

CONNECTED Uniting People March 18, 2018

John 17:22 “I’ve given them the glory You gave Me, so they may be one as We are one. 23 I’m in them & You’re in Me. May they experience such perfect unity that the world will know that You sent Me & that You love them as much as You love Me.

We were created for relationships. Humans weren’t made for isolation. We were made for connection because we’re created in the image of God. God is love, & to love, you’ve got to have somebody to love. (“Everybody, loves somebody, sometime)

Hebrews 10:24 Let’s think of ways to motivate one another to acts of love & good works. 25 And let’s not neglect our meeting together, as some people do, but encourage one another...

Godly community makes a difference. When we live this way, people want to be together because they’re experiencing encouragement, care, help, correction, comfort, motivation, home, belonging... And people notice; as we demonstrate Christ’s love & grace in action, our community becomes an important factor in drawing people to Jesus

We’re moving forward. We’re not waiting around for something to happen. By faith, we’re growing in the Holy Spirit w/ the power of God. Our community’s filled w/ people who are connected not only to God but to each other. We’re gathering people who want to know Jesus who are truly seeking to understand this Christianity thing. People who are hungry for meaningful, rich relationships. People who are devoted to worship, to prayer, to teaching, & to community.

MARRIAGE RELATIONSHIPS & CONNECTEDNESS

Genesis 2:18 Then the Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be **alone**. I will make a helper who is just right for him."

Matthew 18:19 AMP ...if two of you on earth agree (harmonize, make a symphony together) about whatever [anything & everything] they may ask, it'll come to pass & be done for them by My Father in heaven.

***There must be spiritual, social, & physical agreement & intimacy.**

Signs of isolation & disconnection & emotional distance:

- *A feeling they aren't hearing you & don't understand
- *An attitude of "Who cares?" and/or "Why try?"
- *A feeling of being unable to please/meet expectations
- *A sense that they're detached from you
- *Refuse to cope w/ what's wrong "*That's your problem, not mine*"
- *A feeling that keeping the peace by avoiding the conflict is better than the pain of dealing with reality
- *Some of you are bored and apathetic; you're dying from emotional malnutrition and neglect.
- *The longer this lack of connection lingers, the more you feel like you're living as roommates, instead of lovers.

You stop coming for advice: they won't care about your problems; no longer respect their opinions; you are not emotionally secure enough with them to share your problems.

You stop sharing your life: you're no longer sharing anything w/ your spouse. Your conversations are short & shallow, then you watch TV. You don't share details of your work, family, friends, or your children. You don't feel they deserve to know what's going on in your life.

You are purposely critical: Hurt people hurt people. Find the smallest thing to criticize. Majority of your conversations are criticisms, so your spouse is most likely going to withdraw even further from you.

You stop having sex: no longer want to be intimate. No emotional connection, you can't give that much of yourself. Using the gatekeeper method of withholding sex as a form of punishment.

Side effects when you feel no emotional connection w/ your spouse

If you've been trying to connect w/ your spouse & they keep turning you away it can feel hopeless. This is a frustrating & demoralizing

Loneliness and depression: You've made vows of forever & yet you feel like you are taking on your days alone. Loneliness is disheartening.

Self-doubt: Few things in life are more paralyzing than self-doubt.

When you can't emotionally connect w/ your spouse you start doubting yourself. Am I not a good enough? Do they not like me enough to share their emotional side? Are they connecting w/ somebody else? Leads to jealousy, paranoia, low self-esteem, etc.

You grow distant: The more you try to connect & feel nothing in return, the more distant you'll grow from one another. After being "turned down" from emotionally intimate conversations for long enough, you'll stop trying to share yourself spiritually, emotionally, sexually, mentally..

Infidelity: *Feeling emotionally neglected* makes you *feel like* your mate no longer cares about you or fulfilling your needs. Loneliness & neglect can sharply turn into anger & resentment toward your spouse. Coupled w/ insecurity, these emotions can leave you ripe for an affair.

What to do when you feel no emotional connection.

Communicate: Say how you're feeling & that you don't feel close. Ask if there is anything you can do to help you bond together again. This may open up the conversation and allow both of you to share issues.

Don't play the blame game: Tell of your lack of emotional connection, but don't blame. Don't say it's their fault that you feel disconnected. Instead, express your desire to be connected.

Schedule date nights: Especially if you have children; remember to have fun together. Scheduling a date night once a week & following it will create a deeper emotional connection. Take up a hobby together, go out for dinner and a movie, jog together, or go out for coffee.

Whatever you do, make sure it is something that you both enjoy where you will be able to talk and share.

Keep having sex: It's difficult if you feel no emotional connection. But having sex is going to be beneficial to both of you. Sex that results in orgasm is one of the biggest doses of oxytocin, or "the love drug" you will ever get. For women, this hormone Oxytocin stimulates bonding & empathy. For men, stimulates the reward center of the brain & releases a rush of dopamine through the body. Overall, sex is a bonding agent.

1 Corinthians 11:11 Among *the Lord's people*, women aren't independent of men, men aren't independent of women. 12 Although the first woman came from man, every other man was born from a woman, & *everything comes from God*.

