

Lifebyte 47

Marriage As A Covenant Lifestyle (Part 1)

Living Righteously In The Days of Chastisement



*Jesus must remain in heaven
until the time comes for God to restore everything,
as He promised long ago through His holy prophets.* (Acts 3:21)



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Dear Friends,

Our Lord has impressed on us to begin 2008 by helping married people truly live in *covenant union* with each other. Marriages that shine with the character of Jesus are like spiritual “gas stations”: they’re able to come alongside others and pour into them the love and compassion of our King. Yet within western Christendom, so many marriages that *could* be a hallmark of the covenant love of Jesus have instead foundered on the shoals of divorce.

Sue and I were married in 1970. We spent the next 23 years immersed in various congregational systems as “warm bodies” that helped keep the organization running: youth directors, choirs, elder boards, Sunday school teachers, parish council, even a congregation’s couples bowling league!

Yet with all that social attentiveness and eager participation as a couple, our marriage covenant bore little resemblance to the character of Jesus. We were just two more people taking part in programs and activities that put us alongside other people in the same activities and programs. But how few really *knew* us — and how few *we* really knew under the surface of beatific smiles. We were all too busy to be *family* with each other!

But our Father is called the God of *hope* — and we needed a large dose of hope to save our struggling marriage! In His divine timing and mercy He propelled us to Jerusalem for an extended stay with friends. During that period He made very clear the revolutionary changes He was going to make in our marriage — revolutionary because we’d never known them before nor had we ever dreamed that they were totally biblical as well as His means of preparation for the next season of our union together!

It was in Jerusalem on our 24th wedding anniversary that we renewed our vows to live in covenant union and to use our marriage to physically represent our Lord Jesus to others.

We’ll be celebrating 14 years of covenant living in February, 2008. The first 24 years together allowed us to experience the frailties of self-interest and “married singleness” as parallel train tracks. These past 14 years, however, have joyfully matured our appreciation for each other in a whole new way.

We’re profoundly grateful to our Father that the “scars” of the past can be instruments of healing testimony in the lives of other couples, with no sting as we recount those earlier years. It’s out of a covenant union that keeps pressing onward and deepening that we hope to increasingly represent Jesus to others.

In this Lifebyte and in as many others as our Lord prompts us, we’ll be focusing on a Godly marriage covenant that serves

our Father’s purposes in His love and in His power. We hope to provide discussion tools for you to both *talk about* and *work through* until a covenant

way of life becomes part of your marriage. (If you’re not married, you’ll still find that many of the elements that impact marriage apply to your own close relationships.)

You may have noticed that in 2007 we wrote a lot on the centrality of your relationship with our Father and His Son Jesus. Our last Teaching E-mail, **34. When Jesus Says ‘GO’, What Do YOU Do?**, contained a warning of God’s impending judgment coming on the United States. We’ve heard from several



who have responded in repentance and are now walking in Covenant union with our Father in the Spirit of Christ.

Beginning 2008 we want to help you make your Covenant with God a physical reality in *your marriage*. In our Hebraic Article, *The Gospel of the Covenant is the Pilgrimage to Salvation*, we affirm this:

Our Father intends that your marriage covenant represent in the physical arena of your life the spiritual Covenant you have with Him through Jesus.

Nothing less than this goal for your marriage glorifies Him. These two key covenants are inseparably linked. Yet how few Christians have any idea that there's an *intentional correlation* between their covenant union with their Lord and their own marriage covenant. God Himself is called the *Husband* of Israel, His "wife" (see Isaiah 62:5; 54:6; Jeremiah 2:2; 31:32). The collective Church is the *Bride* of Christ, the heavenly Bridegroom (see Matthew 9:15; Revelation 19:7; Mark 2:19,20). Are you getting the picture?

Ignorance of this spiritual reality robs marriage partners of the impetus and motivation to really make their relationship reflect the devotion and love of the Bride of Christ. That kind of dedication takes *purposeful yieldedness* to the work of the Holy Spirit in each of us to have a covenant union that resonates with His Presence.

How do you best reflect your *Covenant purpose in Christ*? You help each other become more and more like Jesus. However, growth in Christ's likeness isn't just gaining more spiritual knowledge. Rather, it blooms as you grow in awareness of the *innermost needs* and *motivations* of each other and help each other use these for the glory of God.

"Put the blood [of Jesus] on the sides and tops of the doorframes of the houses..." (Exodus 12:7).

2008 is a year for you to ensure that your marriage is sealed in the blood of our Lord Jesus. We encourage you to be deliberate in making sure that your marriage doesn't defame His Name.

For the enslaved Israelites in Egypt, failure to smear the Passover lamb's blood on the doorpost meant death at the destroyer's hand. As our God judges this nation, make sure your marriage and your home life are dedicated to living in a way that's pleasing to our Lord.



