men and women – but usually for different reasons. Very often men fail to talk when they should just because they are lazy. Talking is harder for us men, and we get tired of doing it all day at work, and so when we come home we are too lazy to put forth the effort.

For women it is not so much laziness as unwillingness. Very often women want their husbands to understand them and to know them deeply, and so sometimes they'll say, "If he loved me, he would know what I want him to do right now." Wives, if you think that way your focus is completely backward. Your job is not to see to it that your husband loves you properly. Your job is to see to it that you love your husband properly. The next time you find yourself thinking, "If he loved me he would..." - catch yourself right there in mid-sentence and say, "No! The question is not what he would do if he loved me, but rather what I would do if I loved him." Don't think, "If he loved me he would do this." Think, "If I loved him, what would I do?" And the answer is, "If I loved him I would tell him what's on my heart instead of expecting him to read my mind."

"But I want to be known so deeply and so thoroughly that the one who loves me can know what I desire without being told." If that is what you want – if you long to be known that thoroughly, then enjoy the fact that God knows you that way. Enjoy being loved by God that way. And then let your joy from that overflow into passing God's love on to your husband and pouring out love from your heart to your husband. And then your joy will be full no matter what your husband does.

Listening

The other component of communication is listening. Very often men are poor listeners, which is alarming because husbands are to live with their wives in an understanding way (1 Peter 3:7). No man can live with his wife in an understanding way if he doesn't listen to her.

Poor listening is a hard problem to fix because most poor listeners are such poor listeners that they don't even know they are poor listeners because when people tell them they are poor listeners, they don't listen! Usually what they do instead is talk.

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

The reason good listeners do not answer too fast is because it takes some time to really take to heart what a person is saying. Listening is more than just interpreting the words. It involves taking the thoughts to heart. That is

why Scripture speaks of God listening to some prayers and not listening to others. God is aware of all prayers. He could repeat them back word for word. But He does not listen to all prayers in the sense that He does not give all prayers favorable consideration. He does not allow His heart to be moved by all prayers. Just because you can repeat back everything your wife just said, does not in itself mean you are listening. Listening involves interest and favorable consideration and allowing the person's words to sink down into your heart.

That is why premature responses are an indication that you haven't really listened. In fact, one of the habits of poor listeners can be quick apologies. She tells you something you did that hurt her, and before the words are even all the way out of her mouth you are already saying, "I'm sorry." Sometimes "I'm sorry" can really mean, "OK, I admit I was in the wrong, now let's just forget about it and move on." When she tells you about something you have done that has hurt her she isn't always just looking for an "I'm sorry." She may be looking for some understanding as to how it hurt her and how she feels. And so initially maybe a better response than "I'm sorry" would be to talk with her about it and explore more deeply how it affected her and how she feels about it. That way when you apologize she knows that you understand what it is you are apologizing for. Answering before you fully listen is the activity of a fool even when your answer is, "I'm sorry."

Another form of poor listening is firing off glib solutions off the top of your head for her problems. We husbands are famous for that. When you offer a solution after thinking about it for all of two seconds it belittles her concern. Helping her solve her problems is part of your role as husband, but it is not your only role. Sympathy and compassion and understanding and love are also part of your role. So when your wife comes to you with a problem, first understand how she feels, then problem-solve. Compassion then a solution is far more loving than just a solution.

And interested, quiet listening is itself an act of compassion and love.—especially when you already know what she is going to say. Not having to go through the trouble of finishing what you were going to say might seem like a wonderful thing to you, but it is not such a wonderful thing for her. You see, the difference between you and her is she *likes* to talk. She doesn't want to be rescued from the burden of completing her sentences. Many women need to express their thoughts verbally just to sort them out. Men tend to think everything through in their mind, which is why they don't want to talk as much, because if they tell you their thoughts that will be the second time they have had to go through it. But a lot of times women need to talk something over with someone and express it verbally in order to think it through for the first time. For some reason the ideas don't come together and take shape until they start expressing them out loud to a good listener.

