

Making Love to Your Spouse

I hope there are things being shared with you that make a big difference in your life, things that you can immediately begin to apply because that is how God is. He wants to come into your life. He does not want to be a distant God, a God you are afraid of, a God that you think does not care about you. God cares about the most intimate parts of your life, the most intimate things that maybe only you and your spouse talk about it. God wants to even be there and help you, give you wisdom, advice and good counsel.

Today, we are talking about relationships. In talking about relationships I want to talk to you about making love to your spouse. Most of the time when I say something like that, the first thing everybody thinks of is having sex. That is part of it, of course, but you know your greatest sex organ is your mind. Have you ever heard anybody say that? It is. That is why pornographers go after people on the internet, to get their mind. Jesus understands you and what it takes to make you feel loved. He knows what it takes to make your spouse feel loved. He knows what it takes to make your children feel loved. I want to share that with you today. I want to try to give you some practical advice on how to make the person who means something to you feel loved by you. I know you women, you are sitting out there and you are saying, my husband is the one that needs to hear this. You know what? You are the one hearing it so let us work on you. God can work on him.

Have you ever heard the saying, "Don't talk to your man about God, talk to God about your man?" It works. Most men do not want a wife that is like a mother, telling them what to do, how you do everything, how you should not do everything. They already have a mother. They do not need another mother and they do not need a nag. In marriage I heard Dr. Charles Stanley say, "A woman can tell a man anything she wants to once, after that it is nagging." I hated to hear that because as a wife they are bigger than you are for the most part. You think if I do not tell them and I do not keep telling them, they are not going to do it and it is important and so you nag. Do you know what a man does? He stonewalls. What does that mean? He becomes like a stone wall. It is like, "You are not listening to me," and so you nag a little bit more. "You are listening." They just get quieter, maybe cross their arms or maybe start watching a ball game. It drives me crazy when my husband says, "I heard every word you said, Betty. You said this, this and this." They do listen, but a lot of the time you are telling them things they are not ready to hear or they just have so much on their mind. The same for you; maybe you are that busy.

What does the Bible say about how God looks at marriage? In Malachi 2:14-16 it says, "God was there as a witness when you spoke your marriage vows to your young bride and now you have broken those vows. You have broken the faith bond with your vowed companion, your covenant wife. God, not you, made marriage. His Spirit inhabits even the smallest detail of marriage. What does He want from marriage? Godly children. Guard the Spirit of marriage within you. Do not cheat on your spouse. 'I hate divorce' says the Lord. I hate the violent dismembering of one flesh so watch yourself. Do not let your guard down. Do not cheat."

If you have been married a long time, you know how hard it is to make a good marriage work. The honeymoon euphoria, the chemicals that are released in a brain will go maybe two years. After that, you start seeing things they do that you do not like. They do not change in ways you want them to change. You can feel hopeless and frustrated and that is when the work of marriage really begins is when you reach that phase. It might be sooner than that and it might be a little later than that, but it is going to hit. You are going to have to be in this thing for the long haul, committed. If you will say to yourself or as a couple, "Divorce is never an option. We will never mention the word. We will never discuss the word. When we get to the hard places we will figure out what to do." One thing I know you can do, because I have done it, is to say, "Jesus, we have come to a bump in our marriage, would you carry us both over it and show us how to solve it."

I have been married almost 40 years. I think I have a great marriage. I love my husband. My heart still beats fast when he comes into the room. This is 40 years later. We have a lot of fun together, but we have had hard times in our marriage. I guess everybody does. It would be foolish to think that you do not, and yet we have been determined and committed that we are in it for the long haul and we are going to work through it. Sometimes, some things do not get worked through very fast.