We hope through this series of Lifebytes to show you how to bring both your marriage covenant and your family's lives under the blood of Jesus. Please take seriously the questions we ask throughout the Lifebytes. Make sure you confess your sins and make restitution where appropriate.

"Has not [the LORD] made them one? In flesh and spirit they are His. And why one? Because He was seeking godly offspring. So guard yourself in your spirit, and do not break faith with the wife of your youth"
(Malachi 2:15).

What does it mean to produce "godly offspring"? To many Christian parents it means that their children "aren't as bad" as the children of unbelievers. The fruit of "Christian programs" mixed with humanist education and culture among Christian youth is the *same immoral goals, values and conduct* as young people who make no claim to bear His name.

The first and best way to begin to grow “Godly offspring” is to live in Covenant union with our Father through Jesus and role model via your marriage the character and motivation of your Lord. While your children are still at home and open to the wisdom the Spirit would give you to live and to speak as would Christ, you need to live out for them a marriage relationship that personifies the love, respect and holiness of Jesus. Your marriage becomes a visual image for your children to willingly and daily live in response to the question, **“What Would Jesus Do?”**

A Jesus-like Marriage Requires Collective Commitment

The Hebrew word *edah* [eh-DAH] depicts an important aspect of a marriage that reflects Jesus. That you understand this word has particular significance for your marriage, your family, and for those with whom you share fellowship as extended spiritual family.

Edah pertains not to an individual but to the *collective relationships* of followers of Christ. This collective sense of relational responsibility embodies a deep sense of interconnectedness that far surpasses the sense of being an “I”. And this is the point we want to emphasize in this series of Lifebytes on marriage: the *collective responsibility* of covenant living.

Edah causes us to think *outside* ourselves and our own needs and wants. We start to consider our faith pilgrimage in terms of our *collective* responsibilities to God as we help one another become more like Jesus. (Remember those 54 *one-anothers* in the Newer Testament?) *Edah* means that *together* with your spouse you’re actively becoming more like Jesus: first in your marriage, then in your family, and next in your fellowship family.

“A righteous man cares for the needs of his animals... Be sure you know the condition of your flocks, give careful attention to your herds” (Proverbs 12:10; 27:23).

We want to use these two verses to convey an important point about marriage. If you’ve ever tended farm animals, you know the diligent care needed if your herds and flocks are to thrive and reproduce. While animals can’t talk, they’re certainly able to let you know what their needs are *if* you are observant. People also make their needs known if you care about them *and* are observant.

We’ve conducted numerous marriage retreats over the years and have marveled that so few husbands and wives know the *inner feelings and motivations* of their spouse. Even couples who’ve been together for decades seem oblivious to what stirs and drives and inspires the one with whom they’ve shared the most intimate of relations.

- **If you’re married, how conscious or intentional are you to make sure that Jesus is reflected in your marriage?**

- **Would our Lord take delight in how you and your spouse represent Him to others?**

- **Is your marriage a union that portrays Jesus in ways that others would like to emulate, or are you like two railroad tracks going in the same direction but not intimately joined together? What other word pictures would describe your marriage?**

- Are you aware of any changes Jesus wants you to make in your marriage so that His work in both you and your spouse would flourish?

We've mentioned previously that those who call themselves Christian in the United States have a higher divorce rate than those who aren't believers. Why do you think this is so? We want to review a few factors because one or more of them may be hindering your own marriage.

- You may have hidden out in what some called "Christian hospitals" — large congregations in which nothing is required of you but your attendance and tithe. You may have been comforted by feeling accepted without any requirement made on you that repentance was necessary to walk in Jesus. But be warned. Religious activities, lively worship and gratifying programs can dull you to the real needs of your spouse. Personal *irresponsibility* in the spiritual realm can carry over to lazy disregard for the purposeful effort that's needed to maintain a growing relationship.

- Most of your life you were taught the Bible by people who didn't necessarily role model what they presented. The clergy person who instructed you about God probably never entered the door of your home, sat by your barbecue, or shared in your children's trials and joys. Professionals lecturing behind pulpits are not

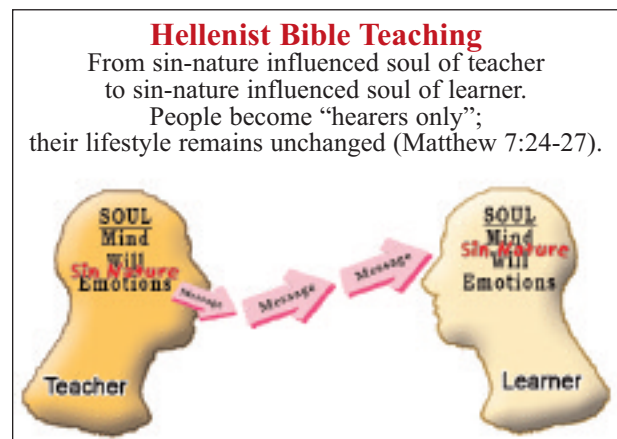
God's way of strengthening your marriage as a way of life that grows increasingly Christ-like.

