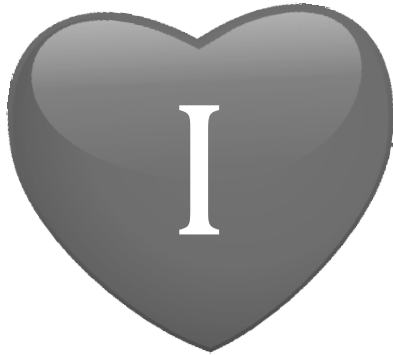


First Principles of MARRIAGE
“Fulfillment & Happiness”



CHOOSE



First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE Connection

The very first question that comes up when we talk about marriage is this... What is the purpose of our marriage ? The answers vary from wanting to glorify God to bearing children and so many more. However what got revealed in the research is this one. The purpose of marriage is “ **FULFILLMENT & HAPPINESS**”. All the other goodies and gifts of marriage are secondary to it. This is so true because you know you had every thing in single life and yet feeling unfulfilled and desperately looking for a partner to fill that void or emptiness in your life which you were not able to fill by any of your adventures.

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 ”. ! Think about how much Fulfillment and Happiness becoming one flesh in Unity brings in to your marriage. This is God’s plan for your marriage life. ! You as couples do not have to live your life in quiet desperation or apathy as most end up but rather dream for the Life God has designed for you both to enjoy. ! If that is the main purpose for which we got married...today how fulfilled are you by each other in your marriage ? We all know how much the **JUST** Married couples enjoy this kind of relationship or once upon a time we ourselves enjoyed this kind of fulfilling relationship when we newly got married. You may be even in the category of never had this kind of fulfilling relationship. Now that the purpose is clear and defined, how are we going to achieve that Fulfilling relationship between the Husband and wife? The answer is simply this: Staying in Love which was Started in Love. So many times Husband and wife seem to be carrying on life in a legalistic marriage structure but are not connected to each other. That is precisely the reason why there is no fulfillment. The marriage is meant to be connected in Love. It is the **LOVE CONNECTION** between the couple that leads to **FULFILLMENT AND HAPPINESS** in marriage.

Kindly search this in your life. What is keeping you both connected ? Is it the kids, extended family, church, job, some responsibilities or simply your thali or ring? If all these things are taken away, will you still remain connected ? These are all external factors that force you to get connected in a legalistic structural way but unless you get connected in Heart Level, you will not be fulfilled. That is what Love Connection does. It connects us at the heart level. Love originates from heart and it cannot be faked easily. ! Your marriage may be in much bad situation. You may not be just disconnected, you may actually be disintegrating, even for that scenario, Restoring **LOVE** Connection is the way to repair Relationships. ! For couples to have a fulfilling and happy relationship is very much possible. However many erroneously sit around thinking **LOVE** Connection would happen automatically. No, it is not automatic. It involves you choosing to act. It takes work and through both husband and wives effort you can have that fulfilling relationship. So are you ready to **CHOOSE**, what it takes to build a Fulfilling & Happy Relationship with your spouse ?

Today's Practical : Can you honestly answer the level of Fulfillment & Happiness in your marriage with a score between 1 to 10. (1 being not fulfilled at all and 10 being completely fulfilled and any other number in between being accordingly reflected) If you feel comfortable share this score with your wife. Do not get into any argument on this. Just become aware of the status of your marriage and decide to pray together everyday even for 5 minutes before going to bed for this to change and grow towards highest fulfillment of 10.

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Day 2

First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

To understand love connection with our spouses, we can draw the parallels from the critical importance of love connection God expects from His people.

Revelations 2: 1- 10, The Ephesus church members loved Jesus. They showed it by working very hard, enduring hardships, persevered, doing somethings that they thought matters. Lots of character. But failed the test of love. Jesus says you have fallen from the first love. No sincere fire. No passion and no excitement. Simple and pure heart that enjoyed Jesus is lost. If you do not get this, all your struggle, responsible behaviour goes in vain. We think we love Jesus. But Jesus says you lost it. There seems to be a disconnect. Jesus wants **LOVE CONNECTION** and not Legalistic religious activity. In **1 Corinthians 13:1-3** Paul echoes the same thing. Activity without being connected in Love is of no use. Speak in the tongues of men and of angels, gift of prophecy, fathom all mysteries and all knowledge, faith that can move mountains, give all to the poor and surrender body to the flames, but have not love, we gain nothing. As Jesus, even our spouses want to be connected in **LOVE**. With love all activities in marriage leads to emptiness. Why ??? **LOVE** Connects the Heart. Simple solutions is to repent . Stop doing what you are doing now. Overworking in Job, taking all the burdens of family responsibility, serving at kitchen etc. But start doing what you did at first. The sincere fire and excitement. Does your spouse feel the simple pure hearted enjoyment of first **LOVE** ? Does your spouse see you very responsible at **HOME** but fear you having affair elsewhere ? Your marriage is crying for **LOVE** Connection...

Today's Practical : Which phase is your marriage at ? Discuss the graphs below with your spouse and pray

THE INFATUATION PHASE



THE LOVE CONNECTION PHASE



THE MUTUAL AFFECTION PHASE



THE DISINTEGRATION PHASE



Your marriage may be at DIFFERENT phases:

- Phase 1 - Newly married? Still madly in love with each other....This phase is called **INFATUATION.**

- Phase 2 – Have warm feelings for each other ? like brother and sister a feeling of responsibility- **MUTUAL AFFECTION**

- Phase 3 – No more feelings for each other – only resentment and anger:

DISINTEGRATION phase.

- Phase 4 – The healthy phase of intimacy called **LOVE CONNECTION.**

Day 3

First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

1Corn 13: 4-8, Based **NOT** on the value of the recipient But on the Character of the giver. If our Heart is in the right place and not legalistic then our behaviour would affect our attitudes. It is difficult to show love if we have little or no motivation. Love in its truest sense is not based on feelings. Determination to show thoughtful actions even if we see no reward. The act of kindness that comes from our heart would reach your spouses heart.

