

Answers to Text Questions from
"Foundations for a Healthy Marriage" Message
May 15 & 16, 2010

We wanted to express our appreciation for the questions during the three services Annette and I shared together. We know it was impossible to get to all the texts and wanted to take just a minute to respond to the ones we didn't have time to address. Obviously there could be a lot more said about each topic. The important thing is that your participation was valued and being the first time we tried this, we hope to do it again! I will do my best to represent both of us so we can get this out quickly. Thanks to Pastor Dave who has responded to some of the general questions as well.

1. What's a good activity that includes all the love languages?

I think the nature of the love languages is such that thinking in terms of consolidation just doesn't work. These are general ideas that Chapman shares and I know for us that each one has its place. For us our "date nights" usually include multiple opportunities to speak each other's language.

2. What was your biggest adjustment when your marriage came under scrutiny due to ministry?

The ministry God has called us to has been a joy and a privilege. I have tried to keep a balance of reasonable expectations for Annette and my children but sometimes there have been imposed expectations that just were not fair. That goes with the territory but overall it has been fantastic and allowed us the room to grow just like any couple desires.

3. How do you fight taking each other for granted and making sure to treat each other with affection, love and respect?

We try to follow those little promptings that you sometimes think about but don't act on. For example, when I am on Broadway in Everett and drive by Stadium Flowers I am reminded they have some nice, inexpensive roses that I pick up for Annette. It would be easy to just go on to the next appointment but I usually stop. When you think about it...act on it.

4. How often do you pray together? How much daily time should a couple spend together in prayer?

We have an extended time of prayer on Monday evenings which has been our family devotion night. We pray at all our meals obviously. Usually once or twice a week some special need will come up and we will spend time together taking it to the Lord.

5. What unique pressures did having children put on your marriage?

We were married one month when we found out were pregnant. We have four children and it seemed right out of the gate we were in the thick of it. No regrets but it didn't allow for those years to settle in with each other like some couples have enjoyed. Carving out the time alone was always a challenge, but we're making up for it now.

6. What should you do when one spouse loses the capacity for conversation or sexual fulfillment due to tiredness or other external influences?

Communicate clearly what the needs and desires are and listen to any factors that may be contributing to the decline in interest. Hopefully a safe enough atmosphere is created so that you can arrive at an honest answer. Desire is a hard thing to fabricate. Unfortunately sometimes it is not recovered until it's too late.

7. How long did you date before you got married?

We met in April 1980. I moved to Indiana where Annette was in August of that year. We were married on December 27th, 1981. We had a 3 month period when we were sorting things out but this time only reinforced the idea that I did not want to live without Annette.

8. What rules do you have when you fight or argue? Do you have rules?

We don't have any stated rules but we have used what you might say are "best practices." Let me mention just a few of these. We have tried to:

1. Acknowledge the problem
2. Avoid attacking the person instead of the problem
3. Don't keep score
4. Be willing to be corrected and forgive when necessary
5. Keep a clean slate

9. Who is in charge of the spiritual climate of your family? Or what roles do you each play in this?

I would consider myself as ultimately responsible. We certainly help each other out. For example, devotional night at times is a challenge. Sometimes she pushes forward and other times I do. Annette has been strong in the area of prayer and I tend to be strong in the area of biblical instruction or reference. So we do it together but I am responsible to lead.

10. How did you know that you should get married?

I suppose it happened when I knew I did not want to live without her. Marriage was to instinctive next step of commitment.

11. How do you protect your marriage from a "wandering eye" or other temptations?

We have taken specific measures to put blocks on the TV and internet. We use a service called 'BSafe' and Annette holds the code to the filter. It also has the ability to include others in the awareness of sites visited for added accountability.

12. Who cooks most in your family & why?

Annette does because she is a great cook. She has had the opportunity to be home for most of our marriage and it's just a practical thing because my schedule has been a bit more unpredictable. I am very capable though and do so usually once a week.

13. What do you do if you feel you are the only one serving?

I know it must be very difficult but continue to do so. Paul gave instructions to do everything "as to the Lord" so it is really Him we are serving in everything.

