

Progressing Together



PRAT 203

The family: The Christian Model



Study Leader's Guide

**Special Note: As an exception, this course of the program “Progressing Together” should only be taught by group leaders trained or approved by the program staff. Although the supporting materials, exercises, and notes in the manual can be useful in edifying Christian couples, we strongly recommend you contact us so we can organize a one week conference for couples in your region.*

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Syllabus for PRAT 203 - Family and Marriage (1) Certificate Level

Course objectives

To help cell groups and churches in newly responsive areas to cultivate healthy, strong, satisfying, and godly marriages in Christian couples; marriages that genuinely reflect the relationship between Christ and His Church to the surrounding community.

Course description

The course begins by looking at God's plan for marriage as recorded by the scriptures. It explains important characteristics of the marriage relationship, such as leaving one's parents, committing to be faithful to a single partner for life, and being united despite being very different.

The second subject covers the roles of the husband and wife according to the Bible.

The following lessons are dedicated to improving and maintaining the relationship between husband and wife through good communication, effectively communicating love, resolving the conflicts that arise, and controlling one's anger.

The last two topics cover the cultivating of a satisfying sexual relationship, and the Biblical principles for child-rearing.

Learning Outcomes:

Content: By the end of the course, the student will be able to:

- Understand the Biblical justification for both singleness and marriage as honorable positions before God.
- Identify the Christian principles for selecting a marriage partner.
- Explain how the Christian imagery of marriage is associated with other key Christian doctrines of the New Testament
- Describe scriptural role models of husband, wife and children (the code of Christian households)
- Define Christian principles concerning divorce
- Provide a way for Christian families to thrive and be rooted in Christ despite a society hostile to their faith.

Character: By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- Understand and embrace a Biblical lifestyle of sexual purity.
- Express and embrace the Christian value of marital faithfulness.
- Begin to prepare him or herself for marriage, if single, through a healthy understanding of Christian marriage.
- Embrace (and if married, begin to practice) a Christian perspective concerning the relationship within the couple.
- Nurture a Christ-centered identity in the children of a Christian home.

Competency: By the end of the course, the student should be able to:

- Develop better communication with other family members.
- Lead a healthier relationship as a couple.
- Be better equipped to raise happy, healthy, and godly children.
- Be able to present these concepts to others in the church as circumstances allow.

Course requirements

Certificate Level

To demonstrate knowledge of course material:

- By answering questions at the end of each section
- By writing a report on applying these questions, or successful completion of the final exam
- By attending 18 of 20 instructor-led sessions (27 physical hours minimum)
- By participating in discussions by listening, contributing as appropriate, and responding to questions
- By reading two books of the student's choice on two different topics (at least 40 pages per book), and writing a one page summary of the points to be remembered for each book. Prepare a 5 minute presentation of one of the books for the class's benefit.
- By Role play. Gather by two's (2 men together, or 2 women). A friend comes to you to seek counsel, because he/she is seeking to divorce. And... action!
- More Role play. Illustrate the principles of communication by role playing. Various members of the class will need to pick different principles to illustrate. Preparing this exercise can be a group or an individual activity.
- By a homework assignment among the following. 1) Create a chart that compares and contrasts the beliefs and practices you were given from your parents, to those you hope to communicate to your children, or 2) Write or tell a story which highlights the consequences of ignoring Christian principles when it comes to selecting marriage partners.
- By using the material learned in class to improve family and marriage relationships. Do not forget the children and parents, if there are any. The student will maintain a journal recording the efforts made and results obtained (both positive and negative) that are observed.

Evaluation methodology and scale

- Execution and student know-how will be assessed using the following scale:
 - 10% for course attendance (the percentage, is equal to the number of sessions to which the student was present, divided by the total number of sessions, and then multiplied by ten).
 - 10% for the student's attitude and participation during class discussions.
 - 20% for reading and preparing the lessons.
 - 35% for homework assignments (20% for reading and presenting the books, 10% in skits, 5% for the story or chart).
 - 25% for the journal or an exam (written or oral).
- The evaluation scale is as follows
 - Satisfactory –70-79%
 - Good – 80-89%
 - Very Good – 90-100%

Course schedule

To be announced by the facilitator.

Credits earned

Successful completion of this course corresponds to 2 hours of credit towards the Certificate in Christian Studies

Prerequisites

(Progressing Together PRAC201 and PRAC202, or equivalent)

Necessary textbooks and related materials

- Required - Progressing Together Manual for PRAC203

Additional readings may be required at the instructor's discretion

- Recommended - Book and materials related to marriage, family, and society

Course methodology

The student will work inductively, by reading texts, answering questions related to content, application and presenting analysis, and by drawing conclusions that apply to his/her local context. After answering the questions in each lesson, students will get together to discuss answers and their practical applications. When necessary, the leader will provide additional sessions to reinforce student learning.

Policies

- Cheating (copying answers from someone else's exam or home assignment) and plagiarism (copying or paraphrasing someone else's work without explicitly recognizing this source in writing) will never be tolerated, as it is contrary to Christian teaching and academic integrity.
- Absences in excess of 3 class hours will lead to a reduced grade; no student missing more than 6 class hours will receive credit for the course. Students who show little or no interest in completing course work will first be given a warning, and then asked to leave the course if their conduct does not change.

Color code

Generally, everything that is in black also appears on the student's copy.

In green are provided explanatory notes addressed to the leader.

In blue, you will find examples of typical answers that could be provided by the students.

In purple are comments meant to be shared by the leader with the students.

Bibliography

Resources for the Christian family

[Translator's note: it appears that most of the books listed in the original French version of this course were published in English before appearing in French. The course developers probably drew substantially on some of them. Books listed below may be only approximate equivalents, or later editions. The editions listed below were available in 2009. Editions available in the UK may have different publishers.]

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Lesson 1: Marriage – Singleness

A. The Definition of Marriage

1. What does marriage represent in society, or within your circle of family and friends?

Open Answer

2. What does marriage represent to you? Provide your own definition of marriage.

Open Answer

Suggestion! –Have couples discuss this between them.

“How can we be sure we will have the right answer?”

-The Bible!

3. What is the biblical definition of marriage according to Gn 2:24? (See also Mt 19:5, Mk 10:7, and Eph 5:31)

Verse to memorize together:

“For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh.” –Gn 2:24

This verse is the biblical foundation for the union between a man and a woman. In a way, it is the summary of God’s plan for couples.

Marriage is not a human institution; it is a divine institution.

Definition of institution: An organization founded and united for a specific purpose.
(Concise English Dictionary, Wordnet)

It is a fundamental institution upon which every aspect of society stands.
J. Adams

The importance of this passage is seen in that it is quoted three times in the New Testament, two of which are citations by Jesus himself.

4. Why did God institute marriage? (Gn 2:18)

In Gn 2:18 God said: “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.”

Man alone = not good.

The reason for marriage’s existence is fixing the problem of solitude.
J. Adams.

5. What did God say after he finished creating the man and the woman? (Gn 1:31)

Gn 1:27 “So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them...”

“God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.”

“Man + woman = very good”

The nature of God is fundamentally relational.

Cultivating relationship is the most important activity that we can be involved in.

Conclusion: Marriage is good.

Marriage is not an institution created to propagate the human race. This kind of thinking is confusing marriage with mating. Marriage legitimizes and structures sexual relationships. Marriage is neither made up of –nor dissolved by– sexual relations. J. Adams

<p>The Bible speaks of marriage as a Covenant of Companionship.</p>
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Mal 2:14-16 It is because the Lord is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant. [...] So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful to the wife of your youth.

Union within marriage places an emphasis on the necessity to give to one's spouse the company that he or she needs in order not to suffer solitude.
J. Adams

Then why do we face so many challenges living together?

Somewhere, somehow, something is misunderstood. We need to change.

Toolbox

Rm 12:2 Do not conform any longer to the pattern of this world, but be transformed by the renewing of your mind. Then you will be able to test and approve what God's will is—his good, pleasing and perfect will.

Ps 51:10 Create in me a pure heart, O God, and renew a steadfast spirit within me.

(Encouragement to reflect)

(Prayer)

“If God had wanted
woman to lord over man,
He would have taken her
from Adam’s head.

If he had wanted her
to be man’s slave,
he would have taken her
from his feet.

But God created woman
from the man’s side,
because he wanted her to be
his companion and equal.”

Saint Augustine

B. Singleness

Since Adam and Eve, everyone has been born single under the authority of his or her parents.

Several people are called to go back to being single (death of a spouse, divorce, prolonged separation).

While we are living with our parents, certain needs can be met (at least partially):

Emotional needs: for community, intimacy, sharing, and protection.

Minus: the desire for companionship.

Physical needs: provision of food, housing, security, hugs!

Minus: the desire for sexual intimacy.

1. The problem of misconduct (sexual immorality)

Definitions: porneia (Greek) = all kinds of sexual behavior disorders outside of marriage:

Fornication, adultery, incest, homosexuality, bestiality.

Context: Questions were coming from the Corinthians: regarding sayings, maxims, reasoning:

v12 "I have the right to do everything"

v13 Just like food, "Sex is for the body and the body is made for sex."

Read 1Cor 6:12-20 to answer the following questions:

a. The body is made for _____ *The Lord*

The body is not made for _____ *sexual immorality*

God is _____ *for* the body.

b. What has God done for each believer in Christ (according to this passage)?

(He has raised us in Christ and) he will raise our bodies with Him. v14

He has united us to the body of Christ: we are one in body and in spirit with him. v17

He has made our body the temple of the Holy Spirit. v19

He has bought us at a high price. v20

c. Consequently, what is our relationship with Him?

We are united (bound) to the Lord Jesus. v17

We are His holy dwelling. v19

We no longer belong to ourselves. v19

d. As a result, how should we treat our body?

We should consider it to belong to God: honor it, and set it aside for his service (keep the body available to carry out His will). v19

We must seek to glorify God (honor Him and reflect his character) in everything that relates to our body. v20

We must flee all sexual immorality. v18

Note: The act of binding oneself to a prostitute and becoming "one flesh" does not imply they will hereafter be considered "married" as a result. It illustrates how unthinkable and reprehensible it is to bind oneself in such a way to this kind of person. We injure ourselves and directly bring God into the matter.

<p>Sexual immorality is an enemy that the believer in Christ should flee.</p>
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2. United to the Lord

a. Reread 1Cor 6:17. Who is “united” to the Lord in this context? (Check the right answer)

Everyone

Every believer in God

Every true believer in Christ

Every single believer

Answer: Every true believer in Christ

This is the same word that is used in the quotations from Gn 2 in the New Testament. We must “unite” ourselves to God.

b. What does Jesus say about our commitment towards Him, compared to the one we have toward our parents? Read Mt 10:37 and complete the following sentence:

Anyone who loves their father or mother more than me _____

Is not worthy of me

Note: Other passages you can quote: Lk 14:26; Lk 9:59-60, “allow me to bury my father”.

c. Jesus requires the believer to leave his parents and follow Him, and unite himself to Him. What does He promise in exchange according to Mk 10:29-30?

Houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land with persecutions at present and eternal life in the world to come.

d. The example of Christ. According to the words in Lk 8:19-21, who are his mother and brothers?

Those who listen to God’s word, and put it into practice.

e. As disciples of Christ, which of our brothers and sisters should come first and foremost?

Our primary commitment should be to Jesus Christ, and then to our new family in Him.

Note 1: You can emphasize this response and ask them what family members they have currently acquired as a result of the promise in question “c”.

Note 2: As servants of Christ and relatives, we need to care for our own family before caring for the Church (see 1Tm 3:4-5).

3. The gift of singleness vs. the gift of marriage. Paul speaks on this matter in 1Cor 7. Read the whole chapter.

a. The believer in Christ is free to choose. Which gift is more desirable according to this passage?

Singleness

Marriage

Both equally

It depends on the circumstances

It depends on his abilities and personal preferences

The last two cases: circumstances v26; abilities/preferences v9, 36-38

b. The problem of sexual immorality. When is it preferable to marry (v1-9)?

When we burn with a longing to marry and have trouble controlling our sexual desires.

c. Paul provides a central principle which applies to every believer in Christ in every social status in v17-24. What is it?

Not trying to change the civil or social status we had at the time of our conversion. To live contentedly in our current situation, and to concern ourselves instead with the Kingdom.

d. How does this principle apply to singles (v25-35)?

Not to worry about their marital status, but to occupy themselves with the Lord's business. Worldly ties (such as marriage) can slow us down, just like the anxiety of wanting to break a marriage.

What advantages does Paul highlight in singleness?

i. v26:

We are much less worried by the persecutions and distresses of this world when we do not carry the responsibility of a family.

ii. v32-35

We can commit ourselves directly to the Lord's service, without being pulled in other directions.

4. Committed to the King's service: The eunuch for the Kingdom (Mt 19:11-12)

a. What is a Eunuch?

A Eunuch is a man who is unable to have children due to a deformity, or a physical intervention. This favored their employment to the service of kings, because they had less desire to satisfy personal interests, things which would have deterred their devotion to serve.

b. Why does Jesus call certain single disciples "Eunuchs of the Kingdom" in the context of these verses?

Just like the eunuchs of an earthly king, a single person lays his personal interests aside in order to better serve his Master. He does not let himself be hijacked from his devotion to the Lord's work.

c. In the mission of the Church and of God's kingdom, what ministries rather suit single believers? Can you think of any examples of people who modeled this in the past?

Open answer. I.e. traveling evangelist, pioneer missionary, showing hospitality to people on the street, being available for emergencies.

- d. Do you consider yourself, or have you ever considered yourself to be a eunuch in the Lord's service? Why, or why not?

Open Answer

"Celibacy and marriage are gifts to be honored and esteemed." Albert Hsu

"Whether we are married or single, we are responsible for the same task: to live a fulfilled life despite many unsatisfied desires." Paul Tournier

5. Questions for reflection and application:

- a. In your current situation, whether single or married,
i. What do you find is inconvenient or lacking?

Open Answer

- ii. What particular opportunities for service are open to you?

Open Answer

- iii. As someone who is single or divorced, are you seeking to remarry?

Open Answer

- iv. Have you decided to remain single? Why?

Open Answer

- v. How does this teaching in 1Cor 6-7 inform your decision?

Open Answer

- b. Have you left behind your parental ties by uniting yourself to the Lord?
i. Concretely, what ties have you left behind?

Open Answer

- ii. Have you left everything, or do some ties remain?

Open Answer

What does it mean to leave? How should my relationship with my parents be, as a disciple united to Jesus? In the following lesson we will study these questions in more detail.

Open Answer

For Further Study

6. What attitudes and expectations do you encounter concerning marriage and singleness within your circle of relationships?

Civil Status	Behaviors/Expectations		Biblical Teaching
	In Society	In the Church	
Singleness			
Marriage			

7. What lack of understanding do you personally experience from family or friends in your sexual life and marital status due to your obedience to Christ?

Open Answer

Lesson 2: Leaving – Honoring

⊗ *Workgroup. (Form groups of 3 to 6 people)*

Gn 2:24 “That is why a man leaves his father and mother”

(Jesus quotes this verse in Mt 19:5 and Mk 10:7, and Paul quotes it in Eph 5:31.)

1. What does it mean to leave?

To abandon, break off, separate from, forsake, and walk away from.

Most separations are difficult and often provoke deep and painful crises. At the same time, they can become joyful occasions which contribute to our personal development.

2. Who does God ask to leave?

The whole man: Physically, emotionally, voluntarily, intelligibly and spiritually.