A Hidden Battle: Who Won?

You're probably unaware of a great battle that took place decades ago between two camps of religious curriculum publishers. One camp designed materials with the focus that Bible content alone would result in changed lives. Sadly, generations up to the present day have proven that concept to be false. Sinful lifestyles are as common among those who attend Sunday school as among the population at large.

In the other camp were those like curriculum writers Larry Richards and Lyman Coleman. These teachers recognized that the *relationships* among learners helped ensure that the Bible truth they were taught was more likely to be put into practice.

Bible text alone vs. relational application. Which prevailed? Sadly, Christian publishers for the most part sided with the ineffective side — a Hellenist approach that we consider *evil* because so many have been duped into becoming *hearers only*.



The evil, ineffective side said:

The Bible text is the only thing that counts. Since the words alone are the

Word of God, just teach people the Bible and they will obey. Whether or not they develop a relational sense of family with one another is irrelevant.

This approach did not spring from a vacuum! The converted Greek philosophers from the second and third centuries introduced into Christianity the concept of education based on content dissemination. The Hellenist *lecture* method replaced Hebraic *group discussion for application*. From the Hellenist view, any personal teacher/student relationship was unnecessary, nor was relational responsibility among learners even considered an option.

Sadly, even the leaders of the Reformation embraced the Hellenist method of teaching the Bible as *content only* — certainly a great step forward compared to the Roman Catholic conglomeration of Bible mixed with pagan theology, but still content *without* the communal interaction that would encourage Spirit-empowered changed lives.

Europe is now considered by missiologists to be a **“post-Christian”** continent. Except for pockets of spiritual responsiveness in Christ, the majority of the nations have settled into a “been there, done that” framework. “Church” is irrelevant, a practice of the past. The United States isn’t far behind in that pattern. Much of western Christendom has devolved into a man-pleasing cultural practice, lacking any conviction to either grow in Christ’s likeness according to His Word or to serve His Kingdom interests.

What a fallacy to believe that imparting biblical knowledge alone will change lives or character! You have only to consider the Germany of the first half of the past century — a society *full* of Bible knowledge. But that *knowledge* did not

prevent the Holocaust atrocities, nor did it motivate the people to halt Nazi inhumanity.

The same separation between *religious knowledge* and *righteous responsiveness* is true for much of Christianity in the United States. Studies confirm that the morals of “Christians” and unbelievers are the same. The name of Jesus is being defamed! Are you one of these “Christians” whose life belies His holiness?

The side for Christ-like transformation said:

The Hebraic method of *personal interaction* and *relational responsibility* is exemplified in Jesus and His disciples. From a deeply personal relationship with His disciples Jesus imparted the truths they needed. God’s Word — the sole truth for man to live by — overflows with relational awareness and connectedness.

From the very first chapters we discover the *relational union* in which God wants to relate with His children. He specifically calls out a *people* to represent Him to all other nations — first the Hebrew descendants of Abraham, then the collective body of those who follow His Son.

Another collective, relational indicator in the Newer Testament is His commands to His people. These are written in the *plural* to the combined body of believers (*edah*), not in the singular sense. God’s commands are written for people to collectively apply and live out together.

You can’t miss Paul’s intent in 1 Corinthians 12:11-20 that we are to operate like a *body* — intimately belonging to each other as each does his or her part to serve the other parts. Therefore it is critical that we develop strong committed relationships in the Holy Spirit. Then we can live in union with one another as we learn to apply God’s Word *together*.

In summary,

Ineffective Evil side
Bible taught for content only; relationships are optional or irrelevant.

Christ-like Transforming side
Load-bearing relationships nurtured as you teach people to apply the Bible together.

- **In your thoughts throughout the day, what percentage of them would you say are concerned with how you can be a blessing to others?**

- **Would our Lord be *more* or *less* concerned for others than you are?**

- **If He would be *more* concerned, what do you need to do in order to be like Him?**

The Hebraic foundations emphasize the importance of sincere, load-bearing relationships. This kind of depth begins with our Covenant with our Father, and is manifested in loving intimacy in our marriage covenant. All other relationships are dependent on the loving intimacy of these two covenants.

Please note the diagram at the bottom of this page. It's from our Hebraic Article, **I Hate Nicolaitanism!** (Part 5) *Relationally-Connected Men Produce Successors in Leadership*. Both men and women need close, load-bearing relationships with role models in order to change as the Spirit would empower you. Notice that only *men* are influenced positively through **confrontation** by those who mentor them through a close relationship, while only *women* are able to use **education** as a means of effecting change.

