

**Being Understood  
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We are focusing on Building Healthy Relationships, with the understanding that we were designed and created to be in relationship with God and with each other. When God created Adam he made the declaration, "it is not good for man to be alone." And, so, He created Eve.

We were designed and created to be in relationship!

Last night, I talked with you about the role that expectations play in our relationships. We looked at the need and process for dealing with selfish desires. And then we talked about a process for working through unmet expectations.

In this session, I want to talk with you about the role communication has in our relationships. But, before we talk about communication, I want to build a foundation for this teaching.

In order to do that, I want us to consider two passages of scripture. They both communicate a similar message.

**Ephesians 4:1-2**

**As a prisoner for the Lord, then, I urge you to live a life worthy of the calling you have received. <sup>2</sup> Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love.**

As followers of Jesus we are to be humble and gentle and patient with each other, bearing with each other in love. Bearing with each other suggests that you all may have shortcomings and weaknesses... and me too. We all have shortcomings and weaknesses, and in humility, gentleness and patience, we are to help each other and encourage each other. Why? To keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace. Unity is about relationship. We bear with each other in order to maintain relationship.

**Romans 15:1-2**

**We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. <sup>2</sup> Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up.**

We often think about strength in physical terms and certainly that's in view here. But, also in view are emotional strength and spiritual strength; it's about conscience and conviction.

So we're to bear with those who are weaker, those who have needs.

Ministering to the needs of others is part of our relational calling as followers of Jesus.

Do you get the picture of what's being said here in Scripture?

We are to bear with each other in humility and gentleness and patience and we're to help each other in our weaknesses and needs, we're to build each other up.

How do we bear with each other and how do we communicate in ways that build each other up?

First, let's understand that the best communication is often done by demonstration. It is understood that 93% of our communication is non-verbal. Only 7% of what we communicate is contained in the content of our words. The rest is communicated through tone of voice, facial expression, gestures, posture, situation, context and other factors. So, if we are going to effectively build each other up, we need to be aware of and work on the delivery system of our communication.

Second, let's understand that the person receiving the message uses their own interpretation process to understand what's being communicated. We may say something with perfect clarity in our own mind, but the person receiving the message may not have that same clarity, or may not receive the same message.

Third, Let's understand that the person receiving the message will process what's being communicated, both verbally and non-verbally through the filter of their own

needs. In other words, their understanding of what's being communicated will be colored by their needs.

Therefore, if we want to communicate to and build each other up effectively, we must be aware of each other's needs, and speak to those needs. And it's helpful for us to be aware of our own needs.

This takes work on our part. And, this is where I want to spend our time today... working to understand each other's needs, and our own needs.

We all have needs. And typically men's needs are different from women's needs. Typically that's true, but not always.

So, since it's mostly true, I'm going to work with our typical needs.

Men and women have three pairs of complimentary needs, and if we'll work to validate them in each other, we'll find that our own corresponding needs are often met as well.

### **The first set of complimentary needs is in the area of trusting and caring:**

Men need to feel trusted. One of the most loving messages a man can receive is **"I'll leave you alone to do this by yourself."**

What that message communicates is trust; a belief that the man has the competence to handle the situation. I trust you.

Women, on the other hand, need to feel cared for. To her, a high degree of involvement communicates love.

Often we muddy up the waters for each other by communicating out of our own need set, rather than communicating to the need of the other.

For instance, I like this simple example. Let's just say, I've got a leak under the kitchen sink. And, you've got to know that I hate plumbing because it often doesn't go right. But let's just say that I'm down under the sink trying to fix the leak, frustrated and doing everything I can to fix the problem, and Phyllis-San thinks, "Oh, I need to show him I care." Out

of her compassion and desire to communicate her love, she comes over to the sink and asks, how is it going?

When I respond that it's not going, she adds her helpful insights: did you try tightening this or turning that, or perhaps a different wrench would work.

What she wants to communicate is that she cares. But because my need is for trust and to feel competent, her words and questions communicate that she doubts my competence and doesn't really trust me.

The words she meant as encouragement and to build me up, in reality, worked to tear me down, because when I hear them in light of my own need they mean something totally different than what she intended.

Change the situation around. Let's say that Phyllis-san is under the sink trying to fix a leak. Now, me, being the encourager that I am, if I think to myself, "I trust her, she's got this, she can handle it." And, instead of offering to help her, I just go out to the garage and work on something else. Without even having said a word, I would have communicated very clearly an uncaring message. I was trying to communicate trust, but that would not be the communication she received.

You see, when I try to communicate based on my own needs, I miss the mark with her. It's only as I understand her needs and communicate to them that the intended message is received.

Think about this in light of a young guy or gal interacting with their parents. A young gal working hard to meet the competence standard that her father has set, working hard to find his acceptance, while deep in her heart she just desperately wants to know that her daddy cares.

A young guy, desperately wanting to be viewed as competent, lives in a situation where his mother, out of her deep love and affection, continually offers corrective helps so that he can be all that she knows he can be. And in the

midst of her help, he just desperately wants to be trusted and wants to feel competent.

When parents understand and know the needs of their children and breath into them, it just hits that child's heart in the place that makes them sing and soar. They thrive when their needs are met.

