

Maintaining a Strong Foundation (4 of 8)  
Series: Extreme Home Makeover  
Song of Solomon 1

1. In a little more than a week, we will celebrate Valentine's Day. So, guys, this is your final warning. Now women, if you wonder why Valentine's stresses so many men out, it's because there is so much more for us to process. I can illustrate it well with one picture.

2. As we continue our Extreme Home Makeover, we want to talk about building and maintaining a strong foundation. Yes, I realize that we already talked about the framing, and that the foundation comes before the framing, but I wanted to save the marriage stuff until we got closer to Valentine's Day. Make no mistake, though, the foundation for a strong home, is not the parent-child relationship. It's the husband-wife relationship. You don't start a family when you have a child. You start a family, when you stand before God and say I do. That is the primary relationship. It is the foundation for the home and you have to give your marriage priority, energy and effort even during the child-rearing years, or the whole thing could fall apart. Many couples lose the glue that holds them together when they have children, because they no longer give the marriage the priority it deserves. They think the parent-child relationship is most important, and they don't realize their foundation is eroding from beneath them.

3. God intended the glue to remain even years later. Proverbs 5:18 says, "Rejoice in the wife of your youth." (Proverbs 5:18). Yet, this is a joy that many miss. After a decade of marriage, the word "rejoicing" is not a word many would use to describe their relationship. It is estimated that after 10 years marriage, only 25% of first marriages are successful (i.e. intact and happy).

4. So, if God's intention was that we would be able to maintain a spark many years into marriage, why are so many of us missing out on this? What are we doing wrong?

5. Right in the middle of your Bible is a love poem. It's a song, actually. It calls itself the *Song of Songs*. Of all the love songs that have ever been written. Of all the songs ever sung from one lover to another, Solomon says this one tops them all. The greatest love song of all time. It's greater than anything ever sung by Elvis, the Beatles or the Righteous Brothers. Journey, REO Speedwagon, or Air Supply never sang a ballad as gushing as this one. Adele will never top it. It doesn't matter how many boyfriends Taylor Swift goes through, she will never write a love song that tops the *Song of Songs*. It is a exuberant, unabashed, and somewhat explicit celebration of love between a husband and his bride.

6. For centuries, a somewhat embarrassed church didn't quite know what to do with this little book in the Bible. They tried to say it was an allegory of Jesus' love for his church. In fact, one Bible commentator writing in the 19<sup>th</sup> Century says that this book cannot be about the amours or sexual relationship between Solomon and his bride, because such a thing would be monstrous.

7. Personally, though, I find it reassuring that right in the middle of God's Word is this blatant, brazen celebration of love in marriage and married sex. It was God's idea, after all. It was His gift to us. Why shouldn't we rejoice in that? So, this morning, let's see if we can't recover a bit of that which has been lost. In many ways, the *Song of Songs* is a primer on how the husband and the wife can romance each other. I want to show you from the *Song of Songs* three ways that husbands and wives can creatively communicate their love to each other, and keep that flame alive, or even rekindle it.

## **I. Communicate With Talk**

1. There are times Teresa looks me in the eye and says, "Talk to me." She doesn't want sports scores. She doesn't want politics. She doesn't want to hear about things at the office. She wants my words for her, to her, and about her. Solomon, in all his God-given wisdom, understands the power words have with women, "*How beautiful you are, my darling. How beautiful you are! Your eyes are like doves.*" Now listen to her response, "*How handsome you are, my beloved, and so pleasant! Indeed, our couch is luxuriant!*" (1:15-16)

2. He says, "*You are altogether beautiful, my darling, and there is no blemish in you* (4:7)." Men, listen to how Solomon is talking to his wife. He is showering his bride with praise. He is giving her affirmation. Do you think if she was standing in front of the mirror, she couldn't find some flaw, some blemish she would like to improve? But that's not what this is about. This is about building our mates up. Husbands can't just show their love, they must say it. We can't say, "I don't need to tell you, 'I love you,' because I show my love.'" She needs words.

3. Words have incredible power. On November 12, 2013 Southwest Airlines Flight 3426 experienced irregular cabin pressure, which required they make an emergency descent from 35,000 feet to 25,000 feet. The pilot got on the intercom to make the announcement and used the most unfortunate choice of words, "We're going down."