- C=C+C
- Connection=Correct + Consistent Efforts
- Our Effortsour Behavior affects our **ATTITUDE** towards our spouse – which in turn affects our feelings of Love.

» This is the reverse from Infatuation phase...Feelings of **LOVE** will come when our behavior and action is there

Dr. John Gottman, arguably the foremost marriage research scientist in the world: !

“To maintain a balanced emotional ecology you need to make an effort (from HEART) – think about your spouse during the day, think about how to make a good thing even better, and act.”

Today's Practical : Write 3 things you like in your partner. In prayer thank God for that.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____

First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

Deutronomy 24: 5

“ If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married ”. God knew what he was doing...Such a great emphasis on building the early years of marriage with total commitment and devotion and not to have any distraction. These are times wonderful memories are built which form the Foundation for our marriage.

Today’s Practical :

Both the spouses spend time going through your wedding album and share about the memories of your early days of your marriage. Pray together about those times.

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First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

1 John 3:16 - “ This is how we know what love is: Jesus Christ laid down his life for us. And we ought to lay down our lives for our brothers.”

1 John 3:18 - “ Dear children, let us not love with words or tongue but with actions and in truth.

1 John 4:8 - “ **Whoever does not love does not know God, because God is love**”. Developing Love Connection is all about making that extra effort. Jesus made the ultimate effort of laying down his life. We need to make Love as the central theme of our life as we understand clearly that GOD is all about Love. God’s love is not hidden and cannot be hidden. It will find a way to demonstrate itself. In the same way our love for our spouses cannot be kept hidden. We need to bring it out in the open and demonstrate it by our actions.

Today’s Practical :

Husbands buy flowers for your wife. **Wife** make a special snack or dessert.

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First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

1 Corinthians 13:13 - “ And now these three remain: faith, hope and love. But the greatest of these three is Love.”!!!!!!!!!!

Colossians 3:14 - “ And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity.”!!!!!!!!!!

1 John 4 :18 - “ There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love” Understanding that the greatest of virtues is love, should motivate us to realize its power in binding the spouses in unity. The key test that shows if the relationship between the spouses is built on love or not is by the display of fear among the partners. When the relationship is connected in Love there will be no place for fear, insecurity, hiding and cheating. To grow in Love connection the partners need to learn to accept on another with out judgement as Jesus accepted them with out punishment and fear.

Today’s Practical :

Only both of you together with out kids or anyone spend 2 hours in going for an outing without a mobile phone. May be to park, beach or restaurant. Husbands need to plan it.

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First Principles in Marriage - Choose LOVE Connection

Romans 12 : 3 - “ For by the grace given me I say to every one of you: Do not think of yourself more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the faith God has distributed to each of you..” One thing that helps us to love our spouses is our humility. If we give into our pride and think great about ourselves, we do not see our weakness that is damaging our relationship with our spouse. We will only be consumed about our partners weakness as the sole reason for the problem in our marriage. Only through humility we will genuinely learn to love and respect our spouse which will help us build our love connection.

James 1:19 - “ My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry ” The reason why we are unwilling and reluctant to listen to our spouses is because of our pride that blocks our mind. Again our pride makes us to fast to speak and fast to get angry. Love is communicated in so many ways. Through our listening and through our words. Truly our words reflect the condition of our hearts. Resolve to say nothing negative about our spouse quickly. If we are humble then it will become easy for us to be slow to speak and not to find fault with our spouses. That will surely develop our Love connection.

Today's Practical :

Write 1 thing YOU (not your partner) can change that would make the greatest difference in your marriage and pray for that.

1. _____

First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE & RESPECT

As we have gone through the first week of Marriage Quiet time series, I am sure you and your spouse are able to get a picture of where your marriage is at in the area of **LOVE** Connection. You may also would have appreciated the importance of being connected in Love as couples. Assuming you have chosen to make correct and consistent efforts needed for building the love connection towards your partner, I am of the faith you are experiencing some refreshment in your marriage. This week the our focus area is on the next vital principle that builds our marriage. This is the key factor of **LOVE & RESPECT** between the spouses, which if practised makes you grow in your love connection. Conversely lack of **LOVE** and **RESPECT** among the couples destroys the **LOVE** Connection. Sir Gottman, one of the foremost Marriage Scientist after 20 years of his research came with the conclusion that the most basic ingredient for a healthy marriage is **LOVE & RESPECT** among the couples. God is awesome : He had already taught us in the Bible scriptures 2000 years ago. A happy fulfilled marriage is not based on two people who just magically happen to be the “right” mix, but on two people who know how to show **LOVE & RESPECT**. Both husband and wife need Love and Respect, though packaged differently.

For Husbands the bible says...Show Love and Respect to your Wives.

Ephesians 5: 22-33 “Husbands **love** your wives, just as Christ loved the church...For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh... Each one of you also must **love** his wife as he loves himself,

1 Peter 3:7, “Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with **respect** as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

For Wives the bible says...Show Love and Respect to your Husbands

Titus 2: 4-5 ..."they can train the younger women to love their husbands and children, to be self-controlled and pure, to be busy at home, to be kind, and to be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the word of God."

Ephesians 5:33.....and the wife must respect her husband.

These verse clearly give us the conviction that we need to give love and respect to our spouse and we need to receive love and respect from our spouse. Many think only wife needs love and not husband which is not the case. Many also have a wrong notion that only husband needs respect and not wife. Ignorance and lack of training are the two main reasons why there is no sufficient love and respect in many marriages. As we go through this series, we will learn how to give LOVE and RESPECT to your partner which will eventually help you both to grow in healthy love connection towards each other.

