

Here's where I believe healthy relationships begin and end. In one line in Ephesians, chapter five, Paul gives us the key. He says (Ephesians 5:21) - *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ*. To believers in the first century, the Greek word for "submit" meant "to arrange yourself underneath" ... to be a support, a foundation. So we are not talking about a winner-take-all power struggle, but rather two people on the same team, each offering the other support in humility. *The Message* version of the Bible translates that line this way: "Out of respect for Christ, be courteously reverent to one another." Write that down. *Courteously reverent*. Try living your marriage that way for the next 24 hours. Courteously reverent. Not because one of you is better than the other or because one of you deserves it ...but out of reverence for Christ. Women, how can we become more courteously reverent to the men in our lives?

One place we can work is in the area of expectation. By far the most common comment made last week on those cards you gave me had to do with this. You said things like, "Men have no idea what women are thinking unless they tell us." And "Men are not mind-readers. Just say what you want." **Men don't read minds** ... and beneath that comment I hear frustration over unmet expectations and assumptions. Expectations and assumptions are mean little buggers.

A few weeks ago, I mentioned a study done by Elizabeth Newton. She conducted this experiment with two groups of people. The group she called "tappers" were asked to tap out well-known songs, while another group ... called the "listeners" ... were supposed to guess the songs. Newton's experiment was designed to judge the relationship between the tappers and the listeners. Just from the taps, listeners were able to guess *less than* three songs in a hundred. But when she asked tappers to predict whether the listeners would guess correctly, about half the time (50 songs out of a hundred), the tappers assumed the listeners got it. From a tapper's perspective (because they know the song and are singing it in their head while they tap), it

seems so obvious that it's hard to imagine anyone on the receiving end not getting it. And yet, the listeners correctly guessed less than three songs in a hundred. Newton concluded that there is something called the "curse of knowledge" in communication. The person with knowledge in a given situation will often *assume* the listener understands more than they do.

And what I hear guys saying is that often this happens ... that they are left feeling inadequate ... simply because they don't hear what the female in their life is tapping. So how do we apply submission to that circumstance? Rather than becoming impatient, frustrated, critical ... how do we respect another person's limits without making that person feel inadequate?

Let me just leave this as a question and move to a second comment I hear from men. **Men tend to deal with life from a rational (rather than emotional) place.** Guys said this on those cards in several ways last week. One comment: "Men don't always want to talk about everything on their mind. Let me sort it out, then we'll talk." And, "If you come crying to me, make sure you are looking for a solution, not just a reflection of your feelings." And then this: "P.S. – Complaining is a turn-off."

David Jones says one reason guys like to fix things and solve problems and even solve *our* problems is that they are wired to take care of us. It's part of the God-given design. Men are geared to provide and protect. It's how men serve, and ... it is how they find value. I think this is very much what's beneath Paul's word to wives in Ephesians 5 when he says (Ephesians 5:22-24) - *Wives, submit yourselves (come underneath to support; be courteously reverent) to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.*

Paul is *not* saying women are somehow second-rate. He is asking us to understand how men are wired by the God who created them. God has given a special purpose and responsibility to men. This is how he has wired men. He has wired them so that they are driven to provide and protect. Its natural for men to approach problems this way. So women, understand that when you need something besides a fix from your husband, you may need to just say so. I've learned to tell Steve sometimes after I've cried over something, "All I need from you right now is for you to say, 'It will be okay.'" Because listen: if we yell at our husbands for trying to fix something we don't want fixed, we are condemning how they are wired.

**Men are wired with a drive to make a positive difference.** Willard Harley counseled married couples for years and then wrote a best-selling book, *His Needs, Her Needs*. After counseling hundreds of couples, Harley concluded that the top five needs of men fell into five categories. One of the five was admiration. Harley says, "Men want their wives to be proud of them. So when you tell your husband he's wonderful, it motivates him to achieve more."

Years ago when Steve and I were in living in Kentucky, he was going through a season of pretty serious depression. My expectations were way up here and Steve's outlook on life was way down here and it was a strain on us. Finally one day, after I'd done everything I could think of to help the situation, I decided to pray for him every day for 20 minutes. And for the first few days, I talked a lot in those prayers. I told God everything I was thinking about the situation and how frustrated I was and how hard and what I thought Steve should be doing. Eventually, we came to the place ... God and me ... where we would just sit and look together at Steve. Not literally, but in that place of prayer. And one day, while we were just looking at him, God said, "You need to let Steve clean the bathroom." And I was like, "No problem! But I don't know how that's going to help." And that's when God showed me that I'd been trying

so hard to make Steve's life easier that I'd taken away every opportunity he had to be appreciated.

We all need that, but men are especially wired with that need to be appreciated ... to be admired by the woman in their lives. Someone wrote this: "Women, the #1 way that we as men feel close to you is when you affirm us, support us, respect us, and take pride in us ... there's no feeling quite like what we as men get when we know that you are proud of us and that you respect us."