***Man must leave because he is to become the head of a new household.
There is always tragedy in the air when a husband places his parents
above himself (therefore rejecting his own authority as head of household)
or above his wife (therefore denying her the first place in his life) J. Adams***

3. What are we leaving?

We leave our parents (in the spiritual realm as well as in the realm of affectionate, physical and material security).

-The Bible clearly states that to enter marriage is to leave one's father and mother behind.

-Along with these, we leave the security of affection. Affection from our parents was guaranteed.

-What will we find? We must forsake one life to enter another.

- Leaving one's parents implies a physical and material split. We quickly realize this is closely tied to financial independence. Becoming an adult without attaining financial independence is not true adulthood. To get there, it takes being responsible and giving oneself the means to succeed. Certainly, it is a difficult and scary thing for young people today, but taking on responsibility is a good thing!

4. What does the verse in Ex 20:12 mean (or Dt 5:16): Honor your father and mother? (This verse is quoted six times in the New Testament: Mt 15:4 and 19:18; Mk 7:10 and 10:19; Lk 18:20; Eph 6:2.)

To respect, love, give importance to.

Contribute to supporting them in old age.

Note in Mt 15:4, Jesus admonishes the Pharisees and doctors of the law for not honoring their parents, and for withholding the financial support they could have provided for them in order to follow their devious traditions.

a. Does this mean I need always obey or submit to my parents? Why?

No! Obedience from the child is asked of him when he is a child.

Note: In the Jewish culture, a child steps into adulthood at the age of 12/13 through a ceremony. Imagine a son still submitted to his father –and a girl to her mother– once they are married.

b. Does the commandment to honor my parents allow me to say: “I will never physically leave my father or mother”?

No. If we do not feel ready to leave our parents physically, we are still tied to them.

This manner of thinking demonstrates that we are not ready to commit to a new, intimate relationship. Whoever doesn’t leave should not marry.

If one is already married, he must leave his parents. Otherwise, the couple’s life as a team is handicapped and limited.

c. Does this grant parents unlimited rights?

No!

Parents can expect help and affection from their children, but not on their own personal terms and conditions.

5. How can we leave, yet still honor our parents?

**We must insure their material and physical well-being.*

**Reassure them of our love: “I will always love you.”*

**Reassure them of our respect: “Your advice is always welcome.”*

**Set boundaries: “I make all my decisions with my spouse.”*

**Reassure them of our forgiveness, or our request for forgiveness.*

**If my spouse’s family does not share my faith, I must not treat them any differently. I have double responsibility towards them in witnessing love, and in leading by example.*

Dt 27:16. “Cursed is anyone who dishonors (minimizes, curses) their father or mother.”

It is painful for parents. They no longer take priority.

But leaving and honoring are not incompatible.

6. Questions for parents:

a. Are we raising our children to hold them back, or prepare them to leave?

To prepare them to leave.

b. With whom should I share my most intimate sentimental relationship?

With my spouse.

Some parents have trouble letting their children go. This can be an indicator which reveals that their most important relationship is not in the right place.

The parent-child relationship is temporary. The union between husband and wife is permanent. J. Adams

7. Personal questions

- a. Have I truly left my father and mother?
- b. What spiritual heritage did our families leave us?
- c. Are there currently ties that need to be forsaken?
- d. How do father and mother influence our marriage, even from afar?

For Further Study

The Story of the Roast:

A young woman has a friend over for dinner. While they talk, she takes a roast out of the oven and places it on the table. "Today, we are eating roast." This roast is splendid. Surprised, the friend observes as the hostess carefully slices off both ends of the roast and discards them.

"Tell me Laaziza, why did you cut off each end of the roast? That is good meat!"

-Always! I always cut off the ends. That's the way you do it.

-But why? I've never done that.

-Maybe, but you're wrong. Anyways, its the way my mother always did it, and I'm sure she had a good reason.

-You're probably right, Laaziza, but I do wonder why?

-Well, I'll ask her the next time I see her."

Laaziza does not forget her promise. The next time she sees her mother, she asks her: "Yimma, haven't you always cut the ends off of a roast before putting it in the pan?"

-Yes my dear, I still do!

-Tell me, why do you do it this way?

-Because the pan has always been too small for the roast."

Encourage the participants to make – and keep – commitments. Pray.

Lesson 3: Being united and divorce

A. Being United

Definition:

Take two pieces of paper of different colors and glue them together, one on top of the other, in front of the group.

In Greek, the verb “to unite” portrays the image of two pieces of paper whose whole surfaces are glued together, so that they cannot be separated without being torn.

The key to being united is to be vulnerable and aware of the fact that we need the other.

“Man will be united to his wife” shows a movement from the man to the woman. He is the one who takes the initiative and is responsible for it. It is not an easy development in life.

⊗ *Workgroup.*

Gather once more the groups of 3-6 with the separate spouses. Be prepared to provide a solid structure for the discussion. Emphasize the main points and principles.

It takes time and effort.

1. How much time does God think is necessary for two newlyweds to get to know each other?

Dt 24:25 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

One year.

The man was required to take a sabbatical year so he would be available for his household and bring happiness to his wife. It allowed him to dedicate time, care and attention to this very thing.

To unite requires a great ability to adapt to change. It involves learning to listen and asking ourselves questions about the way we do things. Conflicts are opportunities to seize.

Will we manage the difficulties we encounter with maturity, transparency, truth and love?

2. How do we unite with our spouse? What does it require?

You can present this section as being the “Unity Toolbox”

1-The requirement of public commitment

In the Bible, the commitment of marriage was established by the engagement. In the event of adultery, an engaged person would obtain the same sentence as someone who was married. This was not the case for singles. (Dt 22:23 and Mt 1:16-25)

The betrothed are called husband and wife. The marriage of Joseph and Mary, initiated by their betrothal, does not begin with a sexual union, yet Joseph can only terminate it through a divorce.

According to the Bible, marriage is fundamentally a contract, not a sexual union. Marriage is a legal agreement –a covenant– between two people, to become lifelong companions for one another who will love each other.

J. Adams

2-The requirement of complementarity.

The first “other” created by God for man was a woman, not another man, parent, or child.

Homosexuality is considered a perversion of human nature and the order of creation. This subject will be seen later.

3-The requirement of an exclusive union.

In the beginning, in Gn 2, we see only one woman for one man (and not two or ten), united to form one person (one flesh) for life. According to Jesus, this is how marriage should be.

1Cor 6:16 Do you not know that he who unites himself with a prostitute is one with her in body? For it is said, “The two will become one flesh.”

There is adultery when a third party comes on the scene to ensure companionship (generally sexually, but not necessarily) in place of the husband or the wife “of youth”. J. Adams

Adultery is to marriage what a knife is to the back. (It is a betrayal of trust to one’s spouse, one’s family, one’s community, and above all to God)

4-Requirement of faithfulness

Man is united through time: it is a lifelong commitment.

Mt 19:6 Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.

For Further Study

3. What does the Bible tell us about polygamy?

1Tm 3:2 Now the overseer is to be above reproach, faithful to his wife...

Ti 1:6 ...appoint elders in every town, as I directed you. An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife...

A church leader cannot practice polygamy.

*The life of a leader must be exemplary, and God desires the model of monogamous marriage to be given within the church (the local Christian community).
Careful! Paul does not say married only once (this is not referring to remarriage), but indeed the husband of only one wife, which means only one wife at any given time.*

1Cor 7:17, 20, 24. Each person should remain in the situation he or she was in when they were called by God.

*When someone is converted, he should remain in the same situation he was in before he was called before God;
In other words, a polygamous man is not compelled to dismiss his other wives.*

4. How should we handle friendships outside of the marriage?

***When some relationship threatens the stability of commitments we have made to those who are most dear to us, it loses any right to exist.
Understand the power of your eyes. Keep penetrating looks for one person alone. Mayhall***

5. What are the reasonable boundaries for jealousy?

*We must avoid sparking jealousy from our spouse.
It is legitimate to be jealous when our spouse becomes too intimate with someone else.
We live in a world that encourages us to be sexually unfaithful, but also—in a more subtle and complex manner—seeks to destroy marriage and pervert love. We need to be aware of the danger and do everything in our power to avoid them.
Even if it only involves a little flirting, we must not be afraid to seem jealous. In this case, the feeling is completely legitimate because of the covenant and the exclusive nature of a relationship between spouses.
In the same way, God is jealous of His relationship with us.
However, we must be able to discern whether this jealousy is reasonable, or unwholesome (unhealthy).*

6. What happens if we try to separate two spouses?

*There is tearing (a split, a rupture).
Attempt to separate the two glued pieces of paper. When they are parted, one retains some of the other's color.*

Marriage implies

A full commitment,

Of a whole person,

For their whole life.

B. Divorce

*In the following material, you will find several citations from **Marriage, divorce, and remarriage** by **Jay Adams**. We encourage you to acquire the book, read it fully, and present it to the participants.*

1. What is the Biblical stance towards divorce?

Mal 2:16 “The man who hates and divorces his wife,” says the Lord, the God of Israel, “does violence to the one he should protect”

Jer 3:8 I gave faithless Israel her certificate of divorce and sent her away because of all her adulteries.

God hates that which causes divorce; he hates the consequences of divorce; he hates divorce that is wrongly obtained; But God Himself is a divorced Being!

In the best of conditions, divorce brings only grief and injury. This is why God hates it. J Adams

The concept of divorce is Biblical.

The Bible does not systematically condemn divorce for all people, and in every circumstance.

In the list of abominable sins (1Cor 6:9-10, Rev 22:15, Gal 5:19-21), there is never any mention of divorce. J. Adams.

Mt 12:31 And so I tell you, every kind of sin and slander can be forgiven...

Even someone who has obtained a divorce stained with sin can be forgiven. J. Adams

2. What is divorce?

Dt 12:1-2 If a man marries a woman who becomes displeasing to him because he finds something indecent about her, and he writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, and if after she leaves his house she becomes the wife of another man...

Mt 19:8 Jesus replied, “Moses permitted you to divorce your wives because your hearts were hard. But it was not this way from the beginning.”

Divorce is a legal separation.

3. For what reason could a man divorce his wife?

For any reason (“something displeasing” Dt 24:1).

Adultery was punishable by death.

Jesus is challenging whether or not divorce should be permitted for any reason.

He is also challenging the notion of stoning to death for the sin of adultery.

Jn 8:3-11. The adulterous woman.

4. Why did God allow divorce?

God allowed and regulated divorce to allow a woman to legally remarry.

The written procedure of divorce is in fact a legal, deliberate matter which takes time. It protects the social status of the female spouse.

5. What is the exceptional reason which enables Christians to divorce?

Mt 5:31-32 “It has been said, ‘Anyone who divorces his wife must give her a certificate of divorce.’ But I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, makes her the victim of adultery, and anyone who marries a divorced woman commits adultery.”

Mt 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery.”

Jesus offered only one cause for divorce between believers: porneia (Greek), fornication or sexual sin.

Jesus says we commit adultery, unless we divorce our previous wife due to fornication. The divorced wife and her second husband are warned that they will commit adultery if the divorce was not caused by fornication. Jesus declares fornication (porneia –sexual sin) to be the motive allowing a letter of divorce to be written because fornication covers incest, bestiality, homosexuality and lesbianism, as well as adultery. In such cases, the Bible does not require divorce, but allows it. J. Adams

If the guilty party repents, his or her partner should forgive them.

Lk 17:3 *If your brother or sister sins against you, rebuke them; and if they repent, forgive them.*

If there is no repentance, then the elders and church leaders should intervene, seeking reconciliation/church discipline.

Dt 24:3-4 *...and her second husband dislikes her and writes her a certificate of divorce, gives it to her and sends her from his house, or if he dies, then her first husband, who divorced her, is not allowed to marry her again after she has been defiled. That would be detestable in the eyes of the Lord.*

“According to Jesus, what soiled the woman during this process? The sexual relations did not soil the woman, but a divorce made for any old reason.” Jay Adams

Eph 5:22-23. *The biblical standard of Christian marriage is found in the relationship between Christ and His Church.*

The Christian divorce toolbox.

6. In 1Cor 7:10-16, what two potential divorce situations are presented?

1Cor 7 presents the two potential divorce situations conceived by the New Testament: divorce among believers, and divorce of a believer with an unbeliever.

I - Divorce between believers

1Cor 7:10-11 To the married I give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.

In the New Testament, the words "separation" or "repudiation" refer to legal separation by divorce;

The modern perspective of separation is an anti-biblical substitute to the Biblical requirement of reconciliation or (in some circumstances) of divorce. It is deceiving because it provides a temporary feeling of relief (which is often mistaken for peace). But it does not fix anything.

Modern separation is nothing more than a way to run away from problems rather than resolving them as God has shown us. It only magnifies the challenges. Jay Adams.

a. What is the double commandment found in 1Cor 7:10-11?

Neither the Christian wife nor the Christian husband can divorce one another.

Reminder: According to the Lord this commandment applies to the desire for divorce, except for sexual sin.

b. To what particular situation of women is Paul speaking?

Paul is addressing a divorced Christian woman.

c. Why would this woman have divorced?

We are not told, but we can reasonably assume that she divorced for a reason other than sexual sin.

d. What two options remain for a Christian woman divorced from her Christian spouse?

1-She remains unmarried.

In the case of divorce for a reason other than that of sexual sin, remarriage is not an option. The purpose of this first option is to provide protection for a woman against abuse, while leaving the door open for option number 2:

2-Reconciliation.

Reconciliation can be sought within the setting of church discipline by following the steps presented in Mt 18:15.

***Although the motives for divorce can be illegitimate, divorce itself is not.
The term “always married in the eyes of God” is non-biblical. Divorce ends
a marriage.
Jay Adams.***

II - Divorce between a believer and an unbeliever.

1Cor 7:12 To the rest I say this (I, not the Lord):

This verse is just as inspired as the previous one. What Paul means by it is this: To married believers, the Lord had already laid out the principles concerning divorce. When he did so, the believers/unbelievers group did not yet exist. For these, Paul will address the issue himself, with divine inspiration, of course.

1Cor 7:12-16 If any brother has a wife who is not a believer and she is willing to live with him, he must not divorce her. And if a woman has a husband who is not a believer and he is willing to live with her, she must not divorce him. For the unbelieving husband has been sanctified through his wife, and the unbelieving wife has been sanctified through her believing husband. Otherwise your children would be unclean, but as it is, they are holy. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.

- a. What is Paul's purpose for laying down the requirement: let it be so?

In order to live in peace.

- b. Which spouse in the couple takes on this responsibility?

The unbelieving spouse.

- c. In this case, is the believing spouse free to remarry?

1Cor 7:39 ...he must belong to the Lord.

Yes. However, just as in marriage, the remarriage of a Christian man or woman must be done in the Lord (with a Christian spouse).

- d. Can we remarry after divorce?

On the basis of Dt 24, any rightly divorced person is allowed to remarry. Christians are required to marry Christians.

1Tm 4:3 They (hypocritical liars) forbid people to marry...

2Cor 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers.

Someone who has divorced according to the exception Jesus provided (Mt 19.9) is free to remarry, because this exception (except in the case of "sexual sin") does not only apply to the phrase "whoever repudiates his wife" but also to "and marries another". J. Adams

1Cor 7:27 *(Literally)* Are you tied to a woman? Do not seek to free yourself. Are you freed from a woman? Do not seek a woman.

Careful! This verse applies within the context of ongoing disasters (1Cor 7:26). It is also considered to be advice and a general principle, not an obligation.

Conclusion

Christians should be able to marry, divorce, and remarry, only if, when, and how, God says they can do so without sin. J. Adams

For Further Study

People with a difficult past

How can we help someone who is distressed by a difficult past to see himself in Christ and accept his forgiveness? Here are a few verses:

David was guilty of adultery and murder.