At first, everyone was confused and looking around, but as soon as the aircraft nosed down, everyone began to panic. Everyone got out their cell phones and began texting their final goodbyes to their loved ones. One lady clutched her

chest in pain. A few minutes later the plane levelled out and continued its flight and made a normal landing at Raleigh-Durham International Airport. Your words have the power to make your marriage fly, or make it go down.

4. James talks about the incredible power of the tongue to be a blessing and a curse. He compares it to a small spark that sets an entire forest ablaze, or a tiny spark that steers a great ship. But it also has the power to heal a broken heart or mend a wounded spirit. The tongue can bestow the grace and love of God. Are your words a blessing or a curse?

5. Men, one of the greatest gifts you can give your wife is the gift of words. I'll be the first to confess, this isn't always easy. Scientists say that men, on average use 12,000 words a day, and that women use 24,000 words a day. The problem is we come home, and we've used all of our words for the day, but she still has 12,000 to use. We've got to do better than, "uh, okay, fine, and I dunno." It takes work, but she's worth it and the results are worth it.

5. The truth is though, you get men talking about the right subject and we won't shut up. You let the subject get around to golf or fishing or football with a bunch of men and you can't get a word in edge wise. Many of us will blow past our 12,000 word limit before the third quarter. Words are not our problem. Subject matter is our problem.

6. There was a Dilbert cartoon that showed a man talking to a woman. The woman says, "I like men who know how to communicate, but not a man who not only talks about sports, computers, his job, TV, sex or his accomplishments." With a puzzled look, the man says, "That only leaves Greek Mythology and you to talk about." The woman says, "I hate Greek Mythology." The truth is women like us to talk to them and they like us to talk about them, as we talk to them. They want us to know that we are interested in them.

7. Men, we need to engage our wives in meaningful conversation. We have to save some words for our wives. One marriage counselor says that he never hears men complain that their wives don't talk to them, but he hears that complaint all the time from women. For us guys, conversation is a means to an end. That's why we will talk a lot while we're dating, but after a few years of marriage the conversation dries up. When we're dating, we're trying to win them. It's a race, a competition. We want them to say, "yes," and "I do."

8. For women though, conversation is an end in itself. They want to talk just for the sake of talking. In just talking to her, about the events of her day, and things going in her life, you are communicating that you value her as a person. Your conversation shows her she is important to you. Dr. Willard Harley, in his book *His Needs; Her Needs* explains how after working with hundreds of

couples, that when it comes to words, what most women need most is affirmation.

9. This isn't to say, ladies, that your words to your man don't matter. Men may not live, eat, and breathe conversation like you do, but your words will build your man up, or tear him down. Dr. Harley explains that what men need emotionally from their wives' words is admiration. And it isn't just the things you say to him, but it's the things you say about him. He needs your words or respect, and honor and admiration. So many wives don't realize that damage they do with their constant belittling and criticism. "Well, I'll use words of respect as soon as he is worthy of my respect."

10. Let me quote Dr. Willard Harley from his book *His Needs; Her Needs*:

*Admiration not only motivates, it also rewards the husband's existing achievements. When she tells him that she appreciates him for what he has done, it gives him more satisfaction than he receives from his paycheck. A woman needs to appreciate her husband for what he already is, not for what he could become, if he lived up to her standards...Admiration also helps them believe in themselves...While criticism causes men to become defensive, admiration energizes and motivates them. A man expects—and needs—his wife to be his most enthusiastic fan. He draws confidence from her support and can usually achieve far more with her encouragement.<sup>1</sup>*

So, we need to communicate with talk.

## **II. Communicate With Time**

1. In Song of Songs 2, Solomon's bride says, "My beloved responded and said to me, 'Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along. 'For behold, the winter is past, The rain is over and gone. 'The flowers have already appeared in the land; The time has arrived for pruning the vines, And the voice of the turtledove has been heard in our land. 'The fig tree has ripened its figs, And the vines in blossom have given forth their fragrance. Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, And come along!(2:10-13)'" This is not just a suggestion on the part of the bride to go bird watching or flower gazing. Her whole point is to get away, so that the two of them can spend time together.

2. Do you want to know how you spell love in a marriage? T-I-M-E. Don't buy into this lie of quality of time versus quantity of time. Quantity has a quality all its own. When we take time to spend time with each other that's how we communicate how important they are to us. It's also how we keep them a priority. If you don't make them a priority, they won't be a priority.

