

# THE LOSS & RESTORATION OF DIGNITY IN MARRIAGE



# INTRODUCTION

## A SERIES ON MARRIAGE AND DIGNITY

Thanks for joining in the second week of the series on marriage. Our first message and booklet can be downloaded on the **compassouth.org** website. Julie and I have been married for 30 years and we are not experts, but we do care. We're learning just like you are. We want our marriage relationship to be growing and healthy and full of love. As we continue this message series on marriage, we would like for you to come along with us each day by having conversations, taking time in prayer, and interacting with the content in this booklet.

The theme of this week is God's process for our spiritual growth and maturity. During the second sermon, we will consider the process God has for married couples to help one another and love one another as they mature.

This booklet will also be a kind of focus group. So you are encouraged and welcome to give feedback, ask questions and share testimonies of how God is working in your marriage as you hear the messages, seek the Lord, and participate in this guided material.

**Email us your thoughts to [chadlangraves@gmail.com](mailto:chadlangraves@gmail.com).**

## **Dig Deeper In A Couples' Group**

We are praying for you both as you open your heart up to one another. Recently, Julie and I went on a weekend marriage retreat where we were privileged to be led by Dr. Kenneth Sanderfur with the Created for Connection ministry. It was during that weekend and counseling that we found a new level of intimacy and understanding that we have never had before. We were given a tool to help us when we get stuck in negative patterns, and we were reminded of how common it is for couples to get into a cycle of hurts and offenses.

During this series, I will be addressing what it feels like to lose your dignity with each other and how to find your way back to restore your dignity as an individual and as a couple. During this series, Julie and I will offer an 8 week small group for couples who would like to dig deeper into this material and the process found in the book Created for Connection.

**This small group will meet on Wednesday nights at the Triangle Cafe from 6:15 to 7:15 PM starting on February 28. Follow the link below:**



# DAY EIGHT

## THE DIGNITY OF MATURING

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### **The best things take time.**

There is an African proverb that says, “if you want to go fast, go alone, but if you want to go far, go together.”

Have you ever been with someone who’s trying something new and listened to them apologize over and over for their lack of ability? Have you ever been with someone who hasn’t mastered a skill yet and watched them react with an unreasonable embarrassment? Have you ever had a meltdown of frustration over your own struggle to make progress?

I like to teach pottery and specifically the steps necessary to learn how to throw pottery on the potter’s wheel. A few years ago I was teaching a pottery class at Lyon College, and I had 12 students that semester.

The psychology of development is fascinating to me as a teacher. Progress is sequential in many ways. The student first must master kneading the clay. It comes easier to those who have stronger hands. The next stage is centering the clay on the wheel. Depending on how soft the clay is, this can be quite a challenge. It

takes patience. It requires lots of repetition to master this skill. The next stage is a technique called coning. It's a process of building up clay and pushing it back down by hemming it in with your hands. It takes a combination of strength and gentleness, but after several times, the clay, through centrifugal force, becomes pliable. The impatient student can rush the process. They can jump ahead and make the mistake of not spending the time to work out the imbalances. When they do this, it creates problems throughout the rest of the process.

As a teacher of those 12 students, I wanted to teach every one of them to become potters. Six of them progressed along in each of the stages and mastered the skill. Three of them struggled with impatience and did not mature through the stages in their practices or understanding. It would take another semester to make potters out of them. Another three gave up and decided that this was just not for them.

Can you imagine if you had never played piano and someone asked you to play a difficult piece of music? What would you do if they became angry and spoke harshly with you when you could not play the music? I would assume that you would be startled and would think that they were unreasonable in their expectation. You might even say, "you're crazy if you think I can sit down and just immediately play beautifully when I have never done it before".

We know this and yet all of us place unrealistic expectations on ourselves. It takes time to master our emotions. It takes repetition to work out our responses to one another. It takes learned skills to navigate conflict resolution. It takes maturity to make something beautiful in our marriages and in our lives.

