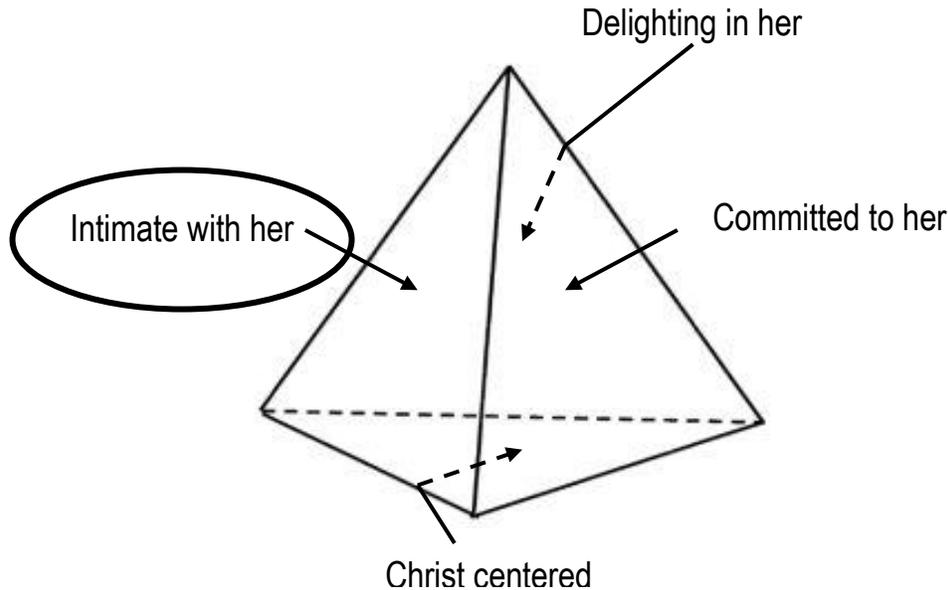


What Men Need to Know

Week 3 - Intimacy

Introduction



Intimacy is knowing one another.

As she knows you and believes that you know, accept and understand her she will feel intimate with you.

Intimacy takes time.

It is impossible for an engaged or newly married couple to deeply understand one another.

You will be surprised by her history, her feelings and her perspectives many times over the course of your early marriage.

Changing life situations will reveal things that you might never otherwise have known.

But, time alone will not produce intimacy.

You could be married 30 years without being intimate.

Put another way, time is a necessary for intimacy but it is not enough for intimacy.

Intimacy requires the environment created by the other principles.

Christ centeredness

You don't need to 'be right' because your righteousness is in heaven so the confusing effects of your defensiveness are diminished.

You don't need to get things from your wife or avoid losing things to her because you are a beloved son who can have everything you need to love from Christ.

You can persist through confusion and suffering because the Spirit indwells you – comforting, guiding and helping you.

Your kingdom is overshadowed by God's; His agenda over your own (Luke 17)

Delighting in her

Her sense that you appreciate her; are enthusiastic about her and want to create a life with her is the background music for intimacy.

This tone makes it difficult for her to believe that you are against her. It tells her that you like her and are on her side.

Committed to her – The essence of commitment is staying in the relationship and working for her good.

There are many ways to avoid her and many reasons to stay aloof from her. If you do not resist these tendencies you will keep the relationship at a distance.

Unless you are committed to her wellbeing you will have lots of incentive for maintaining the *status quo*; especially if she also wants to maintain the *status quo*.

These relational principles alone will not produce intimacy. Put another way, these are needed for intimacy but are not enough for intimacy.

So, what is needed for intimacy?

Intimacy itself involves HONESTY, CURIOSITY and PERSISTENCE IN CONFLICT

Men tend toward cowardice when it comes to intimacy.

An aggressive, goal oriented man may seem incapable of cowardice but his habit of forcing his wife to conform to his views and avoiding the parts of life where he is not competent reveals his fear of losing control.

A more reflective man will often avoid intimacy with his wife because he cannot figure out what to say or do. If he does not know every step to take, he won't take the one step he does know to take. Since he cannot predict or manage her feelings, he avoids her out of fear losing control.