Sadly, because the evil, ineffective side prevailed in the battle over how to teach the Bible, most married people (and singles, for that matter) have lacked much-needed role modeling in their lives. While this is a hindrance, it doesn't render impossible the task of having a Christ-like marriage.]

There is one other hindrance to your spiritual development we need to discuss. It is the influence of public education on your thinking patterns. Again, contemporary public education has been heavily influenced by Hellenism. If you were a part of that system, you were "educated" by being given content to learn in order to pass tests. Most likely you were not *trained* in the biblical sense with information that changed your life.

As a result, you've been attracted to the evil side of *ineffectiveness*. You see the Bible as just another bunch of facts you must *learn* in order to be a "good Christian". These facts have been acquired in a lecture format from pulpits and lecterns by people with whom you have little or no personal contact. Therefore they role

Effecting Christ-like Change in Males and Females			
<u>Men:</u>	<u>Effect</u>	<u>Women:</u>	<u>Effect</u>
Role models	Very Positive	Role models	Very Positive
Confrontation	Very Positive	Education	Very Positive
Education	No Effect	Confrontation	Minimal

model none of their teaching for you, so their words have little application to your way of life.

The public education system leaves a false impression on vulnerable young minds: when you complete your schooling, you think you know everything you need to succeed in life. "My education is over; now I can go out and *live!*" This mindset of course becomes painfully exposed as being far from the truth!

Let's say you've been part of public education and your primary source of Bible knowledge is sermons and Sunday schools. Chances are, you're lacking the *wisdom* that comes from diligent life application of biblical truth.

Again, our Father is restoring to His people the *trust-filled, obedient life* of Abraham, the man He knew and chose:

For I have chosen him, so that he will command his children and his household after him to keep the way of the LORD... (Genesis 18:19a).

Our Hebraic ancestors understood the lifelong need to pursue wisdom. *Wisdom* is seeing life from God's vantage point, and *continuing* to learn how to live in accordance with His Word in the power and love of His Spirit.

Our spiritual ancestors recognized a crucial reality that has escaped modern consideration: that *older people*, both through role modeling and instructive discussion, are the best repository of wisdom.

Public education has destroyed reliance on older men and women for wisdom, as has family fragmentation. Peer dependence has become the accepted norm. As a result, most Christians pursue Bible *knowledge* rather than the Spirit-empowered *wisdom* that guides them in a life that's pleasing to God.

If you've read *Discussing How To Restore the Early Church, Section 1: Lesson 10, or Section 5: Lesson 34*, then you're aware of the six stages of male development. Only in the final two stages, the Mature Man and the Sage, is a man able to impart wisdom to others. This normally occurs after age 40, when he is able to combine *compassion* with life experience.

"For You created my inmost being; You knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise You because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Your works are wonderful, I know that full well" (Psalms 139:13,14).

How truly conscious are you, as was the psalmist, that you are *fearfully and wonderfully made* by God? As our Father looks at you, He takes delight in how He put you together in your mother's womb!

If you're like so many we've ministered to over the years, you don't think about how wonderfully made you really are. As a result, you fail to appreciate how wonderfully and uniquely *different* God made the people who are close to you in your life. And, one key area of special design is generally overlooked by most Christians: the *innermost being* of others.

God created each of us with *inner feelings* and *motivations* that make us uniquely different from each other. It is these *differences* that are the true gems of intimate relationships.

We've ministered to so many over the past 30 years, and one element stands out above all others:

Most Christians really don't perceive the innermost being of the people who are close to them.

This one factor, more than any other, contributes to the rampant divorce among Christians. Too many find com-

mon footing on *externals*, such as their religious practices as well as hobbies or careers or even chores. Sadly, these are the thin binding force in their marriage. So why do *Christians* suffer a higher divorce rate than unbelievers?

First, religious practice and creedal belief only call for your mind, will and emotions (your soul) to participate. It costs your inner person no more to sit in a pew than in a movie theater. Modern Christianity is of the *soul*. Neither obedient trust, laying down of life nor Spirit-love are necessary parameters. *Soulish* satisfaction thus spills over into your marriage. You're in it for yourself!

Second, most of western Christendom ignores the biblical element of intimate devotion of one heart to another. Instead, it stresses religious forms and practices of the congregational gathering rather than the vital relational growth that goes on 1-on-1 in a person's home. And, your *home life* is a key emphasis of the Hebraic Restoration!

Studies on human nature show that the innermost motivation of people is to be **loved**, **understood**, and **accepted**. The only way to accomplish this is for people *to know*, *to appreciate*, and *to cooperate with* the inner feelings and motivations of other people.

