

# What Men Need to Know

## Week 2 - Delight

### Introduction

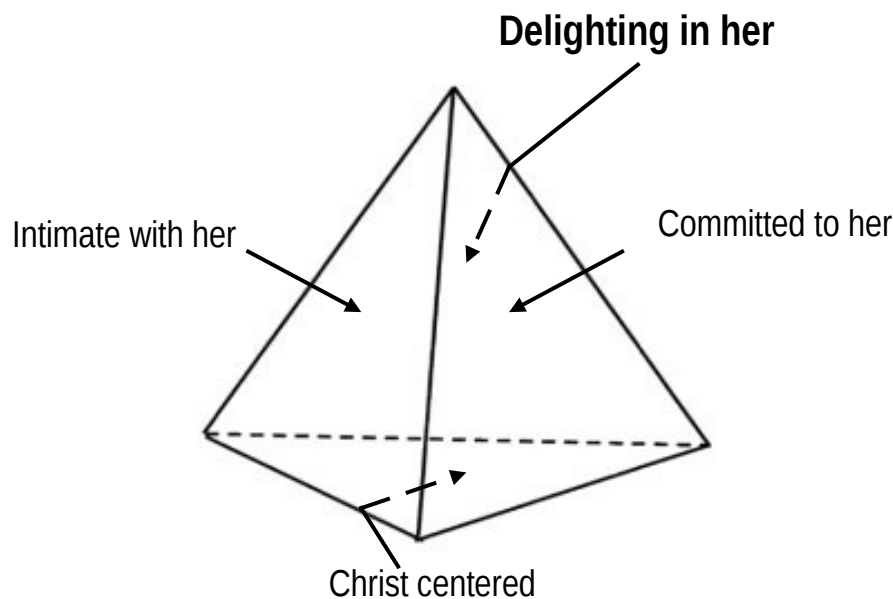
Last week we looked at one of four principles that, if practiced, can have a profound effect on the quality of your marriage → being **Christ-centered**.

This is the most critical principle of all four. The other three tell us what to do & how to do it but Christ-centeredness gives us the motivation.

Review Christ-centeredness:

- b/c **Atonement** no need to be righteous (defensive; self-righteous)
- b/c **Relationship** (father; shepherd; guardian; king) no need to live for self (self-serving & self-trusting)
- b/c **God's Kingdom & Glory** no need to make her become what you need, no need to expect glory from her.

[Review the homework]



### Delighting in her<sup>1</sup>

***“Arise, my darling, my beautiful one, and come along! ... let me see your form, let me hear your voice; for your voice is sweet, and your form is lovely” (Song of Songs 2:13-14).***<sup>2</sup>

This short passage is one of many in the Song of Songs that summarize the essence of delight.

What we see here and in the rest of the book is a man who is:

<sup>1</sup> The Hebrew term *chaphets* (pron. khaw·fates) may be translated in several ways: delight; enjoy, take pleasure in; desire or long for.

<sup>2</sup> Song of Songs is full of two lovers delighting in one another. Every sense is used in the project – taste, touch, sight, smell and sound – to either give to the lover or appreciate what has been given to them by the lover.

appreciative of his wife (*darling, beautiful, your form is lovely; your voice is sweet*), enthusiastic (ditto the earlier e.g.s) and active with her (*arise; come along*).

The most enjoyable thing in life is the sense that you are appreciated and enjoyed. So, **one of the greatest and rarest gifts we can give your wife is your appreciation, enthusiasm & involvement**.

In one sense, delight is a spontaneous feeling we get when we like someone. This is responsive or passive delight. **Passive delight is an automatic response to our own pleasure.** ...*nothing wrong with this, it's just not enough*

In another sense, delight is a decision to stay positively focused, enthusiastic and engaged with someone. This is active delight. **Active delight is a deliberate posture taken for the sake of someone else.**<sup>3</sup>

- It does not require a special personality to practice active delight. Some of you are more naturally effusive; some more fun-loving; some more creative but every one of you can be grateful, enthusiastic and involved.
- Your wife does not have to look, act or be a certain way for you to practice active delight or God would not command it.<sup>4</sup>

**Expressing delight enhances your delight** – the more you try to enjoy her, the more you'll actually enjoy her. **Positive reflection/expression toward her increases your joy with her.**<sup>5</sup>

*Fix your thoughts on what is true, and honorable, and right, and pure, and lovely, and admirable.*

*Think about things that are excellent and worthy of praise.* Philippians 4:8

**Expressing disdain enhances your disdain.** (1<sup>0</sup> predictor of marital failure – Gottmann)

In distressed marriages husbands are negatively focused and engaged which erodes delight.

Even if you are right in what you disdain, you are wrong in the good that you ignore.

Once you go down the path of disdain, you will begin to exaggerate her faults so much that you will not be telling yourself the truth about her weaknesses.