Today's Practical :

1. Do you feel like you have given adequate love and respect to your spouse ? Can you write down how much love and respect you have given to your spouse. Put in a number between 1 to 10. (10 being highest and 1 being the lowest and any number in between reflects accordingly.) Score 1. _____.

2. Do you feel like you have received adequate love and respect from your partner ? Can you write down how much love and respect you have received from your partner. Put in a number between 1 to 10. (10 being highest and 1 being the lowest and any number in between reflects accordingly.) Score 2. _____.

Check if score 1 is matching with partner's score 2. Pray for humility to learn and grow.

First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE & RESPECT

CONSIDERATE & LISTENING to your wife is the first step for the Husband to act after being enlightened about the need to make your partner feel loved and respected. You will be amazed at how much your wife feels loved and respected by that act.

Hebrews 10: 24-25...Even though this passage applies to our interaction with all disciples, it has to start from our own wife, who is a disciple in most cases. Consider how to spur one another on to love and good deeds. You have to consider her, that means, think about her, do your preparation and then act on it. Some brothers are nice to every other sister except your own wife. Have Meeting with your wife alone with out missing and encourage her by **LISTENING** to her as you and your wife form a small family group meeting.

Mathew 18:19-20, If just two of you, Husband and wife come together in Jesus's name to spend time, God is with you as in any church meeting. When you both agree with one another in the heart level and ask in prayer Jesus promises it will be done. Isn't that powerful marriage life? But it takes time, talking and listening to forge that unity. Wife wants to and loves to talk. Husbands prepare your mind as you get back from work so that you can be giving yourself to listen not to give solutions but just listen to connect with wife.

Today's Practicals :

Husband: Ask your wife how much of a considerate listener you are ? Let her give you a score between 1 to 10. _____. Commit to your wife that every day you will spend an hour with her listening considerately.

Wife : Be Open. Share how much that is a NEED and how you long for it ?

First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE & RESPECT

APPRECIATE : This is the foremost thing to be done by wife to make the husband feel loved and respected. We all need appreciation.

1 Thessalonians 5: 11-18 ... **Paul** says we need to appreciate and lift other up others with words like acknowledge, appreciate, build up, encourage and hold in the highest regard. In fact for those who work hard among you, who care for your souls and to those who lead you (wives, don't you think the husbands fit in this as much the church leaders) you are required to show the HIGHEST level of regard. To appreciate others we need to be grateful and humble souls. Not only that Bible expects us to be appreciative of our leaders (Husband is the first leader for the wife), kindly note that appreciation does wonders for the husband to develop Love Connection towards wife as he feels loved and respected by her. Lack of appreciation from wife makes the husband feel emotionally distant - No Love Connection. What came out of the research with thousands of Husbands by Dr.Neuman is that Men are emotional beings and they long for emotional bond with their wives. It is the appreciation from wife or lack of it that determines their bond or break with their wives.

Today's Practical : Wife : Ask your Husband how much of appreciation he gets from you? Let him give you a score between 1 to 10. _____.

Husbands: Express yourself freely on your need of appreciation. Wives call your husbands church friends, family members, coworkers, and ask them what is the one good thing in your husband that they appreciate and make a list. Share it with him and appreciate him for what he is good at especially outside the home. Commit in your mind to hold him in highest regard and everyday be appreciative of him for one thing at least.

First Principle....LOVE & RESPECT

Being a **RESPONSIBLE LEADER** is the next key effort that the Husband has to make to help the wife feel Loved and Respected. Husbands need to work on being responsible in supporting the family financially, taking an active role in family life and on behaving with integrity (No double life or hidden life).

1Timothy 5:8...Husband has a responsibility to finance or support or provide for his family. This is talking about money. As a husband, your earnings are not your own but belong to your wife as well and your children.

I Timothy 3:3-5...Another responsibility of the husband is to be active in the area of the discipline and rearing of the children. This passage talks to elders but is certainly applicable to all men. It is not a proper to say that as the husband I will provide the living and the wife is to take care of the house and children. The husband should take up duties at home even after his days work in the office. Otherwise wives will not feel loved & respected.

Proverbs 11:3...If the Husband's behavior is dishonest, the wife will feel insecure. Husbands do not hide be transparent to your wife with your finances, interest, emails, phone calls, SMS, web chat, web surfing and any attractions or temptations toward illicit activities. Same is for wives as well. Lies and deceit will produce mistrust and build a wall. Most wives love it when the husbands talk with them about their deepest thoughts.

Today's Practical :

Husband: Ask your wife how much of a responsible leader you are ? Let her give you a score between 1 to 10. _____.

Be humble and accept. Don't argue. Make a decision to be transparent and take your wife inside your deepest secret world. If you feel nervous take help from other matured couples. **Wife:** Do not freak out when your husband is trying to be open. Make it easy for him. He is already feeling bad. Encourage and appreciate him for his attempt to be honest. Share your pain calmly and pray together.

First Principles : LOVE & RESPECT

INITIATE and enter into the Husband's world is the second key effort that wives need to make after appreciate. That way the husband would feel loved and respected by wife and it will promote the love connection.

Philippians 2:1-4...To look into others's interest more than our own is the way to become like minded and one in spirit with your spouse. It takes humility and giving up our selfishness. Do not look down on your husband's interest or hold up resentment. Initiate and get involved and try to join along with them - may be on their business trips, church responsibilities, cricket matches, football practice, bike rides, trekking, movies, restaurants and fun trips. It is the desire and effort to join with your husband that counts. In this busy life both the partners need time and space for their interests. The love hormone "dopamine" gets secreted in the brain of both couples when couples try out exciting new things together - it does magic in their love connection. It may be cooking a new recipe together. It may be jogging together, going on a roller coaster in an amusement park together.