2Sm 12-13 Then David said to Nathan, "I have sinned against the Lord." Nathan replied, "The Lord has taken away your sin. You are not going to die."

Ps 51:1-3 Have mercy on me, O God, according to your unfailing love; according to your great compassion blot out my transgressions. Wash away all my iniquity and cleanse me from my sin. For I know my transgressions, and my sin is always before me.

God ended up blessing this marriage. Jesus is called son of David.

1Cor 6:11 And that is what some of you were. But you were washed...

Rm 5:20 But where sin increased, grace increased all the more.

2Cor 2:7-8 Now instead, you ought to forgive and comfort him, so that he will not be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. I urge you, therefore, to reaffirm your love for him.

It is clear that God forgives the most disgraceful sexual immorality, murder, etc.
The community of believers in Christ must do the same!

Let man not separate
what God has united!

Let man not condemn
that which God has allowed!

Let man not despair
of that which God wants to
heal!

Henri Blocher

A few major hurdles in marriage:

- 1) Ignorance or unrealistic expectations;
- 2) Unwillingness or a lack of commitment;
- 3) Poor communication.

The seasons of marriage.

“Each season of marriage carries its own challenges, and requires the couple to take specific measures.”

(This material can help each couple assess themselves according to their own current and upcoming challenges, or gain perspective on the years spent together.)

- 1) The honeymoon.
- 2) Organizing life together as a couple.
- 3) The children’s arrival.
- 4) Organizing life for the long term.
- 5) Old age.

Questions for personal reflection

These questions can be read and kept for personal reflection at a later time, and then again with one’s spouse.

7. Is my life in line with the Word of God, or do I have other beliefs that keep me from changing?

8. Do I want help?

9. Would I like to talk about it?

Lesson 4: Becoming one and Differences

Introduction

Until now, we have seen that the first requirement for becoming one in marriage is leaving our parents. Otherwise things may turn out this way:

“My husband treats me just the way his father treated his mother, and I react just the way my mother reacted to my father. The problem, of course, is that my father and his mother are not married” -Jack and Carole Mayhall

God’s second requirement for a husband and wife to become one is for them to be joined together by the official covenant of marriage, for life. This empowers a love which no longer hesitates or searches left and right. It is a love which has made its decision.

Now that we have studied these questions a little, we will continue by following the logical order God gave us: leave, be united, become one.

But we need to be weary of ourselves. God is always reasonable, which is not always the case for us. So, every time we encounter an obstacle to our unity, let us ask ourselves the following question: “Is there something from my family that I am still holding onto?”

Leaving, joining... it can sometimes be painful, and it is never fully attained. Both of these are acts of will which continuously need to be renewed. It is the only basis for achieving oneness.

Pr 24:16 Though the righteous fall seven times, they rise again.

Each time they give themselves to one another, husbands and wives who love each other are renewing their marriage vows.

A. Becoming one flesh.

1. What does it mean to “become one flesh”? Is it limited to sexual union?

No

2. Let’s think a moment: what is our first sexual organ?

—The brain. Sexual union begins in our thoughts. It is not a strictly physical act; it is intimately tied to thought.

If the brain is the first sexual organ, it takes a lot more than uniting bodies to become one.

3. Will a couple have the desire for sexual union in the evening if they were torn apart during the day?

Eph 4:3 “Make every effort to keep the unity of the Spirit through the bond of peace.”

A climate of spiritual unity is crucial.

We need to learn to resolve conflicts, forgive, and ask for forgiveness. Becoming one is not easy... especially when the other is different.

We just mentioned that unity between husband and wife is based first on leaving and then in being joined to one's spouse. But there is a third, important, element—like the third leg of a three-legged stool. This element is the very core of our unity.

B. Unity requires differences

This is easy to understand in terms of sexual unity. A man needs a woman, and a woman needs a man. God tells us that homosexuality, like all other sexual perversions, is a detestable thing in God's sight.

Lv 18:22 “Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; that is detestable.”

The only relationship in which God allows sexual intimacy is within the marriage union to a person of the opposite (different) sex. This is true for men as for women.

We will develop more on sexual union at the end of the course. But first, let us examine the following question: What about other, non sexual differences?

C. Let's talk about differences

The following material is based upon the book “Opposites Attack” by Jack and Carole Mayhall. We encourage you to buy the book, read it fully, and present it to the students.

We are all different from one another. Among all the people in the world, no two are identical; each one of us is a unique creature throughout all creation.

If each person created in the image of God is “something new under the sun”, a marvel, then the only conclusion is that two people joined in marriage are also spectacular. If someone does not think his (or her) spouse is different, the only alternative is to believe he is wrong. Mayhall

1. Provide at least five differences between you and your spouse concerning your tendencies, personalities, preferences or beliefs.

Open Answer

Some qualities appear more characteristic of men, others are more common in women.

Dr. Willard Harley, a certified clinical psychologist, defines five basic needs that are different in men and women. Here is what he says: "I define a need as being something that procures intense pleasure to a person when someone does it for them. I have discovered that, for women, the fundamental needs are: affection, conversation, honesty and frankness (the foundation of strong trust), providing for financial needs (enough money to live comfortably) and a strong family bond (her husband must be a good father).

For men, the five fundamental needs are: sexual satisfaction, companionship in activities (his wife participating in his hobbies), an alluring wife (who always tries to be as pretty as possible), support (finding peace and quiet at home) and admiration in the home."

However, even here we must be careful. When differences are organized into two big feminine and masculine categories, it can prove uncomfortable for some. Without necessarily landing in the opposite sex category, we do not always correspond to what is a typical need for our category. We take a little here and a little there, which is normal. Every person is different.

The importance here does not lie in finding whether or not I belong to a clearly defined psychological group, but to ask myself the following question:

2. Do I complement my spouse well by my differences? How so?

Open Answer

Note: you can mention the qualities cited previously by Dr. Harley to help student reflection.

To complete each other! Doesn't that mean to become one? (1Cor 12, the body)

Yes, of course.

Careful, this is not at all the same thing as becoming alike!

To think alike is not a valid goal. If two people think alike, one of them is unnecessary. Mayhall

The goal is to think together, using our differences.

One of the goals of marriage is for us to complete one other. This is possible because of our differences, but it also implies making changes.

For that matter, another essential purpose of marriage is to place ourselves in a situation which requires change. The question is:

3. Do I really want to change?

Our faith does not view marriage as an end in and of itself, but as the starting point of a new adventure. Marriage is a commitment to grow and allow our spouse to grow.

Note: You can ask them to finish the following sentence: "For a Christian, the goal of all change is... to become more like Christ."

4. When we have a disagreement or an argument about something, in what ways are we different from each other? Is it a difference in the way we think, the way we feel about something, the way we communicate, or the way we act? Do these differences come from our personality, culture, education, or beliefs?

Open Answer

*It is normal to have arguments. To argue “fairly” is a sign of maturity. But to argue with gentleness in love –now that is a blessing! Mayhall
Neither point of view is bad. They are simply different.*

Note: Of course, we should not ignore the fact that both spouses are prone to sin and may need correction and repentance. But in this context we are talking about differences which stem from different yet valid perspectives that can be held by two different people. There is no sin, and in such cases, we must refrain from any kind of moral judgment.

5. How is this difference valuable for a couple?

Open Answer

Thank God we are not alike. Instead we are stronger, better, more complete, united, we compensate for the weaknesses of the other and reinforce the other’s strengths.

**“The success of a marriage does not depend on whether or not we have found the right person. Rather, it depends on the ability of each spouse to adapt to the person his or her spouse truly is, the person we inevitably discover our spouse to be once we marry.”
John Fischer**

D. What does the Bible say about differences?

Differences are at the heart of all that God does, they are at the heart of Creation itself. Our beliefs in regards to differences between men and women are extremely important. They have a tremendous influence on the way a man treats his wife, and the manner a woman reacts to her husband. If their beliefs are flawed, their attitudes will be flawed as well.

To lead a balanced life as a couple, it is crucial to view our sexual identity in light of Biblical truth.

On what foundation have we based our beliefs? Merely on what we want to believe?

What does God, the creator, think about the differences between man and woman?

Interestingly, the Bible speaks little of differences between men and women.

Let us be careful not to attribute various characteristics to one sex or another according to ideas we have received from our culture, or even an isolated passage of the Bible. We need to consider the Bible’s teaching as a whole.

For example, in 1Pet 3:4, “the gentle and quiet spirit” asked of wives is not a typically feminine characteristic. In Ph 4:5 it is also written to the men: “Let your gentleness be evident to all.”

*In fact, the Bible only mentions two major differences:
The difference in natures, and the difference in roles.*

I - The difference in nature.

The apostle Peter mentions this difference, and he does so very sensitively:

1Pet 3:7 And you husbands, give thought to your way of life with your wives, giving honor to the woman who is the feebler vessel, but who has an equal part in the heritage of the grace of life (The Bible in Basic English. The translation ‘women are weaker beings’ is not the best)

The Greek word *skeuos* can refer to a vessel such as a jar or vase, or to the body.

1Th 4:4 ...each of you should learn to control his own body [*skeuos*] in a way that is holy and honorable.

2Cor 4:7 But we have this treasure in jars [*skeuos* (in plural)] of clay to show that this all-surpassing power is from God and not from us.

Answer the following questions in the light of 1Pet 3:7:

1. What difference of nature is referred to here?

The woman has a more delicate body.

The woman alone has the privilege of bearing and giving birth to children. In this, she reflects the image of God as Creator. How has God specifically qualified woman –body and soul– to fulfill this role? How does this make her more delicate than man?

Possible answers:

Physically –hormonal changes, organs, body structure...

Emotionally –sensitivity to needs, etc.

To illustrate the difference, take a plastic bowl to represent man, and a jar in ceramic or glass to represent woman. Point out that the more fragile container is not less valuable because of its fragility.)

2. How do we treat a fragile vase?

Do we smash it??? Not at all! That would just make it weaker.

Thankfully, Peter immediately continues: “Honor them!”

3. In light of this, how should a man treat his wife?

He must learn to understand and honor her.

How can he do this? Take time to listen to her, not judge her, ask her how he can help with her responsibilities, protect her physically and emotionally.

*“Husbands, what could possibly complete the weakness of your wives?”
–Your strength, naturally. By using your strength to serve her –and not against her– you honor her.*

Draw the students’ attention to the chart in Annex 1 at the end of the student booklet, and encourage them to fill it out.

II - The difference in responsibility in marriage.

God entrusts to a husband and wife two different responsibilities . This topic is the topic of the next lesson (5a & 5b).

Form one group of men, and one group of women. Tell them that after this, each will have the opportunity to share with the other what they have discovered.

For Further Study

When we exchange roles.

What happens in a couple when the wife “takes the wheel”? How do we proceed when the woman is more qualified to lead?

What should our attitude be in these particular cases?

1Sm 25: The case of Nabal and Abigail.

Here is a summary in three verses:

1Sm 25:17 “One of Nabal’s servants told Abigail what had happened, and said, “Now think it over and see what you can do, because disaster is hanging over our master and his whole household. He is such a wicked man that no one can talk to him.”

1Sm 25:32-33 David said to Abigail, "Praise be to the LORD, the God of Israel, who has sent you today to meet me. May you be blessed for your good judgment and for keeping me from bloodshed this day and from avenging myself with my own hands. . . .”

1Sm 25:37 The next day, when Nabal was sober, Abigail tells him what happened. “...his heart failed him and he became like a stone.” He dies not long after this.

This man refused to listen to anyone. The day he was forced to hear his wife out, he died from it. He was a fool.

Put yourself in Abigail’s shoes. As a Christian woman, how should you respond?

What difference does it make whether or not the husband is a Christian?

Jg 4. Barak et Deborah.

Summary:

Deborah was a judge in Israel. She was in a position of authority, providing direction.

She gives Barak an order from the Lord to go into battle. Barak is not very confident.

He tells her,

—“If you go with me, I will go; but if you don’t go with me, I will not go.”

She replied,

—“Very well, I will go with you. But because of the way you are going about this, the honor will not be yours, for the LORD will hand Sisera over to a woman.”

In Jg 5:24, Barak et Deborah sing: “Most blessed of women be Jael....”

Deborah tried to give Barak the honor. This is what any woman who has a gift of leadership should do.

Lesson 5a: The Wife's Responsibility (For Sisters)

Christian Submission

(Lesson for the sisters as a group)

Introduction

Eph 5:21-24 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

Col 3:18 Wives, submit yourselves to your husbands, as is fitting in the Lord.

1Pet 3:1-2 Wives, in the same way submit yourselves to your own husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

A. Definitions

1. What does submission mean?
 - a. Give your own definition using synonyms.

1) Dictionary's definition:

- "To defer to or consent to abide by the opinion or authority of another." (Webster's 11th Collegiate Dictionary). "To place oneself under the control of a person in authority or power;..." (Shorter Oxford English Dictionary, 1933).

Synonyms and related expressions (for comparison): to defer to; bow to; yield to; acquiesce; obey; comply; accept (the authority of); disciplined, docile, humility, etc.

Antonyms: to resist (an authority), to defy, to rebel, to disobey, unyielding.

2) Definition within the biblical context

-In the Bible, it is first and foremost a virtue reflecting a mark of divine character. Jesus Christ practiced submission towards his Father. It is asked of all Christians, men and women alike: this is not a uniquely feminine virtue. How could we define the verb "to submit" according to the Bible?

- b. Is submission the same thing as obedience?

1Pet 3:6 They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham.

Submission holds an element of obedience, but it is more than that.

Note that rather than to submit, adult children are asked to respect their parents in Eph 6:1.

- c. Is submission the same thing as respect?

Eph 5:33 Each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

The act of submission includes an element of obedience, but it is more than that.

Note that rather than submission, adult children are asked to give respect to their parents (Ex 20:12).

2. To whom should a married women submit?

-To her husband!

It is the person they are submitting to which makes all the difference between the words obey, respect and submission.

3. What is the difference between our relationship with our parents and children, and our relationship with our spouse?

—Our spouse is the only family member we have chosen.

—Our spouse is the only person in the world with whom we become one for life.

4. Can we become the complete person God wants us to be while rebelling and resisting?

Mk 3:25 If a house is divided against itself, that house cannot stand.

Jn 6:38 For I have come down from heaven not to do my will but to do the will of him who sent me.

Jn 10:30 I and the Father are one.

No—we attack each other and tear one another apart. Its chaotic.

5. Whose responsibility is it to submit within the couple?

It is the wife's responsibility.

“To submit oneself” is different from “submitting” someone. In the verb “to submit” there is a negative implication of someone using force, and demanding submission. Perhaps, this subtlety is what makes us resist or hesitate from using this word.

The concept of submitting someone else is in conflict with Christian character.

Mk 10:42-45. “You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant...”

In this context, the idea of submission implies voluntary acceptance, it is a decision.

Concerning submission within the couple, Paul and Peter specifically address wives –which is rather rare. The Bible never suggests that the husband should make his wife submit. This is an act of the woman's responsibility. She must choose to submit herself.

**Submission to our husband can mean:
Choosing to obey our husband and respect him
above any other person in our lives;
or still:**

**“A woman shall leave her father and her mother and hold fast to her husband,
and they shall become one flesh.”**

6. Why submission? Or what is its purpose?

Since the meaning of marriage is the same for both man and woman, why does Paul redefine it in terms of submission for the woman?

a. Is submission a result of the fall?

1Cor 11:9 Neither was man created for woman, but woman for man.