**Often the negative focus includes making comparisons with other women or self**<sup>6</sup>

Viz. 'other women' – comparing their idealized positive qualities with her negatives

Viz. 'self' - a sensitive, thoughtful or intellectual husband disdains his wife for not being sensitive, thoughtful or intellectual enough;  
a task oriented, accomplishing practical husband disdains his wife for being impractical and getting 'too little' done.

In these ways, we can choose to focus on/distain her weaknesses rather than her gifts.<sup>7</sup>

- **Delight begins with gratitude toward God**<sup>8</sup>

God delights in us & will delight in us (Zeph.3:17; Ps.147:11; 149:4; Jn.5:44 1 Pet.1:6f; Ro.2:29; 1 Cor. 4:5)

God invites us to delight in him (Phil.4:4; Rom. 5:2; Ps. 37:4; 43:4; 70:4; 63:3)

<sup>3</sup> I suppose there's another form of delight – fake delight. Pretending to care in order to get something (aka manipulation).

<sup>4</sup> The term "delight" is often a command: Proverbs 5:18 calls on men to delight themselves in their wife; Proverbs 23:26 a father tells his son to delight in his Father's way of life; Psalm 37:4 calls on us to delight ourselves in the Lord;

<sup>5</sup> Lewis says that praising and enjoying are intimately related. "*I think we delight to praise what we enjoy because the praise not merely expresses but completes the enjoyment; it is its appointed consummation...*" C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, pp.90-98

<sup>6</sup> "*When they measure themselves by one another and compare themselves with one another, they are without understanding.*" 2 Corinthians 10:12

<sup>7</sup> Often her weaknesses are tied to her strengths. She's fun loving AND less reliable; reliable AND less fun loving; accomplishing AND less relational; relational AND less functional; intelligent AND 'always' serious;

<sup>8</sup> And all sin begins with ingratitude. God's response to David's adultery – "You have despised my generosity." God takes ingratitude personally.

Part of delighting in God is having and expressing gratitude toward God for your wife.  
This is critically important if you intend to have gratitude toward your wife before God.

*Live happily with the woman you love through all the...days of life that God has given you...(She is God's reward) for all your earthly toil.* Ecclesiastes 9:9

"Except where intolerably adverse circumstances interfere, *praise almost seems to be inner health made audible...*" C. S. Lewis, *Reflections on the Psalms*, pp.90-98

*Meaning that a posture of ingratitude says much more about you & your relationship with God than it does about her.*

Getting back to Song of Songs..

- **Delight is appreciative**

Antithesis: disdain is disappointed and critical

- o **Praise – appreciation for who they are**

- Praise takes reflection<sup>9</sup>**

- What are her positive attributes: physical<sup>10</sup>, emotional, intellectual, social and spiritual?

- What are her gifts and burdens?

- What positive impact does she have on you and/or others?

- Praise is expressed.**

- Tell her face-to-face.

- Tell her in a note.

- Tell others in her presence and when she is not present as well.<sup>11</sup>

- Tell her non-verbally (How do you physically react when she's good at something?).

- Ask her to help you with something that fits her strengths.

- o **Thanks – appreciation for what she does.**

- Like praise, this may take some reflective time.

- It may require us to notice those things that we take for granted.

- It may require us to ask God to show us what to be thankful for.

- Like praise, thanks needs to be expressed too.

- Sometimes it's non-verbal but mostly it involves speaking and writing.<sup>12</sup>

- Most of the time it should be as close to the behavior as possible.

- At times, it helps to look back over years of effort and thank her for it all.

[Take time to fill in the praise & thanks sheet] *How are you feeling about her now?*

- **Delight is enthusiastic**

<sup>9</sup> Consider Paul's admonition to the Philippians 4:8, "...whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence, if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things."

<sup>10</sup> **Note:** you might need to be careful here. If you have the habit of focusing on her body as an object of your pleasure OR she has a history with objectifying men...admiring her body might feel more like leering than delight.

<sup>11</sup> When you praise someone to others, it helps create an ethos of appreciation with widespread impact.

<sup>12</sup> The more specific you are, the more impact it has. "You're awesome!" has less impact than telling her what she did that leads you to feel that she's awesome.

This is more general than praise or thanks. It is the expression of interest, desire and excitement about her and for her.<sup>13</sup> – *lots of warm bids* -

Does your wife (friend) have a kind of background music in their life – that you really enjoy her?

o **Tailor your enthusiasm in a way that's meaningful for her.**<sup>14</sup>

Using words – written or verbal

Physical touch – not groping; casual or prolonged (e.g. snuggling, massage)

Gifts -

Non-verbal expressions – facial expressions; body language (e.g. orientation; turning toward her)

o Expressing enthusiasm when she shares good news.

