

The Journey – Part Five – Needs

by Lloyd Biddle

Specific Needs

Needs - N is for specific needs. Speaking in general terms, men and women need very different things from marriage. In 1994, psychologist and marriage counselor Dr. Willard Harley published his book, *His Needs, Her Needs*. From his experience counseling married couples for over 25 years, he concluded that many married couples were splitting apart because they failed to meet each others most important emotional needs.

According, to Dr. Harley, a woman's most important emotional needs are:

Affection - When men think of affection, many connect it with sex. When women think of affection, they think of hugs, phone calls, invitations to dinner, flowers, love letters, cards, conversation and other things that show them you care. Many will tell you, they could use more of this from their husband.

Conversation - How many of you spent more time talking to each other on the phone and otherwise before you got married than you do today? This is typical. Many wives report that their husband talked more to them before they got married than afterward. Women seem to connect consistent verbal communication with intimacy more closely than men do. I must admit that sometimes I forget to keep calling my wife at home regularly. I think she likes it when I do this, probably even more now than in the past, because I am much harder to reach by phone than I used to be. I need to seek her out more at home just to talk. Adopting good communication habits strengthens marriages.

Honesty and Openness - We talked about this when we talked about the need to understand each other in marriage. Whereas secrets and lies destroy a union, honesty and openness build it up. (See U is for Understand in newsletter archives)

Financial Support - Here's a brief excerpt on this topic from Harley's book: "Whatever women say in public about their willingness to share the burden of making a living, in private I hear something different. Married women tell me they resent working, if their working is not an absolute necessity. I strongly disagree with the materialistic trend that has forced women into the work force simply to "keep up with the Joneses", not to mention just to keep up with the bank and the credit-card bills. Many couples set a standard of living for themselves far higher than they need to be happy. If they would simply reduce their standards of living to a point of comfort, many could avoid husbands working long hours and wives pressured to earn a paycheck. Please understand I'm not against women who want careers and I don't oppose women who choose a career early in life. My daughter who is married with two small children earned a PhD and is a licensed psychologist. I am proud of her achievement, and she is happy with her dual role as homemaker and psychologist. And so is her husband. I wish, rather, to stress the principle that women themselves need to make the choice of whether or not to work. If they choose a career, the money they earn should not have to be spent on basic support of the family. To put it all very simply, a family needs to learn how to live on what a husband can earn in a normal workweek."

Family Commitment - She needs him to be a good father. Married women who have children want their husbands to take a leadership role in the family and to commit themselves to the moral and educational development of their children. The ideal scenario is for the wife to marry a man whom she can look up to and respect and then have her children grow up to emulate their father's good character. Here are some practical things dads can do that demonstrate their family commitment:

- Make meals together with your family a priority and encourage family discussion
- Encourage walks and/or bike rides with your family
- Attend church with the family
- Be involved in the spiritual and intellectual training of your children
- Read to your children when they are young
- Attend your children's extracurricular activities
- Plan family get-aways and vacations

The man's five most basic needs in marriage tend to be:

Sexual Fulfillment - Dr. Harley states: "When a man chooses a wife, he promises to remain faithful to her for life. This means that he believes his wife will be his only sexual partner until death parts them. He makes this commitment because he trusts her to be as sexually interested in him as he is in her. He trusts her to be sexually available to him whenever he needs to make love and to meet all his sexual needs, just as she trusts him to meet her emotional needs. Unfortunately, in many marriages, the man finds that putting his trust in this woman has turned out to be one the biggest mistakes in his life. He has agreed to limit his sexual experience to a wife who is unwilling to meet that vital need. He finds himself up the proverbial creek without a paddle. If his religious or moral convictions are strong, he may try to make the best of it. Some husbands tough it out, but many cannot. They find sex elsewhere."

Men and women view sexuality very differently. For women, qualities like affection, attentiveness, warmth of personality, kindness and tender sensitivity do more to arouse her than any special technique a man may have developed. A man with the qualities mentioned above makes a woman feel that he understands her and has chosen to care for her. One wife described the special appreciation her husband had for her as his ability to be aware of her as a person not just a sex partner. The key to harmony in this area is for you to understand your spouse's particular needs by talking about them. Talk candidly about your wants and needs in terms of intimacy, affection and sex. Once you know the issues, you can take positive action.

Recreational Companionship - Many of you may remember that famous song from the 80's by Cindy Lauper, *Girls Just Want To Have Fun*. Well, according to Dr. Harley, guys want to have fun too...with their wives. Sometimes they want to do the things they enjoy with their wife ... like watching a football game on TV, going to a baseball game, riding a bike or going hiking. Husbands need their wife's companionship in the things they like to do.

An Attractive Spouse - Dr. Harley offers three corollaries on this subject for women:

- Balance your intake of calories with the proper amount of exercise.
- Attractiveness is what you do with what you have. It's not attempting to be like the latest fashion model or actress.
- An attractive woman is made, not born.

Domestic Support - When we talk about domestic support we are talking about the work that is done in the home that keeps the family going. Work like cooking, cleaning, laundry and ironing. According to Dr. Harley, men need their wives to take ownership in this area. This helps produce the peace and tranquility that he seeks to have at home.

Admiration - Honest admiration is a great motivator for most men. When a woman tells a man she thinks he's wonderful, that inspires him to achieve more. Her appreciation for what he has done provides more satisfaction than any paycheck ever could. A woman who appreciates her husband for who he is as opposed to who he could become, is a tremendous blessing and encouragement to her husband.

In closing, consider this: A good and faithful servant understands the needs and desires of the one he serves. When it comes to the most important person in the world to you (your spouse), are you being a good and faithful servant? Where do you need to make some improvements to become a better husband or wife? This month, maybe it's the right time for you and your honey to have a heart to heart discussion about how you can best meet one another's needs.