1Tm 2:12-13 I do not permit a woman to . . . exercise authority over a man; . . . For Adam was formed first, then Eve.

No. Submission of the wife to her husband was established at the time of creation, before the fall.

The only reason God asks the wife to submit to her husband is because of the creation order.

1Cor 14:33 For God is not a God of disorder but of peace.

1Cor 14:40 But everything should be done in a fitting and orderly way.

Gn 3:16 Your desire will be for your husband, and he will rule over you.

Rather, the result of the fall is that the wife will be tempted to rebel against God’s established order. This is no doubt the reason Peter and Paul specifically encourage wives to submit themselves.

Whether we like it or not, whether or not we submit, the creation order cannot be changed. If we want to live peacefully, we have the responsibility to respect our husbands. If we rebel against the authority and order established by God, we place our husbands –and ourselves– in an extremely difficult position before God.

In fact, to submit simply means to place ourselves under (someone). A good synonym for submitting oneself is to subordinate oneself. To subordinate oneself is to place ourselves under the authority of another. Subordination is an established order between people which makes them dependent of one other.

Subordinate: Someone who is submitted to an overseer

Ph 2:3 Do nothing out of selfish ambition or vain conceit, rather in humility value others above yourselves.

b. Does this mean the wife is inferior?

Ph 2:6-8 [Jesus] though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped [...] he humbled himself by becoming obedient to the point of death.

To take an inferior position does not mean to be inferior.

To place ourselves under someone's authority involves many of the higher qualities that Christ modeled.

c. Is this order the result of some inequality between man and woman?

Gal 3:28 There is neither [...] male nor female, for you are all one in Christ Jesus.

1Pet 3:7 Husbands, [...] treat [your wives] with respect as [...] heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.

No, man and woman both benefit from the same heritage in Christ.

d. In that case, is it due to some difference?

1Pet 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life.

Yes, there is a difference! But there is no inequality.

In this verse, Peter makes a clear distinction between difference and equality. The woman is likened to a more fragile vase which is to be honored.

We can be different yet equal.

2Cor 12:10 When I am weak, then I am strong.

Weakness becomes strength in Christ

e. Does God require submission simply for the love of order, as a divine quality to be developed?

Why not?

This quality is so important that it governs all of creation.

B. The apostle Paul, an example of submission according to Ac 22-26

1. Practically, what does it mean to submit oneself?

Paul speaks of submission to authorities. Therefore, we will examine how in practice he lived out this submission.

Paul wrote his letters between 52 and 67 A.D.

2. Who ruled during this time?

Nero was emperor of the Roman empire from 54 to 68 A.D. In 64, he undertook one of the most cruel persecutions of the history of Christianity. He is among the illustrations of the Anti-Christ.

3. What does Paul ask? Read Rm 13:1-7.

Paul's letter to the Romans was probably written around 57 A.D.

a. How did Paul submit to an evil, repressive authority?

In fact, Paul had already chosen the authority to whom he would give account. When he is arrested in Ac 22:25, he chooses to place himself under Roman authority rather than Jewish authority.

b. What was Paul accused of? What had he done to deserve detention?

They accused him of all sorts of things.

Ac 21:28 False things.

Ac 22:21 True things: he had gone afar to the Gentiles.

Ac 23:1 "My brothers, I have fulfilled my duty to God in all good conscience to this day."

Ac 23:6 "I stand on trial because of my hope in the resurrection of the dead."

Ac 23:29 The Roman commander Claudius Lysias said that Paul was accused of violating the religious law of the Jews, but that "there was no charge against him that deserved death or imprisonment."

Ac 24:5 "We have found this man to be a troublemaker, stirring up riots among the Jews all over the world. He is a ringleader of the Nazarene sect and even tried to desecrate the temple" The high priest and the elders.

Ac 24:16 "I strive always to keep my conscience clear before God and man."

Ac 25:7 The Jews who followed Paul from Jerusalem brought "many serious charges against him," but they could not prove the charges.

Paul was judged for his faith and testimony.

c. Paul could have offered Felix money. What did he do instead?

Ac 24:25 Paul speaks about “righteousness, self control and the judgment to come”

d. So then, who is in the position of authority? And who is in a position of submission?

Ac 25:8-11 "I have done nothing wrong against the law of the Jews or against the temple or against Caesar. If [...] I am guilty of doing anything deserving death, I do not refuse to die. But if the charges brought against me by these Jews are not true, no one has the right to hand me over to them. I appeal to Caesar!"

e. Who was the Caesar at the time?

Nero.

Paul chose to submit to Nero rather than to the Jewish authorities.

f. Did Paul really know what he was doing?

Yes.

First, under Jewish authority he was the subject of false accusations.

Secondly, there was no chance of being vindicated by the Jews. They wanted his death.

Finally, the Lord had warned him: “As you have testified about me in Jerusalem, so you must also testify about me in Rome.” Ac 23:11

Paul testifies before Festus, who tells him:

Ac 26:24 “You are out of your mind!”

Ac 26:25 “I am not insane, most excellent Festus,” Paul replied. “What I am saying is true and reasonable.”

4. What qualities are expressed in Paul’s submission to authority?

(The following answers can be found at the end of the student copy, Annex 2. For more precise answers, please look there.)

— *Wisdom. He chooses his authority.*

— *Truth. He knows God’s Word.*

— *Faithfulness. He does not renounce his faith.*

— *Gentleness. He communicates clearly, without anger, every time he has the opportunity.*

— *Righteousness. He does not try to manipulate authority (with money), nor his conscience.*

— *Humility. He accepts the decisions made by the authorities.*

— *Courage. He accepts the consequences of his decisions.*

— *Strength. He is confident in his identity, and does not buckle under psychological intimidation.*

— *Love. He submits to God’s will out of his love for the Gentiles, in order give testimony before Nero himself.*

— *Respect.*

— *Anything else?*

5. Do I recognize myself in some of these qualities?

(Encourage the participants to select at least two or three qualities.)

6. What are the consequences of Paul's submission?

- *Several years in prison*
- *He had no idea of how his captivity would end.*
- *He was subject to abuse and deprived of his freedom.*

We can wonder: "Is it fair?"

What if I have a bad husband?

These questions are bad questions.

When we decide to submit to an earthly authority, there really is no point in asking whether or not we will always be treated fairly. We won't! Suffering injustice is a normal part of Christian life.

7. Why should I submit? What's the purpose?

Now this is a good question to ask.

Ti 2:5 [Younger women to] be subject to their husbands, so that no one will malign the Word of God.

1Pet 3:1-2 So that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.

Open Answer

If our husband is not a believer, it is just one more reason to submit.

8. When we marry a man, do we really know what we are doing?

*We choose to leave everything in order to submit to him,
in love, and for his good,
so that God's name will be honored.*

A third reason for submission is to allow God to use the authority in our life to develop our strength of character!

Here's a possible thought to explore: When a woman has been forced to marry, does it change things?

C. Two biblical examples of womanly submission

1. Abraham and Sarah, Gn 21:8-13.

- a. In 1Pet 3:5-6, how does the Bible describe Sarah in her role as a wife?

1Pet 3: 5-6 For this is the way the holy women of the past who put their hope in God used to adorn themselves. They submitted themselves to their own husbands, like Sarah, who obeyed Abraham and called him her lord (Gn 18:12). You are her daughters if you do what is right and do not give way to fear.

Sarah is described as a submissive and obedient wife. We are like her when we do what is right without letting ourselves be troubled by fear.

Read Gn 21:8-13.

Gn 21:10 “Get rid of that slave woman and her son, for that woman’s son will never share in the inheritance with my son Isaac.”

Gn 21:12 But God said to [Abraham], “Do not be so distressed about the boy and your slave woman. Listen to whatever Sarah tells you,

- b. In Gn 21:10, in her determination for Abraham to send away the son of the servant,
 - i. Did she make a request?

No (it is stronger than a request)

- ii. Did she give an order?

Yes (the verb is imperative)

Gn 21:11 The matter distressed Abraham greatly because it concerned his son.

- iii. Did Sarah have the right to require this? Why?

Yes, because of God’s Word. However, she may have been wrong in her interpretation of it.

- iv. Was Sarah submissive in asking this? Why?

Yes. She did not send away her servant herself, nor did she do it behind her husband’s back.

By transferring the responsibility of the action to her husband, she showed her trust in his ability to handle a matter which was emotionally painful for him, and in which she was just as guilty as he was. She also entrusted to Abraham her interpretation of how she understood God’s word. Abraham himself brought this to God to find peace concerning His will. Through all of this, Sarah demonstrates profound respect for her husband.

Toolbox of healthy submission

The elements in Sarah's submission:

- She understood the will of God.
- She communicated her understanding to Abraham.
- She allowed time for her husband to receive a response from God.
- She entrusted her husband to take responsibility for her actions.

c. What was the result of Sarah's submission (for Sarah and for Abraham)?

Abraham listened to his wife and obeyed God.

2. Rebekah and Isaac. Gn 25 and 27

Give a brief summary of Jacob and Esau's birth (Gn 25:21-26), then tell the story of Jacob's blessing. Emphasize the following:

Rebekah knew the will of God concerning her son Jacob.

It appears that Isaac had something else in mind.

Rebekah resorted to deceit to force Isaac to follow God's will..

a. When Rebekah disguises her son Jacob from Isaac, is Rebekah showing submission?

No. Neither to God, nor to her husband, for her submission to God must go through her husband.

Aspects of her insubordination:

— *Doubt. She did not trust God.*

— *Mistrust. She did not communicate the truth she knew to her husband.*

— *Lies. She used deliberate deception.*

— *Manipulation. She did not allow her husband to take responsibility for his actions before God.*

b. What is the result?

Jacob will suffer. Esau will suffer.

The whole family loses out.

Jacob will see his father again, but never again will he see his mother.

D. Practical aspects

1. What obstacles are there in true submission?

The following answers can be found at the end of the student manual, in Annex 3. Please look there for more precise answers.

- *Ignorance. Not knowing the meaning of submission.*
- *Error. Poor knowledge of the Word of God.*
- *Fear. Fear may produce obedience, but it cannot produce submission.*
- *Anger. When poorly managed it hinders communication.*
- *Lying makes us become crafty. This is called manipulation. We can also lie to ourselves, manipulating our own consciences.*
- *Pride. When I believe that I am better than others, it leads to rebellion.*
- *Cowardice. We lack perseverance when we face trials.*
- *Doubt. It is a weakness in our personal identity, and in our knowledge of God.*
- *Hatred and bitterness lead to treason.*
- *Anything else?*

2. Are some of these obstacles present in my life now?

Ask the sisters to identify anonymously one or two of the most important obstacles in their life.

3. I would like to change these things. What can I do?

The leader can offer to talk in private with those who wish to do so.

Conclusion

I am now in a position to ask myself whether I will have enough love and faith to submit myself in all circumstances, to the very end, in a manner that will give glory to God.

A person's relationship to authority is a reflection of his relationship with God. Joseph, David, Daniel, Jesus, and Paul are wonderful examples.

The example of Joseph in front of his brothers, who sold him into slavery:

Gn 50:19-20 "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God? You intended to harm me, but God intended it for good to accomplish what is now being done, the saving of many lives."

Do we believe like Joseph that no matter what happens to us in life, no matter how bad the injustice we suffer, our God is capable of using it for good? How does this change our attitude and behavior towards our husband?

Do we realize God is above all authority?

Pr 21:1 In the Lord's hand the king's heart is a stream of water that he channels toward all who please him.

Pr 16:7 When the Lord takes pleasure in anyone's way, he causes their enemies to make peace with them.

Rm 8:27 (Literally) "The Spirit of God mixes all sorts of things together for the ultimate moral good."

What we believe about God will determine our behavior in submission.

Food for thought: Do we believe that God can change our husband's beliefs?

For Further Study

Submission is a voluntary decision to seek the good of the other, in honor of Christ.

**Submission to human authorities should stem from a decision,
the decision to obey an authority intended by God.**

If, on the other hand, we submit because we feel controlled or guilt-tripped, we will always keep some sort of resentment or rejection towards the authority.

If we say “yes” to God or to someone else, when really we are thinking “no”, our submission is false.

A person in submission respects the other's position, though he is imperfect, as having been established by God and does not seek to overthrow it.

Submitting to authority is submitting to God, not men.

The person in submission takes his role towards the other person into account, and acts accordingly by following the instructions of God's love.

One can remain in submission to an authority without necessarily obeying that authority, when one is ready to accept the consequences of his response with reverence.

**In abusive situations, it takes a lot of faith and courage to submit to someone without
letting them control you.**

In such circumstances, the Church (the brothers and sisters in Christ) is responsible for being a safe haven for the victims of abuse, even to the point of providing a safe place of refuge for victims until the danger has been removed, or the abuse has ceased. Christ desires to make manifest His loving presence and protection to those who are oppressed through his people, his body, the Church.

Lesson 5B: Man's Responsibility (For Brothers)

Submission and Authority

Introduction

Questions for discussion in small groups

Divide the men into groups of 4-6.

1. What is the role of the husband in marriage? What is the wife's role?

a. What does it mean to be the "head" of the family?

Open Answer.

b. What does it mean to "submit"?

Open Answer.

2. How do I feel when my wife does not follow my guidance, or does not submit to me? What bothers me?

Examples of genuine emotional feelings (insist on being straightforward!).

- * Shame/fear before my powerlessness.*
- * Fear or shame for my reputation.*
- * Disappointment because of my wife's lack of trust.*
- * Anger for being denied my rights.*
- * Guilt.*

Important question: "Are my fears concerning the lack of submission from my wife due to a real danger for her or my family, or are these fears misplaced?"

3. How do I react when I feel like my wife is not submitting to me?

Open Answers (from the experience of various participants).

It is the wife's responsibility to submit herself.

The Bible never says: Husbands, submit your wives!

We must exercise self control, not attempt to control the other.

A strong man knows how to contain himself and remain gentle.

Remember Jesus' example.

Never, ever strike!

If you struggle with violence, anger, or abusive words, be sure to place yourself under the authority of a trusted brother in Christ who does not struggle with this issue, and who can accompany you and hold you accountable.

Try to foster opportunities for each of the men to expose whatever issue they have concerning violence individually and separately, and be prepared to initiate pastoral follow-up.

A. The Relationship Between Man and Woman at Creation

Read Gn 1:24-31: The 6th day:

v24-25 God said: Let the land produce living creatures...animals
God saw that it was good!

v26 God said;
a. Let us make man in our image”
b. and let them *rule over sea/air/earth*

v27 God created man in his own image
c. In the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.
d. God blessed them and said to them, “...increase in number; fill the earth
i. rule over sea/air/ground v28-29
ii. God said to them, “I give you every seed bearing plant...fruit

To all the beasts of the earth and birds of the air ...I give every green plant... v30-31
God saw that everything was very good!

Observations on the relationship between man and woman

First, what do we learn on who they are, and secondly on what they do, according to Gn 1:26-29?

Similarities with God in activities and authority

-To rule over creation
-To give life (to reproduce)

Unity in diversity: *(Combinations) male/female: Father / Son / Holy Spirit*

Equality: *—Both are created in the image of God.*
(See also on Gn 2:21: the woman taken from the side of the man)

According to Genesis chapters 2 and 3

Order: *—Man was created first: Gn 2:7 (1 Tim 2:12-13)*
— Man names woman: Before the fall Gn 2:23
After the fall Gn 3:20
— When they both sin, God speaks to the man first Gn 3:9

The ideas in Gn 1:24-31 are presented in a way that highlights a parallel structure of ideas.