There's dignity in a person who can smile while they're learning

and give themselves some grace. There is dignity in those who can learn to laugh at themselves. There's dignity in giving ourselves permission during the process to make mistakes without giving up. There's also an incredible dignity in loving one another through the maturing process of life.

God has given us a big task, and we all need help if we are going to mature into the people He wants us to be. God wants all of us to grow. Maturity is one of His purposes for our lives.

### **Ephesians 4:13-15 CEB**

*"... God's goal is for us to become mature adults—to be fully grown, measured by the standard of the fullness of Christ. As a result, we aren't supposed to be infants any longer who can be tossed and blown around by every wind that comes from teaching with deceitful scheming and the tricks people play to deliberately mislead others. Instead, by speaking the truth with love, let's grow in every way into Christ,"*

Would you give your spouse time to grow up, let them mature with supportive encouragement, and cheer them along in your journey together?

Do you want to see change and maturity in your marriage? Start with yourself. Be the person God has called you to be. Turn your attention to your own spiritual growth and pray for your spouse as God works it out in them.

**Don't give up, the best things take time.**

# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

Sometimes we hear a couple say that they have tried everything to stay together, but that is not quite true - not giving up is still on the table.

*"Longitudinal studies reveal that two-thirds of unhappy marriages will become happy within five years if people stay married and do not get divorced. Two-thirds! What can keep marriages together during the rough patches? The vows. A public oath, made to the world, keeps you "tied to the mast" until your mind clears and you begin to understand things better." - Keller (2011-11-01). The Meaning of Marriage: Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God (p. 79)*

Long marriages are not perfect marriages, conflict-free marriages, or compatible marriages.

**Take time now to pray for each other and affirm your love and desire to be supportive as both of you grow in maturity and in grace. Ask God to help you mature.**

# DAY NINE

## THE DIGNITY OF TEMPERING

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The etymology of the word temper comes from a measured off place and it has with it the connotation of being consecrated for a purpose. The root word in Old French is used to describe something being stretched.

I suppose that is why the Latin language used it to describe being restrained, and we use it in the English language to describe the tempering process of steel. We should not give up the sacred ground of sanctification and maturing in marriage. Like no other space, marriage is consecrated and holy. It is a place of stretching and tempering. James uses a word for patience in his letter that means “staying under” and he says let it do its work in you.

We say that someone loses their temper when they get angry, but that is not the only thing that is lost. When we lose our temper, we lose our dignity and we quench the Spirit’s work.

### **James 1:19-20**

“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger; for the anger of man does not produce the righteousness of God.”

Tempering is a process required to strengthen using pressure



and heat that adds value and improves character. 2 Corinthians 4 tells us that these pressures are working an eternal weight of glory. What was lost in the garden was gained back on the cross. Mankind lost control in the Fall and mankind has self-control restored through fruit of the Spirit. For me, the fruit of the Spirit has become the rubric for the full restoration of our dignity.

What comes out of us when we are squeezed? What is revealed when we are stressed? What does it do to us when we experience pressure?

If you squeeze an orange, orange juice comes out. If you squeeze an angry person, anger comes out. If you squeeze a bitter person, bitterness comes out. But what about the Christian, is it possible that when a Christian is squeezed, can Christ come out?

When we lose our temper, we lose our dignity. When we gain our temper, we gain our dignity. So, the character of a spouse is not developed when they get what they want. The character of a spouse has developed when they do not get what they want.

*J.I. Packer writes, "God uses chronic pain and weakness, along with other afflictions, as his chisel for sculpting our lives. Felt weakness deepens dependence on Christ for strength each day. The weaker we feel, the harder we lean. And the harder we lean, the stronger we grow spiritually, even while our bodies waste away. To live with your 'thorn' uncomplainingly—that is, sweet, patient, and free in heart to love and help others, even though every day you feel weak—is true sanctification. It is true healing for the spirit. It is a supreme victory of grace."*

You're in a holy process when you are being stretched. Don't abandon each other when things heat up.

# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

When Ulysses was traveling to the island of the Sirens, he knew that he would go mad when he heard the voices of the women on the rocks. He also learned that the insanity would be temporary, lasting until he could get out of earshot. He didn't want to do something while temporarily insane that would have permanent bad consequences. So he put wax in the ears of his sailors, tied himself to the mast, and told his men to keep him on course no matter what he yelled. In the moment of surged impulse, escalated emotion, and mind-altering fear we can feel like the world is falling apart. We can feel like we have no other choices. But the tide of insanity will subside and if we allow calm to return, it will. I have been "temporarily insane". We are all capable of losing our composure even if we admit it or not. In times of stress and conflict, it is our commitments that holds us until clearer minds prevail. For the sake of your future, bind yourself to the mast of God's Word and hold on through this storm of life. If you have to, "put wax in your ears" or limit who has your ear.

**Take a moment and grab ahold of each other while you pray. Tell God in prayer about some things that are stressful. Yes, he knows but it will do you good to pray about those things out loud together.**

# DAY TEN

## A LEGACY OF LISTENING

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I have come to believe that listening is a building block of dignity. When we listen to someone else, we bestow on them dignity and we gain our own dignity. An effort to listen is an effort to live with and treat others with dignity.

We even use language that affirms this truth when we say that someone is not “paying” attention. What are we saying? That a lack of giving someone our attention is the act of not valuing them.

We listen when we value someone’s opinion.

We listen when we value giving them time.

We listen when we value understanding them.

We listen when we value their feelings.

We listen when we value including someone.

Find a good listener and you will find a person who has dignity and bestows dignities.

### **James 1:19**

*“Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger.”*

God help us to give others the respect of listening and help us to shut our mouths long enough so they can speak.

Here are a few practices to put into place in our effort to improve our listening.

1. Get face to face and pay attention to both verbal and nonverbal communication.
  2. Eliminate and reduce distractions with undivided attention.
  3. Ask questions for further clarification and give affirmation when communication is understood.
  4. Resist preparing your response as they speak, give them time to stop and formulate their thoughts without being cut off.
  5. Resist listening with a critical ear to point out their errors.
- Good listeners make the person speaking feel heard and valued even when there is disagreement.

You have baggage. I have baggage. We all have baggage.

*"Research in marriage and family therapy suggests that approximately 80 percent of the emotional conflict between couples is rooted in events that predate the couple knowing each other. That's why one of the questions I commonly ask in marriage counseling is how much of each spouse's reaction to the other is his or her "80 percent." In other words, how much of the conflict is not so much a direct outgrowth of a current event as something that flows from parts of their minds that are remembering?"*

-Curt Thompson, Anatomy of the Soul

Figuring out what we carry into a relationship will help us know what to be on the lookout for. This is true especially when it comes to past hurts.

Past problems have a way of showing up in the present and then messing up our futures. In marriage counseling I like to ask couples to write down some good things they bring from their past into the

marriage and also write down some difficult things from their past that they wish they did not have to bring. Talk about these things. Think about how they impact you now. Hurts, fears, failures, and traumas weigh us down. Like at the airport, sometimes we need to get rid of some stuff to get on board and be able to move forward.

**Psalm 38:4, 9**

*“For my iniquities have gone over my head; like a heavy burden, they are too heavy for me. O Lord, all my longing is before you; my sighing is not hidden from you.”*

What did David do when he was weighed down? He unloaded on the Lord.

Drag that stuff out and deal with it. May God give us all the grace to leave some of it behind.

As a pastoral counselor and chaplain, one of the primary things I do is listen to people. Being an extrovert kind of puts me at a disadvantage because for my personality it requires intentional active listening. Even after years of training and experiences I catch myself talking when I should be listening. It is a strong compulsion and the way I am naturally wired. It is both a strength and a weakness.