Think about work relationships, church relationships, and community relationships.

Guys, when we're talking to each other, we can know that trust and competence are important. We can speak to each other at that heart level, building each other up

Women, when you're talking to each other, you can know that feeling cared for is a heart need, you can communicate heart to heart.

And, men, we can learn to speak to a lady's heart. And, ladies, you can learn to speak to a man's heart.

Well, back to the problem with our sink:

Women, rather than offering all kinds of helpful comments, if you believe that your help is essential, ask, "Do you want my input." Allow the man to choose yes or no.

Men, don't wait to be asked for assistance. Offer it immediately when you see the need. At least ask, "Can I help with that?" Allow the woman to choose yes or no.

We've got to learn to speak to each others needs.

So the first complimentary set of needs is Trust for men and Care for women.

**The second set of complimentary needs is in the area of Acceptance and understanding.**

Men need to feel accepted. Women need to feel understood.

This need set becomes evident with how we cope with stress.

Men tend to deal with stress by pulling away from relationship temporarily.

Women tend to deal with stress by working to establish an emotional connection.

For instance, when a man comes home from work, he is likely to want some time alone to process the stresses of the day. If he's got a long commute, the drive time can serve as that down time.

If he doesn't have a drive time, he may need that space when he gets home.

That away time may be difficult for a woman to accept because her way of dealing with stress is to establish an emotional connection. When she comes home from work she's likely to want to spend time talking about her stress.

So here you have it, the man comes home and wants to hibernate and the woman come home and wants to talk. If we are not considering each other's needs, the message we send will be received as unloving at best.

So how do you handle it?

If your wife needs to talk, or your husband needs space, offer it to them first. Husbands you can say, "I'm going to need a little time to process my day. I'm happy to listen now, if you'll allow me to have some space later.

Wives, you can say, I can see you need some space to process your day, and I'm happy to give that to you if we can talk in an hour or so.

Make room for your partner's need.

Also, this acceptance and understanding means that we need to understand each other's communication style.

Men are often problem focused, solution oriented. They want to solve problems with the least amount of words possible. Often, when a woman shares a problem they will give a quick solution, and the woman will feel steamrolled.

Women tend to prefer a sharing atmosphere, exploring feelings. They want to look at the problem from all sides and they do that through talking about it.

Before men are ready to talk about a problem, they have likely taken time to think it through and come up with possible solutions. Only with possible solutions in hand are they ready to talk about the problem. Often they've already figured it out before they begin to talk.

Women, on the other hand, process the problem as they are talking.

That means when Phyllis-San or a female staff person is talking to me about a problem, they are not asking for me to solve it; often they are processing their own solution as they are talking. And, most times, their solution is better than what I could have offered. The reason is that they think relationally. In their process, they think about how the decision connects to everything else.

When we allow space for men to process and connection for women to process, and don't try to force our style on the other, we communicate a message of Acceptance and a message of understanding.

**The third set of complimentary needs is in the area of appreciation and respect.**

This is one that is very important for every married couple to understand.

Men need to feel appreciated. No matter what they do, it seems as though it's never enough.

Women need to feel that their wishes and needs are treated with the same respect as the man's. Women need to feel respected and valued.

Think about the excitement of dating and courtship. A man is likely to make all kinds of gestures that show respect. He is careful to consider his girlfriend's interests and desires... he even tries to anticipate them. And, she appreciates the things he does and says so... and he is fueled by her appreciation.

In that environment, the flame of love grows.

But, shortly after they get married the appreciation and respect seem to fall by the wayside.

She begins to think, it's his trash too, why should I thank him for taking it out?

He thinks, she doesn't notice the things I already do for her, why should I do anything more?

Let me just tell you that this need set being met is what builds the flame in a relationship.

I've had couples come to me, ready to separate, saying, we don't love each other any more. And, as we talk, I can see that they aren't caring for this need in each other. And, I've challenged them with an assignment. Before you make a decision to separate, take this week and try something. Husband, do one thing for your wife each day this week that she is not expecting. Wife, look for one thing each day that you can honestly say that you appreciate that your husband does and tell him.

The next week when we meet, the report is, "You know, we had a pretty good week." Then I challenge them... Do it again.

After three weeks to a month of meeting this need in each other, it is not uncommon to hear a couple say, "you know what, the flame has returned in our relationship. I really love him; I really love her."

Meeting this need in each other, in a marital setting, helps bring the flame of romance back into the relationship.

Meeting this need in each other, outside of marital relationships, helps build closeness and deep appreciation for each other. And in the same way a man and a woman can speak to each other's needs, Men can speak appreciation to men and women can speak value to women.

The apostle Paul tells us in **Philippians 2:3-4**

**<sup>3</sup> Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit. Rather, in humility value others above yourselves, <sup>4</sup> not**

**looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others.**

In order to consider others above ourselves, we must make the effort to understand each other's needs, and to speak to them.

Now when I started this message I told you I'm going to talk about the typical needs of men and of women. That means not all men have the needs I described and not all women have the same needs I described. But considering others above ourselves calls is to do the work of finding out each other's needs and speaking to each other in ways that are received as encouragement and build each other up.

Amen? Amen!