-Sections ‘1’ (v24-25 and v30-31) speak of the animals on the earth.

-Sections ‘2’ (v26 and v27-28) speak of man; man is in the very center of the passage concerning the 6th day!

a) created in God’s image b) to rule the earth

B. The Relationship between the Divine Persons of the Trinity

The groups can stay together while working on sections 1 and 2. If they haven't prepared their answers beforehand, assign the verses by distributing them among the groups, and ask them to write down their responses. Alternatively, give 2 or 3 different verses to each group for them to work on together. One brother is designated in each group to present a summary to the other groups.

1. The Relationship between the Father and the Son

Bible Passage	Role/Relationship of the <u>Father</u> towards the Son.	Role/Relationship of the <u>Son</u> towards the Father
Ph 2:5-11	<i>The Father exalts (honors) him and glorifies him He requires everyone to bend at the knee before Him and acknowledge He is Lord. He gives Him authority over everything.</i>	<i>The Son realizes He is equal to the Father in nature. He humbles himself and obeys the Father even to the point of death.</i>
Jn 3:35-36	<i>The Father loves the Son. He gives Him all authority. He requires everyone to place their faith in the Son to reach Him. (He honors Him.)</i>	
Jn 5, verses 17-23, 30, 36-37	<i>The Father shows the Son great things to be done. The Father entrusts the work and the authority to judge to the Son. The Father sends Him. The Father testifies to Him.</i>	<i>He recognizes he is equal to the Father. He imitates the Father, and only does what the Father tells him to do. He seeks only the will of the Father.</i>
Jn 8:28-29	<i>The Father sends, supports, and accompanies Him.</i>	<i>The Son only does what the Father taught him to do. He does what is pleasing to the Father.</i>
Jn 10:29-30	<i>The Father gives sheep to the Son and protects them. The Father is greater (in authority/role) than the Son. The Father is one with the Son (in nature and purpose).</i>	<i>The Son is subordinate to (smaller than) the Father in role. The Son is one with the Father (in nature and purpose).</i>
Jn 11:41-42	<i>The Father always responds to the Son favorably.</i>	<i>The Son calls on (prays to) the Father.</i>

1Cor 15:27-28	<i>He gives all authority to the Son. He accepts once more the leadership of all things in his role as supreme ruler.</i>	<i>At the end of time, the Son gives back all things to the Father and submits to Him.</i>
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Synthesis:

Do this later, all together as a group. Write the answers on the board.

The Father

*Reveals
Grants permission
Entrusts authority
Supports
Always responds favorably to the Son
Honors the Son and requires that all revere him.
The Father has greater authority, but they are equal in spirit and nature*

The Son

*Recognizes the Father's authority
Obeys and submits to Him
Does all the Father says / what pleases Him
Reveals and glorifies the Father
Depends upon Him, asks Him*

2. The Relationship between the Holy Spirit, the Father, and the Son.

a. Jn 14:26

*The Spirit submits to the Father, who sends him.
The Spirit glorifies the Son, and validates His testimony.*

b. Jn 16:13-15

*The Spirit submits to the words received from the Father and the Son.
The Spirit glorifies and reveals the Son.*

c. Mt 12:31-32

*The Son (and Father) requires the Spirit to be honored.
Blasphemy against the Holy Spirit is not tolerated.*

Summary:

*One God in three distinct (in role) and equal (in nature) persons.
They are in perfect love and harmony, and share common goals.
Each person honors the others, and demands they be honored.*

Order: The Father directs and initiates → the Son → the Spirit.

Depending on how much time is left, you can either have everyone work on the summary in groups (which are to be presented with the group reports), formulate it as one big group, or give the summary yourself. Make sure all answers are recorded so corrections can be made.

C. Application to the role of husband towards his wife.

All together, as a continuation of the previous summary.

1. What differences are there between God the Father and man (the husband), in their ability to exercise authority?

How could we ever compare the incomparable?

-God is perfect in justice, goodness, patience, and faithfulness.

We are not infallible.

-God knows everything.

We are not omniscient.

We will need to listen and learn, and frequently, follow her initiatives.

2. In what ways should the husband resemble God in his relationship to his wife?

–Commitment and a spirit of unity –the unity of members is inseparable.

–Generosity — sharing the glory

–Honor

–Harmony

–Submission

–Order (the Father who invites, initiates)

–Listening, granting (always !?)

–Trust in delegating work, with all the necessary support.

In his relationship with his wife, the husband supports, trusts, and blesses her in her endeavors (following the example of the husband in Pr 31).

D. Submission of the Husband according to Eph 5:22 - 6:9

1. Reciprocal submission applied to three relationships.

Note: To save time, the answers are already provided in the participants' manual. Emphasize them.

Suggestion: 6 students can take turns reading the text while the others observe the table on the following page.

Eph 5:21 Submit yourselves to one another out of reverence for Christ.

This verse applies to every believer in Christ, regardless of his role or position in society. The table shows Paul describing 3 reciprocal relationships. Each time, he addresses himself to the person with a subordinate role first, then to his authority. He describes how every believer submits to the other on the basis of their role.

<u>Wives</u> to their husbands 5:22-24 <i>*Submit</i> <i>*Respect (v33)</i> as to the Lord	<u>Children</u> to their parents 6:1-3 <i>*Obey</i> <i>*Honor</i> in the Lord	<u>Slaves</u> to their masters 6:5-8 <i>*Obey</i> <i>*Serve</i> as to the Lord
<u>Husbands</u> to their wives 5:25-33 <i>*Love</i> <i>(save, give yourself up for her, make her holy, make her appear radiant, nourish, care for her)</i>	<u>Parents</u> to their children 6:4 <i>*Do not exasperate them</i> <i>*Bring them up (correct/warn) according to the Lord.</i>	<u>Masters</u> to their slaves 6:9 <i>*Treat them in the same way.</i> <i>*Do not threaten them.</i>

2. The Definition of Submission

Submission is a voluntary decision to seek the good of another person in order to honor Christ. It is not a sign of inferiority, but a very valuable quality which reflects the nature of God himself.

The one who submits himself/herself respects the position of the one in authority as having been established by God (while recognizing his imperfection), and does not seek to overthrow him. He/she takes his/her specific role in the relationship into account, and obeys the commands of God's love.

One can remain in submission to an authority without necessarily obeying that authority, when one is ready to accept the consequences of his response with reverence.¹

In a few words, how does a husband submit to his wife? (We will further develop these elements in the following section, section D.)

-He loves her: He seeks her interest first and foremost, at any cost.

¹ See Ac 4:18-20 ; a study on Paul's submission to authority is being presented at this time to the women.

-He himself submits by seeking to behave towards her in the same way Christ did toward the Church, by taking on the responsibility of his authority.

3. How does Christ exercise his authority over the Church? (Eph 6:23-29)

a. Christ saves her.

(She is dead in her sins, dirty, unable to love, hopeless)

He initiates the relationship.

He is the first to love and set the example.

b. Christ **gives himself up** for her.

He takes action.

He does not wait for her to convert, change or submit.

c. Christ purifies her, sanctifies her, and makes her radiant.

He sees her hidden value and gives her the acceptance, encouragement, and confidence she needs to flourish.

d. Christ feeds her

He builds her up.

He looks for things that can help her flourish and increase her vigor.

e. Christ cares for her.

He looks to her well-being. When she is in need, he takes notice and makes it a priority.

The husband is called to do the same thing for his wife!

(The wife can also do these things for her husband, but it is primarily the husband's responsibility.)

A few strategies for application

*He saves her

—by protecting her from all kinds of threats (physical, emotional, spiritual)

He gives himself up for her

—Every day, how do I give myself up —sacrifice myself— for her?

He purifies her

-As the spiritual leader of the household, it is the husband's role to place value in the Word of God.

...to present her to himself (she is his pride, his glory)

—Does she feel like I am proud of her when we go out in public?

—Are her gifts exercised to the benefit of others within the Church and in society?

*He nourishes her; he takes care of her.

How can I know if she has needs that I am unaware of, or have neglected?

E. Authority

In this section, most of the teaching material is already in the participants manual. You can let students contribute while emphasizing key points.)

1. The biblical definition of authority:

WordNet English Dictionary definition: "the power or right to give orders or make decisions"

A biblical definition of authority: Bernard Ramm

Generally for a believer in Christ, authority is the right and power given by God to someone for exercising an assigned role or ministry for the benefit of those under his care.

The husband, as the "**leader**" or "head" of two equal partners of a marital union, bears the fundamental responsibility for leading the couple in a direction that glorifies God.

The wife is responsible to help, advise and support her husband in his role of spiritual leader.

"The authority of the husband as head, must not be confused with male domination, in which the man forces his will upon his wife without regard for her equality, her rights, or her value."²

Mk 10:42-45 Jesus called them together and said, "You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many."

2. Facets and responsibilities of authority.

The students do not have these answers. You can stimulate them, or directly provide them yourself.

² Note: Items marked with * are taken from Raymond C. Ortlund, Jr., "Male-Female Equality and Male Headship" in *Recovering Biblical Manhood & Womanhood*, Ed. John Piper & John Grudem.

a. Protection

1Pet 3 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers.

Ensure physical protection:

-from violence

-from lack of food or other things necessary for physical welfare

-allow enough time between the birth of children for the physical and emotional health of your wife and whole family.

-protect her emotionally:

-Demand respect of the children towards their mother,

of parents towards your wife (they must respect her authority in her own home)

-Limit hospitality in ministry.

b. Order and coordination

Do not decide everything, but provide necessary boundaries.

I.e. involve the children to do their share in household chores on week-ends.

I.e. keep the Sabbath, provide times for rest.

c. Guidance, orientation, motivation

1Tm 3:4-5 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him with proper respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?)

Motivate and encourage by setting an example of sacrifice and service.

Encourage others to praise God and grow spiritually.

d. Flourishing

Encourage the members of your family to develop their gifts and talents, encourage them by celebrating their abilities, and thanking God for the fruit of their work.

Toolbox for exercising authority

3. Two pitfalls (dangerous traps) husbands should avoid when exercising authority in their role as spiritual leader:

a. authority degenerating into male domination.

b. yielding his leadership role by being absent or passive.

 **We need to fear God and depend on Him entirely!**

Conclusion: Questions for group discussion:

4. What should a husband do when his wife will not submit to him?

Remember!

**the authority is not threatened; it remains intact:*

—before God (the husband is always the head)

**it is the wife's responsibility to submit*

— may we not take that responsibility from her.

Never: *Men, submit your wives!!!*

*We must exercise **self**-control, not control others!*

Never: *hit her ("A strong man knows how to control his anger and remain gentle," following Jesus' example.)*

Never: *condemn her, or blame her for her failure to submit.*

**See the warning about violent behavior in the introduction!*

Pray 1Tm 1:8 the effectiveness of prayer—authority is practiced under God

Listen —try to understand why:

-Does she see something I do not?

-Is there a problem with my attitude? → Communicate further.

-Did she understand me adequately (and I her)?

Serve her:

"If a husband occasionally

-serves breakfast

-does the dishes

-hangs up the laundry

- takes care of the children

...the submission of his wife will be a lot easier!"

Correct with gentleness, explain the problem.

5. How can I best emphasize biblical equality and order in my home, particularly in family decisions?

—Refer to her to discuss options, and take every important decision together.

—Entrust her with the authority to take action within her areas of responsibility.

—Express thanks and affirmation for her service

—Take part in daily chores, without interfering with her areas of responsibility.

—Recognize what she is more competent in, and when she is right.

—Always consider her interests and preferences, and her ongoing education.

6. How can I (better) love my wife/ sacrifice myself for her? How can I (better) submit to her as a husband?

(Encourage the participants to take specific, personal commitments.)

Lesson 6: Communication

I. The Art of Verbal Communication

(As an introduction, point out that this song offers an explanation on why it is so hard for us to understand each other.)

Translation from the lyrics of a French song, *Pas D'accord?* [You don't agree?].

by Den - Isa

Between what I think, and what I want to say
What I think I am saying, and what I really say

What you want to hear, [and] what you hear
What you think you understand, [and] what you want to understand

And finally, finally, what you understand

There are nine possible ways to disagree
There are nine probable ways to not understand each other

Between what you think, and what you want to say
What you think you are saying, and what you say

What I want to hear, and what I hear
What I think I understand, and what I want to understand

And finally, finally, what you understand

There are nine possible ways to disagree
There are nine probable ways to not understand each other

Yet there remains a possibility still, to agree with each other,
There is still a probability of reaching an understanding.

Introduction

Who considers themselves to be a good communicator?

Who thinks they do not know how to communicate?

The seven arts:

Sculpture/architecture, drawing/arabesque art, representative painting/pure painting, dramatic or descriptive music/music, performing/dance, literature and poetry/pure prosody, theater and pictures/lighting as well as light projections.

Verbal communication is an art.

1. Where should we learn the art of communication?

By listening to (the Word of) God.

The Bible contains a wealth of advice about communication.

A human being can learn to communicate effectively if he has the assurance of unconditional and eternal love, and a unique value in the eyes of the greatest Being of the universe. Only within these conditions can he truly flourish.

The bad news is that learning to communicate effectively takes a lot of effort. The good news is that when we speak of art, we speak of “methods”. And methods imply the ability to grow.

In order to better understand the various mechanisms of verbal communication, we must go back to the beginning.

2. Read the following verses, and answer the questions below.

Ph 4:8 Finally, brothers and sisters, whatever is true, whatever is noble, whatever is right, whatever is pure, whatever is lovely, whatever is admirable—if anything is excellent or praiseworthy—think about such things.

Lk 6:45 For the mouth speaks what the heart is full of.

2Cor 10:4-5 The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ.

a. What is the beginning of all verbal communication?

The heart of man.

What we feel is intimately linked to our thoughts.

Everything begins in our thoughts, also known as the heart.

If the thought is true, the word should be true.

b. What should we do if a thought is not true?

We must not let it occupy our spirit. Ph 4:8

We need to overthrow it with the truth of Christ. 2Cor 10:5

For example: A common saying is: "Beat your wife! If you don't know why, she knows."

At best, there is absolutely nothing to be found in the New or even the Old Testament that would support this. At worst, it is downright anti-Biblical.

c. What should we do if an unkind word comes to our thoughts?

Identify, isolate and analyze it. Without hesitation find out where the thought comes from.

Have you already tried to hold your thoughts captive? Did you know it is possible to isolate a bad thought, and kill it?

d. Does this mean we should abstain from any sad or painful thoughts?

Absolutely not. We need to evaluate it so we can discern whether or not it is true. We must also consider the thought in light of God's word, his goodness and grace towards us, and our new identity before God.

More often than we'd like, the truth is rather dark, isn't it?

e. What should we do with all the hurtful words, criticisms, judgments, and guilt-trips we have been victims of, and which crowd our spirit?

We will need to captivate these thoughts and deal with them, otherwise they will poison our thoughts, our lives, and all our relationships (We will have a hard time putting Ph 4:8 into practice).

Mastering our thoughts is a lot of work! There are books that can help us.

*The book of reference chosen for the topic of communication is: **Telling each other the Truth**, by **William Backus**. Backus is a Christian author, and we encourage you to acquire his book, to read it from cover to cover, and then present it to the students.*

II. Three pillars of verbal communication

Introduction

Generally speaking, communication specialists have reached a consensus in recognizing three pillars of healthy communication. We find these three pillars in the following verses. Identify them below.

Eph 4:15 Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Ja 1:19 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry,

The 3 pillars are: truth, love and listening

Each of these three pillars will be further discussed in the following sections.

Truth without love is cruel.

Love without truth is hypocritical.

