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Today we are going to assume a marriage, what's very obvious in the video (its not about the nail) is that, the nail is metaphorical. The nail represents a problem to the woman. The nail is causing her stress, just quite simple. Now what you must understand is, it is obviously a relationship between two people who love each other. It is not about often people don't love, thy don't know how to love. So for the man very simple, remove the nail and problem solved. For the woman it is not that, you are not listening to me, you are not understanding my problem. So we are going to break this down a little bit. Now let me link this a bit to the message we had two weeks ago because they are tied and we studied a bit of marriage and divorce in 1-Corinthian 7 and in verse 4 it says this

**4 The wife does not have authority over her own body but yields it to her husband. In the same way, the husband does not have authority over his own body but yields it to his wife.**

The key word here is yield. I give over, that means I don't think of my pleasure, I think of your pleasure. That's the point of it and we started to look at the difference between a contract marriage and a covenant marriage and how do you yield for one another. You break it down by understanding what makes the other person happy, simple English. You yield by saying in a relationship it is not my happiness, it is yours. Because Christians serve as Christ serve. That's the basis of this. *For the Son of man did not come to serve but to serve and to give his life as a ransom for others.* And it flows down to us. So I find fulfillment by serving. Now to do that I need to know what makes you happy and by converse I need to know what makes you sad.

So empathy is the ability to understand and share the feelings of another. That's how you yield. It is not about understanding my feelings but the feelings of the other party and a very-very good verse that picks it up is found in Romans 12:15

**Rejoice with those who rejoice and mourn with those who mourn.**

So it comes in two parts and we are going to break it down a little bit. The root of it comes from the gospel of John 1:14

**And the Word became flesh and dwelt among us**

God knew we couldn't connect to him, he came and became us. Went into our backyard, put a tent there, became killable so that he could connect with us and that is the mandate for all of us. You and I are called to empathize because Christ empathized with us. That is the mandate and we are going to see how we are going to do that. Let me give you the first point;

### 1. Men and women general approach empathy differently.

John Gray has a very famous book, has got 15 million copies sold, had become part of the culture of today and it tells a story. Imagine in the church camp and I took aside the husbands and I aside the wives and put them into two groups and I tell the husbands. Okay, I am going to give each of you some paper and a pen and I want you to list down all the problems you have with your wives. And then we go to all the wives and we say okay, here is the same thing. We are going to give you some paper and some pens and you are going to list down all the problems of your husbands. Guess which list is going to be longer. It is instinctive, we all know the answer. In fact, when John Gray did it, the men put it in one sheet, point form. The women had five pages, cross-reference, subpoints, interpolated, scratch and rewrite again. From a woman's point of view, I am very detailed. While men tend to wrap it up quickly. You notice that this is fundamental. We need to recognize because you have to link 1-Corinthians 7 later on to 13 and later on because there is actually differences between men and women.

God made men and women differently to *compliment* each other. Now science tells this, here are few ways. Now to talk about empathy you need to talk about another thing which is about stress. Because empathy is a response to stress.

I googled woman supporting woman and I found very high amount of images. I see woman huddling together, holding hands, doing stuff, women do this. In church, if a woman has a problem you will find five woman getting together huddling and praying. I have seen it in small groups here, I have seen it in the garden café out there.

I googled man supporting man and I see man at the bar. Man don't sit down and huddle and say, oh I got a problem. A man's home is his garage. Batman has a bat cave, superman has a fortress of solitude. Anytime they got a problem they will retreat into a cave, they call it a garage, call it playing videogames, call it going to the bar. Men retreat, they shut off. You must understand this thing about man. To a man he needs clarity, he will shut off, go and play videogame, after a while it is clearer. Woman cannot, woman must talk on. They will talk and they will talk and they will talk and talk and talk. Not all women are like that and not all men are like that, but it is good to know the general way they are doing it now. The science back this up. The American Society of Psychology did a survey on Gender and Stress.