Today's Practical :

Wife : Talk to your husband about his close work contacts / relationships that you never knew and plan to visit his office some time or invite them home for tea or dinner. Sit and ask your husband about his childhood interests/hobbies and write it. Husbands reciprocate

1. _____ 2. _____

3. _____ 4. _____

Day 13

First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE & RESPECT

Being a **ROMANTIC LOVER** is the third key effort husband needs to work on to make his wife feel loved and respected. Song of Songs is a wedding song honoring marriage.

Most explicit statements on physical relationship in the bible is found in this book.

Song of Song 4:1-15...Here the Husband can learn how to be romantic towards his wife. God created physical relationship and intimacy and they are holy and good when enjoyed within the bounds of marriage. Husband and wife honor God when they love and enjoy each other. God wants physical relationship to be motivated by Love and commitment not lust. It is for mutual pleasure and not for selfish enjoyment. Romance keeps the marriage interesting. Commitment keeps Romance going. Romance starts from the heart and mind of the Husband and the first way of demonstration is from your eyes - by the way you look at your wife. Then by your loving words and affectionate touch. When a husband is affectionate wife feels that he loves her and he finds her attractive. Husbands kindly note that women's brain is the most important sexual organ and you can only stimulate it only with heart to heart love connection. Unless you get their Brain (mind) fired up you cannot enjoy a fulfilling physical relationship.

Today's Practical :

Read the Song of Songs chapters 1 - 4 together at night in the bed. Husband needs to read the lover part and wife reads the beloved part. Pray together.'

Husband : Praise your wife as the lover praises her beloved in the bible and have a goal of giving pleasure to your wife in the physical relationship. Don't focus on your self.

First Principles in Marriage ...LOVE & RESPECT

PARTICIPATE in physical relationship is the other key effort wives need to make.

I Corinthians 7:3-5 ...**Wives** may be appreciative of their husbands and may take an interest in their husband's lives, but if they are not meeting their husbands' needs in the sexual relationship, husbands mayn't feel loved and respected. Many women do not realize that their husband's sexual desires are as strong as their own desire for emotional connection. There is a reason that the Bible says we are not to deprive each other sexually. Some time, we women withhold from having physical relationship to get what we want or to punish our husbands. There are women who look down upon husbands active desire to have physical relationship. This kind of behavior and attitude would hurt their relationship with husbands. It would severe the love connection. God created this physical relationship and intimacy and they are holy and good.

Song of Songs 4:15....Solomon's bride was as refreshing to him as a fountain. Could your husband say that about you wives? Do you refresh your husbands by your presence or burden him? Your husbands need you to be a haven of refreshment because they come to you from their world of stress. Wives show love and respect for your husbands by lovingly and willingly participating in the bedroom and this will make your husband feel like a winner. You will see your love connection growing rapidly.

Today's Practical : Read song of songs chapters 5-8 and pray. Wife: Praise your husband as the beloved praises her lover in the bible. Light few scented candles in your bed room and **YOU** initiate for a great physical relationship with your husband.

First Principles in Marriage: AWARENESS - Know yourself & Know your spouse

This week our focus is on another important principle of marriage that is **AWARENESS** - knowing about yourself and knowing about your spouse. Knowing means being Aware of who we are? What we were in our past? Why we are like this? Why do we behave the way we do with our spouses ?

In **John 17:3**, Jesus says that eternal life is defined as knowing God. This means knowing the nature and qualities of God - How he interacts, loves and responds to our love or to our sin etc. We will be able to have a fulfilling and deep relationship with God only by knowing God deeply. In the same way we will be able to have a fulfilling relationship with our spouse only by knowing our spouse deeply. Awesome marriage life is all about knowing your spouse. In the last two weeks as you are working on building your love connection by making efforts that demonstrate love and respect, you might feel a bit burdened to see that you are getting stuck with the same old harmful/hurtful behaviors and reactions from yourself and your spouse. By persevering through this process you may be rewarded with insights about the ways you get stuck in your marriage. Understanding what triggers us in our spouses behavior will help us better understand our own reactions and understand patterns related to our past more than focusing on what our spouse is doing. The annoying behavior of the spouses may keep getting repeated even though we think we have overcome it. The solution is to get to the root. You behave negatively and harmfully because you feel that way. You feel negatively because you think negatively. Your negative thoughts and beliefs bring about negative behavior in our relationship with our spouse. Focus on behavior change is just treating the symptom. Getting to the root of dealing with our thinking will produce long lasting change.

Proverbs 4:23.. "Be careful how you think; your life is shaped by your thoughts." (TEV)

Proverbs 23:7.. "For as he thinks in his heart, so is he." (NKJV)

We all develop certain thinking pattern during our childhood. Sadly many of us have had some emotionally traumatic experiences in our childhood. A child who is sexually molested by a relative might think that he cannot TRUST any authority figure. A child bullied at school may think she is UNLOVABLE. A child berated by his parents might think he is WORTHLESS. In this way the negative thinking pattern developed in our childhood carry over into our adulthood and in our marriage! For some of us the childhood makeup is so strong that it happens to be a roadblock for us becoming functional and healthier adults.

Romans 7:14-25.. Here Paul writes about our two sides. one is the healthy spiritual side. The other is the unhealthy sinful side that we seem to kind of helplessly get trapped into. Some sins are very obviously evil like lying, theft, adultery, smoking and drinking. We have gained strong convictions over them and repented. Whereas the sins of negative behavior may be seen sticking with us as part of our personality. These negative harmful behavior arises out of core distorted beliefs and distorted views and about ourselves and others. Driven by our own distorted views and beliefs, our reactions to life situations are completely overboard (out of scale and out of shape). These are the ones we need to identify and develop Awareness over their pattern and triggering affect on each other. Unlike the obvious sin list in **Galatians 5:19**, this sin list of distorted negative mind and behavior is not very obvious to us. The list has many distorted negative patterns of mind.