Have you noticed that? Sometimes it takes years. Sometimes it takes counseling. Here is something you need to think about. Do not avoid counseling. It is not wrong. Counseling is just another word for wisdom. There are people trained. Would you not go to a doctor for your bad leg if you needed help? Of course you would. It is the same with your marriage. Did you know more people plan for the car they are going to buy or the vacation they are going to take, than they plan how they are going to make their marriage work well. They just think, "Well, we are together and I hope it works." When you run into trouble it is bad. I have seen men come to me for counseling about their marriage and they would say, "I did not even know anything was wrong and then one day she walked in and said that's it, I have had it, you have done this and you have done that and I am not putting up with it anymore. I do not even care about you anymore." He said, "I did not even what happened." Do you know why? It was because he was all caught up in his job. Men are by nature headline people. They just want the facts, get the facts. Women are more detailed and emotional. They want to discuss the emotional side of marriage. That makes most men real nervous. They get real nervous. They do not know how to handle emotions like women do. Women can cry and laugh. It is harder for men.

To make this marriage work, I want to talk to you today about ways to make love to your spouse and I am not talking about sex. If you will take the time to figure out, all right, where do I fit in that and where does my spouse fit in that? What do I need to do? It is not going to be easy. I am going to tell you that because I am doing it to. It is hard, but I will show you why it is hard. The longer you are married, the more you get used to each other. When you have been married a long time, if you are not careful you get negative with one another. You do not move into this really trying to keep the live anymore. I noticed that when we moved into that. When I was young I said, "Look at those old people when they are 40, they are negative. They do not have fun together. They go out to eat and they do not even talk. They just sit there, eat their food and do not talk. I am not going to be like that. I do not want to be negative like they are." I really meant it. When we got there, I discovered why it happened. It is a rite of passage, like a tailspin. If you do not pull out of it, you get there. Here we were, just kind of griping here, griping there, just griping at each other. One day the Lord gave me a picture and he showed me two old dogs by a fire. Do you have dogs in your house? Do you have any old dogs? If you have two old dogs and they like to lie by the fire. They still want that dominance and want to act tough. One old dog will look at the other one and growl. The other one will growl back. They are just kind of lying there. They are too lazy to get up and do anything. They just lay there and growl and then they just go on back to sleep. They cannot even get the energy to get anything going. The Lord showed me, this is how people get at this stage of marriage. "If you do not pull out of it Betty, your marriage will be come less than you want it to be." I started trying to pull out of that. Stop that growling stuff. It is harder than you think it is because it is a natural thing. We pulled out. We kept on going and went to the next thing. It was great.

In communicating, women can be critical and men can stonewall. How do you make love to spouse to keep all of that from happening? One thing is that men need praise. Women need touching, being told you are beautiful, compliments. Men need praise in the sense that they need esteem. They need to know their wife honors them, looks up to them, admires them and they need verbal praise.

I am going to tell you a funny story about when I went to Belarus, which is the former Soviet Union. I was preaching in this church and there were these four men down here and the sound guy. He was running the tapes. All ages of women were in the audience. I said, "I want to talk to you about how to esteem your husband. How long has it been since you honestly praised your husband?" One old lady raised her hand, "At my wedding." Of course all of the ladies laughed. They thought that was so funny. I said, "Ladies, I want to tell you something. Men need praise." Remember, I am speaking in English. I have this Russian interpreter and so she has to interpret it and tell them what I am saying. These four men are down here. I said, "Ladies, listen to me, men need praise. Say that." They would not say it. I said, "Ladies, men need praise. Say that." They would not say it. I said, "Ladies, men need praise. Say it." All of a sudden, the sound guy speaks over the loud speaker, "Men need praise." That broke up the room all over again. I am telling you that you have to tell your husband what you admire about him. You have to tell him what he means to you, what you see in him and what your children see in him. You may say, "There is not that much right now. We hardly are speaking." You can begin to look. When you fall out of love, how do you fall back in love? You do it by serving one another. Marriage is the picture of Jesus and the church. That is why God hates divorce. He wants people to stay together. It is the way it ought to be.

I want to talk to you now about how to actually see what works for your mate. There are about five emotional love languages. You have a love language and your spouse has a love language. They are different. If you are not careful, you will try to love your husband the way you want him to love you. I have done that. I guess we all do. I do not know. You can write in and tell me how you do it. You think that this tells me I am loved, so I will do it for him.

