

Understanding Biblical Relational Needs

EPC Sem 23

Meeting each other's needs in marriage

Acceptance: being welcomed unconditionally, just as I am, even when I've made a big mistakes. Not feeling rejected.

- Accept one another just as Christ has accepted you. Romans 15:7
- Let all seek to discover the excellencies rather than the defects. Often it is our own attitude, the atmosphere surrounding ourselves, which determines what will be revealed to us in another. AH 105

Acceptance in practice

- Welcoming another imperfect person with open arms.
- "I'll always love you, no matter what you do."
- Not comparing your spouse with others, or being cross with them when they have made a mistake.
- Being warm, comforting and supportive when things go wrong.
- Being forgiving and not bringing up the mistakes of the past.

Thinking about acceptance

- What do I do that shows my spouse how much I accept him or her?
- When does my spouse most need my acceptance?
- What can I do to show my spouse that I accept every aspect of their being?
- What do I find difficult to accept in myself and how might this affect those I love?

Affection: showing care and closeness with gentle touch and caring words. Not causing physical pain and hurt.

- Greet one another with a holy kiss. Romans 16:16
- Let the husband aid his wife by his sympathy and unfailing affection. AH 218
- The warmth of true friendship, the love that binds heart to heart, is a foretaste of the joys of heaven. AH 106
- Love cannot long exist without expression. AH 107

Affection in practice:

- Saying things like: "You're so special to me! I love you!"
- Sending caring texts, cards and emails etc.
- Giving hugs and kisses, hand massages, back rubs, stroking skin or hair, warm smiles and eye contact, etc.

Thinking about affection:

- How does my spouse like me to show my affection for him/her?
- Ten ways I could show affection to my spouse are: (make a list)
- Plan to do one thing a day from your list and see what happens.

Appreciation: being thanked or praised for what I have done, or the effort I have put into things.

- I praise you... 1 Corinthians 11:2
- The husband should let his wife know that he appreciates her work. AH 114
- Make your home atmosphere fragrant with tender thoughtfulness. AH 16

Appreciation in practice:

- Saying: "That looks lovely! I really enjoyed that meal! Thanks for ironing my shirt/cleaning my car/doing the shopping etc."
- Sending thank you cards, SMS/texts, and notes, giving flowers, etc.
- Thanking the other for their hard work that provides an income for you.
- Telling others how much you appreciate your spouse.

Thinking about appreciation:

- What do you appreciate most about your spouse, and how does your spouse most like to be appreciated?
- What effect does it have on your spouse when you express your appreciation for even the small things he or she does?
- Appreciation is much more effective than nagging because it encourages positive behaviour.

Approval: valuing the other person, and your marriage, in a special way.

- Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen. Ephesians 4:29
- Let your pleasant, cheerful words ever be like sunbeams in your family. AH 442.

Approval in practice:

- Saying: "I'm proud of you! I'm so glad I married you! You're the most wonderful husband/wife I could have. Marrying you was the best thing I did!"
- Carrying photos, putting their photo on your desk at work, telling others good things about your spouse, celebrating anniversaries and special days in creative, generous and fun ways.

Thinking about approval:

- How can you show your spouse how much they mean to you as a person – not just appreciating what they can do for you?
- What can you do to show your spouse the incredible value you place on your marriage?

Attention: having a thoughtful interest shown in my world, knowing I have your full attention even when we talk about everyday things.

- But that the members (of the body) should have the same care for one another. 1 Corinthians 12:25
- Determine to be all that it is possible to be to each other. Continue the early attentions. AH 106

Attention in practice:

- Saying: "Tell me about your day."
- Saying: "What you would like to do together with me right now?"
- Cheerfully doing things your spouse wants to do even if it's not your area of interest.
- Putting the other person first.
- Responding positively to the small comments and observations the other person makes.

Thinking about attention:

- What are your spouse's interests, and what can you do to join them in their interest, even if they are not your interests?
- How can you show true concern and understanding for the things that are happening in your spouse's life? How would they like you to pray for their concerns?

Comfort: being given strength and hope, having all my grief and pain soothed, and my heart cheered.

- The God of all comfort, who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble. 2 Corinthians 1:3,4
- Mourn with those who mourn. Romans 12:15
- Let not the heart of one connected with you starve for the want of kindness and sympathy. AH 107
- Amidst the world's eager rush for wealth and power, let him (the husband) learn to stay his steps, to comfort and support the one who is called to walk by his side. AH 218

Comfort in practice:

- Saying: "I'm so sad for you. I'm sorry you are going through this. I know how disappointed you are. I hurt with you."
- Hugging.
- Crying with your spouse.
- Sitting with your partner and just being there.
- Listening to the painful stories and hurt feelings without trying to 'fix' them.
- Making your spouse a cup of hot tea or pouring a warm bath.