OR He doesn't want to take action and intimacy will call on him to act. This threatens his self centered goals.

The problem isn't that we fear intimacy; it's that we avoid intimacy because of our fears.

"Look inside an unmanly man and you will find a powerless, angry, terrified man trying to keep his life together through control, intimidation and selfishness...Powerless men spend their lives controlling some outcome and deceiving themselves into thinking it matters."... "Strong men take the initiative even when they are not sure what to do...having more hope in God's power than fear of their impotence." *The Silence of Adam*, p.43-45, 48

HONESTY

Honesty is the inclination to reveal your experiences, behaviors, thoughts, feelings, values and desires.

There are different kinds of honesty: about what you think, say or do; about desires and perspectives or about things that you notice concerning her.

If you are not Christ-centered - full of confidence in his power, authority and approval – you will tend to hide who you are and what you think.

There are many reasons we are dishonest

It is tough to be honest when we are primarily committed to self-protection. Honesty risks loss: of control; esteem or even love.

It is tough to be honest when we are self-deceived and self-justifying.

Even if we say things as we see them, we may be completely deluded and we often are.

Without a deep belief in your own depravity, you will not be tentative about your own perspectives and will not want God's perspective.

If you don't want God's perspective, you certainly will not want that of your spouse even though it often provides helpful insight.

Sometimes we are not being dishonest but are simply failing to surface vague or unformed impressions & feelings.

We may feel a dis-ease about something but don't think to surface it with her.

Instead of saying what we noticed and how we felt about it, we say nothing or we react to what we concluded about what we noticed. [e.g needed]

Instead of admitting that our deeper desires¹ are unsatisfied, threatened, blocked or lost we express boredom, anxiety, anger or devastation. In this way we feel honest but really miss the mark.

We have different ways of being dishonest

Concealing what you believe will cause conflict

Some of you realize that you have two selves: one public and the other hidden from view.

You may feel she doesn't know you because she doesn't. You've hidden part of yourself from her knowledge.²

e.g. she seems critical or demanding; he has a non-verbal angry reaction; she asks, "What's wrong?" He says, "Oh, I guess I'm just tired and cranky."

e.g. he's been flirting or porn viewing but tells himself, "I'll just stop. No reason to tell her and make her feel bad." OR he says, "I've been struggling with lust," which falls short of admitting you flirted or viewed porn.

e.g. making a decision and acting on it but not telling your wife to avoid getting grief.

Open about superficial things

Others believe you are honest when you are really just straightforward about superficial things and largely oblivious to your deeper desires.

e.g. admitting that you're angry but not admitting the blocked idolatry

This may not be deliberate dishonesty but in that case it reveals a largely unexamined life that will leave both of you feeling dissatisfied.

Being defensive when she tries to go deeper

If we make her pay for sharing her critiques or observations about us, then we hope to avoid the awful feelings of unrighteousness.

Sometimes we get defensive when she isn't even attacking. If she says she's worried about one of the kids we immediately think that we're being blamed for bad parenting.

Even if she is blaming, defensive blocking is useless compared with drawing her out.

If we believe that she is mistaken we fear that hearing her out will validate her false impressions.³

Either way, the result is increasing isolation from her.

What do your defenses really defend?

Steps toward becoming 'known'

1. Let God expose your heart

You can't share what you don't know and Jeremiah 17:9 makes it clear that only one person really knows you.

Ask for revelation⁴

It may come directly through the Spirit or indirectly through circumstances; people telling you what they notice; etc.

Meditate on scripture⁵

2. Make regular time for conversation (daily, weekly, quarterly & annually)
3. Make it easy for her to ask questions, worry and critique

¹ Good or bad

² Remember the lessons from *Uncoupling* (e.g. "Uncoupling begins with a secret dissatisfaction...").