A. The Truth: Telling the Truth

1. What is truth?

First, what is truth as you understand it?

For example: The accurate representation of a reality, of an event, a fact, a motivation, an intention.

“Conformity to reality or actuality” Wordnet dictionary

“That which is true or in accordance with fact or reality.” Oxford Dictionary

God alone perfectly knows the truth. The truth we understand through observation and reasoning must be open to correction from the Word of God. When man tries to use his faculties and sense of reasoning to judge the Word of God, he slips into a pit of false ideas and erroneous convictions. Backus

To tell the truth is to say what I really mean.

 **“Say what you think and think what you say.”**

Ps 17:3 Though you probe my heart, though you examine me at night and test me, you will find that I have planned no evil; my mouth has not transgressed.

2. According to the following verse, should the woman be quiet in the house?

1Cor 14:35 If they want to inquire about something, they should ask their own husbands at home.

The apostle Paul encourages a wife to express herself at home, and make her questions known to her husband.

3. How should we communicate within the couple?

Read Eph 4:25-32, and write down the elements that should mutually be practiced between spouses.

v25 *“Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor”*

v26 *“In your anger do not sin”*

v29 *“Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up”*

v31 *“Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger”*

v31 *“Get rid of [...] slander and [...] malice.”*

v32 *“Be [...] compassionate [...] forgiving each other”*

In the previous list of recommendations, highlight those which convey the importance of truth.

Almost all of them relate to truth –especially v25 and 31.

It is better to tell the truth in a clear and straightforward manner, and tell ourselves the truth, rather than remaining silent by suppressing our feelings until they may explode.

A relationship deteriorates when two people do not tell each other the whole truth, and even more so when the truth that is exchanged is done without love. Backus

Toolbox for Telling Truth:

4. There is nothing wrong with saying “I”.

Answer the following questions by providing at least one example from the gospels.

In (French) school, we were taught to avoid using the pronoun “I”, because it was supposedly better manners to speak of others rather than ourselves. Backus

- a. Did Jesus avoid using the “I” pronoun?

*No! “Truly, truly I tell you”
“I am the Good Shepherd” (Jn 10:10)*

5. Did Jesus avoid expressing his needs and desires?

No! Jesus said to the Samaritan woman, “Will you give me a drink”. (Jn 4:7)

- a. Did Jesus avoid expressing negative feelings?

No! Jesus publicly expressed his anger in the synagogue concerning the man with the shriveled hand. (Mk 3:1-6)

6. Ask, and you will receive. How should we ask? To provide inspiration for your answer, read Lk 11:5-13.

*-Recognizing our needs
-Going towards the other
-Expressing our need, clarifying our request
-If necessary, persevering till we obtain an answer*

Should we be ashamed of asking?

An erroneous concept of spontaneity: “I should never have to ask for what I desire, because that ruins everything.” Backus

Learning to ask:

*“I would rather... I would rather not...
“I would like... I would not like...
“I would like you to... I would like you to not...
“Could you please...?”*

7. The freedom to say “no”.

- a. If we have the right to make requests, are we also allowed to refuse them?

Mt 5:37 “All you need to say is simply ‘Yes’ or ‘No’.”

We certainly do have the right.

- b. Did Jesus know how to say no? Provide an example.

Mt 12:38 “Teacher, we want to see a sign from you.”

Mt 20:15 “Don’t I have the right to do what I want with my own money?”

Lk 12:13-14 “Teacher, tell my brother to divide the inheritance with me.” Jesus replied, “Man, who appointed me a judge or an arbiter between you?”

Mk 8:33 “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Mt 4:3 “Tell these stones to become bread.”

Mt, Mk, Lk,

8. Rejecting legalism. How many commandments did God give?

God only gave Ten Commandments (summarized in two); but we have managed to increase them by developing our desires into genuine teachings, and compelling others to submit to them. In Christian slang, this is called legalism. Backus.

9. Understanding guilt-based manipulation. What are the three most common terms used by manipulators?

You must, you should, and you need to.

Some “ifs” and “buts” could also be added to the list: “If you truly loved me!”

When we are faced with generalized judgments (always/never), it is important to ask for more clarification.

For example: “You are always late.” “You never do the dishes.”

We can help the manipulator by clearly reformulating his or her true desire: “Would you like me to do the dishes tonight?”

The level of authenticity of our daily interactions is determined by this goodwill to admit that in the requests we make to others, we are simply expressing a personal desire and not the eternal will of God. Backus

10. Receiving criticism. Are the criticisms we receive valid or justified?

For the most part, YES.

(Generally, at least 90% of them are. Backus)

The best way to defuse these criticisms involves accepting and agreeing to them as honestly as possible. Our objective is not to belittle ourselves, but rather to eliminate controversy and remove the satisfaction the other person might gain if we become defensive. Backus

B. Love: Truth with Love

1Cor 13:4-7 Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres.

Toolbox for Communicating with Love: Three Important Obstacles to Avoid.

1. What shame!

Integrity or hypocrisy

a. What is hypocrisy?

Example: The attempt to present a false image of oneself. To hide one's motivations, level of spiritual maturity, knowledge, etc. to present a better image of oneself.

In cultures where the need to save face is regarded as a prime necessity (and therefore the need to fake or to pretend), authentic communication is corrupt at its core.

The need to save one's honor is a belief that generates cowardly and destructive behaviors.

Admittedly, the goal is to avoid shame.

Jesus calls this craft hypocrisy, and he curses hypocrites.

Mt 23:27 Woe to you!

The Pharisees were so skilled in preserving appearances that Jesus called them "whitewashed tombs" who appear outstanding on the outside (that is righteous), and who are full of dead bones on the inside—which refers to impurity.

b. What verses from 1Cor 13 oppose the hypocrisy reflex?

Love does not boast, it is not proud, it rejoices with the truth, it does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking.

Hypocrisy is a spiritual stronghold that needs to be destroyed. If hypocrisy is a challenge for you, learning the verse by heart will best help you to fight it in your thoughts.

Hypocrisy ≠ Integrity

Pr 20:7 The righteous who walks in his integrity— blessed are his children after him! (ESV)

c. What is integrity?

To have integrity is to show through our lives and words the truth that we know and hold in our hearts. This allows us to be faithful in our commitments.

Showing integrity is a very honorable act of love.

2. What an idiot!

Judgments.

“You are nil, selfish, air-headed, lazy, incompetent.”

“You’ll never make it!”

- a. Can we improve the attitude of our spouse or child by reproofing or humiliating them?

No! What really happens is the person receiving our sarcasm becomes irritated or wounded by our comments. Instead of trying to make changes, the person will react in a way to protect himself by either retorting in the same way, or by mulling over our statement.

In the end, insults poison our relationships with one another.

Hb 12:15. A “root of bitterness” causes trouble and produces castaways.

- b. What does Jesus say to those who judge and place negative labels on their neighbors?
(Rewrite in your own words)

Mt 7:1 Do not judge, or you too will be judged.

Mt 5:22 Anyone who says, ‘You fool!’ will be in danger of the fire of hell.

We must not condemn our neighbor out of fear that we ourselves will receive condemnation from God (and men).

- c. Encouragement and encouraging words. How does Jesus reinforce Nathaniel’s positive behavior in Jn 1:45-51?

Jesus publicly recognizes Nathaniel’s integrity, and does so in a fascinating manner. He invites him to discover much greater things in the future.

By concentrating on the positive rather than the negative, Jesus opens heaven up to Nathaniel.

1Cor 8:1 But knowledge puffs up while love builds up.

Instead of hurting others through our criticism, we can reinforce their positive behavior and replace mocking, threats, humiliations and injuries by constructive words: compliments, thanks, smiles, reminders of good, past actions. Backus

Encouragement is an act of love.

- d. Teasing. How can teasing hinder good communication?

On the one hand, teasing is not a straightforward means of expression. The targeted person remains puzzled, unable to distinguish true reproach from joking.

On another hand, it can offend the person.

3. What fear!

Courage to confront. In Mt 18:15, Jesus tells us: “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you.”

a. Why is the previous verse one of the most difficult ones to put into practice?

Several reasons can be provided:

The fear of losing our temper and being unable to control ourselves.

For most people, the fear of emotions can be so great that it makes it difficult to live with at the time of the relationship.

Not knowing how to bring up the subject can sometimes hinder us from seeking out the people who have wronged us.

Meeting with someone who disagrees with us, causing us to reveal ourselves, includes a certain level of risk:

-The risk of being misunderstood.

-The risk of being disappointed by the reactions of others.

-The risk of ending the relationship once and for all.

b. How can the following passage, in 1Jn 4:17-20, help us?

“This is how love is made complete among us so that we will have confidence on the day of judgment: In this world we are like Jesus. There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love. We love because he first loved us. Whoever claims to love God yet hates a brother or sister is a liar.”

We know that even if the person we confront rejects us because of the conflict or disagreement, God still loves us unconditionally.

The example of God’s love for us encourages us to venture out as well, in order to help others.

Being willing to be vulnerable is an act of love.

C. Listening: “The Art of Understanding”

Activity suggestion (2 minutes): Pair up. One person tries to describe his concept of Christian friendship, while the other does everything he can to avoid listening.

Ja 1:19 Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry.

Toolbox for Listening.

1. Link each of the following verses to one of the sentences provided below. The first verse is provided as an example.

Pr 1:5 Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

Pr 18:13 To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.

Pr 20:5 The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

Pr 21:28 A false witness will perish, but a careful listener will testify successfully.

Ec 3:7 A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak.

- a. God created us with one mouth and two ears!
- b. An effort of concentration is necessary: we must summon our will and purposefully fix our attention on our neighbor’s words.
- c. As we listen to our neighbor, it is important to get a sense of our own feelings.
- d. Among the various communication practices, the one that procures the most satisfaction is reformulating, for it frees us from the anxiety which comes from needing to find an answer.
- e. Reflecting involves showing the speaker we have properly understood his message and heard his distress by restating what we have understood from his words.

You may find that more than one verse corresponds to a given sentence. If so, the student can argue an alternate answer to the one provided in the correction.

The results

Pr 1:5 Let the wise listen and add to their learning, and let the discerning get guidance.

(d) Among the various communication practices, the one that procures the most satisfaction is reformulating, for it frees us from the anxiety which comes from needing to find an answer.

Pr 18:13 To answer before listening— that is folly and shame.

(e) Reflecting involves showing the speaker we have properly understood his message and heard his distress, by restating what we have understood from his words.

Pr 20:5 The purposes of a person’s heart are deep waters, but one who has insight draws them out.

(c) As we listen to our neighbor, it is important to get a sense of our own feelings.

Pr 21:28 A false witness will perish, but a careful listener will testify successfully.
(a) God created us with one mouth and two ears!

Ec 3:7 A time to tear and a time to mend, a time to be silent and a time to speak.
*(b) An effort of concentration is necessary: we must summon our will and purposefully fix our attention on our neighbor's words.
(I only allow myself to ask a few questions or clarifications)*

<p>Listening is a beautiful gift of love to offer.</p>

For Further Study

There are different levels of intimacy in communication.

- 1) Utilitarian or formal conversation, such as greetings.

“I’ll get home from work at six this evening.”
“Could you pass me the salt, please?”

- 2) Reporting provides factual information about other people or things.

“The mailman already came by.”
“Mrs. Smith had a heart attack.”

- 3) Presenting personal ideas and value judgments.

“She shouldn’t work so hard.”
“He should be married at his age.”

- 4) Sharing feelings and emotions.

“I’m glad you came.”
“My son doesn’t come to see me any more; it makes me quite upset.”

- 5) Total and authentic communication which involves the entire person.

A person reveals what is in the very depths of his heart, his personal identity.

2. Classify the following passages by assigning them with one or more of the corresponding numbers in the levels of communication.

⊗ Workgroup activity (Each group reads the passages, then marks the communication level(s) of each sentence.)

 2 Mt 16:13-14. *Jesus asks his disciples what people are saying about him.*

 5 Mt 16:15-20 (16 and 20). *Jesus asks his disciples what they think about him. Peter responds, “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.”*

 3 Lk 18:18-19. *A ruler asks Jesus, “Good teacher, what must I do . . .” Jesus replies, “Why do you call me good?”*

 4 Lk 19:41. *Jesus weeps as he approaches the city of Jerusalem.*

 3/5 Jn 8:53-58. *The Jewish leaders accuse Jesus of vainglory. Jesus replies, “Before Abraham was born, I am!”*

 4 Jn 11:35. *Jesus wept (by Lazarus’ tomb).*

 5 Jn 14:5-11 (19-20). *Jesus clearly reveals himself to his disciples. He is the image of the invisible God.*

3. Questions for Personal Reflection

a. In your opinion, at what level should a married couple be able to communicate?

Every level, up to Level 5

b. What level would you estimate your communication with your spouse to be?

Open Answer

c. Are there circumstances in your life where you have tried to hide from yourself, others, and God?

Open Answer

Share these experiences with your spouse and pray together.

III. The Love Languages

This study is inspired from the book “The 5 Love Languages” by Gary Chapman.

We encourage you to acquire this book, read it and present it to the participants.

D. Discover the Five Love Languages.

⊗ Group work

1. What is the love language used in the following verses?

Pr 12:25 A kind word cheers it(the heart) up.

Pr 15:1 A gentle answer turns away wrath.

Pr 15:23 How good is a timely word!

Pr 18:21 The tongue has the power of life and death.

Pr 25:11 Like apples of gold in settings of silver is a ruling rightly given.

Mt 25:21, 23 “Well done, good and faithful servant! [...] Come and share your master’s happiness!”

Language 1 = _____ *Words of Affirmation*

a. What are its alternatives?

Ac 18:27 “The brothers and sisters encouraged him”

Jos 1:9 Be strong and courageous.

Mt 9:2 “Take heart, son; your sins are forgiven.”

Mt 9:22 “Take heart, daughter, [...] your faith has healed you.”

Jn 16:33 ‘But take heart! I have overcome the world.’

Gn 50:21 And he reassured them and spoke kindly to them.

1Th 5:14 Encourage the disheartened.

1Cor 14:3 But the one who prophesies speaks to people for their strengthening, encouraging and comfort.

1Th 5:11 Encourage one another and build each other up.

Eph 4:29 Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.

Alternatives: *Words of encouragement and comfort.*

Key verse: Jn 1:47 “Here truly is an Israelite in whom there is no deceit.”

2. What is the love language expressed here?

Mt 26:6-13 The woman pours the jar of perfume on Jesus’ head.

Lk 7:36-47 The sinful woman pours oil on Jesus’ feet.

Jn 2 The water changed into wine at the wedding in Cana.

Jn 6:11-13 The multiplication of bread.

Jn 10:17-18 I give you my life.

Jn 10:28 I give them eternal life.

Jn 11 The resurrection of Lazarus.

Jn 12:1-8 Marie pours perfume on Jesus.

Jn 15:13 There is no greater love than to lay one's life down for one's friends.

Jn 16:7 Jesus promises to send the Advocate.

1Cor 12:4 Spiritual gifts.

Language 2= _____ *Gifts*

3. How did Jesus prove his love in the following passages?

Mt 20:26-28 The Son of Man came to serve.

Mt 27:55 Many women had followed Jesus to care for his needs.

Jn 13:1-17 Jesus showed his love and washed the disciples' feet.

Gal 5:13 "serve one another in love"

Language 3= _____ *Acts of service*

4. What language of love did Jesus use in these instances?

Mt 8:3, 15 He touched the leper.

Mt 9:29 He touched the eyes of two blind men.

Mt 17:7 He touched three disciples when they were terrified,.

Mt 20:34 Jesus had compassion on them and touched their eyes.

