

Home Improvement Series: Building Healthy Relationships
Part One: "INGREDIENTS OF A SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP"
Pastor Dale Campfield - June 27th, 2010

Intro:

Matt 28:19 "Go and make disciples of all nations..."

ECC Process of Discipleship: Making an IMPACT...To Love...To Grow...To Serve

We have 3 priorities – To love...which is expressed in our Sunday morning celebration and connection groups. To grow...which is expressed in our Path to Discipleship. To serve...which is expressed in our daily lives in the places we live, work and play; as well as through the local church. The vision of E.C.C. is to gather together weekly for corporate worship, loving God and each other; then to come together in small Connection Groups for discipleship and fellowship, and are regularly involved in reaching out to others with the love, acceptance, and forgiveness of Jesus Christ through community outreach. To Love...To Grow...To Serve!

Today, we are going to begin a new series called "Home Improvement" in which we're looking at building healthy relationships.

Philippians 2:2

"Live together in harmony and love, as though you only had one mind and spirit between you."

Circle "harmony", "love", and "one mind".

God's ideal for your relationships, whether you're married or not (even if you're not married you're going to get a lot out of this series because it's about relationships) is harmony, intimacy (love) and unity (one mind). The reality is that a lot of our relationships are disharmony, conflict and disappointment. A lot of people will say, "I feel cheated by my marriage.... I feel cheated by my relationships." One guy told me "When I got married, I started off with an ideal; a few months later it turned into an ordeal. Now I'm looking for a new deal." What happened? Good marriages don't just happen. It takes energy, effort to make a marriage work.

Ephesians 4:3

"Make every to keep the unity of the Spirit."

Circle "effort".

As we begin this series, I've got some good news for you: You don't have to change your life completely to make your relationships better. Minor changes will make major differences in your relationships. Just some minor changes in the way you relate to your husband/wife/boyfriend/girlfriend will make major differences in your relationship.

This morning I simply want to introduce the series to you and give you an overview of where we're going to go. We're going to look at Six Ingredients of a Satisfying Relationship. I want to identify them quickly for you so you can start thinking about them and I want you to evaluate your current status in each of these areas this week. Think about them. If you go to work, you get a performance review. You go to the doctor, you get a physical check up. Some of you have an annual audit done on your finances. You need to do a marriage check up periodically, a state of the union study -- "How are we doing in our marriage?" "How am I doing with my relationships?"

What are the six things you need to check up on? What are the six ingredients of a satisfying relationship?

Six Ingredients of a Satisfying Relationship

1. COMMUNICATION

Proverbs 13:17

"Reliable communication permits progress."

Circle "progress". For progress to take place in your relationships, you've got to talk to each other. The problem is the average married couple only talks to each other together, alone -- four minutes a day. In fact, as a couple, you will amass 46 hours of television watching in a week. But you will only spend 23 minutes talking, alone together in a typical week. You can't make any progress if you don't talk to each other.

One of the reasons we have problems in communication is because men and women communicate differently.

I read this week that a woman went to a judge and told him "I want to divorce my husband." The judge said, "Do you have any grounds?" She said, "No, but we do own a half acre in Big Bear." The judge said, "I mean, do you have a grudge?" She said, "No, we park the car in front of the house." The judge said, "Does your husband beat you up?" She said, "No, I always get up before he does." Frustrated the judge said, "Why do you want a divorce?" She said, "We just aren't able to communicate."

Sometimes in your marriage, communication is difficult. It is a skill you must learn. We're going to spend some major time learning this skill in this series. The major reason you have communication problems is you expect your mate to think like you do. And they don't. Think of what you think, then think of the opposite and that's what they think. That's just the way God made us. We're going to work on communication.

Evaluate yourself on your communication in your marriage and in your relationships. If you say, "We never seem to understand each other" give yourself a one. If you say, "Sometimes we're on the same wavelength" give yourself a five. If you say, "We schedule time to talk together" give yourself a ten. As the weeks go on you're going to see these numbers rise. You're going to be better at the end of this series than you are now.

2. CONSIDERATION

Consideration means paying attention to what people say, paying attention to what people feel not invalidating feelings and saying "You shouldn't feel that way!" It means showing common courtesy, treating people with respect, helping them any way you can.

Ephesians 4:2

"Show your love by being helpful to each other."