³ As if our self-perspective is reliable. Proverbs 20:9; 1 Cor. 4:1-5

⁴ Psalm 139:23-24

⁵ see the handout entitled, *Meditation*

- This likely involves some kind of sacrifice. Get in the habit of submitting to God, "O.K. I will do this for you Lord."
4. Get in the habit of sharing vague impressions & ambivalence
You will need to get used to showing your cards, especially when you aren't sure what they mean.
e.g. "I'm feeling funky but I don't know why";
"Part of me wants ____ and another part wants ____";
"I'm not seeing it the same way as you."
 5. Tell her what you have been hiding
...trusting God to manage the fall out
...not demanding she react the way that feels best for you
 6. Consider and discuss your real self/core self (see *How we are formed*)

CURIOSITY

- **Noticing**

Set your stuff aside – be fully present when you're with her.

Pay attention to your wife: how she makes bids & responds to bids; how she relates to change/fun/stress/hardship

If she interrupts you when you're doing something else and you cannot fully engage, stop long enough to say, "What you're bringing up matters to me. Can we talk about it(name a time/place)?"

Remember, turning away is the most destructive response to a bid.

- **Inquiring**

This involves asking them to interpret the things you notice.

It is so tied up with listening, however, that I'm combining it with that material

- **Listening**

Why does God ask questions and listen to the response?

In Genesis God asks Adam, "Where are you?" and then waits for an answer. This is quite remarkable, since he knew the answer to his own question.

This suggests that he was asking Adam a question for Adam's sake - Adam needed to process what was going on and express it to God.

Similarly, God told Job to put on his big boy pants and answer some questions. God didn't need to hear from Job. Job needed to talk.

How could anyone read Psalms without concluding that God loves it when we speak with him?⁶

If God notices behavior, asks questions and listens, then how much more important is it that non-omniscient people become good listeners?

James 1:19 explicitly commands, "be quick to hear, slow to speak and slow to anger."⁷

⁶ The same implication follows from every biblical command to pray.

⁷ Let's not forget the attention Proverbs places on listening: Proverbs 10:19 Don't talk too much, for it fosters sin. Be sensible and turn off the flow!; Proverbs 15:28 The heart of the righteous weighs its answers...; Proverbs 17:27 A truly wise person uses few words; Proverbs 17:28 Even fools are thought to be wise when they keep silent; when they keep their mouths shut, they seem intelligent.; Proverbs 18:2 Fools have no interest in understanding; they only want to air their own opinions.; Proverbs 18:13 What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!; Proverbs 21:23 If you keep your mouth shut, you will stay out of trouble.; Proverbs 29:20 There is more hope for a fool than for someone who speaks without thinking.

This not only confirms that God wants us to be careful listeners but implies that we are not generally so inclined.⁸

Why is listening so important? Several things come to mind:

- *We listen to learn* (Proverbs 18:13)

What we don't know would fill an ocean.

It is prideful to think that we know 'all about' what's going on prematurely.

Ephesians 4:15 encourages us to speak the truth in love but how can we do this if we don't understand the truth.

Many times, I have thought I understood a situation only to discover how little I really 'got it'.

Even if I hear every word they say, I haven't heard the important details that they omitted either inadvertently or purposefully.

And, of course, I could have perfect understanding of the facts of a situation and not understand the most important things.

I cannot presume to know how they feel or how they behaved in response to some event based on how I would have felt or acted in the same situation.

My personality, development, moral character and experiences are different from theirs (i.e. sometimes wildly different).

In finding out the details of the events, their feelings & their behaviors in response to those events, I can begin exploring the deeper areas – where change takes place (i.e. their beliefs and their desires).

- *We listen to love*

Job makes this point when he says, "Listen closely to what I am saying. You can console me by listening to me. Bear with me, and let me speak..." Job 21:2-3

One critically important way to express love to someone is to be genuinely curious about them.

When we seek to understand another person, we are expressing God's perspective which is that they matter.

Also, when people feel heard it comforts them → they are understood.

- *We listen to empathize*

Empathy is the ability to imagine what it is like to be them. It also involves the capacity to communicate that awareness so that they feel understood.

Of course, it is impossible to empathize when we are obsessed with getting them to empathize with us OR get some 'chill time' OR avoid criticism.

The person who can set aside or delay self-defense, self-serving & self-focus in order to really 'get' what the other person is seeing and feeling will become a great listener.