Mk 7:33 Jesus touched the man's tongue (and ears).

Mk 9:36 Jesus took a little child into his arms.

Mk 10:13-16 Jesus took little children into his arms and blessed them, laying his hands on them.

Lk 24:39 After his resurrection, Jesus invited the disciples to touch him.

Jn 13:23 One of them, the disciple whom Jesus loved, was reclining next to him.

Langage 4= _____ *Physical Touch*

5. How did Jesus show his love in the following narrative passages?

(Note: Many of these passages involve complex, often intense communication; they could be discussed for hours.)

Mt 5:1-2 His disciples came to him and he began to teach them.

Mt 8:22 "Follow me and let the dead bury their own dead."

Mt 14:25-33 When Jesus walked on water.

Mt 17:1-13 The transfiguration.

Lk 5:1-11 Calling of the first disciples, with a miraculous catch of fish.

Lk 10:38-42 Martha and Mary.

Lk 19:5-6 Zacchaeus.

Lk 22:15-16 The Last Supper.

Lk 24:13-32 The road to the village of Emmaus; at a table in the village.

Jn 3 The conversation between Jesus and Nicodemus.

Jn 4 The Samaritan woman.

Jn 8 The woman caught in adultery.

Jn 10 (with Ps 23) The Good Shepherd.

Jn 21 Jesus appears to some disciples on the shore of the lake of Tiberius/Galilee.

Langage 5= _____ *"Quality Time" [Chapman's term]*

{Note: From the passages above, we may gather that these are special moments (often unhurried) which involve giving full attention to the other person(s), readiness to understand or

reveal personal thoughts and feelings when appropriate, and often using complex communication in several modes or “languages.”}

Key verse:

*Rm 1:11-12 (emphasis added): I long to see you so that I may impart to you some spiritual gift to make you strong— that is, that you and I may be **mutually encouraged** by each others’ faith.*

E. Discover your love language

List the five main love languages and answer the following questions.

- ❖ *Words of affirmation*
- ❖ *Gifts*
- ❖ *Acts of service*
- ❖ *Physical touch*
- ❖ *“Quality time”*

Allow time for each participant to reply to the six following questions individually. Then, pair up the couples so they can share and compare there discoveries together.

1. Among the languages Jesus used, which one resonates most with you?

Open Answer

2. Sort the languages in the order of importance for you personally, from most important to least important.

Open Answer

3. What is it that hurts you most deeply, among the things that your spouse does or says (or fails to do or say)?

Open Answer

4. What have I most often expected or asked of my spouse? What would I like him or her to do for me?

Open Answer

5. How do I myself express love to my spouse?

Open Answer

6. What is my spouse’s preferred love language?

*Open Answer***For Further Study****To love when we do not feel love—is it possible?**

Read Lk 6:27-36

Jesus commands us to love our enemies. In fact, we do nothing remarkable when we only love those who love us. If this is the case, we should not expect any kind of special recognition. But how can we put this commandment into practice?

1. What does the verb “to love” mean in this passage? (What practical forms does love take or what other terms are used?)

—*To do good to (v27).*

—*Bless (v28).*

—*Pray for (v28).*

—*To not resist (v29).*

—*Give or loan freely (v30, 35).*

—*Do to others as you would have them do to you (v31).*

2. Where do we find the strength to love our enemies according to Lk 6:35-38?

—*From expecting a great reward from the Most High (v 35).*

—*From the joy of being like our Father and of glorifying Him through it (v36).*

—*By remembering how much our Father has forgiven us: this means we do not have the right to withhold His forgiveness from others (v37-38).*

—*In believing the promise that if we give, we will receive (v 38). When we give in faith, God meets us, affirms us, and strengthens us in His love.*

3. Is it hypocritical to perform acts of love towards someone we do not love?

—*We will certainly not have **feelings** of love towards those who hate us; we cannot expect that. But we can take loving **action** towards them.*

Pr 25:21-22, Rm 12:20: “If your enemy is hungry, feed him; if he is thirsty give him something to drink. In doing this you will heap burning coals on his head.”

4. What love language should we use?

Mt 7:12 “...do unto others what you would have them do to you, for this sums up the law and the prophets.”

—*The language that the other person understands and appreciates, of course!*



Love is a conscious choice which requires effort!

Lesson 7: Managing Anger

Anger: Handling a Powerful Emotion in a Healthy Way, by Gary Chapman, was used as the main reference for the following teaching on anger.

We encourage you to acquire this book, to read it completely, and introduce it to the participants.

A. Definition and the origin of anger

1. Definition

This lesson is presented to all the participants gathered together for sections 1 and 2.

Anger is a strong feeling of dissatisfaction.

... a violent dissatisfaction accompanied by aggressiveness.

Synonyms: wrath, fury, ire, rage, indignation. (Weaker synonyms: exasperation, irritation.

Anger is a negative emotion (an unpleasant one) which everyone experiences; it is a universal emotion.

It is a secondary emotion: it is triggered by a primary emotion.

2. What is the origin of anger?

The human ability to become angry is rooted in God. The word anger is found 455 times in the OT; in 375 of the instances, it refers to a divine anger. G. Chapman

a. God's anger

Ps 7:6-11 Arise, O Lord, in your anger;...God is a righteous judge, a God who expresses his wrath every day.

Rm 1:18 The wrath of God is being revealed [...] against all the godlessness and wickedness of people

Rm 2:5-8 God in his wrath will give to each person according to what he has done.

Eph 5:6 ...God's wrath comes on those who are disobedient.

Jesus became angry.

You can ask the participants to recall a few cases.

Mk 3:1-5. *In a synagogue, Jesus looked at the Pharisees with anger because they were so hardened that they opposed healing on the Sabbath.*

Jn 2:13-17. *Jesus drove out the sellers and money changers out of zeal for the Lord's house.*

When God sees evil, He is irritated. It is His natural reaction to injustice and sin. Chapman

God wants man to do what is right in order to enjoy his blessings.

Dt 30:15-16. *God tells the people to observe his commandments that they might live!*

Jn 3:35-36. The Father loves the Son and has placed everything in his hands. Whoever believes in the Son has eternal life, but whoever rejects the Son will not see life, for God's wrath remains on them.

Out of love, God displays his wrath on those who despise his Son.
The wrath of God flows from his holiness and love.

b. Human anger in the image of God

Gn 1:27. **God created us in his image; we are moral creatures.**

Anger is the emotion which comes from what we perceive to be wrong. It is not tied to our fallen nature, but rather it proves that we are created in the image of God and have a sense of right and wrong despite being fallen.
G. Chapman

⊗ Give the participants a few minutes of personal reflection. These questions can be used to prompt discussion in the work groups of section "D" below.)

Try to remember the last time you were angry. Ask yourself: "Why did I get irritated?" There is a good chance you felt like you were responding to an injustice. G. Chapman

I.e: I feel despised. I can't take it when someone cheats at work. I can't stand lying. Don't mess with my child/children!

<p>Tell me what irritates you, and I will show you what matters to you.</p>
--

B. The causes of anger

To be presented to all the participants.

1. What are the causes of anger?

- Injustice
- Biochemical disorders
- Hereditary factors (learned from parents)
- Demonic influence
- Frustration resulting from undesirable circumstances, being unable or prevented from obtaining something we desire to have or achieve.
- Threat or injury to my self-esteem when I am put down, humiliated or ignored.
- Human error: Lack of another person to do (or not do) what I expect
- Learning: People from different cultural backgrounds are often angry about different things. Television teaches us what "should" make us angry.
- Pr 22:24-25 speaks of the influence of those we "hang out" with.

- According to Jer 17:9 (Read it) The flesh: The wickedness hiding in our hearts.

⊗ *Workgroup activity: (Before starting to work in small groups, give a brief spoken summary of Jonah's story before reading the following passage. Do the same for Naaman. Then hand out questions 2-5 to the small groups to work together on before gathering everyone to synthesize their findings. If time allows, question 6 can be discussed in the groups, or it can be kept for personal reflection before a time of prayer.)*

2. Do you think anger is always justified?
 - a. Jn 4:1-11

Jonah's anger in contrast to God's mercy towards the people of Nineveh.

- b. 2Ki 5:10-15

The anger of the Syrian commander, Naaman, toward the prophet Elisha who told him to wash in the Jordan River.

- c. Gn 4:4-7

Cain's anger when God refused his sacrifice.

—*No, not necessarily. In these three stories, their anger was not justified.*

3. In each of the previous examples, what makes the anger unwarranted?

Jnh: We make judgment errors; we lack information. (Jonah didn't take into account grace, mercy and compassion.)

2Ki 5: We may misinterpret or incorrectly perceive what people say and do. (Naaman thought the prophet was trying to humiliate him.)

Gn 4: We can misunderstand what is being asked of us, or be wrong about the extent of our rights. (Cain believed his offering was just as valuable as his brother's; he could not accept the fact that God refused his offering.)

Naaman is a good example of someone who realizes his mistake, and recognizes his anger was unfounded.

4. What questions can I ask myself to determine whether or not my anger is justified?

—*Am I well informed? Did I understand the other correctly?*

—*What is the nature of the wrong that was committed? Is it a moral sin? Do I have the right to be angry? Did my partner commit a sin that is worthy of death?*

5. If it is unwarranted, then where is the wrong?

—*The wrong lives only in my thought!*

6. Try to remember a situation where your anger was unjustified.
- What made me angry?

Open Answer

- What was I thinking, and how did I feel?

Open Answer

- Was a real offense committed?

Open Answer

- Where was the problem?

Open Answer

- How did I come to understand my anger was illegitimate?

Open Answer

- How did I manage it?

Open Answer

7. How can unjustified anger be avoided?

Ja 1:5 If any of you lacks wisdom, you should ask God, who gives generously to all without finding fault, and it will be given to you.

1Cor 13:7 Love always trusts.

We can start by assuming the other person did not mean to do harm. He made our life more difficult, but has not committed an immoral act.
G. Chapman

Rm 8:28-29 And we know that in all things God works for the good of those who love him, who have been called according to his purpose. For those God foreknew he also predestined to be conformed to the image of his Son, that he might be the firstborn among many brothers and sisters.

Even unwarranted anger reveals that something is amiss.

Our anger serves as a guide to discover our most intimate needs, beliefs and priorities. It informs us when too much of ourselves is compromised by an important relationship. Harriet Goldhor Lerner

Trust your anger to God (whether it is justified or not), and thank Him for His forgiveness. This enables emotional and spiritual healing from past sufferings.

Prayer

C. Managing Anger

Reactions to Anger

⊗ *Group work activity: (Answer the following questions from experience, or from the Bible verses provided. Each group should be ready to share its findings with all the participants in the final summary.*

1. How do I react when I am angry?

Encourage each participant to share their reaction style, and organize it into one of the following categories. Help “those who are never angry” to realize that their style corresponds to the “flight” category. If someone is never angry, they have no moral compass.

I explode (fight)

Explosive anger is expressed in words and actions: verbal and physical violence, abuse, and assault. An underlying belief is the need to yell or strike. This is a myth, and it destroys personal relationships. Losing one’s temper has no therapeutic value. On the contrary, expressing rage risks increasing anger and prevents the changes that we seek.

I keep it in. (flight)

Implosive anger is silent, and does not express itself. The person holds the anger inside. This form of anger is difficult to detect, but its destructive power is just as devastating as with explosive anger. It can take on the form of rumination, resentment, bitterness or even hate. It can end up exploding.

I feel embarrassed, (confusion).

Sometimes our identity is still poorly defined, and therefore difficult to affirm. Women often fear that a well defined sense of self threatens the relationship, so they avoid asking specific questions out of fear of making the other uncomfortable. When they feel intimidated, tears, guilt and confusion often replace verbal expression. Few things can increase anxiety more than learning to affirm oneself, to preserve one’s identity, and to hold one’s ground within an important relationship, despite the other’s reactions. Harriet Goldhor Lerner

Two other behaviors to identify:

-The transfer of anger: rather than recognizing the real basis for one's anger, the blame and expression of anger is pointed at someone else.

-Passive-aggressive behavior: A person expresses submission or gives his consent outwardly, but the anger resurfaces elsewhere to punish the other.

The forms of reaction expressed here are sins condemned in the Bible.

Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

2. How does God react when he is angry?

Ex 34:5-9 “The Lord, the Lord, the compassionate and gracious God, slow to anger”

Ps 103:8-9 The Lord is compassionate and gracious, slow to anger, abounding in love. He will not always accuse, nor will he harbor his anger forever; he does not treat us as our sins deserve or repay us according to our iniquities.

Jn 4:2 I knew that you are a gracious and compassionate God, slow to anger...

Mk 3:4-5 He looked around at them in anger and, deeply distressed at their stubborn hearts

(Jesus took the time to look into the eyes of those who provoked him to anger because of the hardness of their hearts)

Jn 2:13-17.

(Jesus delayed his action by taking the time to braid the whip himself.)

*—God is **slow to anger**. He does not keep his anger forever.*

3. How does the Bible ask me to react?

Ps 4:4-5 Be angry, and do not sin; ponder in your own hearts on your beds, and be silent. Selah. Offer right sacrifices, and put your trust in the LORD. (ESV)

Pr 16:32 Better a patient person than a warrior, one with self-control than one who takes a city.

Pr 29:11 A fool gives full vent to his spirit, but a wise man quietly holds it back. (ESV)

Ec 7:9 Do not be quickly provoked in your spirit, for anger resides in the lap of fools.

Eph 4:26-27 In your anger do not sin: Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil a foothold.

Eph 4:31 Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.

Col 3:8 But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips.

Gal 5:19-26.

Ja 1:19-20 My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires.

We should:

*-be **slow to anger**,*

-be self-controlled in the way we express ourselves, keep from displaying our anger fervently.

*-be careful not to keep/hold our anger in overnight.
-keep ourselves from speaking hastily; entrust ourselves to the Lord.*

4. Why does the Bible ask this?

Pr 14:17 A quick-tempered person does foolish things, and the one who devises evil schemes is hated.

Pr 14:29 Whoever is patient has great understanding, but one who is quick-tempered displays folly.

Pr 15:18 A hot-tempered person stirs up conflict, but the one who is patient calms a quarrel.

Pr 19:19 A hot-tempered person must pay the penalty; rescue them, and you will have to do it again.

Hb 12:15 See to it that [...] no bitter root grows up to cause trouble and defile many.

—Explosive anger does not solve problems but creates new ones. It harms relationships and feeds hatred, allowing foolish things to be done.

Careful! Distancing ourselves from people who irritate us by leaving the house comes at its own price (flight behavior):

-An attitude that says “I don’t need you” can lead to separation.

-The intense emotional burden will resurface in other important relationships.

-The resulting emotional distance prevents us from entering new relationships with calmness and clarity.

5. What good is it when I explode in anger? Does it change something?

It is completely useless! Avoid it, it can only make things worse.

Careful! Confronting my family members and trying to change them is a dead end. Becoming “one” does not mean becoming “alike”.

6. Who is responsible for my reactions?

“He or she made me angry”

Ps 62:12 “...and with you, Lord, is unfailing love”; and, “You reward everyone according to what they have done.”

Mt 16:27 For the Son of Man is going to come in his Father’s glory with his angels, and then he will reward each person according to what they have done.

Each one is responsible for his or her own actions: We are not responsible for the reactions of others, and they are not responsible for ours. Beware! The game of “Who’s fault is it?” is a vicious cycle without a beginning or an end, which only feeds the confusion. To argue and accuse the other is sometimes a way of protesting and protecting the status quo at the same time. Neither side is willing to change.