Since much of Christendom operates as an "activity-based" system rather than as an extended spiritual family of close relationships, few take the time or make an effort to really get to know the innermost feelings and motivations of others in their faith community.

If you and your spouse are endeavoring to apply the Hebraic foundations to your marriage, don't model your covenant on an "activity basis" that ignores inner needs and hopes. Purpose to know each other intimately in all dimen-

sions. You can only do this as each of you, through open and honest communication, reveals your innermost being to the other without fear of rebuke or scorn.

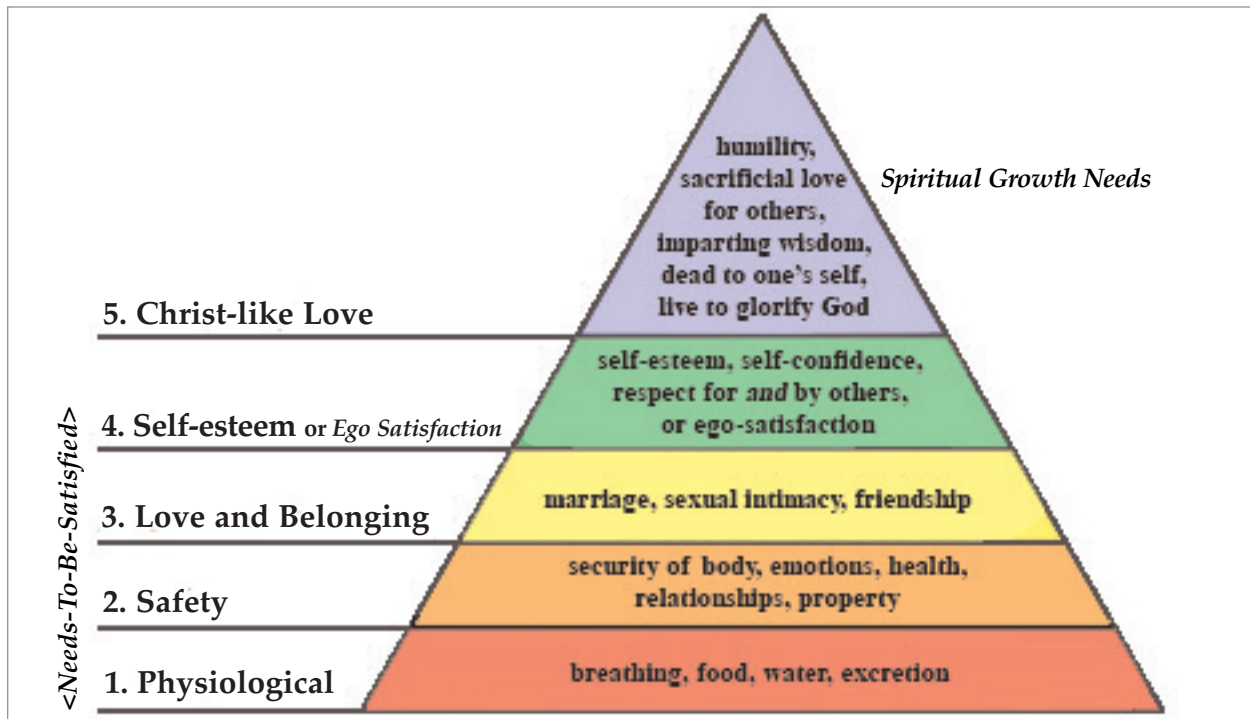
Far more than your knowledge of the Bible is the importance of your visible loving support of the feelings, needs and motivations of your spouse and others close to you. Live the Word!
"The only thing that counts is faith expressing itself through love"
(Galatians 5:6).

A key demonstration of the love that binds relationships together is how we help support heartfelt needs of the people close to us and cooperate with their deeply-held motivations (see Philippians 2:4).

- **How well do you know the inner motivations of your spouse, children, and others close to you in the faith? Ask them how well they think you know them.**

- **Through what method did you learn the Bible: the evil ineffective side or Christ-like transformational side? How has this affected the key relationships in your life?**

- **Has most of your Christian life been one of being *taught at*, or of having someone role model a life that's pleasing to Jesus? How has this affected your faith walk?**



The Hierarchy Of Human Needs

In 1943 psychologist Abraham Maslow presented a paper entitled *A Theory of Human Motivation*. His work has been foundational to understanding the motivation of people in the secular workplace. We're going to adapt his work so that you can get a glimpse of the innermost being of your spouse and of others in close relationship with you.

The diagram above illustrates a hierarchy of needs represented as a pyramid with the more basic human needs at the bottom. The four lower levels — physiological, safety, love and belonging, and self-esteem needs — are grouped together as “needs-to-be-satisfied”. People are born with these four levels of needs-to-be-satisfied and yearn to have them met.