14. How do you know how often to fulfill the sexual needs without it becoming something that takes over the relationship?

Ideally you will approach this area and have a mutual desire. Unfortunately it does not always happen that way. I think there is a balance that you strive for together. Because of the circumstances surrounding the child rearing years I would often defer those desires because I knew it wasn't mutual. The best practice is to keep the lines of communication open. I don't think anything should be allowed to "take over" the relationship. This is not healthy. 1 Cor. 6:12

15. What activities do you do together? What things do you do separate?

Our days off we spend together. We enjoy working in the yard, going for a ride, having lunch at a new place, going to the movies, etc. She's not real fond of water so she rarely goes with me fishing. I rarely go with her shopping. We are trying to take up golf together. We'll see how that goes.

16. What are some of the difficulties that you encounter during compromise? What do you do when situations don't allow compromise, or the compromise creates unhappiness for both partners?

On the subject of compromise I believe if the two of you have it in your heart to put the other one first this will rarely be an issue. You don't try to press your agenda or advantage. On those few times when we have met an impasse I often think of what I have taught to pre marriage couples out of Eph. 5. Men know about "wives submit to their husbands" but often forget that husbands are to "love their wives as Christ loved the church AND GAVE HIMSELF UP FOR HER." When it comes to the first move it was Christ (the husband) that made it. Although not always successful, I have tried to model this in our marriage. I can't think of a time when submission was an issue with Annette.

17. When you have kids, what are some of the difficulties when it comes to courtship?

Some of the difficulties are time, money and privacy. The greatest gift you can give to your kids is knowing the priority your spouse is to you in front of your kids. It spells security and nothing is more important to them than that. We tried to regularly show affection (hug/kiss) in front to the kids. They hated it (but they loved it!)

18. Has moving around so much been difficult?

This time I can't speak for Annette but in the experience of the ministry it was something we both were prepared for. We may not have seen the dramatic moves across the country but we consider ourselves blessed to have served the places we did. Actually the average is a change 2-3 years for a pastor so the fact that we have been in three locations in 25 years has been pretty good.

19. How do you set up a system of "fighting fair" as Annette said?

See # 8

20. How do you fit sports and other self interests into your relationship?

This was tough at first. I had a hard time differentiating ministry relationships that would sometimes be centered around sports and true recreation. Annette (rightfully) couldn't tell the difference. All she knew was that I wasn't home helping with the kids. It was the

source of friction at times. We've learned to first, communicate ahead as much as possible. Also, plan to include the other if they desire. Now watching sports is a whole other issue. I will admit that this is something I can get carried away with at times. I have been thankful for DVR so not as much of "our" time is spent on this. Someday I'll tell you about the time I recorded a Seahawk game over the video of the birth of our son Stewart.

21. How did you know that Annette was the one?

I certainly was attracted to her when I first met her at a youth convention in Illinois. I lived in Portland at the time so it didn't seem likely that we would get together. I moved to Indiana where she was and about 8 months later I knew she was it. The simplest answer is I just did not want to live without her. Now, 28 years and four children later, it just keeps getting better.

22. Is it offensive to have your partner sign a prenuptial agreement?

I have never quite understood this practice. The only time it makes any sense is in a situation where a couple gets married in their twilight years and there are considerable assets involved. The very nature of marriage is the two become one, assets included. Leave and cleave is a basic principal and this just seems to work against it.

23. How do you know Jesus has your back?

For us He has proved it over and over. We put some basic, fundamental biblical principals into the foundation of our marriage and have tried to keep them. Especially in our financial life He has taken care of us in an amazing way. In the most difficult times He has been there and sustained us. Of all that I teach and try to model I know this to be true above everything...Jesus can be trusted.

24. What is the one piece of advice that you would give to a couple to focus on prior committing to marriage with one another?

Make sure you are sincerely going in the same direction at the core of your lives (spiritually). It is too easy to fake it for a little while, so check out the patterns before they knew you. Any red flags that are waving will not get better after marriage, but rather worse. So, expect that the changes that will be made will be in you more than in your partner.