3. One study found that couples only spend thirty minutes of quality time a day

with each other. We now spend more time with our phones than with each other. We might be in the same room with each other physically, but were not together emotionally, mentally, and spiritually.

4. Let me give you two strategies for finding time with your spouse. Some of the best advice Teresa and I got early in our marriage was that we needed to have a date night every week. It didn't have to be fancy or expensive, but it had to be. Just because you're married, doesn't mean you quit dating each other.

5. Now, let me stress this. This continues after you have kids. It breaks my heart every time I hear husbands and wives tell me it's been months, or even years since they've been out, just the two of them, without the kids. Many times, it's the wives that really struggle with this. They have a hard time giving the husband the focus and time he needs as a man. They feel as mothers, they have to always include the kids. Not only are you doing great injury to your marriage, but ultimately you are hurting your children. You're destroying the foundation that gives them a strong home. They need a mom and a dad with a good marriage, and they need that more than they need anything else.

6. You have to give priority to the marriage relationship. You have to keep the foundation strong. So, hire a sitter; leave them with grandma; trade sitting with another couple so you can both have date nights, but find some way to make it happen. The way we did it, was we had a set night. We knew not to schedule anything else on that night, because it was date night, and then we alternated. Every other week was family date night, where we took the kids, but in between it was just Teresa and I.

7. A second strategy for time is the romantic getaway. This is just one or two nights for just the two of you. Listen Solomon's bride here:

*I am my beloved's and his desire is for me. Come, my beloved, let us go out into the country. Let us spend the night in the villages. Let us rise early and go to the vineyards; let us see whether the vine has budded and its blossoms have opened, and whether the pomegranates have bloomed. There I will give you my love. The mandrakes have given forth fragrance; and over our doors are all choice fruits, both new and old, which I have saved up for you, my beloved. (7:10-13)*

She's not planning a shopping trip. This isn't because of her interest in gardening. She wants the two of them to get away just so they can have time together.

8. Find someplace that sets the proper mood and has the right atmosphere. Keep that foundation with Time.

### III. Communicate With Touch

1. Twice in the Song of Solomon we read these words, *"Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand embrace me."* (:6, 8:3) I'll leave it to your imagination as to what he's doing with his right hand. Let's just say the English translation waters this down a bit. O.T. scholars Keil & Delitzsch define the word this way, "to embrace lovingly, to fondle," or a "gentle stroking with the hand."

2. Let me just address something here that all of us know, but let's be clear about it. Men and women are different. Ladies, the number one need of your husband is sexual fulfillment - that is his "touch." Men, the number one need of your wife is affection - that is her "touch" and only you can give that.

3. There is an old story about a man and a woman who fought and fussed for 50 years of their married life. Finally, on the occasion of their 50th wedding anniversary, their kids gave them a unique gift - a trip to a marriage counselor. The couple even argued about whether or not to accept the gift. Then they argued about who would drive to the appointment. Then they argued about who would start talking first. After listening to the couple for about 15 minutes, the counselor got up, walked over to this old lady, picked her up, gave her a big hug and a big kiss, turned to the husband and said, "She needs that at least three times a week." The husband said, "Alright, I'll bring her by on Monday, Wednesday and Friday!"

4. The problem with guys, is when it comes to touch, we so often head straight for the finish line. We want to make the trip in record time, but our wives want us to take the scenic route. So, take your time, take it slow. Romance your wife with occasional serendipitous, extemporaneous, unplanned touches - holding hands with her when you walk down a mall, sitting down beside her and putting your arm around her when she is reading a book, patting her as you walk by, or just a hug. You'll find these small investments of affection pay huge dividends in return. You give her the touch she needs, she'll give you the touch you crave.

5. These are just some practical observations from the Song of Songs, but they can go a long way to keeping your foundation strong. And these things will work wonders in marriages that are mostly stable and mostly healthy. If you're in a troubled marriage, there could be issues of trust and alienation, that need to be dealt with. Let me just let everyone know this. The leadership has talked about this, so I can speak for them. We don't want any marriage here to fall apart because it didn't get help when it needed it the most. If you need help, we'll help you get it. Let this morning be a turning point. Please. I'm begging

you. We will help you get the professional, Christian counseling you need, even if we have to pay for it.

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<sup>i</sup> Harley, Jr. Willard (1994) His Needs, Her Needs. Grand Rapids, MI; Fleming H. Revell. p. 157