I am thankful God called me to be a pastor for many reasons. One of those reasons is because God has used counseling other people to work on my heart. As I listen to other people share about their decisions, conflicts, and struggles something happens. I am able to listen without being guarded or defensive. In my own circumstances and when I am dealing with myself I come at it with self interest and a skewed perspective. In counseling, though, something significant has happened many times. Like a curtain

being pulled back and light shining in, there have been moments that hearing someone else's words has caught me off guard enough and vulnerable enough to expose areas in my life that I was unable or unwilling to see.

It happened twice this week. Once as I listened to a pastor and once as I listened to a spouse. They did not know what was happening, but God was helping me see things I was unable or unwilling to see.

A seminary professor in a class on self leadership asked us the following two questions. First, if I asked you at the end of the day, "did you love and serve your spouse well" how would you answer it? The second question was, if I asked your spouse at the end of the day, "did they love you and serve you well"? What would they say?

It is not enough that we can justify ourselves. We all can make excuses and we all can build a case. But, at the end of the day what our spouses or children or friends or employers think matters. For me, I know the goal post changed that day. The goal is not whether or not I can argue my point and justify my stance and behavior. The goal is for the people that I love to feel loved and cared for. It is a scary thing to ask, "what is it like being on the other side of me?"

One of the best things that will ever happen to us is hearing what is true.

# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

A friend of mine came to me and told me, "Hey, the other day I did not handle things well. I had several conversations that do not reflect my heart. I had to go back and say that I was sorry for my attitude. I want a do over."

Proverbs 3:7 warns, "*Don't be wise in your own eyes*". Later the book describes this kind of prideful person as "*wiser in his own eyes than seven men who can answer sensibly*." What a terrible image of a person who refuses to listen. God help us all.

**It would be good to take a moment and ask God to help you be better at listening to one another. Ask God to help you to be quick to listen and slow to speak.**

# DAY ELEVEN

## THE DIGNITY OF SLOWING

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Have you ever been driving down the road and someone rush up on you? Maybe they even honked their horn or flashed their lights, or gave you some hand gestures that seemed disproportionately angry. Maybe they swerved around you in a dangerous way and sped past you. This kind of behavior can hurt people, and many times their impulsive behavior and impatience can be unnerving.

Maybe you have been the one who impatiently flew around another driver and accelerated past the speed limits and common sense. Either way, I would assume anyone that's been on the highway has experienced a variation of the story only to drive up to the next stoplight and wait together for the light to change.

It seems silly doesn't it? All of that angst, anxiety, and endangerment turns out to be unproductive.

Slowing increases our own dignity. Slowing is the character that is not moved, manipulated, or bullied out of position by someone else's offense. Our pace is our commitment to our identity and agency. To lose our patience, is to lose our dignity. To lose our patience, is to lose our sense of self. Impatience is indignity.



The attributes of God are described in Exodus 34:6-7: *And he passed in front of Moses, proclaiming, "The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger, abounding in love and faithfulness, maintaining love to thousands, and forgiving wickedness, rebellion and sin."*

This "slow to anger" character of God is immutable. This "abounding in love" character of God is unchanging. This "keeping love to a thousand generations" character of God is unbending.

Slow down. Stillness is not laziness, waiting well is not weakness, and slowing purposefully is not dereliction of duty. Learning to wait well is some of the most important maturing we will ever do when it comes to giving and gaining dignity.

**James 1:19**

*"Know this, my beloved brothers: let every person be quick to hear, slow to speak, slow to anger."*

Patience is a basic building block of dignity. When we are patient, we give our spouse time. When we are patient, we assume the best. When we are patient, we make room for their point of view. When we are patient, we are slow to jump to conclusions. When we are patient, we are slow to attribute blame.

Do you want to restore your dignity? Do you want to treat your spouse with dignity? Slow down and breathe.

# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

Self-care is not selfish, it is stewardship.