Research indicates that enthusiastic responses to good news increases intimacy with the supporter and happiness about the news.<sup>15</sup>

o Expressing **enthusiasm**, interest & desire **when you are together** (alone or in a group)

Body language

Playfulness

Alert to and curious about them (get out of your own head/project/entertainment; be fully present)

Enthusiastic responsiveness to their expressions toward you

o Expressing **enthusiasm**, interest & desire **when you are apart**.<sup>16</sup>

Warm departures

'Checking in' letting them know about you and being interested in them.

Notes, emails, calls, texts & tweets

Expressing anticipation over being reunited

Enthusiastic responsiveness to their expressions toward you.

Letting others know that you're thinking about her when you're apart.

Warm reunions

Passing on 'good gossip' about her that you've heard.

o Expressing **enthusiasm for 'us'**

One of the toughest things for a man to pick up is that when married, there is a third entity in the relationship – 'us'.

Many men have a relational blindness to some extent.<sup>17</sup>

e.g. micro-loans are given to women b/c they use them to invest in the family rather than themselves.

Women, more than men, take identity from the relationship.

e.g. "It's not about me, it's about you" is less satisfying for her than "It's not about me or you, it's about us."

Women, more than men, are encouraged by enthusiasm for the relationship.

<sup>13</sup> Preoccupation with your own life; with competing desires & with competing enthusiasms robs you of delight for her

<sup>14</sup> How you feel important to someone may not work for her. Chapman's book, *The 5 Love Languages* might be useful here. The problem I have with it is that it can easily become *quid quo pro* (give to get; transactional). This is why Christ centeredness is so critical. We do this because this is the way God is with us (Zeph.3:17) not because our friend or spouse deserves it or because we happen to be in the right mood.

<sup>15</sup> Gable, Shelly L., and Natalya C. Maisel, 2009, "The Paradox of Received Social Support: The Importance of Responsiveness" *Psychological Science*, 20(8), 928-932.

<sup>16</sup> I didn't say "enthusiasm **that** you are apart"; Notice the frustration and longing expressed in Song of Songs when the lovers are apart.

<sup>17</sup> There is a form of this that men notice and enjoy with one another on teams (missional groups who protect and help one another). If marriage has no clear mission or no obvious threat, men may not be as alert to the identity conferred by the relationship. We'll talk more about this when we talk about commitment. Here I'm focused on the enthusiasm part.

e.g. a guy who resists a flirt; tells his wife that he resisted w/o referring to her/them, may find his wife isn't that happy with his nobility.

**When you say, "I love our life together," it has a different and profound impact upon her sense of belonging – it resonates with her awareness of your identity as a couple.**

You'll be amazed at her response as you begin to think and get enthusiastic about the relationship itself.

Actually, you'll be a better man and husband by learning this quality from her.<sup>18</sup>

**The best way to express this kind of enthusiasm is to:**

- **think in terms of the relationship ('how are we doing?' not just 'how is she doing?')**
- **notice & appreciate the relationship (how are we more than the sum of our parts)**
- **express yourself using words like: *us, we, our...***

*"I notice that we are not giving each other the benefit of the doubt lately. Our schedules and agendas are dividing us a bit. We need a date and we need to make love tomorrow night."*

- **Delight is active**

An important way of communicating delight toward her and the relationship is by doing things together – with enthusiasm that you get to be with her.<sup>19</sup>

In the big book of delight – Song of Songs – the couple is constantly doing & enjoying things together. Playing together and working together (i.e. not playing around each other and working around each other) really helps you both feel better about the relationship.

- o **Schedule regular dates each week; quarterly and annually.**

Set a night. Make it semi-sacred. Stick to it.

If it doesn't work out for some reason, suggest an alternate night that same week.

If it keeps not working out – solve the problem.

- o **Plan activities that she would enjoy doing with you.<sup>20</sup>**

- Would she like to have you work on some project with her?

Would she be happy to help you work on some project of your own?

Try to have a cut-off time and some play or relational time afterward.

- What kinds of experiences does she like?

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<sup>18</sup> This doesn't replace your ID in Christ; it enhances your understanding of it – a collective as well as a personal identity. This is one way that she may uniquely reflect God's glory.

<sup>19</sup> This can/should be expressed before, during and after.

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physical activity, artistic/aesthetic, entertainment, relational

[Take time to fill in the date ideas sheet]

- o **Include regular doses of novelty.**<sup>21</sup>

Get ideas from others & pass on your ideas to others.

*See the 'date ideas' sheet*

- o **Include space for relating on nearly all dates.**

**Make sure that passive activities are rare** (e.g. watching TV or a movie; reading in the same space without taking interaction breaks).

**Make sure that your activities don't typically allow for too many interruptions or distractions** (e.g. staying home; responding to the phone; playing with your phone; activities with too much noise or too much stimulation; especially if one/both of you is easily distracted)

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<sup>21</sup> Read the article, *Reinventing Date Night*