So women need to hear this ... that men need women to need them in the healthiest sense of that term. And women need men to love them. And its all right there in Paul's teaching in Ephesians. He says (Ephesians 5:25-27) - *Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy ...*

Submission and sacrifice. The wife comes underneath her husband, like a foundation, to support him. And the husband gives up his life for his wife.

Jesus is the best example of submission. Philippians 2 says Jesus did not see equality with God as a ladder to scale but made himself nothing, taking the nature of a servant. Out of reverence for Christ, wives and husbands, are we climbing down the ladder like he did? Out of reverence for Christ, wives, are you looking for ways to support your husbands? Out of reverence for Christ, husbands, are you looking for ways to give your life for your wife?

Another thing men wish women knew about men: **Men like to play**. For Willard Harley ... the psychologist and marriage counselor ... this was #3 on the Top Five list for men. Men feel

close to their wives when their wives “spend time with them in recreational companionship.” That means ... do fun things together because it is healthy *and* because men need this. Play. And just so we’re on the same page here, “play” for men does not include rearranging furniture, painting rooms and organizing things. Submission means doing something he likes every once in a while. And of course, that road goes both ways. Philippians 2:1-4 says - *If you have any encouragement from being united with Christ, if any comfort from his love, if any fellowship with the Spirit, if any tenderness and compassion, 2then make my joy complete by being like-minded, having the same love, being one in spirit and purpose.* (and then Paul counsels us on how to get that unity. He says) *3Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, but in humility consider others better than yourselves.* (and here’s the real kicker) *4Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others.* What’s one thing you can do to live that passage out at home this week ... so that its not just you doing your stuff while he does his stuff? Because here’s the real danger. If we are not careful to submit ... to come underneath each other and bear each other up ... to find our needs met in each other ... ***the needs will still get met, but in unhealthy ways.***

And that leads us to one last thought. What men *really* wish women knew about men is that **men have a need for sexual fulfillment.** This was the number one need listed in Willard Harley’s top five needs for men. “Sexual fulfillment.” As one of you said last week on your card, “This is intimacy for men and it is important that its seen as meaningful.” That’s what men want women to know. What *God* wants us *all* to know is that this area of our life together ... specifically in the context of marriage ... is also a reverent place. A place where we are called to support each other, to understand each other, to care reverently. Ephesians 5:28-29 says - *In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves*

*his wife loves himself. 29 After all, people have never hated their own bodies, but they feed and care for them, just as Christ does the church.*

What men may *not* want women to know ... but what we *need* to know if we're going to build health in our relationships... is this. This was written last week on a card: "Inside every man – especially a 'macho man' – is a deeply-hidden, secret fear – a very great fear – of being found inadequate. The pain which that fear causes can lead to a lot of sinful behavior as an escape or a masking behavior." I recognized the hand-writing, since it was my husband's. I want to give time to the man who wrote those words.

**STEVE:** Well, doesn't God have a great sense of humor? So here is the guy with a fear of inadequacy, giving a talk on "the fear of inadequacy," and therefore dealing with the fear that his talk on the fear of inadequacy will in fact be inadequate. Thank you for your prayers.

So I am here to talk about the sensitive and embarrassing connections between men's need for sexual fulfillment, our fears of inadequacy, and the allure of pornography. I am standing here today as only this: a transgressor – a sinner who could not (on my own strength) break free of a powerful addiction. For 12 years – the first half our married life – I dishonored my beautiful and godly wife. And I stand here today with only this to offer: a testimony to the power of Jesus Christ to save, strengthen, and deliver from this addiction.

Pornography is a fearsome and widely used weapon in the hands of Satan, whom the Bible describes as an accuser, a deceiver, and a destroyer. And he uses it to attack both men and women, marriages, families, teenagers.

The allure of pornography for men is the escape it offers from the fear of inadequacy. In this fantasy world, inadequacy does not exist. In a very powerful – but false – way, it appears to be a safe place.

This, of course, is a deception. The truth is found in John 10:10 where Jesus says: “I have come so that they may have life, and have it to the full.” Jesus comes so that we may have life – life in the REAL world -- and have it to the full. So the longer we stay in this fantasy world, the more we separate ourselves from the very real promise of our Savior.

The truth is that pornography is a sin, and sin leads to death. It can kill marriages. Teenage guys, years before you meet the one you are going to marry, pornography can trap you in behavioral and thought patterns that will threaten your eventual marriage. Jesus said in Matthew 5:28, “You have heard it said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I say to you, anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart.” It is a sin, and Romans 6:18 says Jesus sets us free from the power of sin.

When Jesus taught his disciples to pray in Matthew 6, he said, “Our Father, who art in heaven, hallowed be thy name. . . Lead us not into temptation, but DELIVER us from the evil one. . .”