Consideration means bringing in the groceries even when it's the fourth quarter. Men, consideration means waiting until she has both legs in the car before you pull out of the driveway. It's the little things that count! Makes a little difference.

Illus: I recently read this. The Five Stages of a Married Cold.

- First year: Baby, darling. I'm worried about that snuffle you have so I've called the paramedics to rush you over to Christ hospital for a checkup and a week of rest. I know you don't like hospital food so I'm having the meals brought in.
- Second year: Sweetheart, I don't like the sound of that cough. I've arranged for Dr. Johnson to make a house call. Let me tuck you in bed.
- Third year: You look like you've got a fever. Why don't you drive yourself over to the Urgent Care Facility and get some medicine. I'll watch the kids.
- Fourth year: Look, be sensible! After you've fed and bathed the kids and washed the dishes you really ought to go to bed.
- Fifth year: For Pete's sake! Do you have to cough so loud? I can't hear the television. Would you mind going into the other room while this show is on?

A man told me "In the first year, my wife used to bring me my slippers and the dog came barking. Now my dog brings my slippers..."

Two young lovers walked down the street.
She tripped and he worried, "Be careful, sweet."
Now, married, they walk down the exact same street,
But when she trips, he says, "Pick up your feet!"

James 3:17

"Wisdom shows itself in being considerate."

A mark of being wise is being considerate. When I'm being considerate, I'm being wise. That also means when I'm being inconsiderate, I'm being stupid. In any relationship. Wisdom shows itself in consideration, caring about the needs of others.

Evaluate yourself on this. How considerate are you? "I'm considerate when I'm in a good mood" give yourself a one. "I help my mate/friends when they ask" give yourself a five. "I look for ways to lighten my mate's/friend load" give yourself a ten. Do you look for ways? Do you see it as one of your goals in life? How can I make it easier on my wife/husband/friends? How can I lighten the load? That's what consideration is about.

3. COMPROMISE

1 Corinthians 13:5

"Love does not demand its own way."

That is a mark of genuine love. It's unselfish. Do you demand your own way in your marriage? Do you demand your own way in your relationships? Either my way or the highway! Love it or leave it! You're always pushing for your way.

Having been a pastor for many years I know a lot of people stand at the wedding alter and they're saying, "I do" when secretly inside they're going "After I marry him, I'll redo him, I'll change him." There's a progression in a wedding: First you walk down the aisle. Then you come to the altar. Then you hear the hymn. Aisle-Altar-Hymn. ["I'll alter him."] That's the progression. Many people think they're supposed to keep doing that.

What you need to know is this. The facts of life are

1. Every marriage and every relationship has conflict.
2. No matter who you are, you're always going to have some things you disagree with, with your mate/friend -- no matter how much you love them, how long you live together or how long you've been friends -- there will be some things you never agree on. That's intentional. When two people agree on everything, one of them isn't necessary. When you eat, you eat with a knife and a fork not two forks or two knives. God doesn't need two of you. The greater your differences are in a marriage, the greater your potential for spiritual growth and spiritual greatness. God wants to use your marriage as a school of maturity to help you grow up. Your mate doesn't even have to be a believer. God can still use them in your life to help you grow spiritually and emotionally and in relationships.

One of the things you have to learn in the school of marriage and the school of friendship is how to compromise. You can't get your way all the time. I made a list of some of the things that usually require compromise in a marriage. The kind of vacations you take -- some people like to see 82 places in 10 days, other people want to stay in one place. Some people want to plan everything in advance -- you've got all the details, Triple A guides, reservations... The other just says "Let's just get in the car and leave. It'll be an adventure!" So you have to compromise. One year you take one person's kind of vacation, the next year you take the other person's kind. There's a give and take.

For me, I love to go to a movie, get some pop corn and relax in the theater. My bride, she loves to sit down, read a book with a nice glass of ice tea. We've found over the years that we've had to make compromises with each other to make it work. She likes vacations where we just do nothing.... I like vacations where we keep going and going and pack as much into the day as possible. We've learned to compromise. Butch is one way, I'm the other; but together, we are a team!

You're going to have to compromise on the way your kids are raised too. On the way your money is spent. On how often you make love and even when is the best time to make love. Some

of you are morning people -- you're up and ready to go, including your hormones. Others are night people -- you don't believe in God before 11 a.m. in the morning. But at 1 in the night you're still going strong. When it comes to sex one of you is saying, "Drop everything" the other is saying, "Drop dead!" You will have to compromise on how often you see the in laws. You'll have to compromise on how you spend your day off. It's not your day off anymore; it's the family's day off. Once you're married it's no longer what I want to do on my day off, it's what we are going to do on our day off. You have to compromise on those kinds of things.

