

TEACHING NOTES (underlined words indicate answers for the handout)

Session III — Building Blocks for a Strong Marriage

Scripture: Ephesians 5:21-33

I. The Scripture is clear on how we are to build our marriages.

A. Wives are to UNDERSTAND and SUPPORT their husbands.

B. Husbands are to provide LEADERSHIP by CHERISHING their wives.

C. Wives should SUBMIT to their husbands like the church submits to Christ.

D. Husbands are to do EVERYTHING POSSIBLE to love your wife and may your love be marked by giving and not getting.

\* With that in mind it is easier to understand this thought, “Even if marriages are made in heaven, we have to be responsible for the maintenance.”

\* There is a reason R.C. Adams said, “17% of marriages are truly happy.”

\* But when you have a good or happy marriage it will help everything else in your life.

Did you hear the cute story about this one elderly couple who had been married for 65 years. When asked what was the secret of their marriage success he said, “She eventually went blind and I gradually went deaf.”

In this session I want to share with you some strong building blocks that if used can help you have a strong marriage which can stand the test of time.

II. Here are six building blocks for a strong foundation.

A. A COMMITMENT to my companion first.

1. Pastor, what are you committed to first? Where do you spend most of your time? What do you talk about the most?

2. Businessman – the same questions:

3. The motto of successful marriages is “FAMILY FIRST”. Most marriages that fall apart do not do so because of huge problems but because of the lack of HUGE COMMITMENT.

4. When there is commitment first to the family, then other things can be successfully added.

5. The key word is to work at it.

The second building block for a strong foundation is:

B. A willingness to TALK to my companion.

1. I hope this is not true for you, but someone said, "With 2 bathrooms, we forgot how to cooperate, with a 2 car family, we forgot how to associate, and with a 2 TV house, we forgot how to communicate."

2. Sad to say, but too many brides become widows after the wedding because they fail to communicate.

3. Look at the Marital Communication Slide:

1st Year — 70 minutes a day

2nd Year — 30 minutes a day

3rd Year — 15 minutes a day

4th Year — 10 minutes a day

10th Year — 5 minutes a day

4. Intimacy may be defined here as "The degree to which we share vulnerabilities (our weaknesses) in words."

5. How can I know that I am intimate in my communication? Here's how:

We can know we are intimate if each of us can say anything, no matter how silly or frightened or immature or helpless it makes us look, and the other person will treat it with respect, and not use it against us.

The third building block for a strong foundation is:

C. A working towards COMPATIBILITY.

1. I hope you understand that no couple is completely compatible. But may it be understood that in a strong marriage couples work together becoming more and more compatible.

Did you hear about the one epitaph on the gravestone:

"Here beneath this stone we lie,  
Back to back my wife and I.  
And when the angels trump shall trill,  
If she gets up then I'll lie still."

2. There are certain criteria you must have or work toward in order to accomplish good compatibility.

a. VALUES

Values are what is important to you.

Our children pick these up often without us teaching them.

When we have the same values we have freedom with each other.

b. SOCIAL RELATIONSHIPS

Friends are an important part of our social relationships.

Your friendships should be shared together, not separate.

Be careful how close you get to other individual couples.

Two couples vacationing together. He was a good preacher and became a college professor. He and the other man's wife made innocent physical contact but the rest of the story is history. They began to embrace and in time he ended up in bed with her at his house. She was good friends with his wife. More circumstances followed with other women. Today, they both are divorced and remarried. They were very good friends of ours.

c. INTELLECTUAL GROWTH

Learning and growing together will assure both partners a good future in their marriage.

If both partners are not growing the marriage will either fail or only be average.

d. LEISURE INTERESTS

Understanding your companions interests are important to your being compatible.

Make lists of each others.

#### e. SEXUAL COMPLETENESS

This refers to the total male-female relationship, not just 15 minutes of sexual intercourse.

Sex is a special look, a special touch, the special way you relate as male and female.

This includes a unique behavior between a husband and wife that is not shared with anyone else.

