

Introduction-Build on the Rock: Matthew 7

²⁴ “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: ²⁵ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

²⁶ “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: ²⁷ and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Q: When you were young, what advice were you given for whom to marry? You should marry your best _____?

A: Friend.

There is wisdom in that and we'll talk about marriage and friendship this week

The Scriptures inform us about friendship:

Proverbs 17: A friend loves at all times...

According to Dr. John Gottman, 2 staples of marriages that work:

- 1.) an overall level of positive affect (emotion)
- 2.) ability to reduce negative affect during conflict resolution

Way to create positive affect is to build and strengthen the foundation, which is the friendship.

Three components of marital friendship are:

- 1.) Cognitive Room (Love Maps)
- 2.) Fondness and admiration system
- 3.) Turning toward versus turning away (Emotional Bank Account)

Friendship and the positive affect that naturally flows from it are major accomplishments that happy and stable couples achieve. One way to strengthen this friendship is to create cognitive room in your mind for your spouse. This activity is designed to do just that.

Tonight we will do two activities to have fun and to strengthen the friendship between the two of you. We will save the Emotional Bank Account for another time.

1. Cognitive Room

Cognitive room is the idea that when you and your spouse are apart from one another, you are thinking about that person. Thinking about your spouse is meant to create a remembrance of the good feelings and emotions that exist between the two of you.

In order to strengthen this, we are going to do an activity called ‘Love Maps.’ This should be really fun. The purpose of the activity is to learn some new things about your spouse that you’ll think about when you are away from one another such that it creates that cognitive room or space in your mind.

The directions are simple. Each of you will receive a blank piece of paper and also one half-sheet of paper with numbers and phrases. When you receive your half-sheet of paper, replace the phrase “your spouse” with “my” and then write your answer to the question and the question number on your blank piece of paper. Once you have done this for each question, turn your paper over and give the questions page to your spouse.

Once you have the paper from your spouse, read the questions as stated and then answer for yourself. Once you have given your answer to your spouse, ask your spouse for the answer written on the paper with the corresponding number. Take turns reading questions and answering them. You can spread out once you have answered all of your questions and are ready to exchange the half-sheets of paper.

Materials needed:

One blank sheet of paper for each participant

Printed Love Maps paper, cut in half (one page for each couple, to be cut in half)

Pen for each participant

Use Love Maps activity on separate page

Wrap-up Questions:

- a.) What was that activity like?
- b.) What is something really interesting that you learned that you would like to share?

2. Fondness and Admiration

It is very important to examine the positive aspects of your spouse's personality. Many times when we are upset with one another, we lost sight of all these positive aspects of our spouse and of the relationship. If these positive areas of our spouses get acknowledged and discussed, they build the fondness between both of you and help to insulate your relationship during times of conflict.

For a few moments, you are going to think about selected aspects of your spouse's personality. Circle five items that you think are characteristic of your spouse. For each item that you select, think of an actual incident that illustrates this characteristic of your spouse. You will then share this incident with your spouse.

Materials needed:

Print two (2) "I appreciate..." Checklists for each couple in attendance

Wrap-Up Questions:

- a.) What was that activity like?
- b.) What surprised you the most about one thing your spouse appreciates about you?

3. Final Prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who taught us to pray always for each other, so that by fulfilling the holy law we will be made worthy of Your mercy: look down with compassion on our married life and keep us from all perilous falls, from enemies both visible and invisible, so that we may pass our time together until the end with oneness of mind. Grant us health, strength, and fullness of wisdom enlightened from above, so that we may be able to fulfill our duties all the days of our lives, according to Your will and commandments. Protect and keep us from temptations, and may we be able to bear and conquer those temptations that come upon us. Strengthen us in true faith, strong hope, and perfect love, so that together we may do good deeds and that we may order all our life according to Your divine ordinances and commandments.

Love Maps

1. Name your spouse's two closest friends.
2. What was your spouse wearing when you first met?
3. What are your spouse's three top hobbies?
4. Where was your spouse born?
5. What stressors are facing your spouse in the immediate future?
6. Describe, in detail, your spouse's day, either today or yesterday.
7. Who is your spouse's favorite relative?
8. What is your spouse's most important dream not yet achieved?
9. What is one of your spouse's greatest disaster scenarios?
10. What is your spouse's favorite meal?
11. What is your spouse's favorite way to spend an evening?
12. What is your spouse's favorite color?
13. What personal improvements does your spouse want to make in her or his life?
14. What kind of birthday present would your spouse like best?
15. What was your spouse's favorite vacation together?
16. Who is your spouse's greatest source of support other than you?
17. What does your spouse most like to do with time off?
18. What is one of your spouse's favorite weekend activities?
19. What does your spouse most value about Church?
20. What does your spouse most dislike about Church?
21. What is one of your spouse's favorite getaway places?
22. What is one of your spouse's favorite movies?
23. Who was your spouse's best friend in childhood?
24. Name one of your spouse's major rivals or enemies?
25. What would be an ideal job for your spouse?
26. What is your spouse's major fear?
27. Who is your spouse's least favorite relative?
28. What is your spouse's favorite holiday?
29. What is your spouse currently most sad about?
30. What is one of your spouse's concerns or worries?
31. Which two people does your spouse most admire? Why?
32. What is one of your spouse's favorite desserts?
33. What is your spouse's favorite restaurant?
34. What are two of your spouse's wishes or aspirations?
35. What is your spouse's favorite animal?
36. What is your spouse's favorite song?

“I appreciate...” Checklist

| | |
|----------------|-----------------|
| Loving | Involved |
| Caring | Powerful |
| Brave | Tender |
| Intelligent | Sweet |
| Thoughtful | Protective |
| Generous | Assertive |
| Loyal | A great parent |
| Sexy | A great partner |
| Creative | Lively |
| Supportive | Calm |
| Funny | Rich |
| Considerate | Handsome |
| Affectionate | Elegant |
| Organized | Witty |
| Resourceful | Practical |
| Caring | Gentle |
| A great friend | Kind |
| Committed | Nurturing |
| Thrifty | Dependable |
| Athletic | Responsible |
| Cheerful | Reliable |
| Interesting | Receptive |
| Decisive | Adventurous |
| Vulnerable | Reserved |
| Shy | Careful |
| Understanding | Active |
| Flexible | Expressive |

Build on the Rock: Matthew 7

24 “Therefore whoever hears these sayings of Mine, and does them, I will liken him to a wise man who built his house on the rock: 25 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it did not fall, for it was founded on the rock.

26 “But everyone who hears these sayings of Mine, and does not do them, will be like a foolish man who built his house on the sand: 27 and the rain descended, the floods came, and the winds blew and beat on that house; and it fell. And great was its fall.”

Closing Prayer:

O Lord Jesus Christ our God, Who taught us to pray always for each other, so that by fulfilling the holy law we will be made worthy of Your mercy: look down with compassion on our married life and keep us from all perilous falls, from enemies both visible and invisible, so that we may pass our time together until the end with oneness of mind. Grant us health, strength, and fullness of wisdom enlightened from above, so that we may be able to fulfill our duties all the days of our lives, according to Your will and commandments. Protect and keep us from temptations, and may we be able to bear and conquer those temptations that come upon us. Strengthen us in true faith, strong hope, and perfect love, so that together we may do good deeds and that we may order all our life according to Your divine ordinances and commandments.