Like feeling the Abandonment, high Mistrust, Emotionally deprived, Defectiveness or Shame, Social Isolation, highly Dependent, Very Vulnerable to Harm, Enmeshed or undeveloped, feeling of Failure, Entitlement as someone special, lack of Self-Discipline, Subjugation (submit to others), Self-Sacrifice, Approval Seeking, Negativity (pessimism), Emotional inhibition, Hypercritical ness and Punitiveness. All these negative distortions tend to develop inside our mind if the positive emotional needs opposite to them are not provided and met in our childhood by our parents. For example, adequate nurturing instead of abandonment, proper protection with out abuse instead of abuse, emotionally support instead of emotion deprivation, appreciation instead of criticism of defects and shame, social inclusion instead social isolation etc., were not provided and the child's core emotional need will not be met. Thus resulting in these negative distortions of mind carrying up to their adulthood and marriage. When one of these above negative distortions in our spouse gets triggered by not meeting their core emotional needs we get hurt and instead of feeling the pain, we subconsciously develop a way to cope with the pain of the need not being met. We cope in one of the three ways of responding to our mind distortions: 1. Surrendered (Fright), 2. Avoidant (Flight) 3. Counterattacking (Fight). These coping styles may lessen the pain to an extent, but they never truly meet the emotional need. So none of the above are right coping style. Being Vulnerable is the right coping style. In

Proverbs 2:1-5. we get the advice that if we look out for insights, we will find them. Valuable insights into our selves can deepen our relationships. Our dysfunctional behavior is not linked with how many distortions we have but how strong or harmful these distortions are. We usually develop one or many of these negative distortions because of not having our core emotional needs met in our childhood. So to identify and become aware of the distortions in our mind, it is helpful to understand our past childhood. We cannot change what happened in our childhood, but we can change the meaning and understanding we give to the past experiences and emotional traumas which make up our childhood.

Similarly understanding our spouses distortions and their past childhood issues will help us to empathize them better. We are better able to accept them as Jesus accepted us for who they are not for who we think that they should be. We can understand that their reactions are not really so much about us, but about the way our behavior reminds them of old hurts and pain that turned into distortions of their mind. By having this awareness both of the spouses can work together to break this dysfunctional cycle and become healthier. This is not for blaming or giving up responsibility on each other. The good news is that we can weaken our negative mental distortions by strengthening our healthy spiritual side.

Romans 12:2. Here we are asked not to conform to the pattern of the worldly distortions and negative distorted behavior. Our mind must be renewed. Our thinking must be renewed. We need to have new principles, new inclinations, new dispositions and new designs. When this happens we not become Saved Christians but also Healed Christians. As healed husbands and wife we will be able to grow in our love connection. Choosing to grow in awareness will free us to explore new ways of thinking and behaving.

Today's Practical : Kindly list the top most negative mind distortions that you get triggered from the below list? Abandonment, Mistrust, Emotionally deprived, Defectiveness (Shame), Social Isolation, highly Dependent, Very Vulnerable to Harm, Enmeshed (cannot function without the enmeshed person), feeling of Failure, Entitlement as someone special, lack of Self- Discipline, Subjugation (submit to others), Self-Sacrifice, Approval Seeking, Negativity (pessimism), Emotional inhibition, Hypercritical ness and Punitiveness. What is your predominant coping style of the three below when your mental distortions are triggered? 1. Surrendered (Fright), 2. Avoidant (Flight), 3. Counterattacking (Fight).

Day 16

First Principles in Marriage: AWARENESS - Communication

Builders Most women would give anything if husbands would stop and listen to them. But most of the men when they come home they shut down or keep the communication very superficial with one or two syllables. This makes the wives only more frustrated. Couples can really build habits of sharing their minds & hearts through scriptures and build the communication that we need. Take a few minutes a day and look at each other in the eyes and listen to each other's heart.

Communication Builders:

1. Daily Dialogue - **2 John verse 12**
2. Special Times, Special Places - **Mark 6: 30-31**
3. Speak Heart to Heart - **2Corinthians 6:11-13**
4. Learn the Levels: Facts, Opinions, and Emotions - **Proverbs 20:5**
5. Live and Love a Little Lighter - **Romans 12:17-21**
6. Tone, Touch, Expression and Attention - **Mark 10:16, 21, Proverbs 16:24**
7. Common Courtesy - **1 Corinthians 13:4 -7, Ephesians 4:29**
8. Copious Compliments - **Philippians 4:8, 1 Thessalonians 5:11**
9. Share the Spiritual - **Mathew 18:20**
10. Say You're Sorry, Faithfully Forgive - **Colossians 3:13**

Today's practical:

Write down the communication builder that you have been practicing. Pray about growing in the communication builders.

First Principles in Marriage:
AWARENESS - Communication Killers

In the early stages of our marriage most of us probably were pretty good at talking. But over a period of time, our communication can come to a stand still. It may be because you both communicated saying things in the wrong way hurting one another hundreds of time. Now you both retreated to silent corners.

Communication Killers:

- 1. Failure to Listen - James 1:19
- 2. Defensive Listening - Proverbs 18:13
- 3. Disrespect and Dismissiveness - Proverbs 18:2
- 4. Cutting, Critical Remarks - Ephesians 4:29
- 5. Hinting - Ephesians 4:14-15
- 6. Clamming Up - Ephesians 4:26-27
- 7. Blowing Up - Proverbs 29:11
- 8. Grumbling, Gripping and Complaining - Philippians 2:14-15
- 9. Lying - Proverbs 12:19
- 10. Distracted/Distractions - Proverbs 8:6

Today's Practical :

Discuss about one or more communication killer that dominated your marriage life that you want to conquer and repent off. Pray about growing in Communication.

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First Principles in Marriage:
AWARENESS - about Love Languages

Love is a language that is used to communicate in marriages and relationships. Language of love is demonstrated in so many ways. From person to person the way love is expressed, received and appreciated varies. For spouses to have great love connection, they both need to learn to speak the right language that communicates love to the partner.