- *We listen to enhance her learning & receptivity*

People are often confused about their problems. They feel stuck. They are ambivalent.

If they do not believe that you understand, they will find it very difficult to receive your 'wisdom.'

On the other hand, when someone feels heard, understood and loved, defensiveness can diminishes enough for them to entertain alternative beliefs & desires.

⁸ Where there's no violation, there's no need for a command.

How to listen

Listening is not passive but it is not the same as talking.

Listening is more strenuous than talking because it is difficult to accurately understand another person's perspective.

- *Be spiritually prepared.*

As Christians, we believe that all spiritual and relational healing is the work of God and not something we can do by our own power.

The proof that we believe this is that we bathe our time in prayer.

Ask God to enable you to put aside other thoughts so that you may listen effectively.

Ask him also to grant you the ability to spiritually discern the real issues.

Learn the habit of turning to God while you are with her to ask for patience, attentiveness, discernment and empathy.

- *Be non-judgmental and empathetic.*

Avoid the tendency to focus on the correctness of statements they make.

Truth matters and they need to bring their thoughts in conformity with reality but your ability to help them will be hindered unless you truly understand how they see things and they understand how they see things.

Be willing to temporarily suspend your immediate right to judge, in the interest of better overall understanding them.

Frankly, when upset, most people say things that they themselves find outlandish but getting stopped and corrected dries up the flow of thinking and feeling.

Use tentative language to help them put their feelings into words, "Maybe you thought/felt..."; "I wonder if..."; "Could it be that...?"

The goal in empathetic listening is not to become the expert (and judge) but to help them be the expert on themselves.

We are helping them tell their own story so that they can hear what they really think & feel.

- *Pay attention to non-verbal communication & what is not said.*

It is helpful to notice their non-verbal communication.

Their facial expressions, body movement, posture, and breathing rate are all important clues to what they are thinking or feeling.

The tone, volume and tempo of speech are also important in this regard.

Questions like, "What did you do?"; "what did you think?"; "how did you feel?" can get them to continue revealing things.

- *Encourage self-disclosure.*

Being a good listener involves helping them disclose all that is relevant to their problem. There are a number of practical ways to do this.

Give non-verbal encouragement

Maintain an appropriate amount of eye-contact.

Nodding occasionally, coupled with appropriate facial gestures helps to give the other person confidence that you are sincerely interested.

Your own bodily posture is also important.

Sitting in an open, relaxed way will encourage self-disclosure; sitting behind a desk with arms folded will impede it; as will staying involved with whatever you were doing before she started talking.

Lean forward at important statements.

Take note of any distracting non-verbal habits you may have and eliminate them.

Finger tapping, rocking, or staring off into space may help you to concentrate, but they communicate disinterest to the counselee and therefore discourage self-disclosure.

Give appropriate verbal encouragement.

An occasional "uh-huh," as well as questions like "Is there more you can tell me more about that?" encourage self-disclosure.

- *Check for understanding.*

Effective listening involves ascertaining that you have properly interpreted their statements so that you form an accurate picture of the situation.

One of the most effective ways to do this is to paraphrase important parts of what you heard them say, "It sounds like you felt...am I hearing you correctly?"

If they are merely reporting what happened, you may need to ask how they interpreted the event, how they feel about it, and what they intend to do about it.

For example, if they say, "We had an argument," you may want to ask, "What did you do then?" OR "How did that make you feel?" OR "What were you thinking when..."

- *Validate*

Validation involves listening long enough and empathetically enough that you 'get' why they feel the way they feel. It does not mean we agree that their feelings are valid or true, just that they make sense, in light of how they're built, bent and what they know in a situation..

How do we validate? We say, "It makes sense that you'd feel this way." or "...think this" or "want to do that"

- *Give hope without "jumping the gun."*

When they have pressing problems, it is important to find a way encourage them that God can help.

However, it is also important to not offer solutions unless or until you really understand the root issues (i.e. what they want in the situation; what they believe that leads to the interpretations they put on their experience).