- Women are more likely than men (28 percent vs. 20 percent) to report having a great deal of stress (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale).
- Almost half of all women (49 percent) surveyed said their stress has increased over the past five years, compared to four in 10 (39 percent) men.
- Women are more likely to report that money (79 percent compared with 73 percent of men) and the economy (68 percent compared with 61 percent of men) are sources of stress while men are far more likely to cite that work is a source of stress (76 percent compared with 65 percent of women).
- Women are more likely to report physical and emotional symptoms of stress than men, such as having had a headache (41 percent vs. 30 percent), having felt as though they could cry (44 percent vs. 15 percent), or having had an upset stomach or indigestion (32 percent vs. 21 percent) in the past month.
- Married women report higher levels of stress than single women, with one-third (33 percent) reporting that they have experienced a great deal of stress in the past month (8, 9 or 10 on a 10-point scale) compared with one in five (22 percent) of single women. Similarly, significantly more married women report that their stress has increased over the past five years (56 percent vs. 41 percent of single women). Single women are also more likely than married women to say they feel they are doing enough to manage their stress (63 percent vs. 51 percent).
- Married women are more likely than single women to report they have experienced the following due to stress in the past month: feeling as though they could cry (54 percent vs. 33 percent), feeling irritable or angry (52 percent vs. 38 percent), having headaches (48 percent vs. 33 percent) and experiencing fatigue (47 percent vs. 35 percent).

It is not saying that men are not stressed, it is saying woman verbalize their stress. Men bury it inside. They bury it so deep, they actually stress and they don't realize it until their health breakdowns. That's the truth. Now this is very important consideration to understanding empathy. Empathy is a response to stress. I feel pain and that's when empathy comes in. To a guy, don't feel anything. So you have got to understand this little bit of the background. To the man, it is very simple, you got a problem I remove the problem and the pain goes away, end of story. What is there to talk? Men only got one button, on and off. Women got 10 buttons. Men see red, blue, green, yellow, black and white. Women see red turquoise, purple, indigo, yellow, off-yellow, shade, pale, all sorts of color. They have variations of everything. To a man it is very simple, because I am like that.

Now it is very important to understand this, because it is very important to get this background right. This is why relationships breakdown. The word is not that people

don't love, we don't know how to love. The reason why we don't know how to love is we forget God made man and woman differently. We were designed to compliment. Some people say, for example man will paint the big picture but they are so big they forget the details. The woman fills in the details. That's one way of looking at it. So to the guy, remove the nail and that's it. For a woman, feel my pain. You are not respecting me. I am not asking too much, I am just asking for your attention. So to her, you are not feeling my pain. You are always trying to fix it. So for a woman fix the pain then I see clearer, I can see the nail. For a man, I see the nail, remove the nail and the pain goes away. So there is a very-very important point to pick up. That's why sometimes counseling sessions go off because men don't realize how women operate and women don't realize how men operate.

I want to give you three common empathy issues in marriages.

### 1. You misinterpret the actions of the other party.

Wife: Why are you so quiet  
Husband: I am thinking.  
Wife: What are you thinking, have you got problem?  
Husband: No problem  
Wife: You sure or not

After a while it becomes irritating for husband. Now let's be fair not everybody works like that but in spousal relationships some people are different. Sometimes the wife does it, sometimes the wife just shuts up. The woman when she shuts off, she is probably quite angry with you. You ask her, what's wrong. She says, nothing, go read your newspaper. That is the death sentence for you. Men don't ever do that. That is very-very foolish. First, we misinterpret the action. Some people when they fight, they get very worked off, they will shut off for days. You keep asking, what's wrong with you, what's wrong with you and you are making it worse. Some people process it this way. Other people like me, we talk all the time. You give me a problem, I need to analyze it, break it down, talk about it, after 15 minutes I give you a solution, but we must understand if we misinterpret the actions of the other party. So it is very important, afterwards we are going to talk about how you need to look at what we call nonverbal queue. There are two things to look it. We call it micro expressions.

### 2. You have differing expectations

For a husband I come back I give you money and you never appreciate. For her, you only think about your money, never think about how I feel. Now why is that so. I would like to suggest; it is because of our sinful nature. This complementarian thing has been distorted. So we have such differing expectations that we subconsciously keep a scorecard on. The way we score is also different. For a man, if I bring back money the score should be 10 points, for a woman it is 1 point. You kiss her at that

night another point, next morning you remember her another point. For a man bring back the money 10 points, kiss or don't kiss no point. They call this an emotional deposit and we deposit it very differently.