Thinking about comfort:

- What is your spouse most distressed or sad about, and how do they most like to be comforted?
- What does your spouse find most distressing about being a ministry spouse, and how can you comfort this pain?
- How does your ministry distress you, and how can you invite your spouse to comfort you, too?

Encouragement: being helped towards my goals.

- Therefore encourage one another and build each other up, just as in fact you are doing. 1 Thessalonians 5:11
- His kindness and loving courtesy will be to her a precious encouragement and the happiness he imparts will bring joy and peace to his own heart. AH
- In every way encourage each other in fighting the battles of life. AH 106

Encouragement in practice:

- Saying: "I know you can do it! Don't give up now! I believe in you!"
- Sending a card with encouraging words.
- Doing one of their chores so they can find extra time for the things they need to do.
- Finding useful articles, books ideas, etc. that may help with the project.
- Being their 'cheerleader', especially when it gets tough.
- Reminding them of their past successes.

Thinking about encouragement:

- What are your spouse's top three life goals and how can you encourage them as they strive to reach these goals?
- What do you do or say that might discourage your spouse? And how could you do or say something different, that would encourage them and help them to keep going?

Respect: being treated as an equal or higher, having my ideas valued as equal to yours.

- Honour one another above yourselves. Romans 12:10
- There must be love and respect manifested by the parents for one another if they would see these qualities developed in their children. AH 217
- Never should either party indulge in a joke at the expense of the other's feelings. Never should either the husband or wife, in sport, or in any other manner, complain of each other to others. AH 177
- Do not try to compel each other to do as you wish. AH 107

Respect in action:

- "I'd like to hear your ideas. What would you prefer? I was wrong, will you forgive me?"
- Speaking in a respectful voice, saying sorry.
- Asking before taking something.
- Checking before making plans that involve the other person in some way.
- Not putting the other person down, laughing at them or teasing them.
- Being honoured in a special and thoughtful way.
- Being nice to each other!

Thinking about respect:

- How do you show respect to your spouse?
- What might you do that your spouse considers disrespectful, what effect does this have on your spouse and your relationship, and what could you do differently?
- What specific and wonderful thing could you do to show special honour to your spouse?

Security: being free from harm and being protected from my fears.

- Live in harmony with one another. Romans 12:16
- If it is possible, as much as it depends on you, live at peace with everyone. Romans 12:18
- Perfect love casts out fear. 1 John 4:18
- Anything that would mar the peace and unity of the family should be firmly repressed, and kindness and love should be cherished. AH 120
- Let neither the husband nor wife harbour the thought that their union is a mistake or a disappointment. AH 106
- Your family should have something to rely upon if you should be brought into straightened places. AH 396

Security in action:

- Saying "I'm here for you. We're going to work this out. I'm committed to you."
- Not threatening to leave. Reminding each other of your commitment.

- Not walking away from arguments and problems. Staying, talking about things and working them through to a mutually-beneficial conclusion.
- Not causing pain or harm, and not frightening the other person in any way.
- Providing for each other's needs.
- Not losing temper.
- Keeping promises, being on time, or giving plenty of warning.
- Reducing fears by checking doors locked, driving safely, not getting into debt, etc.

Thinking about security:

- What do you do or say that might cause your spouse to be afraid? (driving too fast, changing plans suddenly, building up debts, threatening harm or abandonment etc.)
- How can you be supportive, caring and respectful when your spouse has fears that you think are unfounded?
- What is your spouse most afraid of, and what can you do, if anything, to soothe them or diminish their fear?
- How can you show 'perfect love' to your spouse?

Support: having someone come alongside me to help me face a challenge.

- Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. Galatians 6:2
- Amidst the world's eager rush for wealth and power, let him learn to stay his steps, to comfort and support the one who is called to walk by his side. AH 218
- Let the wife feel that she can lean upon the large affections of her husband – that his arms will strengthen and uphold her through all her toils and cares, that his influence will sustain hers – and her burden will lose half its weight. AH 216

Support in action:

- Saying: "I'll be glad to help you! Just let me know what I can do."
- Saying: "I can see you're busy – so I'll cook the dinner/wash up/put the children to bed, etc."
- Asking: "What can I do today that would help you the most?" and then doing it.
- Helping with a big project that feels overwhelming.
- Teaching each other practical skills, such as changing a wheel, or ironing a shirt etc.
- Doing hard or miserable jobs together.
- Being aware when your partner may be tired and helping them without being asked.

Thinking about support

- When might my spouse most need my support?
- Which jobs around the home would my spouse most like me to do?
- Doing one thoughtful and supportive thing every day for your spouse can help to strengthen your relationship – don't let your spouse struggle alone because you're too busy ministering to others...

By Bernie and Karen Holford

(The concept of these top ten relational needs was inspired by David and Teresa Ferguson of Intimate Life Ministries)