Series: “Single. Married.” (Part 3)

“Mars and Venus: What Men Wish Women Knew About Men”

This is the third sermon in this series called “Single. Married.” These messages are about relationships. Again, I ask those of you who are unmarried to hang in. While the focus in the earlier sermons will be more on marriage, I will say more later to address those of you who are single.

In the last message I referred to a metaphor Dr. Willard Harley and others use to describe our need for love – it’s called the “love bank”. Every time we express love in a way that’s meaningful to our partner, we make a deposit in the love bank. Each time we give out love, there is a withdrawal. The ideal is to have both mates making more deposits than withdrawals.

One of the problems is that because men and women are different, our love banks often take a different currency. The way *I try to express love* may not make my partner *feel loved.* We speak a different “love language”. So, we have to learn to express love in a way that is consistent with my partner’s primary love language.

In the last sermon I tried to help us men look at things women need, and what fills their love banks. Today, I want to talk to you ladies, and try to help you understand what fills guys’ love banks.

Let’s go to some of the experts who do the research, give the lectures, and write the books. For instance, Dr. Willard Harley, Jr, in his book *His Needs, Her Needs,* says men have 5 basic needs:

***1. Sexual fulfillment.*** Now isn’t that a surprise!

***2. Recreational companionship.*** By this he means discovering things that *both partners* like to do, and doing them together.

***3. An attractive spouse.***  Often weight is an issue. But it also has to do with the choice of clothing, hair style, makeup, and personal hygiene.

***4. Domestic support.*** Dr. Harley describes this as the “creation of a peaceful and well-managed home environment”. It includes cooking meals, washing dishes, washing and ironing clothes, house cleaning and child care. Now some of you ladies may snicker and say, “Gee, it sounds like guys want to go back to the 1950’s, where the husband just had a job, and the women stayed home and minded the house and kids. Well, that era’s gone!” Yes it is! But there still seems to be something in us men that wants a wife who takes an interest in the home. My wife Nancy is a wonderful housekeeper and home decorator. I fuss at times about the money she

spends on home items, but there is a part of me that takes pride in the flair she has

for home décor. So, maybe a fair deal here is for *ladies* to listen when men say they need a wife who will invest herself in homemaking responsibilities – and for *men* to hear you ladies when you say you’d really like us to give you a hand and share the load in housekeeping chores and childcare responsibilities.

***5.*** Men need ***admiration.*** A man needs to be respected, valued, appreciated, complimented rather than criticized.

Other experts have additional things to say about men’s need to feel *valued* and

*appreciated.*  Richard Drobnick, of the Mars and Venus Counseling Center, says, “Men risked their lives for tens of thousands of years, going out on the hunt, protecting their families from dangerous neighbors, handling emergencies, etc. In those days, it was easy for women to appreciate men. Today, women can have jobs and earn good income, society has police and a general sense of safety, and they can even hire a handyman. Women don’t need men as much. Men have sort of lost their ‘jobs'”.

There is still a piece of us men that wants to protect and provide for those we love. We need to feel that our wives ***believe in our capabilities***to do that, and are grateful for it! ***Trust*** is part of this – we need to feel that the woman trusts us to do what’s needed - that you can count on us. For instance, criticism over the little things we don’t do…constantly reminding us of things that need to be done… also undercuts this whole matter of trust.

Of course, ladies can say, “We women need that too!” How true. *Everybody* needs to be appreciated. But it’s something we men need also!

Let me mention one other element that some experts put on the list of men’s emotional needs. It’s what some have called ***“Cave Time”*** – time alone, time apart. This could be time with the guys, or just time when the husbands are by themselves.

While many women reduce stress by *talking about their problems,* men tend to

reduce stress by *forgetting about their problems.* One counselor gives this advice to women when their guy retreats to his cave: “Don’t take it personally. Remember, it’s his way to reduce stress. Don’t chase after him or criticize him or he will retreat deeper into the cave…by being supportive, she has put honey outside the cave and

not vinegar. With this support and understanding, a man will return and be more

emotionally available, caring, and loving.”