1 Corinthians 13 : 4 - 13

Following are the few love languages:-

- 1. Encouraging words/words of affirmation
- 2. Acts of Service
- 3. Giving gifts and receiving gifts
- 4. Quality time
- 5. Physical touch.

Today's Practical:

Husbands and wives separately rate in which order the above love languages mean to you. Assign them nos. between 1 to 5 from primary love language to the least one. Share it with your spouse. Learn your spouse's top three love languages.

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First Principles in Marriage: AWARENESS - Love Busters

Certain behaviors among the spouses cause heavy damage among their relationships. They are all very commonly practiced between couples without much awareness. Let us learn and avoid those hurts.

Philippians 2:4 and Proverbs 14:

Love Busters:

1. **Selfish demands** : Attempts by your spouse to force you to do something for your spouse usually with implied threat of punishment.
2. **Disrespectful Judgements** : Attempts by your spouse to change your attitude and beliefs. Trying to force you in to his way of thinking by lecturing or ridiculing and feeling like his opinions are superior and not giving a chance to explain your position.
3. **Angry outbursts** : Deliberate attempts by your spouse to hurt you because of anger towards you usually in the form of verbal or physical attacks.
4. **Dishonesty** : Failure of your spouse to reveal his thoughts, feelings, habits, dislikes, likes personal history, daily activities and plans for the future. This is not only giving you a false information but also knowing leaving you with a false impression.
5. **Annoying habits** : Behavior repeated by your spouse without much thought that bothers you. This habit includes personal mannerism such as a way your spouse eats, cleans up and talks.

6. Independent Behavior : Behavior conceded and executed by your spouse without consideration of your feelings. This behavior is usually scheduled and require thought to complete such as attending sporting event, family functions, social gathering or church activities etc.

Today’s Practical :

Husbands and wives discuss about your recent worst fight and share what was the Love Buster that triggered it. Kneel down and pray saying sorry to each other.

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First Principles in Marriage:
AWARENESS - The Irresistible Man

The quickest cure for incompatibility and fastest road to becoming irresistible lie in meeting each other's most important emotional needs. Happy Couples make their marriage a full time priority. These couples not only put out the effort, they also put the effort in right places. Husbands you can become the kind of man that is so irresistible for your wife to get attracted towards you. It is possible to be the one of that kind. Any husband can make himself irresistible to his wife by learning to meet all the below 5 most important emotional need of your wife.

1Cor 11:3, Col 3:19, 1tim 5:8

The Irresistible Man:

1. **Affection** : You Husband Express your love in words, cards, gifts, hugs, kisses, tender touch, holding hands, back rubs and courtesies. Creating an environment that clearly and repeatedly expresses love.

2. **Conversation** : You husband set aside time everyday talking with your wife about the events of the day, personal feelings, plans for the future, showing interest, spouse's favorite topic, balancing conversation, using it to inform investigate and understand his wife, giving her undivided attention and making effort to understand.

3. **Honesty and Openness** : You tell her everything about yourself. Revealing positive and negative feelings, events of the past, daily events and schedules, plans for the future. Not leaving a false impression and answering questions truthfully and completely.

4. **Financial Support** : You assume the responsibility and make provision for financial resources to house, feed and clothe your family at a standard of living acceptable to you and your wife, but avoiding travel and working hours that is not unacceptable to you and your wife.

5. **Family Commitment** : You are showing spiritual leadership, scheduling sufficient time and energy for children’s spiritual and educational activities, taking them on frequent outings, growing in skill to child training and discipline.

Today’s practical :

Husbands ask your wives how many of these above 5 needs that you are meeting for her. Take her out for a special dating time and read out the card you wrote for her.

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Day 21

First Principles in Marriage: AWARENESS -
The Irresistible Woman

Wives you can gain awareness to be the type of wife you can be that would make you simply irresistible for your Husband to get attracted to. You need not just be day dreaming for it and hoping that it happens if and when you find just the right shampoo, deodorant or perfume. A wife makes herself irresistible to her husband by learning to meet his five most important emotional needs. They are not wants but needs without which your husband cannot survive with good health in marriage life.

Proverbs 31:10-31

The Irresistible Woman

1. **Admiration** : You wives understand and appreciate him more than anyone else. Respecting, valuing and appreciating clearly and often; reassuring about his looks, his capabilities, his work and progress. You be proud of him and avoid criticizing him.

2. **Sexual Fulfillment** : His wife meets this need by becoming a terrific sexual partner. Having a sexual experience that brings out a predictably enjoyable sexual response in both of you that is frequent enough for both of you.

3. **Recreational Companionship** : Developing interest in your husband's favourite activities - spiritual and recreational like doing ministry, bible study, hospitality, games, exercising, watching tv, movies, visiting friends, going out and spending quality time. You need to become his favourite recreational companion and he should associate you with his most enjoyable moments of relaxation.

4. **Physical Attractiveness** : Keeping physically fit with diet and exercise, wearing hair and clothing in a way you find attractive and tasteful in private and public.

5. **Domestic Support** : Creating a home environment for your husband that offers him a refuge from the stresses of life; management of the home in such a way that encourages him to spend time at home enjoying his family. Take care of the children and other household responsibilities.

Today’s practical :

Wives ask your Husbands of these 5 needs above how many are met to his satisfaction. Note down and pray for the changes needed if any. Do not settle for any 3 or 4 needs met.