Even assuming you've helped them get to the bottom of things, it would be better to help them figure out solutions rather than offering your own.

So, in general you should prefer expressing concern for them; having confidence that God can and will help and asking them what they plan to do about it.

Read the Chapter from Nee's, "The Normal Christian Worker" entitled, *A Good Listener*. You can find it on the internet at www.ntmu.net/NCWorker.html

- Help them see their core beliefs and related desires⁹

Situation → Effect (emotions, thoughts & behaviors) *What does this suggest they Believe?...Want?*

OR

Patterns of the same Feelings – Thoughts – Behaviors *What might someone who felt, thought & behaved this way believe about themselves, God, the world, other people?*

Avoid prematurely stopping observations and questions. If you've only gotten to their feelings, you haven't gone far enough.

The goal is to get to their beliefs and/or their wants (their hyper-desires).

⁹ See the handout entitled, *Listening*

It things get hairy, take a deep breath & relax. There is no deadline and no difficulty that is too hard for God to resolve.

Tensions don't have to get resolved in one session.

- Help them consider God's perspective and provision
Her long-term spiritual health is tied to replacement of false core beliefs with true ones and fleshly cravings with godly ones.

PERSISTENCE IN CONFLICT

Conflict is normal in intimate relationships. Some of it is unnecessary and some of it is essential for the health of the relationship.

So, do your part to decrease the frequency and intensity of unnecessary conflict and enthusiastically move toward important conflict.

1. Decreasing unnecessary conflict

You can decrease your contributions to unnecessary conflict as you persist with the principles of successful marriage.

Christ-centeredness decreases your neediness to get from your wife what God alone can provide.

This makes you more able to sacrifice for her sake - a full man, rather than a hollow man.

Delighting in your wife increases your opinion of her and helps her feel cherished. Many times I've found that my own cranky perspective on my wife evaporates when I spend a few moments 'liking her' – reflecting on her positive qualities.

Intimacy with your wife keeps you both up to date with each other's feelings, thoughts, behaviors, beliefs and desires. If you know her and are known by her there will be fewer unnecessary conflicts because nothing is hidden from view. Think about how many of your fights are rooted in one of you not knowing something about the other?

Commitment to her not only communicates your loyalty to the relationship but also your interest in her personal success. Also, since we love what we devote ourselves to, commitment provides us buoyancy and optimism. A committed man doesn't say, "Oh well." He says, "We will solve this."

2. Engaging in important conflict

The problem with conflict is its tendency to move us away from all 4 principles in the mistaken belief that self-protection or self-vindication is the priority.

God disappears from our radar. Delight evaporates. Commitment gets shaken. And, intimacy takes a beating.

Honesty and curiosity are needed in order to navigate conflict successfully. Persisting in conflict involves being honest and curious at the very moment when you are tempted toward less of both.

Honesty gets diminished in conflict. Some, in the name of honesty, say things that communicate disdain or are so exaggerated as to be essentially dishonest. Others hide their true thoughts because avoiding conflict is more important to them than the kind of honesty needed for relational health. This outward dishonesty doesn't stop them from feeling disdain or holding onto exaggerated thoughts in their hearts either.

Curiosity also gets lost in conflict. We can become so obsessed with our core beliefs and cravings that the other person's legitimate interests are of no interest to us. Put another way, we become so defensive of ourselves that we become disinterested in our wife. Also, some are so anxious to escape the conflict that they quickly 'resolve' things in a way that

leaves neither party satisfied because it's more about caving into her or letting her cave into you than understanding what's going on. What we need in conflict is less assuming and more insight.¹⁰

Dealing with acute conflict

Some conflict is limited to momentary tension over some issue or something interpersonal.¹¹ Let's call this *acute conflict* and look at a few helpful steps to take.

- **Clarify the problem**

Honestly consider the possible cause(s) of the alienation.

Make sure that you're involving her, God and a mature friend in this process.

Involving God means asking him to draw you and your wife closer and to reveal hidden things that are coming between the two of you.

Involving a mature friend means telling them the situation, what you've tried and asking them what they think might be going on.