We all feel busy, overworked, tired, taken for granted. Natural selfishness will cloud our judgment, & we'll start thinking our spouse isn't doing enough to keep the marriage & the family going "*Each horse thinks his pack is heaviest.*"

7 Steps to Defeat Disconnection/Isolation in Your Marriage

Step One: Learn about God's blueprint for marriage

God created marriage, we should find out what His blueprints are for building a marriage.

Ephesians 5:21 ...*submit to one another* out of reverence for Christ. 22 For wives, this means submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For a husband is the head of his wife as Christ is the head of the church. He's the Savior of His body, the church. 24 As the church submits to Christ, so you wives should submit to your husbands in everything. 25 husbands, this means love your wives, as Christ loved the church. He gave up His life for her to make her holy & clean, washed by the cleansing of God's Word. He did this to present her to Himself as a glorious church w/out a spot or wrinkle or any other blemish. She'll be holy & w/out fault. In the same way husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man who loves his wife actually shows love for himself. 29 No one hates his own body but feeds & cares for it, just as Christ cares

for the church. 30 We're members of His body.31 The Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father & mother & is joined to his wife, & the two are united into one." 32 This is a great mystery, but it's an illustration of the way Christ & the church are one. 33 So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

If you build your marriage according to God's blueprints, as the years go by you will really appreciate the genius of how God has custom-made your spouse for you.

Step Two: Reaffirm your commitment

Genesis 2:21 The Lord God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep. While the man slept, the Lord God took out one of the man's ribs & closed up the opening. 22Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib, & he brought her to the man. 23"At last!" the man exclaimed. "This one is bone from my bone, flesh from my flesh! She'll be called woman because she was taken from 'man.'24This explains why a man leaves his father & mother and is joined to his wife, & the two are united into one. 25Now the man & his wife were both naked, but they felt no shame.

Adam accepted God's gift totally—he received Eve as God's gift to Him. He trusted God totally, knowing this woman was God's provision for his needs. Marriages today are disconnected because the husband & wife have stopped accepting each other. They've stopped trusting God. Focusing on differences/weaknesses

Adam & Eve felt no fear or rejection. Total acceptance. When a husband & wife truly leave, become united, and become one flesh, they experience "oneness," which is the opposite of isolation in marriage. This is a total commitment to God & to each other. Each spouse needs to say, "I will love you w/out demanding an equal amount in return. I am committed to this relationship for a lifetime & I'll do whatever it takes to make our marriage work."

Step Three: Deal with your selfishness

Couples underestimate how selfishness threatens a marriage. During courtship, we do everything we can to attract. Once we're married & the conquest is complete, our natural selfishness, independence, & pride begin to bubble up. You may say, "There's no hope; I can't get him to change," or "What's the use? She'll never be any different." The answer for ending selfishness is found in Jesus & His Word. He showed instead of wanting to be first, we must be last. Instead of wanting to be served, we must serve. Instead of trying to save our life, we must lose it. Marriage is built when two individuals deny their selfishness and yield to Jesus for the purpose of loving and serving their spouses. Jesus will begin the process of building your home if you submit to Him.

Step Four: Begin to pray with your spouse

Daily together. Start a spiritual discipline. This daily habit will help you resolve conflicts & keep the communication lines open. Most importantly, it demonstrates your dependence on Jesus as the Lord of your family. Invite God into your marriage daily, He will change things. God wants marriage to be a spiritual relationship between a man, a woman, & God. It's natural for God, the One who initiated marriage, to want us to bring our lives to Him.

Step Five: Develop your relationship skills

We develop some bad relational habits over the years, we need training & practice to develop skill in practical areas of marriage: *Adjusting to your differences; Resolving conflict; Listening to each other; Speaking the truth in love; Communicating expectations; Forgiving each other; etc. Your determination to improve your skills in areas like these will show just how serious you are about revitalizing your marriage.

The "D-word" - Don't use the "D-word"! Don't even think of divorce. Too many marriages begin to unravel when one of the spouses mentally entertains the possibility of divorce.

Step Six: Spend focused time together

Focused attention is gold. In addition to regular dates, *make sure you plan for getaways*. How long has it been since you spent extended, focused time w/ your spouse? Not just an evening out, but a couple of days away from your usual environment to catch up w/ each other? In too many marriages, the demands of the ordinary grind overwhelm us. Because of our fast-paced culture, we need to pause once or twice a year to rest, count our blessings, & dream some dreams. Without any of the everyday distractions, we can concentrate on romancing each other.

Step Seven: Depend on God's power to build your marriage

We don't use all of the resources & tools God makes available to build *oneness* in our homes.

Psalm 127:1 Unless the Lord builds a house, the work of the builders is wasted.

***Are you and your spouse part of the family of God?*

***Are both of you allowing the Holy Spirit to guide & empower your lives?*

Unless you answer yes to both of these questions, you'll lack the power to build your marriage w/ the oneness God intends. Many of us say we're Christians but we've never truly known God. What each of us needs in our own marriage is something to defeat our selfishness. The Spirit helps us control our temper, impatience, selfishness, desire to say things we'd later regret. We need Jesus.