25. How do you deal with one spouse who sees God's direction and the other one doesn't?

#1. Pray a lot about it. Evaluate where they are getting God's direction. Is there confirmation from the Bible and from others, or is it just "God told me that this is the way" as a mask for personal opinion. I argued with a girl once about "God's will" for our relationship. She said it was God's will to stop dating. I said it was God's will to continue dating. She was right. I was glad...eventually. If both opinions are lining up with the Bible and good counsel, then apply Ephesians 5:25 and 22...the husband makes the decision based on what is most sacrificial for him and best for his wife, and the wife follows the husband.

26. Don't most of these gender-specific needs (His needs, Her needs) actually go both ways?

A lot depends on the personality style of the individual. Some men are verbal and need to talk and have someone listen. In our marriage, I'm a bit like spaghetti...able to jump from subject to subject exhausting my wife who wants more depth on things and to go slower. The "gender-specific needs" are most likely generalities...i.e. some men have a lower sex drive for some reason while some women are wired to need sex more often...perhaps because their love language is touch.

27. Can't all of the love languages be valid, just depending on the mood of the individual?

All are valid, valued, and valuable. Most people appreciate all of them, and all of them say "I love you." The idea of love language, however, is that usually one is like the "native language." It is the language you "feel" in. Sure, you can understand the words or actions as love, but usually one "language" touches you at the core in a way that the others don't quite. A person usually identifies this "core" "native" love language by which one they most notice is missing ...i.e. that they just don't feel loved when it is absent. The others are great to have, but it doesn't really matter if they don't get it. Or, this language is usually the way you intuitively express love. My language, probably touch, is where I feel it. Being one of 4 boys without any sisters, I was trained to do acts of service...so I do them naturally. However, if I don't get acts of service, if I don't get gifts, it isn't as crucial. When I first understood this was when I was deeply emotional about something and my girl friend (now my wife), reached out and touched me because she knew how I felt without saying anything. That spoke volumes to my heart. Gifts are great, time spent is important to my wife, and I love it. But, I probably can survive if she is busy and it doesn't say, "I don't love you" like coldness and not touching would say it.

28. What happens when one partner is very good about meeting needs, and the other doesn't keep up their end of the deal, so to speak?

- a. Talk to God about your need. Recognize that He is the source, not your mate. Ask him or her for what you need, and expect God to work in the relationship. When you die to your own needs, God has a way of providing them. When I died to preaching, God provided opportunities.
- b. Look at your own need to give more than at your partner's failures to give(Matthew 7:1-5)
- c. Keep doing your part, even if they don't do theirs (Romans 12:17-21)
- d. Communicate your feelings in a way that admits the issue is your feelings and that they can do something to help: "When you do (or don't do) . . . X . . . I feel . . . Y . . . I need you to Z." Confess your need to them. Too many of us expect our partner's to read our minds. They may not realize it, even if you've told them a dozen times. They need to be told again.
- e. If they are basically selfish, keep praying and go back through A-D)

