Rev. Caroline Braskamp

Preston Hollow Presbyterian

7 March 2021

**5 Simple Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage:**

**Have a daily “sit down and listen” time**

**Welcome**

* 5th week of 5-week marriage & relationship enrichment series based on the book, 5 Simple Ways to Strengthen Your Marriage… When You’re Stuck at Home Together by Gary Chapman

**Purposes for gathering today**

* Quick review of the first 4 skills
* Discuss the 5th skill: Have a daily “sit down and listen” time
* Have a conversation with your spouse (notes for a future conversation)

**Opening Prayer**

**Review**

* Significance in the order of the skills
* Skill #1: Call a Truce on Throwing Verbal Bombs
* Words have power to heal or to hurt (bombs vs. balms)
* Reduce the “warfare”
* Skill #2: Tear Down Emotional Walls
* Through apology and forgiveness
* Can do that after the “dust” has settled
* Skill #3: Discover and Speak Each Other’s Love Language
  + Words of affirmation, quality time, receiving gifts, acts of service, physical touch
  + Filling our deepest emotional need
* Skill #4: Learn the Value of Teamwork
  + work together as a team with a fair and optimal division of labor
  + when our love tank is full, we are ready to work together
* Skill #5: Have a daily “sit down and listen” time

**Scripture: Psalm 40.1-3**

* Psalms as Israel’s hymnbook, prayerbook
* 3 types of Psalms (orientation, disorientation, reorientation)
* This is a psalm of reorientation

1I waited patiently for the Lord; he inclined to me and heard my cry.

2He drew me up from the desolate pit, out of the miry bog, and set my feet upon a rock, making my steps secure.

3He put a new song in my mouth, a song of praise to our God. Many will see and fear, and put their trust in the Lord.

* What does God do for the psalmist?
* What led to the psalmist’s reorientation?
* Last song on U2’s War album (’83)

**Have a daily “sit down and listen” time**

* “we often say, ‘let’s sit down and talk,’ but most of us need to learn to listen”
* Usually we listen in order to respond, not listen in order to understand
* Listen with empathy, putting ourselves in the other person’s shoes
* Daily sharing time:
  + 3 things that happened in my life and how I feel about them
  + Steve and I do this while walking
  + Purpose: to stay mentally and emotionally connected
  + Hard to stay connected while having conflict (pandemic has led us to new areas of conflict)
* Weekly conflict resolution time:
  + Listen with empathy, seeking to understand
  + Take turns speaking for 5 min
  + Listener can only ask clarifying questions
  + Try and find a solution, compromise, or agree to disagree for now
* Gottman conflict (tactical addition to empathetic listening)
  + Solvable problems (1/3): focus only on the situation itself, where you can compromise, and possible solutions
  + Perpetual problems (2/3): acknowledge the unfulfilled dreams beneath your conflict, where you can compromise

**Conversation with your spouse**

1. If you already have a daily “sit down and listen” time, focus on learning to listen empathetically.
2. If you don’t have a daily “sit down and listen” time, consider trying it. Decide on a time each day (and maybe a time limit of 10-15 min).
3. Consider having a weekly conflict resolution time that will focus on a conflict that you have faced recently, taking turns as the “talker” and the “listener.”
4. If you are experiencing a number of conflict areas, make a list and rank them in order of importance.
5. In the past, how successful have you been in resolving conflicts? How could you make conflict resolution a more positive experience?

**Closing Prayer**

**Looking Ahead**

* Spring break (no class on 3/14 and 3/21)
* 3/28: How to talk about Holy Week with kids