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First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

This week we are going to be paying attention to one of the most important principles that makes or breaks the marriage i.e., being vulnerable with our spouse in communication. The word Vulnerability refers to the capacity to be wounded and it can be seen not as a very positive virtue in the world. However, having a spiritual outlook to this word, we can understand that this word “Vulnerable” is referred to a stage in which our defensive measures are reduced or compromised. This enables us to have a healing relationship in our marriage. In the last week study series we might have become aware of the harmful behavior patterns (negative mind distortions) of ourselves as well as our spouse. Typically when we fight with our spouse, we have some form of the same fight over and over again. I hope you are able to capture this aspect in your marriage fights. What is worse - it is not even our spouse that we are really fighting ; that is, - when our sinful negative mindset get triggered, we are re-experiencing the trauma of our core emotional needs that were not met when we were children. We are in a place of very old and very great pain. This place is the root of the conflicts we have with our spouse and the place where we need to work to create lasting change. From our childhood, we have also learned the unhealthy way to block this pain through one of our coping styles like counterattacking, surrendering and avoiding. But the right and healthy way to cope when we get triggered (painfully feel that the need is not getting met) is by Being Vulnerable. Vulnerability is about moving away from patterns of defensiveness, contempt, angry counterattacking, fear and avoidance to a place where we allow our partners (and ourselves) to see us as we really are.

Mathew 18:1-4, Here Jesus meant for us to imitate the godly qualities of a child - the side where we do not put up a front but are transparent about how we really feel and what we really need. Children are genuine if they are angry or happy.

They do not mask or fake. Jesus is not giving us an option if we can try and become like little kids. Jesus says unless we change and become like the little kids we will not enter the kingdom of Heaven. We getting into our child side is called vulnerability. This is when we feel the most authentic, genuine and spirited. Our child side expresses the feeling of joy and pain without fear or judgement. We don't completely lose this child side of us, even as adults; we only become good at hiding it. When we were kids we may not have received adequate guidance, nurturing and love. Instead we were given from our ignorant parents more of a feeling of shame, guilt and fear as we were growing up. These negative emotions while growing up make us to develop with a false sense of who we are. Our child gets hidden and the false side becomes a natural part of our makeup and personality. For example when we fight with our spouse, rather than being vulnerable, we might act tough and pretend we do not need them and that we are fine without them. We may then avoid our spouse and get busy with our work or our addictions. By being busy we keep ourselves detached from our vulnerable true child side.

1 Peter 2: 23, In this verse we see how Jesus responded in such a vulnerable way with out putting up his defenses. He was insulted. He did not threaten. But he responded like a child finding his safe place with his Father. When Jesus sets the standard that unless we become like kids we will not enter heaven, we can be certain to see this example here. Surely He is the Prince of Peace. He shows us the path we need to follow to be a healed, non-reactive soul when we are triggered. This is how Vulnerability brings healing.

Today's Practical : Both the spouses take turns to share one of the most emotionally traumatic painful childhood experiences with each other. Be like a child and share by lying in your partner's lap or in arms. The other spouse should be patiently listening with empathy and giving gently strokes on your partner's head or back. This conveys reassurance and acceptance and promotes healing and love connection.

First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

Today we can learn some more practical ways on how to be vulnerable. We can practice vulnerable communication by :-

1. Expressing your weakness and fears : 2 Corinthians 12: 5 -10.

Here we read about Paul's experience with his weakness and interactions he had with God on those weakness. Even though he was particular to get rid of his weakness and be perfect, God's response to his request was different. God did not take that weakness away. Paul was reassured by God's sufficient grace upon him. Paul learnt that he should be true to himself and be honest about his weakness like a child. He was not be driven by shame. He did not hide the truth about his weakness.

1 John 5:16-17, This passage gives us the understanding that some of the unhealthy harmful behavior patterns of our spouses are sinful, but with these things we can be considerate and gracious. When we understand the grace god has given us, we will realise how much we are sufficiently blessed and happy. Then we do not resort to putting a false front of ourselves towards our spouse. We develop a level of comfort to express our weakness and fears to our partners. Sharing our weakness means sharing gut-wrenching soul baring information with out fear of how we are perceived. This is the hardest part. Instead of reacting when triggered by our spouse, we need to take stock of which emotional part of you is getting triggered and what are the fears that come into your mind. Be humble to admit your weakness and fears. Even though you may feel embarrassing and difficult to do this, when you admit your weakness and fear, healing will take place. While this is being done the other spouse needs to listen and understand the feelings and not jump into giving a lecture or solutions.

Today's Practical :

Share 2 of your spouse's weakness and express how you have accepted your partner with their weakness like you accepted your own child. Be very gracious and express how much you love them and how they are special.

First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

The next step to Vulnerable communication is :-

**2.Expressing your painful feelings respectfully :
2 Kings 20: 2-6.**

Here King Hezekiah expresses his painful feelings to God. After hearing from the prophet Isaiah, that he would die from this present sickness, Hezekiah chose not to react with anger or contempt with Isaiah or towards God but chose to express his painful feelings to God in a respectful way. His tears brought healing and he reaped a good deal of benefits. We can learn from this King how he expressed his feelings like a child respectfully. He was blessed for his vulnerable communication. Expressing your feeling respectfully means that instead of being rude and angry, stuffing or sulking we honestly share like a child our pain and hurt as lovingly as possible. Many times the arguments between the couples escalates to very destructive levels because of not sticking to this boundry. When you communicate keep the focus on **YOUR SELF** - your pain, your feelings, and not about your spouse.

Today’s Practical :

Each spouse can share their worst fears in their marriage like a child would share. Partners reassure and comfort and encourage. Both pray together.

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First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

We are probably seeing how growing in our vulnerable communication leads us to Love Connection. The next step to vulnerable communication is :-

3.Expressing your need : Mark 14 : 32 - 42.

In this passage we see Jesus under tremendous stress. He being the son of God, requesting his close friends (his inner circle of disciples James, peter and john) to be with him as he is going through deep pain and distress. He did not hide it from them. He did not pretend to be all tough. Like a child, He was open and honest to them. He was expressing his need and his situation and what state of mind he is in. He was very keen to have them stay with him and pray. We can learn how vulnerable was Jesus here with his disciples. Also we see Jesus going to his father like a child expressing his need for the cup to be taken away from him. He was humble and vulnerable to express his need, even though, eventually he was courageous to carry out God's will. Expressing your need in your marriage means that we ask for help, rather than being demanding. This works best in a gentle tone of voice. We can express what the partner could have done that would have been more helpful. While this is being done by one spouse the other spouse needs to see how much their partner needs them and also understand that they are good enough to meet the need of their partner.