29. What are some of the ways you work thru your partner not meeting one of these needs adequately?

- a. Communicate with them, although I presume that this has already happened. They can't read your mind, however, and I'm amazed at how many times a person expects their partner to just "know" what is obvious, and they have no idea because it isn't obvious to them.
 - b. Offer to coach them if they haven't learned how, or encourage them to talk to someone who can coach them.
 - c. Accept that they just might be missing equipment. The "program" just might not be installed on them. You can use a word processing document to construct a spreadsheet, but it is cumbersome and doesn't work easily or intuitively. You use a spreadsheet program to work with columns and numbers because it works best. Some men, some women, just don't have it on board. Do some reading, attend some seminars, and go to counseling for these areas so that the "program" can be installed. Listen to your mate when they say something is missing. Take action to get it installed.
 - d. Recognize that they may be broken and it may take years of work to repair the breaks. All of us are "broken" somewhere. This is the opportunity for God to do the supernatural. So, patience, prayer, and being on their team rather than "on their case" will be helpful.
30. What does an encouraging relationship look like when the woman is the primary "bread winner"?
- a. For the wife: The same as it does when she is the homemaker - following, supporting, encouraging, recognizing the needs of the husband and being available to be God's instrument to meet them. Recognize that the husband may be dealing with more ego issues and self-worth issues than they would if they were the bread winner. Yes, these are the same issues many women feel when they are homemakers...because our society doesn't reward homemaking. It is even more difficult for a man, because the church doesn't reward male homemakers, but often bashes them as being outside God's plan. So, extra doses of praise, attaboys, and meeting the husbands needs for sexual fulfillment even when you are tired. It is called sacrifice.
 - b. Of course, the husband needs to do the things a husband is supposed to do even when he is the homemaker and his wife is the "bread winner". Proverbs 31:28-31—praise her; I Peter 3:7—be considerate of her; treat her with honor; treat her as an equal; pray for her. Encouraging is the same no matter who is working outside the home.
31. At what point does the commitment of the marriage become something that isn't worth keeping alive? (if ever)
- a. I Peter 3:1-7 is written in the context of living with a difficult person. Both Vs. 1—written to the wife, and Vs. 7—written to the husband, both begin with "in the same way". This throws you back into chapter 2 where Christ set us a pattern to

follow when He was treated unfairly. The pattern is to “entrust yourself to Him who judges justly” and keep doing right. Romans 12:17-21 tells us to not let other’s evil overcome our good, or make us “join the dark side” and become like them. Retaliation is so easy in this situation. Because they are not doing their job, we don’t do ours. God doesn’t work that way, but “lets the rain fall on the just and the unjust” , Matthew 5. We are called to be “sons of God”...like Him.

- b. So, the point to give up would be at the same place we would expect Jesus to give up on us and say it wasn’t worth it to die for us; or that the church should give up on following Christ because we don’t like what He is doing in our lives.
- c. Of course, some people sever the relationship by becoming irretrievably committed to another person (i.e. they divorce you and marry another, or start living with them). At this point the marriage is already “dead”. However, the Bible doesn’t specify that other things “kill” a marriage. Many will say that their marriage is dead when they think their spouse isn’t working on it. In John 11, Jesus raised a dead man to life. He is in the resurrection business. As long as they aren’t irretrievably committed to another, Christ just might work in them and “resurrect” them.
- d. If it isn’t safe to live with the person, many feel I Corinthians 7 suggests that one could leave and remain unmarried...stay single.

32. Is it normal to need all 5 love languages?

See the answer above on love languages. All languages can be enjoyable. It really depends on what a person feels like when they are missing one of them. What makes them feel “unloved.” All are nice, enjoyable. But, which one feels like they have cut off your air hose? That one is most likely the “love language.”

33. When two people starting a life together with kids have different views on parenting how do you find a common ground?

- a. Step families are tricky because the step parent wasn’t there first like a birth parent and the kids think it isn’t fair for them to “be the authority.” The kids were there first.
- b. It’s about unity. Marriage is about becoming one. And, a couple has to be vigilant to not let the kids, or the job, or church, or friends, or sports, or hobbies, or facebook, or email, or computer games get in between and make you two instead of one. So, a couple has to work through these parenting issues to give up their own way and find OUR way.
- c. It’s about praying together until you find “God’s way” not just her way or my way or our way.
- d. You may have to work through the issues with a counselor. The tendency is for the birth parent to be more loyal to the children than to the step-parent. This is a

recipe for dissolution, because something is in between the partners of the marriage.

- e. Before you get married, work through how you are going to do this. Go slow. Recognize that building a stepfamily is more like a crock pot than a blender. Work with a counselor to come up with “God’s” for “our way” to deal with parenting.

34. Two Questions: 1. It is often preached that the relationship in a marriage is modeled after the relationship between Christ and the church. How can this be reconciled for the increasing population of single adults (divorced, widowed or never married) today’s church, particularly those over the age of 40, who can easily feel disenfranchised by such a focus on married people?