The top level need is termed “spiritual growth needs” and is associated with the increasing development of Christ's likeness. Those who are *born again* and *indwelled by the Holy Spirit* are driven with a desire to become more Christ-

like. As we'll discuss in this series of Lifebytes, there is a lifelong interplay between needs-to-be-satisfied and our desire to grow into the character and motivation of Jesus.

[In our next Lifebyte we'll discuss the top level, Christ-like Love. In this Lifebyte we'll review the four needs-to-be-satisfied.]

If you've gone through our *Going To the High Places* study guide, you'll recognize in these Lifebytes on marriage the same transformation process that Much Afraid went through on her pilgrimage to the High Places. At first she wanted to *be loved* by others, especially by the Shepherd.

Ultimately she was able to experience the Christ-like love that gives without expectation of it being returned. As a result she became burdened to go back to the Valley of the Fearings and reach her unlovable family who had earlier hurt her. This pattern is true for all who seek to become more like Jesus.

Needs-to-Be-Satisfied

The *higher* needs in the four levels of needs-to-be-satisfied only come into focus when the *lower* needs in the pyramid are satisfied. For example, physiological needs must be met before you seek safety needs. Also, once you've moved upward to the next level, needs in the lower levels will diminish in priority.

It's important to recognize that in the bottom four levels of the pyramid the individual feels *anxious or apprehensive* if the appropriate need is not met. For example, if you're famished, you won't be satisfied until you eat!

1. Physiological Needs

These are our basic human requirements as soon as we emerge from the womb — breathing, food, water, excretion. Our mothers remedied most of these needs for us as babies. As you mature, you fill any deficiencies for yourself.

Your physiological needs take the highest priority. They can control your thoughts and behavior, and if unmet can cause you to experience sickness, pain, and discomfort.

The Bible directs us to not only meet our own physiological needs, but also the needs of others. It is this level of need that James commands us to fulfill: true faith is demonstrated in meeting the physiological needs of the unfortunate (see James 2:14-26).

The apostle is apperceiving this command in the Older Testament: "*Do not withhold good from those to whom it is due, when it is in the power of your hand to do so*" (Proverbs 3:27). So not only do we meet our own physiological needs, but we also express our faith by meeting the needs of others as appropriate.

For the most part, physiological needs are reasonably well satisfied in an

affluent society such as ours. The obvious exceptions, of course, are people outside the mainstream — the poor, the disadvantaged, the disregarded.

If frustration has not led to apathy and weakness, such people still struggle to satisfy their basic physiological and safety needs. As followers of Jesus, we must not only become aware of these needs but also do our part to meet them.

2. Safety Needs

When your physiological needs are substantially satisfied, your safety needs take over and dominate your motivation. Safety needs have to do with yearning for a predictable, orderly world that's free from injustice against you. When you feel safe, that with which you're familiar and comfortable is frequent in your life, and the unfamiliar or unexpected is rare.

In family life, these safety needs manifest themselves in such things as mutual trust, confidence in resolving interpersonal tension, and willingness to reveal innermost motivations and feelings.

Adults who were raised in poverty or where alcoholism or other addictive behavior existed, or by unaffectionate parents, or whose parents were divorced may find themselves encompassed by the need to *feel safe* with others. They may have difficulty experiencing a sense of really belonging to other people.

To compensate for the unsafe feelings they may seek to excel academically, in sports, in prestige or wealth or in whatever else they perceive will give them a sense of fulfillment. Many become business owners, since that gives them a sense of control over their lives.

This one need for safety — relational acceptance or security — has caused so many young women to give up their virginity before marriage. Too many fathers

have failed their daughters by not protecting them or valuing them as the Bible calls for. Later, if and when they marry, these women fail to experience intercourse as God's means to express intimacy in a secure, covenant relationship.

Most addictive behavior is found in people who are trying to find a way to "feel safe" (in Maslow's terms), or to avoid rejection. Sadly, their safety is achieved through a drug or alcohol-induced stupor that cuts off interaction with other people.

In lives in which demonic strongholds, tolerated sin, or resistance to become more like Jesus exist, safety needs are unmet. Christians may stay in stagnant relationships in which no mutual growth into Christ's likeness takes place.

Relational stagnation in marriage is evidenced as the couple finds themselves busy in their roles as husband and wife or parents or income-producers but have no deep intimacy that could meet their inner need for relational safety. That is, they never truly get to know the innermost motivations and feelings of their spouse.

But our Lord has not left us powerless to stagnate with one another! We cite 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 in our workbook *Demolishing Strongholds* because it proclaims key weaponry to counter relational isolation or stagnation:

*The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have **divine power** to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we **take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.***

If you don't make every thought obedient to Jesus, you'll never experience the next level of need, which is Love and

Belonging. Often people jump past love and belonging in order to pursue Ego Satisfaction at level 4. This only compounds your isolation from others and impedes your ability to meet the needs of others.