Paul talks about this in Corinthians and it says,

### 1 Cor 13:5 – “Love keeps no record of wrong”

What a lot of people forget is 1-Corinthians 13 comes from 1-Corinthians 6. The text flows because 1 Cor 6 is about lawsuit and Paul is giving you a covenant idea of how we relate.

### 1 Cor 6:6- “Why not rather be wronged?”

What's the big deal? He is telling you of grace. That means you don't keep it in your heart. The problem in marriage is, we all keep it in heart. We have a database better than any big data, no need data analytics, all downloaded inside. You can remember anything all the way back to 20 years, 30 years, pick out all the little details and then that's what sin does to us. So we must understand this why empathy becomes an issue because we store these things and we keep records. We do not know how to be grace in action. So here is the thing, I have learned for example now in my marriage, my wife processes things differently. Very often spouses feel very commonly, the other party doesn't appreciate me. You talk to people and 9 out of 10 will say the same thing. It is so common. Then you go to feeling dejected. You go to bed feeling victimized. You go to bed feeling you had the raw end of the deal but I humbly suggest to you, is because you don't understand how the other person processes things. That's called empathy because empathy for a man is to understand how a woman is wired. Empathy for a woman is to understand how a man is wired in marriage. This goes a very long way in marriage. One of the reasons why people fight is because of this thing.

*Empathy is about going to someone where their pain is, and not where you want them to be.*

This is the point, because we very likely like to impose our perception of things or the problem onto the other party. In the video, the guy he is trying to impose to her that the problem is the nail, so everything she says is white noise. He is not listening to her. So she is quite right. You are not listening to me. For her, you are not feeling my pain, you are not feeling my stress, you are not feeling it. So she is trying to push that to him. For him, it is very stupid because the nail is still there. For her, you are very inconsiderate because you are not being a good husband by understanding where I am, you see where we are going with this. You can shift this outside of marriage scenario to any scenario, any scenario whatsoever has the same dynamics. So when I talk to someone at work, work is classic, you impose it on that

person. The other person imposes it back to you, now this is where empathy is not there because you are supposed to go to where that pain is.

In that video the breakthrough happened when he paused and he just says, it must be very hard and she pauses and she says, yes then you notice the nonverbal Q. She squeezes the hand and says thank you, that's the breakthrough. So these are little-little things that we learn. That's why the video is so powerful. What interesting about video is that the way it ends because empathy is not enough, you still got to get the nail out. So here are few pitfalls that we have. The classic pitfall is we think we are listening to the other party but often we are not.

Another way of putting it is that you are listening but you are not processing it. You are only listening at one level, to him she is just bevelling. He is not listening to how she feels, he is just listening that she is describing a symptom of a problem. So this is the issue. Most people do not listen with the intent to understand, they listen with the intent to reply. I have that problem, I talk a lot so I know. I think this is so true, meaning when you listen, you listen with an agenda already. It is ready coloured. Again the scripture tells us this in the book of James 1:19

**Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to anger, for man's anger does not bring about the righteousness that God desires**

Now here is the thing about this verse, people like to interpret it as three parts, it is not. Because if you look at the Book of James, James continues this along in the other chapters. He talks very heavily about the heart. You want to go and do business, you never think about God. You pray, you don't get things because your heart is wrong. This is coming from the heart. He is saying, how do you know if someone is slow to speak and slow to speak doesn't mean speak slowly. Slow to speak means you have reflected before you open your mouth. They call this reflective thinking. That means before I come and tell you that there is a nail in your head, I have reflected on it. How do I know then, I am slow to speak, because the evidence is, I am quick to listen, quick to listen doesn't mean you just heard everything. It means you really listen to her pain. So what the video is telling you, if you listen to her pain, her stress and you felt how much it hurt her, that's the quick to listen, you will come out in the slow to speak and the slow to speak is you empathise with her pain and you say, before you quickly offer a solution you tell her it must be very hard. How then it links to slow to anger because the moment you are quick to speak, people start to fight and why in the video it gets somewhere was because both sides are quite civil. That's what you call a de-escalation of it.