Involving her means saying, "I want to be closer to you but I'm not sure what the problem is. Do you feel this way? Do you have some sense of why things are this way?"¹²

Consider that this may be a more complex argument than you realize. Many conflicts involve several layer of conflict:

1. The issue conflict (fights about 'it')
2. Feelings conflict (fights about how your spouse 'makes you feel')
3. Core conflict (fights about how you perceive yourself and what you deeply crave)

When a couple cannot resolve an issue, it's because they're really fighting one or both of the other two conflicts without knowing it.

- Are you keeping the relationship strong?
 - Are you Christ focused?
 - Are you delighting in her?
 - Are you cultivating intimacy with her?
 - Are you acting committed to her?
- Is this an issues oriented conflict?

What exactly is the issue?

Challenges, threats and losses – busy schedule, conflicts with others, finances, work, health, death, disaster, absence (i.e. this provides the occasion for other problems to surface)

What is her opinion (i.e. not your caricaturization of her opinion)?

What, if anything, should be done about it?

Should we get other perspectives from mature friends?

Note: issues conflict often includes affective conflict. In fact, issues often provide the setting in which affective conflict emerges.

Deliberately and openly ask to set aside the issue for a moment, so you can deal with the relationship.

Later, having dealt with the affective conflict, re-engage the issue.

¹⁰ Sort of like Gene Kranz portrayed in *Apollo 13*, "Work the problem people. Let's not make things worse by guessing."

¹¹ aka *issues oriented* or *affective* conflict

¹² Be prepared to receive total blame for the problem without being defensive OR quickly agreeing. The goal at this stage is to encourage her to stay engaged until you both can understand better – not to come to a rapid conclusion that you hope to persuade her is true. Make sure you tell her what you've heard her say, asking if you heard her correctly.

- Satan (How have you tried to neutralize this threat?)
- Sin
 - Justified self-centeredness (yours/hers)
 - Un-confessed sin (yours/hers)
 - Idolatry (yours/hers)
 - Weakening of spiritual renewal (yours/hers)
 - Bitterness (yours/hers)
 - Negativity (yours/hers)
- **Repent, confess and ask forgiveness as needed.**
 Godly sorrow leads to confession and repentance 2 Corinthians 7:9-11
 Reconciling is an urgent priority (Matt.5:23f) over which you need to take personal responsibility (Ro.12:17f; Heb.12:14)
- **Move toward & stay engaged with her**
 In the flesh, people are relentlessly deceptive, self-justifying and deceived.
 Remember, this is true of you as your wife. You may have much more to consider and repent of than you thought to this point.
 Sometimes we are so certain of our own rightness or so preoccupied with their flaws that we actually make things worse – amplifying their need to be right.
 Sometimes the enemy throws a monkey wrench into our conversation.
 In situations like this they may become defensive – stuck in a foxhole (review defensiveness).
 How do you deal with this entrenchment?
 Notice her behavior & words; share what you're seeing and ask her to interpret it for you.

Sometimes you're both entrenched at the same time.

The 'infinity loop' argument



- Create and keep a relaxed and gracious tone
 Be open with your thoughts & feelings (showing your cards).
 Be curious about her.
 Imagine what it would be like to be in her situation.
 Stay hopeful because God is involved.
 She has a spiritual nature because of her salvation. That part of her wants to follow God and live in the light. She has God's Spirit living within her, who will convict her.¹³

¹³ Philippians 2:13; see Philippians 1:6 I am certain that God, who began the good work within you, will continue his work until it is finally finished on the day when Christ Jesus returns.

We have God's Spirit living in us and He will guide, strengthen and provide for us in many ways. Where God sends, He provides.¹⁴

So, take a deep breath, relax, there is no deadline and no difficulty that is too hard for God to resolve and it doesn't have to get fixed in one session.