No one else can take your thoughts captive for you! This is your personal responsibility to Jesus. To *not* do so is sin, and will rob you of the love and belonging you long for with your spouse.

- **Would Jesus commend you in making your thoughts obedient to Him? Yes or No? If no, how are you falling short and what do you need to do in order to change?**

- **Consider these paraphrased verses and consider if the truths convey the essence of your marriage: "A [spouse] loves at all times, and is a great support in adversity.... A [person] of many companions may come to ruin, but their [spouse] will always be there for them" (Proverbs 17:17; 18:24).**

Do you feel safe in your marriage? How free do you feel to reveal your innermost feelings to your spouse? Do you fear that your spouse will let you down when you need them most? If so, how does this make you feel?

- **What does your spouse do that creates feelings of apprehension and distrust in you?**

3. Love and Belonging Needs

After physiological and safety needs are fulfilled, the third level of human need is Love and Belonging. This level is very much from the *heart*, and is dependent on other people for fulfillment. It can only be met when you perceive that you're safe and secure, *and* that you have supportive and communicative relationships with others.

Everyone needs a sense of belonging and acceptance. We need to love and be loved (whether sexually or non-sexually) by others. In the absence of giving and receiving love, many people become susceptible to loneliness, anxiety and depression. This occurs even when they are in proximity to other people.

Also, as we'll see when people substitute *Ego Satisfaction* for Self-Esteem (next), people who fail to experience love and belonging will seek *recognition* instead: **"If love is absent, recognition will do."**

Substituting recognition for love has driven many women into corporate America. Many were raised in fatherless homes, or without affectionate and supportive fathers. Tragically, they marry men who likewise fail to meet their need for love and belonging.

- **Do you experience loving affection from your spouse? If not, what do you feel is lacking in your relationship?**

- **Have you any relationships in which you're experiencing love and acceptance? If yes, describe the nature of these relationships.**

- **Do your spouse and others close to you feel loved and accepted by you? Ask them.**

- **If they don't, ask them for feedback. Write down what they said.**

4. Self-esteem Need or *Ego Satisfaction*

All people need to be respected and to have a healthy sense of self-esteem.

Esteem and self-respect are satisfied when you engage in activities that contribute positively to others' lives.

In essence, the more you act on behalf of the well-being of others, the greater you appreciate the way God has created you.

If your need for love and belonging is being met, you'll more eagerly want to help others. Extension of yourself emanates readily from the outflow of love you're experiencing.

A follower of Jesus who is experiencing love and belonging himself will easily respond to the Spirit and actively pursue a life that benefits and blesses others. (That doesn't mean you *cease* to bless others if you're *not* receiving love, however!)

It may be noted that you need to first *accept yourself* the way our God has created you. This can be hard if you were beaten down by destructive comments or were often compared to more successful siblings. But the encouragement of your spouse and close friends can be extremely helpful in steering

your thoughts toward *God's view* of you rather than allowing yourself to be deceived into a sense of worthlessness (see Hebrews 3:13).

Unlike the need for self-esteem, a person who is pursuing *ego satisfaction* participates in activities for the sole purpose of gaining recognition. As we mentioned earlier, the ego drive for recognition is more likely to occur in people who feel unsafe in their relationships, or who for some reason fail to experience love and belonging.

The ego drive produces many perfectionists who are driven to excel even if others are trampled along the way. People who are impatient with others are driven to feed their own ego. They may seek fame or glory, which again depends on being recognized by others, or compulsively perform good deeds so that others will praise them.

If you're bent on feeding your ego but find you're not succeeding in gaining recognition, you may become enveloped by fear and insecurity and an obsessive striving to control all facets of your life. Contemporary American culture embodies the worldly pursuit of ego gratification.

This is an important factor for you to realize. People who fail to experience security, or whose need for love and belonging are unmet, will often jump into ego pursuits for the sake of being noticed. This is one of the powerful evil forces destroying marriages today. Many women who could be at home experiencing self-esteem as they raise their children are instead seeking recognition outside their home.

- **How is your self-esteem? Do you have an inner confidence and gratefulness about how you've been created?**

- **In what ways are you contributing to the well-being of others around you?**

- **In your activities, are you more inclined to serve others, or to seek recognition for yourself? Ask others close to you for their input and make note of it.**

- **Ask your spouse where he or she fits into your priorities. Do they feel like just another task or duty in your life?**

Further Thoughts to Ponder

Now that you've had a chance to familiarize yourself with the four levels of needs-to-be-satisfied, let's consider several other points in how the diagram may apply to your life.