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The first one is words of affirmation. I want you to listen to this and figure out which one is you and which one is your spouse. Words of affirmation. You have a love tank, just like going to get your gasoline filled in your car in the tank. You have a love tank and it can get low, especially with life experiences growing up, so it needs to be filled up. They just want those words all of the time. They just want me to tell them how great they are all of the time. They are just going to get cocky. They are just going to get the big head. No, that is not true. If their love language is hearing words of affirmation you have to say it to them. It does not matter if you do something else that does not tell them they are loved. What tells them they are loved is when you tell them all of the ways you think they are wonderful, all of the ways you appreciate what they do. You tell them all of the things as specifically as you can, "I love the way you look at older people. I love the way you are kind to your mother. I love the way that you treat your employees right. You are a good person. You are very wise." These are sincere things. You have to use the right tone of voice, too. Even if you do not feel it, fake it until you make it. That is kind of a little wife thing. Another thing you can do in using these words of affirmation is to do it indirectly. There is something about third party reference. If you are out to eat with another couple or at a party, just brag on your husband in front of them. It does not have to be phony. It does not have to be fake. Just say, "Do you know what I like about him? If he says he is going to do something, he does it." You just cannot imagine what that does for somebody who thrives on words of affirmation. Do you see what I am talking about? Are you getting it? In fact, if you are thinking "You know what, you are right, what do I do?" I will give you a little activation.

Once or twice a week, pick out one thing you really admire in your spouse and tell them. See what happens to the love in your marriage. That is serving your spouse. You can serve your spouse. We are called to serve one another. You can do that.

The second love language is quality time; not everybody needs this but the people that need it have to have it to feel loved. That means, the verbal compliments do not mean that much to them. They want you to just sit down and talk to them, sit down and watch television with them, watch a ball game with them, get off the computer, get off the phone and spend time. That is my husband. I am verbal. I want verbal affirmation. He wants quality time. It is as hard for him to give me verbal affirmation, which I need, as it is for me to give him quality time which he needs. Why? I am very energetic. If I sit down, I fall asleep. I am just not a person who can just sit around. I cannot do it.

It drives me crazy. I have to do that because I want to love and serve him. I have to make myself do it. I do not want to tell you that you have to make it because it is wrong; I am just trying to tell you that it is hard for you to do it but you can do it. I am really working on it. Forty years of marriage and I am really trying hard. The other day I said, "Honey, I have really been working hard at spending time, staying off the computer, staying off the phone, how am I doing?" He said, "I do not know. I cannot tell that much." I have really been trying, but it has to go for a long time. He has to see long, consistent effort.

Another one is receiving gifts. You may think, "I am broke. I do not have any money." It does not have to be an expensive gift. It could even be, you are walking out some day and you find a feather on the ground that you think is really pretty, or a rock. You bring it home and lay it out and say, I saw that and thought you might like that, it looks like you. That is a gift of love. It is just giving gifts. Yes, you can buy them things and they need that. You may have to budget that. Just remember, it can be little or big, expensive or not, it is just the gift saying I remembered you. I was thinking of you and I did this for you. If you are not a gift giver and say, "We did not give gifts in my family growing up," you can still change. You can do it. Even if it does not come naturally, you could make a list. Here would be a little activity; make a list of all the gifts that your spouse has said someday I would like to have. Maybe ask family members what something is that they really want and then just try to make it happen. I am not saying go into debt. I am not saying that at all. You may be a very thrifty person and you do not like to spend money. Just remember, people are made by God this way. It is not unusual. They are made by God to like receiving gifts.

Another one is acts of service. Some people, the way they know they are loved is their spouse is out there doing something, like cleaning the garage, sweeping the snow off the sidewalk, cleaning up something that was left in the kitchen or washing the dishes all of a sudden. It is an act of service.

When you do that, the other person feels loved. Look what they did. It is not what they said, not what they gave, it is what they did. You can do that.

