

Cultivating Closeness

So, what comes to mind?

This is something that is...

- ⊙ Deliberate, not accidental.
- ⊙ Work, not a walk in the park.
- ⊙ A process, not an accomplishment.
- ⊙ Progressive, not instant.
- ⊙ Started “below” the ground and moves “above” the ground.
- ⊙ Addressing existing obstacles, not fantasizing about utopia.

This will require us to...

- ⊙ Address the condition of the soil
- ⊙ Give careful attention to the selection of the seed.
- ⊙ Remain invested in the feeding and weeding process.

The condition of our “soil”.

The nature of the soil itself.

...Our problem...

1. We were born sinners, Rom. 3:23.
2. As sinners we are spiritually dead, 1 Cor. 2:14.
3. As sinners we are incorrigibly selfish Eph. 2:1-4.

...Our Solution...

1. We must be born again, Eph. 2:5-9
2. We must continue to grow in Christ, Eph. 2:10.

The “buried debris” in the soil.

“He that covereth his sins shall not prosper: but whoso confesseth and forsaketh *them* shall have mercy.” Proverbs 28:13

What is this verse saying?

What do you mean by “buried debris”?

What can we do about it?

- ⊙ Identify the symptoms.
 - Inability to trust.
 - Internal “walls”.
 - Insurmountable sinful patterns.
- ⊙ Identify the source.
 - Past violations of trust, “offenses”.
 - Inability to find a solution or cure.
- ⊙ Implement God’s solution.
 - It is described in “surgical” terms.
 - It is identified as forgiveness, that is BIBLICAL forgiveness.

- It is explained with a word picture that reveals that it includes...
 - ...assessment.
 - ...confrontation.
 - ...cancellation.

The selection of the seed

The foundational principle.

“Be not deceived; God is not mocked: for whatsoever a man soweth, that shall he also reap. For he that soweth to his flesh shall of the flesh reap corruption; but he that soweth to the Spirit shall of the Spirit reap life everlasting.

And let us not be weary in well doing: for in due season we shall reap, if we faint not Gal. 6:7-9

The specific warning.

Why would we be deceived?

- ⊙ The time between sowing and reaping.
- ⊙ The difference in “appearance” between seed and fruit.

The specific identification.

“Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband.” Eph. 5:33

So, what do seeds of love look like?

So, what do seeds of respect look like?

Feeding and weeding

- ⊙ This will require a new understanding and commitment to truth in communication.
- ⊙ This will require a renewed and sacrificial commitment to invest the necessary time.

Communication

- ⊙ The most recognized problem in cultivating closeness in marriage is communication, while the most reliable “tool” for cultivating closeness is communication.
- ⊙ While progress in this area is never *easy*, it can in fact be *simplified* if we understand two basic truths.

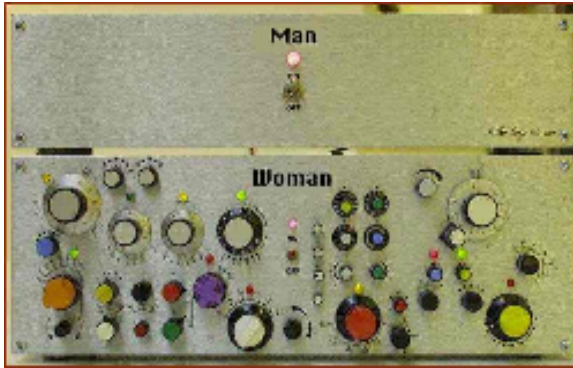
These basic truths are...

- ⊙ First, the single most important goal in communication must be *understanding* NOT *agreement!*

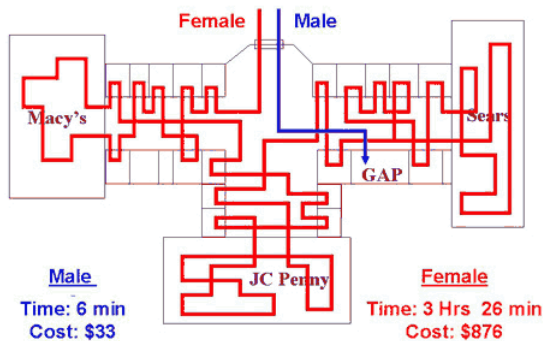
What difference does this make?

- ◎ Second, all communication between a man and a woman, especially a husband and a wife, must be understood to be a cross-cultural mission and ministry.

So, what is so cross-cultural about communicating with your mate?



Mission: Go to Gap, Buy a Pair of Pants



Comparing men and women

Nicknames

If Emma, Suzanne, Debra, and Michelle go out for lunch, they will call each other Emma, Suzanne, Debra, and Michelle. But if Mike, Phil, Rob, and Jack go out for pizza, they will affectionately refer to each other as Fat Boy, Godzilla, Peanut-Head, and Useless.

Eating Out

When the bill arrives, Mike, Phil, Rob, and Jack will each throw in \$20, even though it's only for \$22.50. None of them will have anything smaller, and none will actually admit they want change back. When the girls get their bill, out come pocket calculators.

Money

A man will pay \$2 for a \$1 item he wants. A woman will pay \$1 for a \$2 item she doesn't want.

Bathrooms

A man has 6 items in his bathroom – a toothbrush, toothpaste, shaving cream, razor, a bar of soap, and a towel from the Holiday Inn. The average number of items in the typical woman's bathroom is 437. A man would not be able to identify most of these items.

Arguments

A woman has the last word in any argument. Anything a man says after that is the beginning of a new argument.

Cats

Women love cats. Men say they love cats, but when women are not around, men kick cats.

Marriage

A woman marries a man expecting that he will change, but he doesn't. A man marries a woman expecting that she won't change and she does.

Dressing Up

A woman will dress up to go shopping, water the plants, empty the garbage, answer the phone, read a book, get the mail. A man will dress up for weddings and funerals.

Offspring

Ah, children. A woman knows all about her children. She knows about their dentist appointments, and romances, best friends and favorite foods, their secret fears, hopes and dreams. A man is vaguely aware of some short people living in the house.

Investment of Time

- ◎ Let's begin by considering a familiar story in Luke 10:38-42.
 - What was their situation like?
 - What choices did they make?
 - What comment did Jesus make?
- ◎ Let's continue by considering some specific practicalities.
 - You should be looking for "times" rather than "time".
 - You should see these times as absolutely indispensable parts of your day and week. So, plan it, schedule it, do it.

There is NO substitute for consistent quantities of quality time in any relationship.

"I don't have time" often leads to a situation in which you have nothing BUT time.

"I would do/give anything..." only works at the beginning, not after the end!