- 1. What levels of need do you consider substantially satisfied in your life: Physiological, Safety, Love and Belonging, Self-esteem?**

- 2. If your Self-esteem is not being met, describe what's preventing this. Is there anything you can do to change this?**

3. Are you able to express your feelings to others? A good test when you want to express your feelings is this: If you can substitute the phrase “I think” for “I feel”, then you’re only expressing your opinion, not how you feel. Ask others if you really express how you feel, or just what you think. What did they say?

4. Do you know people personally who are on lower levels of need than you are? Name them and describe what you’re doing to help them have their needs met.

Would Jesus do more for these people than you’re doing? If yes, what?

5. Below are suggestions from our book, *Growing Relationships Through Confrontation*. Try to make them a way of life.

What to support

- The other person’s anxiety, fear, doubt.
- The right for him or her to feel or think differently.
- The reality of his or her perceptions.

How to support

- Pray together for wisdom and truth.
- Let the other person speak his or her case.
- Listen! Listen! Listen!
- Restate back what he or she is saying.
- Verbalize his or her feelings.
- Ask for his or her preferred solution.

Don’ts

- Don’t rush in too quickly with solutions.
- Don’t tell him how they *shouldn’t* feel.
- Don’t cut him or her off too soon.
- Don’t judge — describe instead.

6. Write a letter to your spouse describing how you feel about your relationship with him/her. Include those things that are satisfying and dissatisfying. Also, address what you wish they would do differently and what *you* intend to do differently to meet *their* needs.

Human Attributes

(source unknown)

Below, you will find a list of attributes that influence human motivation and feelings. Go down each column and place an 'X' by the attributes that best exemplify you. Put an "O" next to those that describe your spouse. [For the single, do the same with your closest friend.] Be honest with yourself and do not overlook the negative attributes. Recognizing the negative attributes will assist you as you help each other grow in Christ's likeness.

Discuss your answers thoroughly with your spouse or close friend. Your quest is to know the other person through their motivations and feelings. Don't try to discuss all the attributes at once. Take all the time you need to truly know the innermost person of one another.

EMOTIONS

Calm and dependable	Self-righteous
Rich, sensitive nature	Confident and strong to make decisions
Good-natured, easy to get along with	Warm & lively
Cheerful & pleasant, even if he/she doesn't have much to say	Strong-willed, self-determined
Emotionally responsive	Optimistic
Deep, reflective thinker	Talkative - never at a loss for words
Kind-hearted	Self-sufficient
Peace-loving	Refuses to worry about future or fret about the past
Moody, gloomy, pessimistic; looks on the negative	Anger problem
Lacks confidence in self	Highly opinionated
Hypochondriac	Unusual capacity for enjoyment
Rarely laughs aloud	Unemotional & cold
Introspective to the point of being harmful	Emotionally unpredictable
Passive & indifferent	Restless
	Exaggerates truth

RELATIONSHIP TO OTHERS

Dependable friend; constant & faithful	Emotional decisions; impulsive buying
Pleasant to be with	Not easily discouraged
Self-sacrificing friend	Naive & childlike
Makes friends cautiously	Strong leader
Softening & conciliating effect on others	Comes on too strong
Deep feeling for friends	Good judge of people
Diplomatic & peacemaker	Motivator of others
Critical of others' imperfections	Makes friends easily
Insensitive to the needs of others	Never daunted by circumstances
Good listener	Responsive to people
Gives advice only when asked	Makes decisions for others
Fearful of what others think of him/her	Asks forgiveness easily
Suspicious of others	Cruel, blunt, sarcastic
Often deeply hurt by others	Tender & sympathetic
Will carry grudge and be vengeful	Tends to dominate a group
Dislikes those in opposition	Converses with genuine warmth
Hard to get along with	Shares other people's joy and sorrow
Teases others who annoy him/her	Uses people for own benefit
Appears phony	Weak-willed with little conviction
Doesn't expect others to do something they can't do	Seeks credit and approval

ACTIVITIES

Strong perfectionist tendencies	Forgets promises and obligations
Functions well under pressure	Keen, quick mind
Likes detail & analytical work	Great capacity for action
Self-disciplined; finishes task	Does not vacillate
Undisciplined	Very practical
Conscientious & thorough	Stimulates others to activity
Plans tasks before beginning	Gifted in caring for the sick
Stabilizing influence	Thrives on opposition
Knows own limitation	Easily engages in new plans
Tires easily	Breeds enthusiasm
Hesitant to start something new	Overly self-confident
Life must demand the greatest in sacrifice, self-denial & service	Completely disorganized
Overprotects self from involvement	Undependable, late
Discourages others	Prejudiced
Opposes changes of any kind	Opinionated
Makes excuses for own negligence	Bored by details
Decisive; intuitive ability to make decisions	Many unfinished projects
Talks too often about self	Easily distracted
Quick and bold in emergencies	Forces others to agree to his/her plan
	Has time only for own plans and projects