

MAN IN THE MIRROR BIBLE STUDY
The Husband in the Mirror – Your Wife, What Makes Her Tick
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My daughter Jen is getting married two weeks from tomorrow. At a bridal shower a couple of weeks ago, the hostess collected marriage advice from all the other women attending the wedding. And she thought ahead far enough to ask my son John if he had any advice to offer to the groom. And so on the card, my son wrote, “Jay, keep your sense of humor, girls are weird.” Today, we begin a series called “The Husband in the Mirror”. I wonder how many of you men in the room are unmarried. How many of you would like to be unmarried? Don’t do that, this is on video, guys! (Laughter) For those of you who are unmarried, obviously, these are life principles, and obviously apply to all relationships. And I am going to dedicate this series to my son and my new son-in-law. It’s interesting, when I watch this young man look at my daughter, I can tell that he loves her as a husband as much as I love her as a daughter, so I am delighted to give my permission and my blessing to marry her.

I wrote this little email to John and Jay anticipating this morning. Christian writer Florence Littauer said, “We are attracted to each others strengths, and then go home to live with each other’s weaknesses”. You have embarked on the great adventure for which every man is created, and for which no man is properly equipped. The three greatest wants of all men are number one: I want something I can give my life to – a mission, or a cause. Secondly, I want someone to share it with. The third want is: all men want a system that gives a reasonable explanation for why number one and number two are so difficult. Number one and number two are difficult, your mission in life, your marriage, and your other relationships too. If, at Man in the Mirror (we work with men), if we were to take the marriage problem and put it in one stack, and take all of the other problems that we deal with and put them in another stack, the marriage problem alone is bigger than all of the other problems that men are dealing with, combined. Today as many Christian marriages end in divorce as non-believing marriages. It has been said that the family is disintegrating – and if you’ll notice, if you’ve been here for a while, precision with words is very important to me. And so, it is true to a degree, the problem in this country is that the family is disintegrating. But I suggest to you that a more precise way of stating the problem is that the Christian family is disintegrating. And so, it seems appropriate to do a little series here on this.

Patsy, my wife, said yesterday, “Well, what are you going to talk about this week?”. And I said, well, I’m going to talk about the subject of, “Your Wife, What Makes Her Tick?” And she said, “Good Luck!”

Let me go ahead and kind of give you the map of what we are going to do for this session. We are going to start by asking the question: “What makes her tick?” And we’ll start out just by asking the question, “What is she like?” And then we’ll answer the question, “Why is she like that?” And then I’ve got a little idea out here I want to share with you which you can use for some application.

So, what’s she like? Well, when I was dating my wife Patsy, I asked her to marry me, she said yes (actually, she said some other things, too, but that’s probably for later in the series). And sort of as an engagement gift, I bought her a little one hundred cc dirt bike. (Laughter) I know it sounds stupid now, but at the time it made sense! Well, here’s how it all happened...When she met me, my plan was to race motorcycles professionally and travel around the country in a trailer, and eventually own a motorcycle dealership here in Orlando. I mean, that was my dream! So, she fell in love with me, and thought she was going to be marrying a motor-cross racer! So I bought her this engagement gift, this little dirt bike, and I began to teach her how to ride the motorcycle. I should have known right away...Patsy is Mother Theresa, but she is not Martina Navratilova – I mean, she’s not very athletic at all. And so, when I saw her trying to balance herself on this motorcycle, she was basically put-putting around. Then we were married, and a couple of weeks after we got back from the honeymoon, I said, “Let’s go riding bikes!” And she says, “Well, why don’t you just go by yourself today – I have some things I have to around the house.” She never got on that motorcycle again – a little clue into what she’s like!

Another clue into what she’s like. After we had our daughter, Jen, we then followed that with two miscarriages. And to sort of, remember the two miscarriages, in my theology, a life begins at conception,

so these are two human beings that miscarried. And my theology's not quite worked out carefully enough to know all about that, but I have chosen to believe that these two little children are with Christ in heaven. And so, after the second of the miscarriages, I purchased these two little angelic figures, and they sit on my wife's dresser and she looks at them from time to time and is reminded, and I look at them from time to time and am also reminded. And I must tell you that, as a man, when we had these two miscarriages, especially the second one, because we didn't know if we were ever going to have another child (we did, we had John) I was deeply affected emotionally by that. It was a very challenging time – but the way I felt was nothing the way that my wife felt. My wife is a very steady eddy kind of person. The only time in our marriage that I ever remember her feeling any kind of prolonged sadness or depression was when she had her second miscarriage. That's another little clue into what she's like.

We could put some words on the board here, in fact, let's do that. Rooster – and what? Hen. Bull – Cow. Stallion – Mare. That's a little bit more about what she's like. Here is another way of talking about what she's like – she's like a beautiful, fragrant flower. Pleasing to the eye, fragile when neglected, responding quickly to the least bit of attention, devoted to a fault, and with a steely resolve when necessary. This is what this woman is like. Well, why is she like that? Let's take a look at the scripture and find out God's design for a woman: Genesis 2:18 – I'm going to go ahead and give you the Big Idea for the message this morning, but this is kind of the overarching idea for the whole series: “After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority.” And we are going to find out, as we see how God has designed has designed a woman, why this is such a crucial idea to grasp.