More marriages die from inflexibility than from alcoholism, or abuse or adultery. More marriages die from inflexibility -- an unwillingness to change than from anything else.

Evaluate yourself on this third secret of a satisfying relationship, whether you're married or single and the relationship with your closest friends. How willing are you to compromise. If you say, "I'm stubborn until I get my way" give yourself a minus 10. If you say "We don't talk about the issues we don't agree on" give yourself a 1. If you say, "We stay with an issue and keep working on it until we reach a compromise," give yourself an 8. If you say, "Both of us go the second mile when we disagree" give yourself a 10.

4. COURTSHIP

This particular ingredient is for those who are married, or those who have friends of the opposite sex and your relationship is leaning towards marriage; so that you'll be prepared when you do get married.

Romance, physical affection, sex, fun, playfulness, having time to enjoy each other. God intended for your marriage to be that way.

Proverbs 5:19

"Let your mate's affection fill you at all times with delight."

He says "at all times". At all times you are to be affectionate, you are to keep the courting going on in your marriage. If there was more courting in marriages, they'd be fewer marriages in court. The problem is that the things you did to win your mate's love, you've stopped doing to continue keeping that love alive. You've got to keep on dating your mate.

Ladies, men by nature are very achievement oriented. They are goal oriented. They see you and want you in their life. They woo you, romance you, do all kind of things that they would never do -- operas, flowers, candy. The moment you are married, they (in their mind; they don't think this consciously) think subconsciously "Mission Accomplished! Now it's on to the next goal." The next goal is usually, "Now I've got to provide for this woman I love. I've got to provide for the family we're going to raise," which means he takes all that energy and turns it into his work. He is providing for the woman he loves and his kids. He is thinking it seems natural: "I've now got to provide for the people I love."

All of a sudden the wife goes, "What happened? He's not the knight in shining armor anymore. Instead of candy and kisses I get burps and gas. What happened?" She's feeling intense rejection when the guy's thinking, "This is how I show I love you -- the hard work."

We don't think alike. But you've got to have romance in your marriage all the time.

A man went to a psychiatrist with his wife. He said, "My wife is depressed. I'm really concerned. The psychiatrist said, "Could I talk to her privately?" Psychiatrist talks to the woman and finds she is just starving for affection. He brings her man back into the room and to model it, the psychiatrist walks over to the man's wife, gives her a big hug and a big juicy kiss. He said, "She needs this every day of the week." Guys are kind of dumb. The man said, "I think I can only get her here Mondays, Wednesdays and Fridays. . ."

Part of the problem with romance is that husband and wives see each other in absolutely the worst part of the day. It's either when you're getting ready, you're rushed and you're on your way out to work and you're stressed out. Or you come home at night with nothing else left to give. And that's the only time you see the most important person in your life. So the most important person in your life gets your leftovers. That is not fair. We're going to change that in this series.

Ecclesiastes 9:9

"Enjoy life with your mate whom you love."

Literally in Hebrew it says, "With your wife." But I think it applies both ways. We need to date our mate. We need to make our relationship a priority. Become best friends. Have fun. The problem is that the longer you're married, the more you tend to share the chores and the less you tend to share the joys. It becomes boring. You need to develop common interests.

"We have nothing in common!" you say. Of course you don't. What do you think attracted you to each other? Before marriage opposites attract. After marriage opposites attack. All those things you thought were unique and interesting and caught your attention, now irritate the socks off you! You're around them all the time. You say, "We've got nothing in common!" That's why you must create things in common. You must develop common interests that you like to do. Make a list of things that you learn to do together that are fun. If you don't, your marriage is going to go stale. You must intentionally develop, find things that you both will like to do -- that you can do together than you will enjoy doing.

Evaluate yourself on how well you court your husband or your wife. "It's non existent. I'm too busy for fun and romance" give yourself a 1. If you say, "I still write love notes to my husband/wife" give yourself an 8. If you say "We schedule a weekly date away from the children" give yourself a 10. You've got to continue dating your mate.

5. COMMITMENT

The Bible says in...