Slow to anger means even though things don't get right, you don't provoke the situation. So they are a flow you know. I humbly suggest to you, most people get this wrong including myself. Because we all had trigger points. If I say something there is a trigger to you, you and I blow. So that's why this verse is such a powerful

verse. Now let us unpack this a little bit. This is some evidence where we don't listen,

*My mom always tells me she wants me to talk to her but when I do she doesn't listen or gets angry.*

The parents might say that they listen to their kids, but the kids will tell you that they don't listen to us. In fact, the first person should refer to is kids. You go on Instagram, you go on snapchat, you go on twitter, it goes to all the blogs that kids are on. They all universally tell you, parents don't listen to them including Christian parents. Because we are doing so much helicopter parenting, the kid haven't finished the work, you better go to sleep, you better switch off the computer. Now without this, this what I am trying to tell you is that, I propose to you we generally have a problem with listening. We are just blind to it. Here is another very clear example.

This is a story of a parent who discovered the kid was gay and walked through the kid with his sexuality. I am not agreeing with the end results but I humbly suggest to you, the intent is correct. You see, if you discover your kid is gay most Christian parents will just lecture the kid, you will go to hell, we don't say that we just say, you better delete all the gay porn in your computer, you better be celibate. How many parents have the courage to sit down and walk through the kid, we don't. You can take this through a lot of issues. How many of us understand the LGBT issue? It is not about agreeing with it, it is understanding their pain. How many of us understand the prochoice issue? It is not about agreeing with prochoice but understanding how a woman feels when she got raped and she doesn't want a baby. How many of us understand the Palestinian issue from the view of the Palestinians and the sufferings they feel because their land was taken away from them. You don't have to agree with the intention.

Evangelical Christianity is very close-minded, we just deny it and I propose to you most of us don't listen as much as we like to think we do. So that's the first problem. So lets us what empathic listening is not. Why is this important?

1. Giving advice like *"I think you should ..."*
2. Correcting the person *"Wait! I never said that!"*
3. Consoling the person *"You did the best you could ..."*
4. Telling a story *"That reminds me of the time ..."*  
Shutting down feelings *"Cheer up. Don't be so mad."*
5. Sympathizing *"Oh you poor thing ..."*
6. Interrogating *"How come you did that?"*
7. Evaluating *"You're just too unrealistic."*
8. One-Upping *"That's nothing. Listen to this!"*

A person in pain, to be fair, has the right to ventilate. We try to just simplify the things. All these things oversimplify it. The best thing to do is to not say anything, just be there. It was all good unless Job's friend open up their mouths. So these are little little things that we unpack.

Empathic conversation lets break this down a bit.

- Rephrasing (*investing authentic interest*)  
Someone tells you, my mom doesn't listen to me, you talk that conversation and say, okay, so your mom doesn't listen to you, you just rephrase it. Basically, you have taken that conversation and you pull it in. That's how you do, keep it short.
- Open ended questions (*empowering the other party*)  
Why does your mom doesn't listen to you? It is open-ended. Well, she just snaps at me. She snaps at you really. You notice, you keep the conversation to No, Yes and No answers. Because that's interrogation. Because open ended questioning allows empowerment.
- Watching out for nonverbal cues (*micro expressions speak volumes*)  
Then you watch for nonverbal cues because sometimes you ask a probing question, if there is a pause or people's eyes look down and they grip, it is time for you to back off. You don't drill anymore, you just hit what you call a nerd.
- Giving strokes (*move to communicating authentic care*)  
It is a therapy term. The word stroke comes from a therapy called transactional analysis therapy. It means from a baby. What happens to your baby when you stroke the baby, the baby goes to bed. So what happens, after a while the baby psychologically adapts to it. He is familiar to stroke, he is comforted. So that term is used in therapy. Meaning, you look for nonverbal cues to assure the person.
- Be conscious of not placing blame on the other party (*projecting respect*)  
Sometimes little gesture helps. You have to project respect. When you do empathic discussions it is always going to shot spurts, you never go and give a sermon. Pause, maybe give a verse. Little verse that helps. God counts your tears in bottles. By doing this you reframe the whole discussion back to God, because either that it becomes very grounded on man. This is how you go into an empathic conversation.
- Look for opportunity to redirect conversation to God- short prayers, reading comforting scripture, etc. (*shift to Christ centered caring*)



## 2.2 We often offer unsolicited solutions *unconsciously*.

The book of Ecclesiastes tells us that there is a season to everything. Here is the thing, not everybody is ready to hear the truth. That's very important. People who do counselling had a problem called righting reflex. In fact, you do research most people who do counselling have this problem. The professional counsellors all recognize this. It is almost a problem. That means you feel it is your God-given duty to fix people. So the danger is that, if you sit down with someone and someone is telling you their problem, you assume it is your job to fix it, it is not your job to fix it. Your job is to show them you love them and direct them to God. Along the way, you can give them some good advice, fine, but they call this righting reflex. It is reflexive.