The Bible actually uses the illustration of marriage to show us a spiritual lesson about how Christ loves us and how the church follows Christ. The flow of the passage goes both ways. The truth for the single person is that we are the church, we are married to Christ, He is our true husband, and we follow Him faithfully, wholeheartedly, thankfully, even as He shapes us for knowing God. The truth is very appropriate for single people because it tells us that Jesus is our true Husband, the source of helping us grow. It is not just up to us. It’s not just up to our earthly mate. God’s part is to purify, cleanse with the word, and change our lives. Our part is to follow. That single people feel disenfranchised is rooted in the lie that we have to be married to be fulfilled. Yes, God uses marriage to shape us and knock off the rough edges. But, He uses lots of relationships to do the same thing. Knowing that Jesus is our true Husband, source, purifier, cleanser, and changer is the spiritual lesson from marriage.

35. Question #2. Even those who are not married have needs of sexual fulfillment. How are those needs to be addressed/suppressed in such a sexualized society? We can get needs such as companionship and conversation met through friendship, but we seem to be expected to deny our sexual selves.

- a. Paul says in Romans 12 that we are to let the Word of God renew our mind and not be squeezed into the world’s mold. This is especially true in a sexualized society that tells us that God made us sexual beings and that we must express our sexuality in the sex act to be healthy and fulfilled. God’s design for sex is far more than the sex act or sexual release. By buying the cultural lie that we have needs of sexual fulfillment and separating sex from spiritual and relational intimacy found only in a committed marriage relationship, we are letting the world squeeze us into its mold as far as our sexuality goes. God’s design for sexual fulfillment (see Proverbs 5:15-20; I Corinthians 7:1-5; Matthew 19:4-9) shows that the place for sexual fulfillment is within the committed marriage relationship between a man and a woman. Outside of that, it isn’t fulfillment, whatever the world calls it, but lust; sex loses its spiritual dimension and becomes a cheap and unfulfilling act. It isn’t sexual fulfillment because the sex act doesn’t accomplish its primary purpose—to tie together a couple in a spiritual intimacy shared by no one else.

- b. How does a Christian deal with sexual temptation when they are single, divorced, widowed? Perhaps that is inherent in the question, too. Like Jesus did? By staying a long ways away from the mud puddle. By avoiding movies, tv shows, books, and other media that glorify or strut sexual themes in front of us. Martin Luther said that you can't keep a bird from flying over your head. But you can keep it from building a nest in your hair. Romans 13:14 tells us how: *Clothe yourself with the Lord Jesus Christ, and do not think about how to gratify the desires of the sinful nature.* Romans 1:32 says that it is a problem when ³² *Although they know God's righteous decree that those who do such things deserve death, they not only continue to do these very things but also approve of those who practice them.* If Christians stopped approving of those who write the sexualized movies, DVD's, TV shows, and refused to buy them or look at them, they would find it much easier to deal with their sexual selves. Exposing oneself to sexualized material is a choice we make. We can just as easily choose not to expose ourselves to it.

36. Does Northshore have marital counseling?

Northshore's counseling ministry is supervised by Associate Pastor David Grant as one of our Community Care Ministries. He can help you by referring you to Christ-centered counselors in the community, to marriage classes in the church, and to support and encouragement from pastors and trained volunteers. There is a self-referring counseling sheet on our church website at <http://www.northshorechristian.org/contentpages.aspx?parentnavigationid=3850&viewcontentpageguid=83ad3555-94d4-47e0-9199-4686c20d20fb> . Sometimes we are able to help subsidize therapy, however, payment helps you value the counseling and apply what you learn.

Or you can contact him at dgrant@northshorechristian.org or 425 322 2311.

37. When is Northshore going to start a singles ministry?

Single's at Northshore fit into a variety of small groups that are not formed on the basis of marital status. Contact Pastor Mike Toben at mtoben@northshorechristian.org or look up group life on our website to find groups that make singles feel comfortable in their fellowship.