Malachi 2:16

God says, *"I hate divorce, Make sure you do not break your promise to be faithful to your mate."*

It's interesting to me that even the secular media is beginning to notice the importance of commitment. *Time* magazine's cover has a bride and groom doll with twine wrapped around them binding them together. Headline says, "For better or for worse. The growing movement to strengthen marriage and prevent divorce." Why would a national news magazine present the cover article on the importance of commitment in marriage? Because the United States has gone from the most marrying country in the world to the country with the most divorces in the world and the country with the most unwed mothers in the world.

That is a problem. The deterioration of the family is happening because the entire generation of baby boomers grew up in the 60's and 70's based on the thought, "I've got to do what's best for me". That's called selfishness. If you try to do that I guarantee you your self esteem will go lower not higher. Jesus said, "You lose your life to find it." You give your life away and in giving your life away you find meaning and significance. The more selfish you become, the more self centered you become, the more bitter you become, and the more unhappy you become. Throw that line out -- "I've got to do what's best for me!" No you don't! You have to do what God says is best for you. When you do that, that's what is going to be what is best for you.

God says, Keep your commitments. Even if it's painful, He says keep your commitments. You will never build a great marriage unless you throw out the option of divorce from your mind. As long as divorce is a possibility back in the back of your mind, you'll never build a great marriage. It is always too easy to walk out than it is to rebuild a relationship. It's always easier to run, than it is to rebuild. But it is always more rewarding to rebuild than it is to run.

I'm not talking about some guy who is perfect. Butch and I have never considered getting a divorce over the past 30 years. We had one time when it could have went that way, but my bride was committed to me and didn't even allow it to be an option. We said, "Divorce is not an option for us." We locked the escape hatch on our marriage the night we got married and threw away the key. We said, "I don't care how miserable we are we're going to make this marriage work."

On August 2nd of this year, Cathi and I will celebrate our 30th wedding anniversary. We made a commitment to each other 30 years ago. Because it was not an option, I made a promise to God and so did she. When you got married you didn't make a promise to a pastor. You didn't make a promise to a judge. You said before God, "Till death do us part." One day you'll stand before God and He'll say, "Did you keep that commitment?" This is serious business.

One of the reasons why people don't keep commitments is because they don't know the meaning of commitment. As we start this series, write down this definition. Commitment really means: Being willing to be unhappy until we work it out. That may be quite a little while. We're still working on things thirty years later. Commitment means I'm going to stay with you as long as it

takes because I made a commitment to God and regardless of what you choose to do, I'm going to be committed.

The greatest enemy of commitment is what I call the myth of incompatibility. That is the most unscientific word which has absolutely no basis in reality. Two quotes from two of the top eminent psychiatrists in the world, Paul Tournier, the Swiss psychiatrist who wrote the book Understand Each Other. He says, "So called incompatibility is a myth invented by jurists in order to make a plea for divorce. It is likewise just a common excuse for people to hide their failings. Misunderstandings and mistakes can be corrected if there is a willingness to do so." Incompatibility is really just selfishness and stubbornness. That's all it is. "We're not compatible." That's saying I'm not willing to change. I'm not willing to give. You're not willing to give. We're both selfish and we're both stubborn.

Dr. Paul Popenough, the director of the Institute of Family Relationships. He's written dozens of books on marriage. He says, "I don't believe incompatibility exists. Almost any two people are comparable if they try to be."

Our marriage is what we make it to be. The grass is not greener on the other side of the fence, the grass is not greener on this side of the fence. The grass is greener where you water it. If you would take all the energy you've got complaining about your marriage and all the energy you've got comparing your marriage to others and focus on growing your marriage, it would be a whole lot better. You're just putting the energy in the wrong place, griping and comparing.

It's a willingness to compromise, a willingness to change, a willingness to stay with the commitments I've made. Evaluate yourself in this fifth area. If you're saying, "I'm toying in leaving my marriage" give yourself a 1. If you say, "I use divorce as a threat when I'm mad" give yourself a 2. If you want a successful marriage you've got to eliminate that from your threats. When you get mad you can't bring up, "I'll walk out" or "I'm leaving". There are other ways to leverage your mate. One of them is not with the threat of divorce. It's off limits if you want a great marriage. If you say, "Divorce is not an option for me. Regardless of what my mate does, divorce is not an option for me" give yourself a 10.

For those of you who are not married, it's important that you keep your commitment to your friends as well. It's one thing to be a friend, but it's another thing to be committed to that friendship. You're friends need you.