Well, so much for what some of the “experts” say. **How does that stack up with**

**what the men of the church said in our surveys?** To be honest, a lot more women completed surveys than did the men. I’ve been thinking about this and what it might mean. One factor is that there are more ladies in our congregations than men.

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The other is this. It *probably means that we men have it together – we understand marriage and women, and we don’t want to be bothered filling out surveys.*

Don’t I wish! But that’s not the case! I think that having fewer men return the survey reminds us that *men tend to shy away from this “touchy-feely relationship stuff”!* A lot of guys aren’t much into talking with someone else about our marriage,

or the feelings we have that go along with being a single guy. Maybe if I had designed the questionnaire asking men to give advice on how to fix the toilet when it doesn’t work, or tips on buying a new car, it would have been different. So, thanks to the men who did respond (and to the ladies who filled out the survey also)!

**We asked married men: What do you want or need most from your wife?**  Here are some of the responses:

“Companionship to complete our goals in life”

“Belief in my abilities, trust in me, respect”

“Understanding in the pursuit of our children and God”

One person put: “Keeping me straight”!

**The men were also asked: When do you feel closest to your spouse?** Some of the responses are:

“When we fare troubles together. When we celebrate together.”

“When we are in synch and working toward a common goal.”

“When I help her.”

“When she finds her center and is happy.”

Even though a limited number of men responded, the information seems to

underscore what some of the experts said men need. M**en need a wife who will be our friend and companion.** Men seem to be saying that they want a wife who is the “helper” or the “helpmate” described in the Book of Genesis, in the story of Adam and Eve. Men want someone to share life with them, to be their partner working together towards common goals.

This includes wanting a wife who will ***listen.*** One of my favorite responses from the questionnaires came from a man who heard this series of sermons when I preached

them some years ago in a previous church. He wrote on his questionnaire that he feels closest to his wife “after sex, when we talk.” His wife then added these words to his sheet: “We don’t talk, he falls asleep” (followed by a little smiley face). The husband then noted underneath her words: “Not true” (with a smiley face)!

There is something a bit confusing here, in saying men want a wife who will *listen.*

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Often the complaint of you women is that guys don’t want to talk! So what’s going on here? Maybe it’s like this. We men aren’t usually as good talking about our *feelings* as you women are. But we do like to talk more about *objective facts and information that relates to us and our accomplishments –* and to have a wife who will listen!

**Men also seem to be saying: Our love banks are filled when we are needed and appreciated**. God seems to have placed in every man the desire to please a woman, to be some woman’s hero, some lady’s knight in shining armor!Now you ladies may be thinking, “C’mon Harry. Give me a break! You guys will just have to get over this fragile male ego stuff!” But look at the animal kingdom, how males strut

around and puff out their chest (and do all sorts of other oddball antics) just for the right to claim a female! You know, it makes me feel good when I finish a project around the house, or fix something, and Nancy voices appreciation.

**I can imagine that as I’ve been talking, some of you ladies have been wondering: What if my husband is hard to respect? What if he’s lazy? What if he hardly does anything to fill my emotional tank or love bank?** This *is difficult,* isn’t it?

Love is called for here – “agape” love – the God type love we are to have for others. The love where we *choose* to act in a caring and kind way to a person, even if the warm *feelings* are not there.

Here are just a few suggestions if this is the situation with your husband. First, focus less on what you *don’t like* about him – his shortcomings (which we all have). Stop complaining and criticizing. Hardly anyone is changed by nagging or browbeating. Second, tell your partner what good qualities you appreciate about him (even if it takes you three days to think of one)! No one’s totally bad. If you can be thankful for some of the good qualities about your husband, sometimes our *feelings* can change. Third, pray – and ask God to change your partner. You can’t, but maybe God can!

**Let’s turn to the Bible and see what it says about how wives should treat their husbands.** The New Testament doesn’t say much about this. And unfortunately, some of what it says angers and upsets many modern women! One of the best

known and controversial texts is found in Ephesians, chapter 5. Let’s look at what it says in verses 22-24. “Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.” Whoa!

This “submission” text has been quoted to justify all kinds of foolish and sinful

behavior! For instance, pastors who tell women to go back into a house where the

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husband physically beats them. Women who are advised to put up with a selfish, insensitive spouse without claiming any rights of their own – all in the name of wives “submitting” to their husbands.