- Listen carefully
Body language;
Ask fewer questions if she starts to shut down (questioning is not listening).
- Provide feedback (e.g. "It sounds like you're saying...am I hearing you correctly?"; BTW keep this short and limited to what she has said (omit your 'wisdom')
- Take things deeper.¹⁵
Your main approach here is to create an environment where she feels safe and encouraged to explore her own motivations. Instruction creates a different environment and even if she agrees with your assessments, she may not remember what you said 48 hours later. Her insights into herself are 'sticky.' Your insights are not.
Notice and ask about her feelings, thoughts and behaviors.
Ask about the circumstances that spawned these effects (triggers).
As you consider these things with her stay curious about what may have been threatened (anxiety), blocked (anger), withheld (boredom) or destroyed (hopelessness, devastation).
Avoid prematurely stopping the observations and questions. If you've only gotten to her feelings, you haven't gone far enough. The goal is to get to her core beliefs & wants – her hyperdesires.
Respond to any ANTs before they derail things.¹⁶

Dealing with Chronic Conflict

Most marital conflict is connected with long-term differences between you and your wife that may never change or only slowly. Let's call this *chronic conflict*.

Couples need to learn strategies for dealing with chronic conflict. Otherwise the tone of the marriage can drift toward mutual disdain which is very corrosive!¹⁷

Unresolvable conflicts include:

1. Intrinsic differences between the couple (see, *We are so different*)
 - Gender differences
 - Personality differences
2. Besetting sin (i.e. long term sin issues)
This takes us back to core beliefs and desires (childhood baggage).
[See the earlier material]

The bad news for the couple is that they will have to accept these unresolvable things as normal for their marriage.

The good news is that the couple doesn't have to get freaked out and hopeless when these things pop up (normalize vs. over-react; adjusting/repairing vs. eliminating).

¹⁴ Philippians 4:6, 19; Jn.14:14 ask anything in my name and I will do it

¹⁵ see the handout entitled, *Listening*

¹⁶ See the handout entitled, *A.N.T.s*

¹⁷ See, *The Four Horsemen of the Apocalypse*.

The negative way we respond to chronic issues makes things much worse than they need to be.

e.g. Sara talks too much; Tom punishes her with glares if she starts talking when he's doing something else; these behaviors are not going to go away and so the response really matters...

Tom could move toward Sara when she interrupts him by physically turning toward her exuding warmth but saying, "I really want to hear about this. Would we be able to talk about it (name a time)?"

Sara could be in the same room with Tom when she starts talking; she could touch him on the shoulder and say, "I'd like to talk with you about something, is this a good time?"

e.g. Brooke is careless with stuff, often leaving costly things in precarious spots; many things have been ruined by this. Evan is much more careful and conservative. When a cup of coffee gets knocked onto a pile of bills she set it on (at an angle), he yells at her and insults her.

Evan could realize that part of her carelessness with things is rooted in her optimism and/or in her 'get it done' approach to things. These are great qualities for the relationship and so he decides. If I see danger, I'll correct it, that's a role I play in the relationship. If things get damaged, we'll deal with it.

Brooke could admit to Evan that she knows this is a drag, that it's her fault and ask if he will forgive her.

Since some issues will persist...how do we work with them?

Dealing with differences¹⁸

- a. Identify & discuss the differences
 - In gender (What every man/woman needs to know)
 - In personality
 - In chronic sin
 - b. 5 principles to re-establish grace & acceptance
 - Accept that strengths and weaknesses are inexorably linked
You can choose whether to focus on the positive or the negative aspect of their personality. The 'boring' person is the 'stable' person; the 'chaotic' person is the 'exciting' person; the 'functional' person is the 'accomplishing' person, etc.
 - Don't judge their behaviors through your own personality/gender
Also, there's a tendency to overlay one's own motives upon another's behavior (e.g. saying "I don't care" may not mean "you don't matter to me"...it may mean "what we do doesn't matter to me; that we are together does matter to me." OR silence may not mean 'they are hiding something' it may just mean, 'I'm not thinking about anything' or 'I'm pondering and not able to articulate it yet' or 'I need to recharge')
 - Your sinful response is the central problem that needs attention
- If you've attended to these first 3 bullets:***
- Confront them on their sin. See the material above and in Week 4 - Commitment

¹⁸ See the handout entitled, "We are so different"

- Recognize that it is your role and privilege to help balance your spouse and let them do that for you.