Genesis 2:18. God has made the creation; it has all been very good. We get to verse 18, and we read this, “The Lord said, it is not good for the man to be alone.” In other words, the whole creation is good, everything, but it is not yet complete, because woman has not been created. It is not good for man to be alone. “I will make a helper suitable for him.” She's made to be a companion – Men need a companion, a female companion, and females need a male companion. It cuts both ways. She has been made by God; she has been designed by God to be a companion and a helper. That doesn't mean that you don't help her, but her basic nature is that she wants to be a companion, she wants to satisfy the “aloneness” that men feel. She wants to be a helper. She's made this way.

Genesis 2:24. For this reason, a man will leave his Father and Mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. Marriage is the mysterious, mystical fusion of two separate lives headed in two separate directions into the spiritual union that we call “one flesh”. Oneness - Swindoll says it's like gluing two pieces of paper together. Just imagine trying to take two pieces of paper and unglue them. It can't be done! You tear one, you tear both. What's the opposite of oneness? Twoness! Not a good thing! So – and then in 3:16, we read, the fall has not taken place, and God is saying, what is going to happen as a result of the fall, “To the woman, he said, I will greatly increase your pain in childbearing; with pain you will give birth to children; your desire will be for your husband and he will rule over you.”

Now, this word desire is very interesting because Keil and Delitzsch, in their commentary, note that this should be understood, this desire, that this fragile flower has for you, this creation of God, this companion, this friend, this helper, it should be understood as a desire bordering on disease. It's a desire that she has for you that comes out of fall. It's a desire that borders on disease – in other words, it's a desire that she has for you, that is subject to potential corruption. And you know this is true, because you know how your wife can get distracted, how her heart can be overly clingy, and insecure. You know that she can be jealous, that from time to time she can be subject to corruption by being a controlling person, and wanting to determine the way you go. You also know that this is true, that this desire that she has for you is a desire that borders on disease, because you know from your experience how your able to take this fragile person, who has this desire for you bordering on disease and manipulate her. And we've all done this, yes?

When I wanted to get a Harley Davidson, three years ago, I could easily, if I wanted to! I know how to get what I want from my wife. I know how to manipulate her. In that case, I decided I wanted her blessing, not just her permission, so I spent a year working on the project, okay? Honestly, I didn't know if I would ever get her blessing, I really didn't, but I was committed that I wasn't going to get the motorcycle unless I did. Praise God, I got it! Amen! She has a desire for you that borders on disease, which means that it's subject to corruption, manipulation, she's fragile, she's devoted to you to a fault, she's created to be a

helper, companion, she seeks oneness, her greatest need is for intimacy. Now that's unlike you! That is not your greatest need. Do you have the need for intimacy? Absolutely! Because it's one of the three things you really want! You want someone to share your life with. But even more important to you is that you find something you can give your life to – the mission, or the cause. So, as a man, our greatest need is our need to be significant. I want to do something with my life! I want to be somebody! I want it to matter that I've walked the face of the earth! I don't just want to be a shooting star that streaks across the night one night and then disappears. I don't want to be another notch on the belt of history – I want to be somebody, I want to do something with my life! Just think about your greatest need right now! This need that you have to be significant – what turns your crank? What gets you juiced? What gets you out of bed in the morning? Boy, where does your passion come from? Feel it!

Now, hold that thought. Your wife also, has a greatest need. And, she feels just as passionately about her greatest need as you do about yours. And her greatest need is for intimacy. Yours is significance – hers is intimacy. Does she want to do something significant with her life? Does she want a cause? Does she want a mission? Absolutely! But even more than that, she longs – dare I say it – she longs – for you to give her the first place in her life, the way that she has already, by her nature, given you the first place in hers. Her greatest need is for intimacy, and that's why the big idea – after God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority!

If you would, take the questions for the day. We will be unpacking some of the things I'm about to show you in the weeks ahead, but I'd like to have you look at the bottom of the sheet where these generalizations are, kind of some comparisons between a man and a woman. And what I want you to see here is that a woman's core motivation is to love a man, and nurture a family, which is very different than the core motivation of a man. We are talking about what makes her tick, what's she like, why is she like that...so let's look at these generalizations. The greatest need of the husband's significance, of the wife intimacy, the principle drive of a man is to be respected. The principle drive of a woman is to be cherished. And that's why some of this, you'll see in the scriptures as we move on, why the scripture tells the wife to respect the husband, and the husband to love the wife.