*"Ignoring our emotions is turning our back on reality. Listening to our emotions ushers us into reality. And reality is where we meet God. . . . Emotions are the language of the soul. They are the cry that gives the heart a voice. . ."*

- Peter Scazzero

Psalm 62:5-8 encourages us to pour out our hearts. As we start the day it is good for us to settle our heart in the Lord.

*"Find rest, O my soul, in God alone; my hope comes from him. He alone is my rock and my salvation; he is my fortress, I will not be shaken. My salvation and my honor depend on God; he is my mighty rock, my refuge. Trust in him at all times, O people; pour out your hearts to him, for God is our refuge."*

Self-care is not selfish, it is stewardship.

**Take time to talk about the commitment to slow down and make room for what matters. Pray and ask God to bring things to your attention that He wants you to address. Ask God to bring rest to your souls.**

# DAY TWELVE

## THE DIGNITY IN DISAGREEMENT

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### **How do we treat people with whom we disagree?**

The character of a men and women is not revealed by how they act when they get what they want. The character of a men and women is revealed by how they act when they do not get what they want.

There is a clip in a 2019 award winning movie starring Adam Driver and Scarlett Johanson called Marriage that portrays a couple melting down in an argument. They start in with a volley of insults, resentments and disgust. It escalates to a wall-punching climax with the husband telling the wife that he wishes she would get cancer and die. Then it happens. The tension breaks, and he falls to his knees sobbing with his head in his hands. She comes over to him and lays her hand on his shoulder. They have pushed each other to say things they do not mean. They have allowed the darkest part of their thoughts to spill out into terrible words that are irretrievably wounding. Almost anyone who is flawed and has been married knows what it is like to be guilty of indignity.

My hope and conviction is that it is not too late for us. It is possible to restore our sense of self-respect and our dignity if it has been diminished.. This book is an attempt to honestly look at marriage, maturity, and the journey along the way.

Some well-meaning people want everyone to agree and get along. They emphasize unity even over conscience. This just pushes disagreements underground. When people are not welcome to voice their thoughts, things look good on the surface, but bitterness roots and grows.

Patrick Lencioni wrote:

The key ingredient to building trust is not time. It is courage. For the sake of your marriage, family, church, business, and friends don't avoid conflict, embrace it. Learn to talk it out. Learn to be ok if someone you love or work with doesn't land on the same conclusion you do. Learn to give those you disagree with some grace and treat them with dignity. And when your disagreement turns to offense remember this verse:

### **Colossians 3:13**

*Bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive.*

We all act out of character at times. I think of it as losing our dignity. Personality paradigms like the enneagram call it disintegration. It is the moment when we are under pressure and we allow someone or something to push us outside of our personality.

Maybe you are at your base a very controlled person and something has you screaming. Maybe you are naturally an outgoing person but conflict has you avoiding and isolating. Maybe you pride yourself on being self-assured but pressure has rocked your confidence.

Live long enough and you will have a crisis of self. Deep down we are all contradictions. We are sinful in that we miss the mark. The

character of God is without contradiction. His nature is unchanging and his reactions are consistent.

What does it mean to be godly? It means to be whole and dignified.

## CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

Patrick Lencioni writes,

*“Teams that trust each other are not afraid to engage in passionate dialogue around issues and decisions that are key to the organization’s success. They do not hesitate to disagree with, challenge, and question one another, all in the spirit of finding the best answers, discovering the truth, and making great decisions.”*

Conflict is unavoidable in healthy relationships and healthy cultures.

My friend Nathan says that when we find ourself having imaginary conversations, it is time to start having actual conversations.

**Take a moment and reaffirm your desire to be kind even when you disagree, especially when you disagree. Pray for the Holy Spirit to put a leash on you and have control over your words. Pray the Psalm 139 prayer.**

### **Psalm 19:14**

*May these words of my mouth and this meditation of my heart be pleasing in your sight, Lord, my Rock and my Redeemer.*

# DAY THIRTEEN

## THE DIGNITY OF BEAUTY AND GRACE

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The God who made all the colors, all the stars, all the sunsets, and everything else that's beautiful, looks over all of His creation and there is something that is beautiful in his sight according to 1 Peter 3.