Refrain from giving solutions where possible. Because what you want to do is let the person discover it on their own, she has to see the nail, not you tell her where the nail is. Not everyone wants you to express empathy with their problems. They just need to know you care for them. Some people will never ever open up to you, I have seen them in my life. They will just shut off. Not everybody will sit down with you and pour out their heart problems. Can I suggest to you majority of people are like that. That's why so few people ever go for counselling. Imagine this, how do you reconcile them with Ephesians, when Ephesians tells us to speak the truth in love. Now here is where what I think we misunderstand that verse.

If I was abused as a kid, I am not going to tell you, but I want to come to church and I want to feel loved, I am not going to tell you and if you see it and try to probe it, I am going to shut up even more. There are many-many people in that shoes. But you know, you suppose to speak the truth in love. Now this is where we forget the context of the chapter. Because if you read the Ephesians chapter context, before that Paul tells you, some are called to be apostles, some are called to be prophets, some are called to be teachers. He is trying to tell you that everybody is an agent of truth. If I was abused as a kid and it is affecting my relationship with others, I build walls, someone touches me I trigger off, I am not prepared to talk to you one to one, where is the best place to hear it. On a Sunday morning sermon. In a small bible study group where it is not directed towards me. Because it is anonymous. Truth edges are many and that's why learning to care is everyone's job. The moment we make it into our culture and we permeate this into Gamma classes, we permeate this into our ministry, we permeate this into our life group, I am sitting there I am hiding a secret no one knows and I am not going to tell you because it is too painful but we talk and we talk and someone says something and it makes sense. I just learned something tonight which makes sense and I am going to go back and maybe I am loved more.

So that's how we give people a safe platform. Let me just end with this. Empathy can be prompted. What's interesting in the vide is that, he starts off without empathy, in the end he becomes empathetic. How did he become empathetic? Because she told him off. She told him off and then he process it and then he began

to try to show that he understood her pain. Now this is I think interesting, because it means we don't just look at it from a listener's point of view, we can look at this from a victim point of view. How many of us will appreciate other people being more understanding of your situation? And I want to suggest biblically it is our job to split the truth in love to the other person in this case. That means you need to tell the other person; you are not feeling my pain.

There are few ways to do it.

- Are you in right state to prompt listener to be more empathetic? Sometime the pain is so deep you can't, but if it is not and you are able to calm yourself done you can do this. How you do it? You actually de-escalate the situation. because the moment conversations get very escalated, you cannot go into this and they call this a TACOS model
- Can you de-escalate the situation? (TACOS formula)
- Can you rephrase your communication intention?

The TACOS model is this. In your conversation avoid Threaten, Argue, Challenge, Order and Shame. If you use any of these, the whole conversation just escalates. So if you are at a victim side. So you are at home and you are having an argument with your wife and you feel your wife isn't understanding your space or your husband isn't understanding your space. Your first job is to de-escalate the situation and the way to do it is to remember these are the things that mustn't come out in your language and they are very subtle ways it just can come out to trigger. The moment you de-escalate it and then you rephrase it. Some simple things, instead of telling someone, you never ever listen to me. If you can pause, nonverbal que handout, press, and speak softly. If you practice this more and more, people are hopefully able to process this. You've got to do it because we are all victims of it.

Empathy itself is not enough

The video is great because it ends on that cliff-hanger. You never know if the nail is coming out. We need genuine love, we need follow up and you need to point to the love of God.

It is the mandate of the church to show empathy for those who struggle with depression. It is the mandate of the church. The church is the place where we pull everyone in. The church is the place where people feel loved and we cannot do it by elders or pastors or counsellors, we are going to do it with the bodies involved and that's why you guys are here tonight. The more people show love, give love, people don't do crazy things. In the end, it is not about the nail, it is about the nails that Jesus took. It is about these nails that drove into the hands of Christ. It is about these nails that prompt us to love others the way God loves us.