

Leadership Tip!

Make sure that during your group discussion, you solicit input from everyone. Ensuring participation from everyone will help grow stronger relationships.

THE ART OF RELATIONSHIP – WITH YOUR SPOUSE**STARTER QUESTIONS:**

Where did you and your spouse go on your first date?

What was the most embarrassing date that your spouse took you on?

Why is it important to still date your spouse?

MAIN IDEA:

This week in our series entitled “The Art of Relationship”, Pastor Hank focuses on the marriage relationship. Depending on whether you are married or single, Hank mentioned three things we should prioritize, which would set the stage for a healthy dating life, a healthy marriage, and even help set a wonderful example, for our children, of what a covenantal marriage should look like.

FOR SINGLES ONLY:

The *first priority* was for singles who are dating. Always look for persons of **character** and do not “settle” on outward appearances alone. Look for people that are “growing in their walk with the Lord and pursuing godliness. Looks alone and infatuation are not enough, when you are looking for a spouse. Be determined to only date people that respect and love the Lord as you do.

Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness? 2 Corinthians 6:14 (NIV)

What is the most important characteristic that you look for in a person when you are dating?

Does this characteristic align with God’s best for you? Why? Why not? (Share some experiences of dating gone bad.)

The *second priority* was for married couples was to prioritize their **spiritual walk**. (This certainly applies to singles as well.) A prioritized spiritual walk leads to spiritual maturity and better spiritual discernment.

Although many relationships begin with physical attraction, this is hardly sufficient to sustain a relationship. In order to have a relationship that stands the test of time, we learn that Jesus must be invited to more than just the ceremony, but that he must be at the **center** of the relationship.

KEY VERSE:

The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." Genesis 2:18 (NIV)

From the beginning, in the creation story, we learn that God designed us for relationships, beginning with our relationship with Jesus. Then after God created man, he blessed us with a wife, so that we would not be alone. This relationship is unique from all other relationships because it teaches us about oneness. Oneness does not mean a couple must think alike or agree about everything, but means to be *unified* and *committed* to one another.

Therefore a man shall leave his father and his mother and hold fast to his wife, and they shall become one flesh. Genesis 2:24 (ESV)

How would you describe the "oneness" in your marriage?

Why is "oneness" important in a marriage?

God has chosen the marriage relationship (covenant) to provide the world with an image of how Christ loves 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." This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church." Ephesians 5:31-32

Men often quote the following verse in Ephesians 5:22, which says

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 husbands in to their everything. Ephesians 5:22

The reality is that Ephesians 5:21 starts off with the idea of **mutual submission** out of **reverence for Christ**.

Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Ephesians 5:21 (NIV)

Ok, men, here is where it becomes impossible without the power of the Holy Spirit. In Ephesians 5:25-27, it says,

Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.

Holy and blameless? Really? That is exactly how God sees us, when we have surrendered our lives to Jesus Christ!

He has now reconciled in his body of flesh by his death, in order to present you holy and blameless and above reproach before him. Colossians 1:22 (ESV)

Men: How can we encourage and support one another in loving our wives as Christ loved the church?

Ok, ladies, you're not off the hook here! God has challenged you as well. Again, this is only possible through the power of the Holy Spirit.

However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and **the wife must respect her husband**. Ephesians 5:33 (NIV)

Let's be honest ladies This can be tough when you've asked a dozen times to have your husband fix something and he says okay, while he continues to watch "the game". But remember vs. 21 that tells us to do these things out of *reverence to Christ*. Changes things a little, right?

Women: How can we encourage and support one another in submitting to and respecting our husbands out of reverence to Christ?

You see, at the end of the day, we were created, to be in relationship with, and to glorify our Heavenly Father and that includes within our marriages!

For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. Colossians 1:16 (NIV)

FINAL THOUGHTS:

In the first message of the series, Hank showed himself and Donna playing a practical joke on one another. It was quite hilarious! The take-away was that we need to take the time to have fun with our spouses. Hank and Donna value having fun together? Do you? Why? Because it brings life, brings energy, and helps you love each other more and more. Let's never forget to laugh and have fun in our marriage relationships!

When is the last time you and your spouse just acted silly and had fun together?

By the way, the *final priority* was **marriage**. Be intentional in investing in your marriage and it will bless your children!

How can our group pray for you?

CLOSE IN PRAYER

THE ART OF RELATIONSHIP

“... With Your Spouse”

March 12, 2017

My wife is “the greatest (earthly) gift of grace a man could have.” –Martin Luther

“No man or woman really knows what perfect love is until they have been married a quarter of a century. You can get along on good looks for five or six...” - Mark Twain

Genesis 2:18 – ‘Ezer’ = “Suitable helper” or “complimentary fit”

Proverbs 2:17 – ‘Alluph’ = “special confidant” or “best friend.”

Song of Solomon 5:16 – ‘Dod’ = “lover” or “friend”

“There was a wedding celebration in the village of Cana in Galilee. Jesus’ mother was there, and Jesus and his disciples were also invited to the celebration.”

John 2:1-2 (NLT)

“I’ve rarely had a wife complain to me about her husband’s looks. When wives send me emails, it’s almost always about character issues: “He shouldn’t do this thing. He should do that thing, but doesn’t. How do I fix this?” Yet most women are not seeking men of character first. They are seeking men with whom they feel “in love.” If they do feel in love, they will excuse every fault they see in their man, trying to make the relationship work. If they do not feel in love, they will not seriously consider the man as a potential mate.” - Gary Thomas

“The wine supply ran out during the festivities, so Jesus’ mother told him, “They have no more wine.” “Dear woman, that’s not our problem,” Jesus replied. “My time has not yet come.” But his mother told the servants, “Do whatever he tells you.”

John 2:3-5 (NLT)

“Standing nearby were six stone water jars, used for Jewish ceremonial washing. Each could hold twenty to thirty gallons. Jesus told the servants, “Fill the jars with water.” When the jars had been filled, he said, “Now dip some out, and take it to the master of ceremonies.” So the servants followed his instructions.”

John 2:6-8 (NLT)

- Make character a priority. It will help your dating life.
- Make your marriage a priority. It will help your kids.
- Make your spiritual walk a priority. It will help your marriage.

“Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless.”

Ephesians 5:25-27 (NIV)

“To fall in love is to look at another person and get a glimpse of the person God is creating, and to say, ‘I see who God is making you, and it excites me! I want to be part of that. I want to partner with you and God in the journey you are taking to his throne. And when we get there, I will look at your magnificence and say, ‘I always knew you could be like this. I got glimpses of it on earth, but now look at you!’

-Tim Keller in “The Meaning of Marriage”

“When the master of ceremonies tasted the water that was now wine, not knowing where it had come from (though, of course, the servants knew), he called the bridegroom over. “A host always serves the best wine first,” he said. “Then, when everyone has had a lot to drink, he brings out the less expensive wine. But you have kept the best until now!”

John 2:9-10 (NLT)