Brothers, the Father wants to lead us away from this terribly deceptive, terribly destructive, temptation -- to DELIVER us from it -- and to bring us back to our wives and to holy living – and teens – to holy living for the sake of your future wives and families.

But Satan also uses the weapon of pornography to attack women with a message of inadequacy. If your husband has a porn problem, you may hear the accuser saying to you: If you were more

affectionate, if you were more amorous, if you were more attractive, your husband would not need to find satisfaction from pornography.

Sisters, this is a lie from the pit of hell. Spirit of accusation, spirit of deception: We command you, in the name of Jesus Christ, be silent.

Porn becomes a problem for the vast majority of men in their adolescent years. I had a problem long before I ever met Carolyn. Sisters, don't let the devil put this burden on you.

And the truth is that porn does not offer anything real to men. What it presumes to call satisfaction is only a weak, empty, fleeting sham – and a trap. Wives, when you give your husband respect, when you give him appreciation, when you give him support, you are giving him the things that truly satisfy and that truly free. Not something weak, empty, and fleeting but something strong, substantial, and enduring.

Another deception is the idea that if this secret sin is discovered, the shame would destroy your life. The truth is that Jesus told us in Matthew 10:26 not to be afraid of the devil's spiritual forces. He said, "There is nothing concealed that will not be disclosed, or hidden that will not be made known."

So if the devil is holding fear of discovery over your head, you can take that weapon out of his hand in an instant by confessing this sin yourself to others in your church family. It will not ruin your life. In fact, your life will get better. By confessing your sin, as it says in 1 John 1:9, you will find forgiveness and you will open the door for your brothers and sisters in Christ to begin praying for your healing and deliverance.

FREEDOM. DELIVERANCE. Malachi 4:2 says, “The sun of righteousness will rise with healing in its wings. And you will go out and leap like calves released from the stall.”

Some practical steps toward freedom and deliverance:

1. Close the door to the devil. Put the filters on the computer. Use the V-Chip on the TV. And make sure that the ONLY person who knows the password is the person WITHOUT the porn problem. When we lived in Athens, we could not have the internet in our house because I was too weak to resist the temptation. Going without the internet or cable TV will not destroy your marriage, but pornography can.

2. Keep the computer in an open area of your home. If the danger of a porn problem exists – if you have teens in the house -- the computer should never be behind a closed door.

3. Get accountability. If you’re a husband, come clean with your wife. Confess. Ask for her forgiveness, and her help. If you’re a guy – from a 5<sup>th</sup> grader on up – admit your problem to some other brothers in Christ. “Hey, my family’s going to be out of town this weekend; I need your prayers against the temptation of pornography, and when you see me next week, ask me how I did.”

4. Finally, brothers and sisters, let us find our adequacy in Christ. From the Father’s point of view, there is no such thing as inadequacy in Christ. When He measures you, and you are in Christ, He is actually measuring not you but Christ. And Christ always measures up. “*Mene, mene, tekel, parsin*” – that terrifying phrase in Daniel 5 -- “you have been weighed on the scales

and found wanting.” Men, when you are in Christ, and you are weighed in the scales, Jesus is in them with you. You will not be found wanting.

And women, your attractiveness and your adequacy is also found in Christ. Your Heavenly Father loves you so much, He has paid a great price to ransom you. You are precious in His sight, a beautiful treasure – and you can bring great joy to your husband by giving him your respect, your appreciation, your support, and your love.

**CAROLYN:** I know ... this isn't the most comfortable subject for church, but actually, I'm sorry we haven't talked about it sooner. Steve and I are charged with being spiritual guides in this church. And the purpose of a guide is to lead others toward the goal ... which is Christ ... where healing is. And we sense that many men, many couples, many families are dealing with this issue. Something like 70% of young men are developing a habit. 60% of men in their 30s. What men need women to know is that the temptations are strong. And men and women both need to know that Christ offers healing. Men need our understanding and also our accountability. Be fearless in talking about the tough issues and let God be God for you. If you're looking for a place to start, the website listed in your insert has a wealth of information.

[www.porn-free.org](http://www.porn-free.org)

Steve's email: [smoore1776@bellsouth.net](mailto:smoore1776@bellsouth.net)

And Steve is available and is glad to talk confidentially to anyone, either today or by phone or email. Those conversations would be completely confidential.

Friends of ours struggled for years in a marriage scarred by addiction. He wasn't a faithful believer ... she was horribly codependent. After he ended up in a treatment program, they pulled their lives in under the wings of God and found healing there. The last time Steve and I spoke publicly about marriage, she asked me to pass this word along. "Please encourage those," she said, "who wish their marriages were more faith-filled, who long for their spouse to know the Lord ... for the first time, or just in a closer way ... please let them know that there is hope. God delights in making marriages work that the world would rather see fail."