Here is the orientation: husband to task, and wife to relationship. And I'm going to show you how to overcome that in the weeks ahead. The principal activity for the man is providing; for the woman – nurturing. There are scriptures noting where that can be found. Creativity for the husband is directed toward his work, for the woman, toward the home. These are generalizations, yes? Are these true one hundred percent of the time? No! For example, four and a half percent of all households, the woman is the principle bread earner. So there are exceptions, but these are generalizations, and let's not throw the baby out with the bathwater, these are generally true. So, just because they are not always true, don't discount the fact that they are usually true. The deepest fear of a man is the failure to provide; of a woman, is to lose a child, yes? Risk-orientation: For him, it's to take a risk, for her, it's to seek security. His principle concerns are money and meaning; her principle concern, husband and children. Yes? We are attracted to each others strengths, these are the strengths that you have, these are the strengths that she has, and then go home to live with each other's weaknesses, often forgetting the strengths.

After God, but before all others, make your wife your top priority. Now, I am going to give you an idea of how you can work that out. We talked about that long ago, and since, I'm sure. This is an idea that for the whole twelve weeks, we'll be talking about this. What does that stand for? It stands for: Emotional Bank Account. Now, let me give you the concept first, and then a few examples, and then a deposit for today. The idea is basically this – that every human being, your wife, you, we each have what you might call an emotional bank account into which you make deposits, and from which you make withdrawals. In fact, what I want you to see is that every time you have contact with your wife, you are either making a deposit, or you are making a withdrawal - Every time; whether you are walking in the house, driving together to the store, running an errand together, not running an errand together.

Every time you negotiate anything with your wife, you either are making a deposit, or you are making a withdrawal. Let me give you a couple of examples. Let's just say it's been a very rough day. You come home, squeal the tires into the driveway, skid the tire to a stop in the garage. Come through the garage door. Slam the door! Letting out signals to your family that you've had a very rough day, and just to make

sure everybody understands, you go, “Hrrrrrrrrrrrr” making an imitation of a large zoo animal so that everybody knows that you have had a very rough day and you are not to be bothered! You have had enough hassles for one day – everyone knows exactly what that means, yes? You go over to the lazy-boy recliner, you turn on the news, you kick back, you take the newspaper, you rustle it real loud, you stick your head in the newspaper, and listen to the news, letting the family know that you are not to be interrupted. Now, is this a deposit, or withdrawal into your wife’s emotional bank account? (Laughter) Okay, you are starting to get the picture! Okay, obviously, this is a withdrawal, but let’s just say the next morning, you really feel like a jerk, which of course, you are, but it’s a novelty to really be able to notice this, and so, the next morning, you really feel like a heel. And so, you go and make coffee, and take a cup of coffee to your wife in bed. Well that’s unheard of, but if it wasn’t unheard of, what would that be? That would be a deposit – and then you say, I’m sorry for being such a huffy guy last night. This is a deposit into your wife’s emotional bank account, right? Also, these things don’t have to be quite so verbal, they can be non-verbal. Let’s just say that you come home, and your wife tells you that your twelve year old daughter had a fight with another little child in the neighborhood during the day, and there are some bruised, hurt, feelings, and she wants to talk about it. She wants to unburden her heart, because she has these pent up feelings, these emotions about this, and you’ve had your own little tête-à-tête during the day, and you are not going to trouble her with yours, and you can’t understand you with hers, and so you kind of cross your arms, and get this look on your face, and stare out of the window while she’s talking.

Okay, the point of this is that if you are after God but before all others going to make your wife your top priority, perhaps the singular most important concept that you might want to try to get your mind around and implement is this idea of the emotional bank account. Every Christian writer that I know about has some name for this concept: love bank, love tank, emotional bank, emotional bank account; being in a business background, I like the bank account idea. Whatever you want to call it, this is a very practical way for you to after God but before all others, make this fragile flower, subject to corruption, which has a desire for you bordering on design, designed by God to be a companion and helper, to be one with you. A few things to remember: She’s going to bank somewhere. Your wife is going to emotionally bank somewhere – because she has emotional needs, and she will get them filled. And if you don’t fill them, somebody else will. Second, some of you need to learn her account number. Third, remember that the account numbers for deposits are much longer and difficult to remember than the account numbers for withdrawals, yes? She says, understand me, accept me, love me, treat me with tenderness, pray with me not just for me, be my companion. And if you do this, I will respond to you, be your friend, be your lover, be your supporter, respect you – after God, but before all others, make your wife, your mate, your top priority. Let’s pray.

The Husband in the Mirror: Lord, that’s us – that would be me. Father, we each are here this morning to be reminded of what makes her tick, what she’s like, and why she’s like that, and to be reminded that even though we want a mission and a cause, we very much want someone to share it with. And no doubt, some of us have allowed ourselves to be distracted, and have not made our wives our top priority after you. Something else is competing with that. If you find that’s what you’ve been doing, and the thought that your wife is going to bank somewhere is terrifying to you because you know that it hasn’t been with you – you might want to take a moment and say something to God about your regret for that, and your desire to make a change. You can do this now, if you’d like. Father, I pray that you would steal each of these men against the temptations of the world to make anything other than their wives after you their top priority. Show all of us how we can make better and important deposits into emotional bank accounts of our wives. We ask this for your praise and your glory and for her because she is a gift that you have given us. In Christ’s name we ask this, Amen.