Keep in mind when Scriptures like this are read that there are huge cultural differences between the status of women in the Bible and the status of women today. In Jesus’ time, for example, women basically had no rights. They were regarded as *property* (in a way similar to the place of women in some Muslim countries today). All of the Bible was written against the backdrop of a *patriarchal culture* where men were regarded as superior and had far more rights.

When we read Ephesians 5:22-24, we also should compare these verses with the verses around them. For instance, in verse 21 it says, “Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.” Here, husbands are told to submit to their wives as well! There is a mutual submission called for, not just the wife submitting to the husband.

In verse 24, which was quoted above, wives are told to be subject to their husbands *as the church submits to Christ.* Christian believers have no need to fear submitting to Christ, because He loves us and has our own best interests at heart.

In verse 25, a verse quoted last week, it says husbands are to love their wives as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her. If husbands love their wives as Christ loves the Church, there is no problem with submitting to such a person.

Verse 33 says “each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.” Again, it is far less difficult for a wife to respect a husband who loves her as he loves himself!

Certainly in a situation where a wife is in danger from an abusive husband, or if a husband maintains a consistent pattern of being totally thoughtless or selfish, to demand that a wife should submit to such a spouse is questionable, even dangerous. This command to submit has to be balanced with the reality that God created women in His own image, and a woman is to be valued, protected, and loved.

In Colossians chapter 3 there are similar words to those found in Ephesians 5. Colossians 3:18 says, “Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, *as is fitting in the Lord.*” Notice, this includes the stipulation, “as is fitting in the Lord,” not the blanket directive to submit to your husband “in everything” found in Ephesians 5. And in the next verse in Colossians 3, verse 19, we read: “Husbands, love your wives, and do not be harsh with them.” Here again, husbands must do their part!

These verses are part of a larger section in Colossians 3 giving instructions on how to live as believers. Listen to these words: “Therefore as God’s chosen people, holy

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and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness

and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you have a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you. And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. Let the peace of Christ rule in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful” (verses 12-15).

Most of the time when we read these verses we don’t apply them to our relationships in marriage. But this is how we are to treat *everyone, including our spouse.* We are to be kind, humble, gentle and patient. We are to bear with our partner’s short-comings, and forgive when we have something against our partner. We should have an attitude of thanksgiving in our marriage.

Let me share some closing thoughts. We’ve been talking in the last two messages about making deposits in our spouse’s “love bank”, or as others have put it, filling our partner’s “emotional tanks”. *But what if our emotional tanks have holes in them?* And all the love poured in just seems to drain out? *What if our “love banks”* *have secret hackers, withdrawing funds* – so that no matter how many deposits are made, the bank account always seems to be depleted? Do you know what I mean?

Someone you know, maybe you yourself, no matter how much love and affirmation and attention is given, *it never seems to be enough.* You’re complimented, but it doesn’t register. You’re praised, but you always need more. Somebody put a hole in the bottom of your emotional tank, someone set up your love bank so that automatic

withdrawals are made, and there’s no way you can stop them. It could have been a father who always put us down. Or a father or mother we could never please. Or maybe a parent or relative who gave us an image of our self as stupid, or ugly, or incompetent. Or it might have been an overprotective, intrusive mother, who never allowed us to do things for our self, never allowed us to grow up. So we never gained confidence in our abilities, or felt valued as a person. This is not to blame our mom or dad. They probably never got their love needs met. But it is to say that if this is the case, it will be very difficult for us to get our emotional tank or love bank filled. It will take extra work and patience on our part and on our spouse’s part.

Here are a few suggestions for those of us in this situation. First, look at your childhood. Did you get your love needs met as a child, a teenager? Were you

affirmed, appreciated, made to feel important? If not, remember, *God sees you*

*differently* than this parent or caregiver may have seen you. *God sees you as you really are.* And God’s message to you is that you are a person of value and worth, with something to offer in life.

Second, if looking at this and talking with your partner about it doesn’t help much, get some professional counseling. Go to a Christian counselor who can coach you and help you learn how to receive other peoples’ love and affirmation.