Today's Practical :

Share your top 3 needs that you are looking forward from your spouse to be met.

First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

Today we will see one more critical step towards the vulnerable communication. That is :-

4. Apologising when ever necessary : James 1:1-3.

Who needs to apologize? Anyone and everyone who was part of a conflict with someone. It takes two to fight. The whole world struggles to apologize. Our kids struggle. Everyone quickly sees the slightest figment of their own righteous part of the act in a conflict than the pain they caused with their huge unrighteous part of the act. We can never justify being in a conflict. Scripture says our conflicts with our partners come from our own hidden agendas, cravings, self centered demands and wrong motives.

James 5:16, Even though this verse is in the context of confessing for physical healing, we need to be eager ones who confesses their sin. Your remorse, your confession with apology will bring healing in your marriage.

Luke 17: 3-4, Jesus expects us to repent every time we sin against others. We show our repentance by Apologizing and seeking forgiveness to restore fellowship.

1John 1: 5-10, These verses have references to forgiveness through Christ and “fellowship one with another.” So, there is a connection between having a “clean slate” and our relationship with other people. When we have conflict and tension in our relationships, the Bible calls us to examine our own hearts and to own, without blame-shifting, the sins we have committed. In Genesis chapters 32 and 33, we see Jacob offering Esau a sincere apology with many gifts. Esau forgave his brother and did not kill him like he had said he would earlier. Jacob received forgiveness and got to keep his life because he apologized.

Also in Genesis 50, we read about Joseph's brothers apologizing for what they had done to Joseph and their relationship with Joseph got restored. ! Apologizing when necessary means taking responsibility for causing the hurt or not meeting the need and saying sorry. We should never use the word 'if' while apologizing. Like saying "Sorry if that has hurt you". That will not bring healing. Be sincere, exposing your vulnerable child side and apologize to bring healing.

Today’s Practical :

Share one of your past terrible behavior towards your spouse and share how you feel ashamed looking back at that incident. Like a child beg for apology and forgiveness.

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First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

The next key factor for healing and love connection when we have conflicts in marriage is :

5. Choose to offer FORGIVENESS: Mathew18:21-35

In this passage God clearly expects us to cancel the debt of hurts that others owe to us. We may feel we have a right for holding that debt of resentment and retaliation. Here we see the servant had an option not to forgive. But the consequences of that option are grave with regards to our salvation.

Hebrews 12:14-15.

These verses ask us to make special effort and watch out carefully so that our heart would not get into the routine path of bitterness and unforgiveness. So it is not a natural thing for us to forgive. We make a choice to do that as God made that choice to forgive us. After understanding we are unfairly treated, we willfully abandon the bitter feelings and show compassion and unconditional worth and moral love towards the offender as God has done through Jesus Christ. Forgiveness is the spiritual moral action of one individual that starts as a private act, an unseen decision within the human heart. So it is irrespective of the quality of the offender. When people have successfully forgiven the offender spouse, they have developed : -

- Positive thought toward the offender (spouse)
- Positive feelings toward the offender (spouse)
- Positive behavior toward the offender (spouse)

Unforgiveness is shown to correlate highly with anger. Activity in the brain during unforgiveness is consistent with brain activity during stress, anger and aggression.

Today's Practical :

Share with your spouse the success story of you forgiving someone with whom you had a terrible relationship in the past. But now you have a healed close relationship because you choose to forgive. Share who and all helped you and how you overcame to forgive?

Day 28

First Principles in Marriage: VULNERABLE COMMUNICATION

Today we will conclude this quiet time series on marriage with a very vital topic called :

6.Choose RECONCILIATION :

Between troubled couples reconciliation starts with initiation and ends with restoration of relationship and Love connection. When your spouse is angry - you go - initiate, apologise and seek forgiveness. When you are angry - you go - initiate, apologise and seek forgiveness.

Mathew 5: 21- 26.

Jesus talks about what we are to do when someone is angry with us... He says to "reconcile" with them right away. Notice in the passage that Jesus didn't say who was at fault... He just started off saying that it was bad to be angry at someone and call them a fool... Then He said that if you remember that your spouse or someone may be angry at you, go make it right! In context this tells us that we need to do what it takes to make things right with your spouse (including asking for forgiveness). He then told us to go reconcile with people who are angry at us. So, what He's saying is to love others/spouse enough to do what you need to do in order to help remove that bad blood between you both in the marriage relationship. One way to diffuse a situation is to admit your portion of the wrong and ask for forgiveness...Not just say "I'm sorry if I offended you", but instead say, "I was wrong when I did that. Will you please forgive me?" Reconciliation will happen if you follow this principle that Jesus laid. Because you are wholly taking it upon yourself to bring about the healing.

Ephesians 4: 26-27.

Separation amongst couples happen because of anger which results in bitterness and defensiveness toward each other. A daily check on your anger and efforts toward reconciliation would bring about great healing. This way the devil waiting to destroy your marriage is thrown out every night without any foothold on your love connection. Couples work towards daily reconciliation.

Colossians 3:12-14,

Scriptures are clearly mandating reconciliation. Holding back from it is nothing but unspiritual and sinful. For a complete reconciliation of the hurt couples, both parties need to come together graciously bearing with one another and both rendering forgiveness and asking for forgiveness. When it comes to having a healthy, satisfying marriage that builds love connection, both forgiveness and reconciliation are essential.

Today’s Practical :

Call and thank that person or couple or couples whom you feel has played the biggest part for bringing about reconciliation in your past marriage conflicts.

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