### **1 Peter 3:1 (summary)**

*If you have a spouse that is not obeying the word, be gracious to them instead of lecturing them or nagging them.*

### **1 Peter 3:2 (summary)**

*When they see your dignity and the way you are treating them it will be greatly impactful.*

### **1 Peter 3:3 (summary)**

Don't try to manipulate them with external efforts.

*1 Peter 3:4 "rather let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious."*

Do you see what God sees? Do you see the spouse treating their undeserving spouse with grace and God looking down and saying, "now that is beautiful". When we treat an undeserving/undignified person with dignity it is called grace. When we give and forgive, we are overpaying the market value on purpose and increasing their appraisal.

When beautiful Sarah respected her less than respectable husband Abraham, God saw that beautiful grace. When beautiful Sarah stayed around long enough for Abraham to wonder, repent, and mature, God saw that beautiful grace. When beautiful Sarah, called Abraham Lord instead of liar, louse, or loser, God saw that beautiful grace and it was precious in His sight.

There is a difference between earned dignity and bestowed dignity. Everybody has a God-given value and some people live in such an honorable way that we give them or attribute to them dignity. Grace, however, is a dignity that is given when it is not deserved. It is an unmerited favor. Every marriage will require this kind of grace. When we give grace to our spouse in moments of their weakness and brokenness we afford them a kind of dignity that affirms their worth beyond their performance. Giving your spouse dignity and forgiving your spouse of indignity is one of the most significant ways you will ever communicate their value.

### **We nurse each others the wounds.**

Nurses have taught us something about dignity. They walk into rooms that most people want to get out of. They meet people at their worst moments in life and come alongside them. They treat indignities with dignity. They remind us that people who can't help themselves can be treated with kindness, respect, and tenderness. Nurses clean wounds and help tend to the pain. Every spouse has a wound deep in their soul and when we get close enough to them we enter into their pain. Inevitably we all need grace.

Do you want to restore dignity to your spouse and marriage and gain your own dignity? Grace is the answer.

Sarah was a woman of beautiful dignity that partnered with God

in seeing her husband become a dignified man. I bet there were some times that she really struggled to stay with him. Charlie Shedd wrote often about his wife Martha and their marriage. One time they had a big argument that left both of them sore. The next morning he found a note on the table that said, "Dear Charlie, I hate you. Love Martha." Haha The people that we allow to be the closest to us can also be the people that we struggle the most with.

Doctor Henry Cloud warns against what he calls Mutually Assured Destruction. This term was used in the Cold War. It was an approach that each action required an equitable response. So, if one nation built a bomb then the other had to build a bomb. He warns that every relationship will be destroyed without grace.

### **Proverbs 24:29**

*"Do not say, "I will do to him as he has done to me; I will pay the man back for what he has done."*

### **Psalms 103:8-12**

*"The Lord is merciful and gracious, slow to anger and abounding in steadfast love. He will not always chide, nor will he keep his anger forever. He does not deal with us according to our sins, nor repay us according to our iniquities. For as high as the heavens are above the earth, so great is his steadfast love toward those who fear him; as far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our transgressions from us."*

*What a beautiful grace.*



# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

No one marries a perfect and whole person. Everyone is damaged by their own sin. Everyone has been damaged by the sin of people around us. Some in big ways. Some in small ways (benefit of a godly home). Some in consistent small jabs that wear them down.

So if sin is the stripping away of our dignity. Christ laid aside his dignity momentarily in order to purchase us back from sin. Through the sanctification process, Christ addresses the indignities that we carry with us. Marriage is the opportunity to walk with each other and support each other through that process. As opposed to trying to fix each other.

