

Living Out The Grace of God Together

Lesson 2

If you were to do a study on the word “heart” as it is used in the Bible what activities take place in the heart?

I. The Problem of Communication

- a. It may be that physical attraction initially draws people together, but, it is our ability to communicate with one another with some degree of understanding that **holds** people together. *Gen 11:7-8 Go to, let us go down, and there confound their language, that they may not understand one another's speech. So the LORD scattered them abroad from thence upon the face of all the earth: and they left off to build the city. KJV*
- b. The faculty of communication is what we use to exchange information, ideas, desires, concerns, and feelings. From the Biblical perspective, communication which flows from the inner man comes from the **heart**. *Luke 6:45 A good man out of the good treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is good; and an evil man out of the evil treasure of his heart bringeth forth that which is evil: for of the abundance of the heart his mouth speaketh. KJV*
- c. As this series will show, the **Bible** has much to say about communication and the skills necessary to communicate effectively with others.
- d. From a Social Science perspective, research has shown that the most **often** cited problem in relationships is not the lack of words that are spoken but the mutual lack of understanding between the parties.
- e. There are many aspects of communication that can contribute to problems but high on the list is the quality or **depth** and clarity of communication between persons. This is the most frequent problem cited between couples.
- f. Social science research shows that the greater the mutual understanding (depth of communication) between the partners the higher their **satisfaction** with the relationship.
- g. Research shows that it is through deep communication that we begin to understand others and as that understanding grows, so too, does one's feeling of attachment, affection and **intimacy** for the other person.
- h. In the absence of high quality communication between persons, relationships begin to wither and die. In married couples where communication is significantly impaired, the couple is said to be **devitalized**.
- i. The good news is that where there are **willing** partners, any relationship can be revitalized and flourish with the development of communication skills regardless of how or why the relationship has lost its vitality.
- j. Before developing skills however, it is useful to understand some of the fundamental and **universal** problems affecting interpersonal communication

II. The Issue of Perspective

- a. One issue affecting the quality of communication is that of **perspective**. Because perspective is a matter of perception and perception is as individual as fingerprints, no two people share the identical perspective on anything. (Perspective Exercise)
- b. In order to share identical perspectives the partners would literally have to be the **same person**. Not even identical twins perceive events and circumstances identically.
- c. The result of this is that between the couple, it often seems as if one's partner must be living in some other world...there seems to be no other **logical** explanation for his or her viewpoints or feelings. It's a mystery.
- d. This often leaves people wishing that their partner could look over their shoulder to see the world **like** they see it so the two of them could be on the same page facing life together.
- e. Most of us want to feel that our partner is facing the world with us, seeing what we see, knowing what we know, fearing what we fear, enjoying what we enjoy, but **most often**, without much success.
- f. Instead, we are confronted with a **gap** between what we see and understand and what our partner sees and understands. This leads to frustration, a sense of loneliness and sometimes anger, alienation and disaffection.
- g. Fortunately, this lack of **ability** to express, understand and work together is in the final analysis unnecessary and can be overcome by the development and use of communication skills.

III. The Level Problem

- a. Verbal communication takes place at various levels. The deeper the level the more meaningful and **revealing** the communication. Conversely, the more superficial the level, the less meaningful the communication.
- b. At the events level there is no real attempt being made to understand one another; it is merely an exchange of information, not **meant** to convey anything of any real significance to either party about ourselves.
- c. That said however, perhaps **most** of our inter-personal communication occurs at the events level: Did you take out the trash? Who ate the last of the Cheerios? What time is dinner? How was your day?
- d. While the events level of communication is needed in any relationship, if that's all there is, the absence of deep and meaningful exchanges will invariably cause **bad things** to happen over time.

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- e. Like muscles that lose their strength and elasticity from lack of exercise, our ability and even our **willingness** to self disclose to the other person also begins to atrophy when not exercised routinely.
- f. For a relationship to flourish, communication needs to flow out of a deeper level of one's being. The starting place lies just below the events level at the **thoughts** level.
- g. It is literally impossible to experience an event without having thoughts about what has happened. But, in order to express those thoughts requires both time and **energy** to convert thoughts into words and this requires a decision.
- h. The calculation of energy cost is performed below one's **conscious** awareness and takes but an instant but it determines the depth to which one is likely to go in revealing the self.
- i. In that instant, the speaker assesses the likelihood of being **understood** by the other person and how the other is probably going to respond. Based on this assessment a decision is reached that determines the depth of the conversation.
- j. Below the level of thoughts lays the level of **concerns and desires**. Concerns and desires undergird one's thoughts about an event and when they are revealed the speaker is revealing the true self. We can call this the heart.
- k. When one begins to disclose this level of detail about the self there is a certain amount of wariness and a sense of **risk** that automatically arises within.
- l. No one reveals this level of information without calculating the risk, reward, and effort of doing so. If the threat or cost is **perceived** to be significant this level of information may not be forthcoming.
- m. Revealing one's true self is usually done when it is relatively **safe** and when the likely outcome will be satisfactory. Each individual has his/her own threshold for determining when and where to self disclose.
- n. Behind every event, thought, concern, or desire there exists some **emotion**. When we begin to reveal the emotions that attach to each level we are divulging information that says the most about who we truly are.
- o. For many, emotions may be a **dangerous** place, a place to be avoided at all costs; a place that if allowed to surface may mean one's total loss of control or even one's complete disintegration.
- p. When it comes to expressing and understanding one another at all **five** levels, regardless of one's level of comfort or lack thereof, skills can be learned that will enable you to express and to listen to each other at a deeper level.
- q. That is the goal of this series, to **enable** you to listen with the intent to understand the thoughts, feelings, concerns and desires about the daily events of our lives together. In other words; to encounter the heart of another.

IV. Skills Which Keep Relationships Alive

- a. In this series you will learn **10 skills** that will make a big difference in your ability to look over your partner's shoulder to gain a window of insight into their perspective. It won't be perfect insight, but it will be helpful.
- b. The first skill is showing understanding or **empathy**. This skill teaches you to see through your partner's eyes and to understand with your partner's heart.
- c. Another skill is **expressing** what you see in your world in a way that your partner will want to understand; will want to have to enable him or her to stand with you. This reduces defenses and barriers that destroy effective communication.
- d. In every relationship there will be differences to deal with. At these times the skills of **discussion** and problem solving come in handy.
- e. Often when we have successfully discussed a situation with our partner we recognize the need to change. That is when it is time to apply the **Self-Change** and helping others Change skills.
- f. With new skills, over time our relationships tend to deepen, relax, and anchor deep in an **intimacy** which feels safe and wonderful. Of course, even then there will be those times when conflict arises.
- g. These skills will not keep you from **disagreeing**! For those times there is a coaching skill that helps you stay on track when you disagree and stay off that downhill path that leads to a serious disagreement.
- h. Finally, you will learn a conflict **management** skill for those times that the emotions take hold and spill over into the way that you express yourself.

V. Application

- a. To what extent do you believe that using these skills consistently would make your relationships more satisfying?