Did you hear the story about the man that was very, very ill. His wife took him to a doctor and they ran all these tests. The doctor called the wife in privately for a consultation. He told the wife, "I am going to talk with you and then you can talk to your husband." The doctor said, "You know that your husband has a rare disease and he is going to die very soon unless you do certain things. He is going to have to have some real tender loving care. It is going to have to be over a long extended period of time. The longer you give him this care the longer he's going to live. You are going to have to give him a full breakfast every morning, make biscuits from scratch, ham and eggs and all the trimmings.

At lunch he's got to have a meat and three vegetables. At dinner he's got to have a meat and three vegetables. He's got to be very immobilized and waited on hand and foot.

You must have sex with him several times a week. And if you will give him that kind of care he will live a long life. So you need to talk with him."

They got in the car and started home and the husband said, "What did the doctor say?"

She said, "Well, dear, I hate to tell you this, but you are going to die very soon."

That's perception.

The fourth building block for a strong foundation is:

#### D. An understanding of your LEADERSHIP ROLES.

1. Marriage is the only union that can't be organized. Both sides think they are in management.

2. In research from Timberlawn: "We have found a tendency for marriages of more equal power to be healthier in all other aspects.

This isn't a perfect correlation: there are successful, happy marriages with unequal power but with strong commitment, closeness, good communication and problem-solving skills just as there are couples with equal power who divorce.

But on the whole, the more lopsided the power, the more you'll see problems in other areas, no matter who's dominant."

3. Four possible relationship styles:

- a. RETALIATION - Moving against each other.
- b. DOMINATION - Moving one over another.
- c. ISOLATION - Moving away from each other.
- d. COOPERATION - Moving with each other.

4. The less respect in a marriage, the more one controls. The less respect for oneself lets the other one control.

The less respect in a marriage the more one runs over the other.

When there is a problem in your marriage, which one do you refer to?

When marriage is going through the normal process which style do you refer to?

The fifth building block for a strong foundation is:

E. A special CONSIDERATION for your companion.

1. You can tell a man's character by the way he treats his wife.

A man's job is to spoil his wife.

2. How to properly spoil your companion:

- a. Think from their PERSPECTIVE.
- b. Make a list of little things they LOVE.
- c. DO the little things they love.
- d. DO the little things they love CHEERFULLY.
- e. AFFIRM your spouse verbally, privately and publicly.

The sixth building block for a strong foundation is:

F. A willingness to work together SOLVING PROBLEMS.

Listen to this, "My wife and I have an agreement, I don't try to run her life and I don't try to run my life."

This is not an effective way of working out problems even though it is better than some.

1. We need to clearly understand that whenever you have 2 or more people having a continuing relationship there will be conflict.

2. Whenever there is conflict there can only be one of two outcomes.

a. We will either hurt and even destroy each other.

b. Or we will build up each other and benefit from the experience.

3. How should we solve problems in our marriage?

a. Do not underestimate your problem.

To illustrate this you can think of problems kind of like a pregnancy, things will keep growing until somebody will notice.

When there is a conflict look to resolve it, ignoring it will not make it go away.

b. Do not underestimate your potential to recover from these problems.

You must remember that the problems you have encountered in your marriage have already been encountered by millions of other people of which millions have been successful in them.

You and your problems are not unique just to you.

Be encouraged, others have gone through it successfully.

c. Do not exaggerate your problem.

Please quit making them bigger than life.

Too often a small problem is fueled and it ends up being a lot bigger than you could ever dream it to be.

d. Consider all the possible solutions for your problem and pick one.

e. If your problems are not being progressively solved be willing to seek help if really needed.

Asking for help is not a sign of defeat but a sign of hope.

Asking for help is a definite sign of your desire to solve your problems.

There are some problems which need a third party to help each side see themselves as they really are.

4. Let me encourage you with this: One thing you really need to know is if you really do have a problem.

There are some things in a family that are just not going to change.

Don't take this in a negative way or to give up the problem.

Remember, we are all different people and all have our different ways and different personalities.

It is not really a problem for different personalities to never see things in the same way or like the same things.

## CONCLUSION

Let me share a newspaper ad about a guy and remember this is about resolving conflict. Here is what it said, "I would like to announce that the notice I put in this newspaper last Saturday was in error. I will be responsible for any debts incurred by my wife and I will start paying after I get out of the hospital."

Prayer: Let's pray a prayer of commitment to acknowledging and confirming and resolving the conflicts in our marriages. They will not resolve on their own.