Another one is physical touch. With physical touch, a woman might say, "Oh yes, that is all he wants." We all love to be loved, touched and hugged. Some people have to have a lot of it. There is nothing wrong with them needing that. There is nothing wrong with it. Yes you can give it and yes you can die to yourself and do something for somebody else. That is the whole Christian life in a nutshell; to die to yourself and live for others. You can do that. It might just be sitting close to them and watching television. It might be to rub their back. Some people like to have their feet rubbed and

and watching television. It might be to rub their back, some people like to have their feet rubbed and it might just be holding hands when you are walking down the street but the physical contact, the physical touch is what is important to them. If you are struggling with that and you cannot think of things you can get books on it. There is an author named Linda Dillow. Have you ever read any of her books? They are very pointed. They are very strong, but she is a Godly Christian woman who can give you good advice in this particular area. You are really limited only by your imagination on ways to express love to your spouse. In fact, you can ask God to give you creative ideas and He will. I read what God said in Malachi. I want you to love each other. I want you to be together. I am telling you that He will tell you how if you will just ask. Come up with new ways, new things to do, new ways to please each other. Do not get in a rut. You want this marriage to be as good at the end as you do at the beginning. Keep it alive. Keep it fresh. Keep it moving forward.

When you are trying to communicate with your spouse in these love languages, it also applies to your children. It is so important. Sit down and ask your children what shows you that I love you the most? Does it show you the most when I give you words of affirmation or when I sit down and spend quality time with you? Does it show you that you are loved when I give you gift? How about acts of service, when I do something for you, does that say I love you and you are special, or physical touch? I am promising you that if you are doing the wrong one, I do not care how hard you are working, they are not feeling it. It is not saying it to them. No matter how much it is saying it to you, it is not saying it to them. You have to make this change, so get started.

When you are communicating and have disagreements, what do you do? Here you are trying to keep this love in your marriage. How do you communicate when you disagree? What do you do with it? You can communicate verbally and nonverbally. Women are the best I have ever seen at rolling those eyes, crossing those arms and sighing. That speaks volumes and your husband says, "You are always doing that," and you say, "What did I say? I didn't say anything." No, but your nonverbal communication said everything. 97% of what you communicate is nonverbal. You have been watching me and my eyebrows go up and down, my eyes turn, my head turns, I use my hands and I am communicating to you that way. Watch your nonverbal in dealing with your family, especially if you tend to be moody. Learn how to get out of that but that can destroy your family. Mom is in one of her moods again. She has slammed the door and gone to the bedroom. Get healed. This love that I am talking about today that needs to be between you and your spouse, you do not need that moody stuff. He does not need to feel like he is walking on eggshells around you and you do not feel like you are walking on eggshells around him because you never know when he is going to explode. That is what I am talking about. Do not be afraid to get counseling. You are not weak. Your spouse is not weak. You are wise. It takes wisdom to see that we need to do something about this. There are plenty of good counselors out there. They are in churches. There are trained counselors. You can find people to help you work through all of these love issues in your relationship.

When it is time to disagree and you are going to have to, think it out carefully and get your point in your head about what is important. What do we need to talk about? What are our issues? Pick the right time. Pick it at a time when he is rested. Women, especially if you stay home and you have all of these children, when your husband hits the door all you can think of is, "I need to tell you this, the washing machine broke, the plumber had to come. I did not know what to do and then car, this and that." You just hit him with everything, instead of realizing that he has been at work and it has all hit him and he is coming home. Just remember these love languages.

You can do this. Just think ahead about what you are going to do. It will bring joy and delight to you. You will be surprised, when you treat your husband like a king, he will treat you like a queen and that is what you want. It may take a while. You may feel like you have lost the love, but it can come back and it can come back better than ever. God bless you. Go with God.

QUIET TIME QUESTIONS

1. According to Malachi 2:14-16, how is God involved in your marriage?
2. What can you do when negativity enters your marriage?
3. What are the love languages?
4. How important is it to find out your spouse's love language?
5. When communicating with your spouse, what should you first consider?

6. How can you know how to love your children the best?

7. How can you involve God in your relationships?

To watch the video on MAKING LOVE TO YOUR SPOUSE, Pillar Five, Relational Skills, go to www.bettyswann.com.

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