



## **Money Can't Buy You Love (or Wholeness)**

Money. We all have to have it, but oh do our marriages pay the price, so to speak. Did you know that statistically, money is one of the top three sources of conflict in marriage? Joined on the list by sex and communication, money – the lack of it, what to do with it, who works to get it – causes more strain in a marriage than most any other thing. Interestingly, though the finances may be where the conflict breaks out, the true source of the problem may lie much deeper in the relationship.

Bruce and Tammy arrived in my office in dire straits. With extra cash coming in from a side business, money had not been an issue in their marriage...until the economy tightened up. The side income dried up and conflict followed. With some probing, we discovered that Bruce was a spender, using money to manage his emotions. When he felt stressed, insecure or discouraged, he bought things. This habit went unnoticed when money was flowing, but when the funds tightened up, Bruce's spending was a problem. Once we began to address the real issue, it was evident that a budget or spending plan was not the simple answer. Bruce had to be willing to be honest about his issues, how they were impacting his marriage and the importance of making a change.

Honestly, trying to resolve money issues in your marriage is futile if you haven't first addressed the motivation behind your spending and your need for personal wholeness. This would be like remodeling a room with cracks in the wall while the house's foundation is shifting. What is happening in the room is a direct correlation to the unstable foundation.

When Bruce owned what was happening on the foundational level of his heart, we were able to move toward wholeness and explore healthier ways to process his emotions. He learned the value of talking about difficult feelings and was less inclined to act out negatively through spending. He recognized how he used money as a drug to anesthetize pain. This also led to deeper sharing with Tammy when he experienced moments of stress or discouragement. His transparency fostered greater trust in their relationship. Now they were ready to develop a financial strategy that had a chance to work.

### **Renovations:**

Are you spending money or using some other item (food, busyness) to manage stress and emotional pain?

Recognize when you are experiencing difficult feelings such as stress, fear or sadness and choose to talk with a friend. We are less apt to *act out* when we *talk it out*.