Ecc. 4:10

If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up!

You've got to make that commitment to your friends, that you'll be there to pick them up when they fall, when they have difficult times, when they mess up; you're commitment is there.

6. CHRIST

You need communication. You need consideration. You need compromise. You need courtship. You need all of these things together -- commitment. But you need the sixth thing -- Christ -- to give you the power to do those things. Jesus Christ gives you the power and ability to do the other things when human love wears out. The Bible says this in

Philippians 2:5

"Your attitude toward each other should be the same as that of Jesus Christ."

Jesus Christ -- not somebody else -- but the attitude of Christ. When Christ is in me and Christ is in my wife, Jesus isn't going to argue with Jesus. Christ in me is not going to have conflict with Christ in you. When you've got a husband and a wife both moving toward Christ it brings you together. Nothing will bring your marriage closer than when you both focus on Christ. When you move toward Him, it automatically brings you together in spite of all your differences.

This also works in your closets friendships. You're best friends should be those who have a relationship with Jesus Christ! When Christ is in you and He is in them; Jesus isn't going to argue with Jesus. But these friends must be followers of Christ in order for this to happen.

The greatest thing you can do for your marriage is put Jesus Christ right in the center of it. The greatest thing you can do for your relationships to those who are closest to you is to put Christ in the center of it. How do you do that?

First, you invite Him to come into your life and you say, "Jesus Christ, come in and be the director and Lord of my life." If you haven't done that, do it. Don't wait. Then you say, "Together, we want to commit our marriage (or friendship to those who are single) to Jesus Christ and we want to treat each other the way Jesus Christ treats us." Then you get into a church that is committed to building strong marriages and start hanging out with other couples who are committed to making their marriages work. Don't hang around couples that aren't committed to their marriage. I don't care how funny they are or how close they live to you. If they're not committed to their marriage, it's dangerous to have them as close friends. I'm serious! Eighty-three percent of all affairs occur between couples when one couple is not satisfied with their marriage. You should have as your closest friends those who are just as committed to saving their marriage as you are to saving yours. You get into church and find people like that. Then read the Bible together and pray together and maybe memorize some scripture together. Find Christ bringing you closer and closer.

Evaluate yourself on this one, the place Christ has in your marriage. "He's got no place in our marriage", give yourself a 0. "We attend church together and discuss the message", give yourself a 5. "We've committed our marriage to Christ, we're praying together, we're trying to read the Bible together regularly", give yourself a 10.

For those who are single, do the same thing in regards to your closet relationships.

Conclusion:

Good relationships do not just happen. They're not by accident. They take effort. They're built on these six ingredients. As we start this series let me say personally I have found that the greatest joy in my life has been building my marriage. A greater joy than building this church, a greater joy than building a career, a great joy than anything else has been building my relationship to Butch/Cathi. Nothing has been as rewarding than the fruit of that effort.

God wants to work in your life. As we begin this series, I want to challenge you to make two commitments.

1. During the next several weeks as we go over this series, we're going to commit to working on communication, consideration, compromise. We're going to work on deepening our commitment to our relationships.
2. I challenge you to invite Christ into your life and say, "Give me/us the power to do these things."
3. I challenge you to memorize the scriptures in the "Home Warranty" booklet that we are making available to each of you. I have put these particular texts in the booklet for a purpose. They all deal with relationships in some way. When you memorize them, they will help you in every relationship that you have.

And when you do these things...

You watch, You wait, You'll see!

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Part One: "INGREDIENTS OF A SATISFYING RELATIONSHIP"
Pastor Dale Campfield - June 27th, 2010

Phil. 2:2 "... Live together in harmony and love, as though you only had one mind and spirit between you."
Eph. 4:3 "Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit..."

1. _____
"Reliable communication permits progress." Pr. 13:17 (LB)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

2. _____
"Show your love by being helpful to each other." Eph. 4:2b (TEV)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

3. _____
"... Love does not demand its own way." 1 Cor. 13:5 (LB)

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

4. _____
"Enjoy life with your mate, whom you love..." Eccl. 9:9a

1 - 2 - 3 - 4 - 5 - 6 - 7 - 8 - 9 - 10

5. _____
If one falls down, his friend can help him up. But pity the man who falls and has no one to help him up! Ecc. 4:10

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"Your attitude (toward each other) should be the same as that of Jesus Christ." Phil 2:5

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