**Take a moment and thank God for his patient grace and long-suffering. Pray gracious words over each other.**

# DAY FOURTEEN

## THE DIGNITY OF DEPOSITS AND WITHDRAWALS

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It has happened to me on a number of occasions. As a pastor my job is to listen in counseling to both spouses. There has been several times that a wife has explained her point of view to me and her husband in such a way that I totally understood what she meant. Somehow being her pastor instead of her husband cleared up whatever was obstructing my view as a husband myself. As I understood what she was saying, I could see how it made her feel.

Seeking to understand before being understood is a highly effective habit.

These counseling moments have been huge for my own marriage. Multiple times I have left my office and went home to apologize to my own wife. It was in the counseling session that I saw for the first time what I was doing to Julie. I heard explanations that my wife had tried to articulate, but my guard was up and I did not have ears to hear.

Psychologists use a technique called mirroring. When a couple has a “passionate discussion,” the counselor teaches them to state their case to each other and then allow the other spouse to mirror back what they just heard. Many times in this process terms are defined, assumptions are debunked, misunderstanding is revealed,

and understanding is mutually found.

Here is a quote about the benefit of this practice:

“You have accurate information to work with, you get to the heart of matters quickly, you build Emotional Bank Accounts, and you give people the psychological air they need so you can work together effectively.”

One marriage guru introduced the concept of “Emotional Bank Accounts”. He says that every relationship has deposits and withdraws. We better be making deposits if we are going to expect to be able to make withdraws.

If you are not seeking to understand your spouse, but you expect him or her to understand you, then you are eventually going to bankrupt your relationship. If we are not careful, all we can see is our needs and our point of view.

Jesus warned in **Matthew 7** about this (paraphrased):

“Judge not that ye shall not be judged. For, with what judgement you judge, you will be judged; and with whatever measure you use, it shall be measured back onto you, and even multiplied! And why do you examine the splinter in thy brother’s eye, when you have a tree growing out of your own? And how can you even see to remove the splinter from your brother’s eye when you are blinded by the tree growing out of yours? Hypocrite! First, remove the tree from thine own eye, then you may see clearly to remove the splinter from your brother’s.”

One of the most maturing things I have ever had happen in my life is to understand someone else’s point of view. No one wins at everything. We all have shortcomings. We all have holes in our education. We all have blind spots. When you live with someone, they have a front row seat to your sins and inconsistencies.

Julie told me the other day something that I thought was excellent. We were talking about these articles. Julie said that early in our marriage she decided that she would rather have me in her life more than she needed me to be perfect or have it all together.

We must seek to understand our spouse. When they are talking, we must listen instead of building a case so as soon as they are finished we can prove our point.

### **1 Corinthians 13:4-7 ESV**

*Love is patient and kind; love does not envy or boast; it is not arrogant or rude. It does not insist on its own way; it is not irritable or resentful; it does not rejoice at wrongdoing, but rejoices with the truth. Love bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things.*

### **Psalm 119:130**

*The unfolding of your words gives light; it imparts understanding to the simple.*

### **Proverbs 14:29**

*Whoever is slow to anger has great understanding, but he who has a hasty temper exalts folly.*

### **Proverbs 18:2**

*A fool takes no pleasure in understanding, but only in expressing his opinion.*

### **Proverbs 17:27**

*Whoever restrains his words has knowledge, and he who has a cool spirit is a man of understanding.*

# CONVERSATION AND PRAYER

Research suggest that the sweet spot is a 5 to 1 ratio. This means that for every negative interaction during conflict, a stable and happy marriage has five (or more) positive interactions. Whether it's about not having enough sex, the dirty laundry, or spending too much money, conflict is inevitable in every marriage.

What is the predictable outcome of interactions that are negative? Do the math and ask yourself how you are treating those whom you are around. The Gottman Institute says that the sweet spot is a 5:1 ratio. A stable and happy marriage has five (or more) positive interactions for every one negative.

**If you have been particularly negative and hard to spend time with, how about taking a moment and apologizing and asking for forgiveness? Pray for your relationship to be a source of joy and refreshment, not a draining frustration.**