Other forms of poor listening are interrupting, closing your mind so that you won't even consider the possibility that you

might be wrong during the conversation, immediately defending yourself or launching a counter attack when you are rebuked, or being overly picky about the technical meaning of the exact words she used and missing the emotional content.

Poor listening is lack of love. Sometimes we fail to listen because of disinterest. We just don't care. You are telling me about your day, but I don't care about your day. I am just waiting for you to stop talking so I can tell you about my day. If you have trouble being interested in what your spouse is talking about, remind yourself that God is interested. And think of why He is interested. Is it because He is learning something new? Or because it is a challenge to His intellect? Or because it is His favorite topic? No. He is interested in what is on your spouse's heart for the same reason He is interested in listening to your prayers – because He loves you.

Interest is a function of love. Put yourself in your wife's shoes. She has something in her heart that she wants someone else to take an interest in. And if you take an interest, that will bring her joy. So gauge the importance of what she is saying not on the basis of how interesting the information is, but on the fact that it is important to her. And wives do the same with your husbands.

The solution to the vast majority of communication problems is love. If you talk lovingly and listen lovingly you won't have very many communication problems, and the way to talk and listen lovingly is to actually love your spouse. Where there is love there is a genuine desire to lovingly communicate. **Let no unwholesome talk come out of your mouth, but only what is helpful for building your spouse up according to their needs, that it may benefit them (Ephesians 4:29).**

And so when you fall short – repent. Recognize unloving speech or unloving silence or unloving listening for the sin that it is and repent and ask your spouse for forgiveness and take steps to change your heart. So many sins in marriages go unconfessed and unrepented of, because they are so common that we convince ourselves that they are not really sin. Did you know it is a sin to be in a bad mood? So if you realize you have been in a bad mood, repent before God, seek your joy in the Lord, and then ask your spouse to forgive you. Do everything you can to pursue closeness with your spouse.

Seek Grace!

Jesus said a couple is one flesh because God joined them together. The uniting of two souls is not something that can be accomplished humanly, apart from special grace. So any attempt to employ the principles in this study apart from divine enablement will fail.

Grace from God comes primarily through prayer,

Scripture and fellowship.

Prayer

If you want grace from God, ask Him for it. There is a great deal of grace that you need that God will not give you until you ask for it in fervent, earnest, persistent prayer.

Scripture

The instructions from God's Word are better than all of the secular marriage advice in the whole world put together. Grace comes through the power of God's Word, not human wisdom. All truth is God's truth but not all truth is God's Word, and it is God's Word that He has promised to be the primary means of delivering His grace to us.

Fellowship

God dispenses His grace to you through the saints (1 Peter 4:10). The reason you come to church is not just to get a sermon or to sing praises. A huge reason why it is important to be immersed in the church is because so much of God's grace is not available to you unless you get it through the spiritual gifts of the saints. If you have the attitude that, "It's just me and the Holy Spirit, and that's all I need," you need to take another look at the New Testament. The Church is the Temple – the dwelling place of the Holy Spirit. If you want to meet Him and experience Him and receive grace from Him and be near Him a huge part of that will require fellowship. There is a lot of grace that you just will not be able to get unless you get it through fellowship in the church.

We tend to be so reluctant to ask our friends for help with our marriages. What foolishness! What task do you have in life that is more difficult than marriage? Are we so proud and self-confident that we imagine we need no help for such a difficult task? God says to us, "Husbands, love your wives like Christ loves the Church" and we say, "Oh, piece of cake. I can easily pull that off on my own. I don't need any encouragement or exhortation or strengthening or reproof or admonition or counsel or advice or instruction. I don't even need anyone praying for me. I need the rest of the body of Christ when it comes to other things, but loving my wife like Christ loved the church – I've got that down pat." Or wives – "Submit to a limited, fallible, weak, sinful human man in the same way the Church submits to Christ? And do so with a genuine attitude of deep respect and honor? Piece of cake – I don't need any help from anyone." Who are we kidding? If the process of - bearing one another's burdens and - strengthening one another and - praying for one another and - exhorting one another is needed in any area it is needed in marriage. God gives grace mainly through prayer, Scripture, and fellowship; leave one of them out and you will not have the grace you need.