If anger reveals an issue, becoming angry does not resolve it. In fact anger is a double-edged sword: on the one hand it preserves our identity, on the other, it does not resolve our problems. We take distance from a fruitless struggle when we let go of the belief that we can change or control the other. Harriet Goldhor Lerner

Expressions of anger that are condemned in the Bible need to be set aside.

Gather the groups together for the following teaching.

Toolbox: What should I do with my anger?

- a. I recognize my anger honestly by stating the fact aloud.

Eph 4:26 *Literally:* In your anger do not sin.

"I am angry. Now how will I react?" These few words help us make a distinction between anger and action. They prepare us to think reasonably about our behavior instead of being carried away by our emotions. It's an important first step. G. Chapman

- b. Delay any immediate reaction.

Pr 16:32 Better a patient man than a warrior, a man who controls his temper than one who takes a city.

This pause in the action should give me the necessary time to control my emotions. This is also the time to pray and think. G. Chapman

- c. Find out why I am angry. What offense has the person made against me?

Reacting to a trivial offense and a major attack in the same way is a poor way to manage your anger. G. Chapman

- d. What is the best course of action?

*— Is it constructive and helpful? Can it correct the problem and restore our personal relationship?
— Is it inspired by love? Does it seek the good of the person I am angry with? Does it build up or tear down?*

Faced with these legitimate and noble objectives, a Christian has two options:

a. I can accept the wrong done to me.

This is the way of patience and forbearance.

Pr 19:11 A man's wisdom gives him patience; it is to his glory to overlook an offense.

b. I meet with the person with a desire to find a solution that will bring us together. This is the way of communication. Jesus also reacted this way. G. Chapman

Is 53:7 He was oppressed and afflicted, yet he did not open his mouth...

1Pet 2:21-23 To this you were called, because Christ suffered for you, leaving you an example, that you should follow in his steps. “He committed no sin, and no deceit was found in his mouth.” When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly.

Rm 12:19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God’s wrath, for it is written: “It is mine to avenge; I will repay,” says the Lord.

If I decide to “let it go”, I entrust the culprit, as well as myself, to God. God will handle it!

Mt 18:15-17 “If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that ‘every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses.’ If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.”

Mk 8:33 But when Jesus turned and looked at his disciples, he rebuked Peter. “Get behind me, Satan!” he said. “You do not have in mind the concerns of God, but merely human concerns.”

Lk 9:54-56 When the disciples James and John saw this, they asked, “Lord, do you want us to call fire down from heaven to destroy them?” But Jesus turned and rebuked them. Then he and his disciples went to another village.

If I decide to confront another person, my criticism or reproof must be communicated with goodness and firmness. There is no place for condemnation or verbal abuse. The purpose is to explain, confess, forgive, and restore the relationship.

7. What are the advantages and disadvantages of both solutions?

Open Answer

For Further Study

How do I manage my anger?

8. Answer “True” or “False”.
 - a. ____ *False* ____ The results are what matter.
 - b. ____ *False* ____ Who I am is what really matters.
 - c. ____ *True* ____ I look for solutions to my problem.
 - d. ____ *True* ____ I accept that others are different from me.
 - e. ____ *False* ____ I argue.
 - f. ____ *True* ____ I consider the magnitude of the offense.
 - g. ____ *False* ____ I try to change the other.
 - h. ____ *False* ____ I prevent the other person from reacting, thinking, or feeling as they do.
 - i. ____ *False* ____ I leave.
 - j. ____ *True* ____ I assume the other person meant me no harm.
 - k. ____ *False* ____ I accuse the other person of being responsible for my reaction.
 - l. ____ *True* ____ I clearly express my thoughts.
 - m. ____ *True* ____ I define my position.
 - n. ____ *False* ____ I remain silent.
 - o. ____ *True* ____ I try to understand.
 - p. ____ *False* ____ I feel responsible for the other’s reaction.
 - q. ____ *False* ____ I insist the other person do things my way.
 - r. ____ *True* ____ I describe my feelings to the other person.
 - s. ____ *False* ____ I ask the other person to make changes.

Lesson 8: Understanding Conflict

A. The root of conflict

Areas of difference.

To be presented with all participants together. Be prepared to explain or provide examples for areas that need clarification.

- The cultural setting or environment
- Parental role models
- Education

- Beliefs and ideas
- Values and priorities

- Psychological background
- Personality, temperament
- Gender differences (mental, emotional, physical, sexual, etc.)

- Tastes, qualities and talents
- Opportunities and the development of one's career
- Objectives and lifestyles
- Approaches and expectations

Question for personal reflection:

Allow time for couples to self-examine, consult one another, and pray together. Preferably after a moment of personal reflection.

Another option is to present section B immediately after section A, then allow extra time for the couples to work on the questions of both sections together.

1. What differences are at the root of many conflicts we have as a couple?

—I.e.: in the area of tastes, qualities and talents, the husband may enjoy practicing hospitality, but the wife finds it distressing. Perhaps she would rather disciple sisters and teach them. It can also be a matter of temperament and the parental role model one had. Beliefs and ideas can take precedence if one spouse has a bad conscience, thinking they are not providing hospitality frequently enough, or during important circumstances.

Conflicts offer two things:

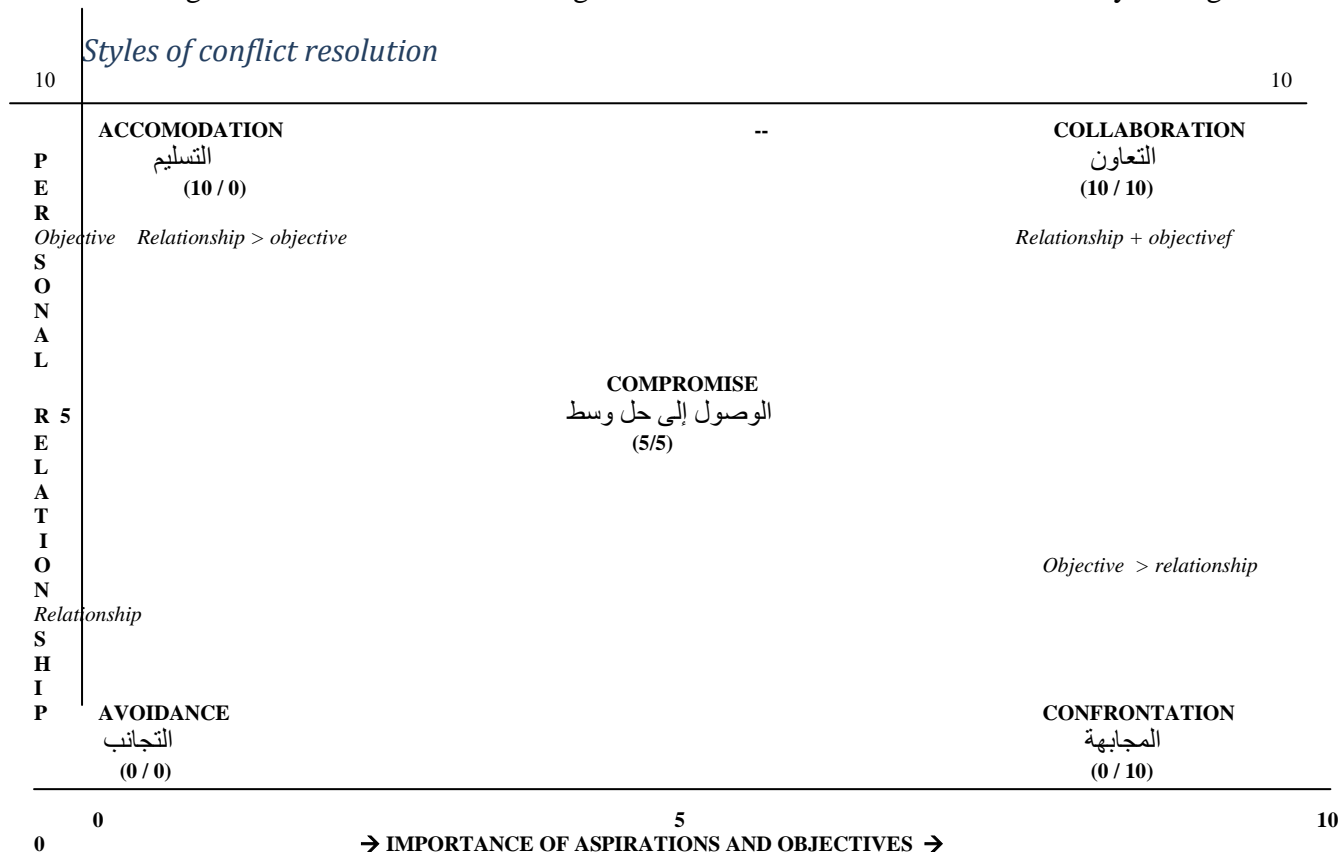
- 1) A danger of tension and separation between partners.
- 2) An opportunity to deepen understanding, harmony, and mutual commitment in the couple.

Everything depends on how we handle them.

B. Conflict resolution styles

The “styles of conflict resolution” chart was recovered from a teaching made by FJA (Famille Je t’Aime, Focus on the Family). The words here are quite technical. It may help bilingual students to read them in their mother tongue.

We categorize five behaviors for facing conflict that are learned within the family setting.



We experience (at least) one of these behaviors during a conflict.

The following material develops each style of the chart.

1) **Avoidance** (التجنب) : Avoidance is a lose/lose behavior (0/0).

Nothing is done to address the problem. No value is placed on the relationship or the solution, nor do our personal desires or a positive outcome seem to be very important. We just hope the problem will resolve itself. This approach can be appropriate if the problem is relatively unimportant, and the person we are dealing with plays a relatively small role in our life.

- What is the underlying belief with this behavior?

Since the Fall, man suffers from a warped image of himself. Innocence has been replaced by guilt and shame.

We do not want to risk experiencing failure or rejection.

“I’ll never make it, I’m not able to.”

“What’s the use trying? Rejection is too painful in the end.

- What is the need?

I need to be loved just as I am. I need to know I have value, and that I am useful, but these goals seem unreachable.

- How can I grow my self-confidence?

The antidote to shame:

I need to become aware of my identity in Christ: I am a child of God, justified.

I need my personal value to be restored. I am unconditionally and eternally loved by God.

I need to feel useful. I am unique in the eyes of the Creator.

- 2) **Accommodation (التسليم)**: In order to preserve the relationship, I accept the solution or objective offered by the other, yet do not necessarily agree (10/0).

This style can be appropriate if the issue is unimportant.

With this behavior, the relationship remains intact but I sacrifice my objective (10/0). The other clearly has the advantage.

- What is the underlying belief with this behavior?

The other's acceptance is more important to me than my own personal success.

- What is the need I am seeking to meet?

I need to feel like I belong to someone. Therefore, my identity is dependent on the other's approval. But the need to be loved remains a dubious goal, and it feeds the fear of rejection.

- How can I be freed from the fear of being rejected by others?

The antidote to the fear of rejection

What matters is who I am in the eyes of the Creator of the universe. He loves me as I am, unconditionally and eternally.

- 3) **Confrontation (المواجهة)**: We insist on following our own line of action for the solution, even if the other person disagrees, or risks getting hurt (0/10).

Sometimes this method is necessary if the danger is real or imminent.

Reaching my goal is more important than the relationship (0/10). The other person is at a disadvantage (one person wins, the other loses).

- What is the underlying belief with this behavior?

Whomever or whatever gets in the way of my success reveals my weaknesses or inadequacies. I work hard to prevent this.

- What is the need?

I need to succeed to keep my sense of self worth. My identity is dependent of my worth. Whatever interferes with this need will generate anger.

- How can we be freed from a fear of failure that produces anger?

The antidote to anger

Know God and trust Him! He has prepared good works for me to accomplish.

- 4) **Compromise (الوصول إلى حل وسط):** We yield on some matters so we can obtain satisfaction from others. It's a give/give (5/5).

No one is truly pleased. This style is useful when there is a very important disagreement, but little time to reach true consensus.

I am half winner, but also half loser. I don't reach full potential, and I keep the other from reaching his.

- What is the underlying belief with this behavior?

Identity depends on good works.

- What is the need?

I need justice. I am trying to justify myself through my works.

Justice without mercy leaves man deeply unsatisfied in the presence of a humanly unattainable goal. It can lead to depression.

- How can we be freed from legalism?

The antidote to salvation by works:

God is the one who justifies.

- 5) **Collaboration (التعاون):** Both parties express their views and make a joint effort to find a new solution which takes everyone's objectives into account (10/10).

As a general rule, this approach is preferable to the others, and should be developed in the couple's relationship.

Collaboration: to help, contribute, cooperate, participate, take part in... without compromising who I am. This is ideal. We work hand in hand (10/10)

- What is the underlying belief with this behavior?

My identity does not depend on the other. His identity is not dependent of me. Our identities do not rest upon our success or our good works.

Our identities rest upon what God thinks of us, and what He has done for us.

- What are the advantages?

There is no manipulation. The gifts, tastes, differences and desires of each member are fully expressed, accepted, and experienced together, so that each one takes part in a common effort.

To attain this behavior, we must know and practice communication skills that, sadly, are not learned at home or in school.

- Where can we learn the art of communication?

By listening to God.

By listening to God, our whole being is able to listen and express itself freely, without being compromised. We can do so because we have the assurance of being unconditionally and eternally loved, and of being uniquely valuable in the sight of the most important Being of the universe. It is only in these circumstances that our being can truly flourish.

Toolbox for disagreements

What is the key in an argument with my spouse?

1Cor 7:5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again...

Prayer

When we are no longer able to agree on anything, we can still agree on this one thing: to decide to each pray on his own, to ask God for the wisdom of His Holy Spirit for myself, my spouse, and for healthy communication, as well as a satisfying solution that is honoring to God.

A few things to work on personally during this time of separate prayer: remember the reason for the disagreement, recognize the other's value, seek collaboration and especially the will of God, forgive and ask for forgiveness.

Questions for personal reflection:

Leave a little time (3 to 6 minutes) for everyone to think and respond individually. Then, provide additional time (5 to 10 minutes) for couples to discuss and pray together. This can be a time of confession for particular situations.

1. What kinds of conflict resolution did Abraham and Sara use in Gn 21:8-13?

First confrontation, then prayer (God speaks to Abraham), and finally collaboration.

2. For each of the previous behavior types, provide a Bible story which illustrates it and determine whether or not the response was appropriate.

Abraham's life alone is enough to find one example of each.

Accommodation: Abraham and Lot, Gn 13

Confrontation: Abraham conquers several kings, Gn 14:14-16 (Also, Paul and Barnabas, Ac 15:36-40)

Avoidance: Abraham in Egypt, Gn 12:10-20. Rebecca and Isaac, Gn 27:6-13.

Collaboration: Abraham and God, Gn 12:4

Compromise: Beersheba, Gn 21:30. Barak and Deborah, Jg 4.

3. What style of conflict resolution is most common:

- Among the husband's parents _____
- Among the wife's parents _____
- In your household _____

4. What style(s) do you want to avoid? _____

5. What style(s) do you want to adopt? _____

6. What will need to be done to make the desired changes?

In a marital conflict, there are either two winners, or two losers. It is impossible to win alone.

Quote from J-J and S Langlois and FJA (Focus on the Family)

7. What can we do when old, unresolved conflicts are buried with anger?

We need to learn to manage our anger –see chapter 7.

C. How do I forgive?

We need to recognize and affirm the following:

1) Yes, I am hurt.

Forgiving does not mean excusing the other person. *(Its not his fault!)*

Forgiving does not mean that we minimize the offense either. *(Its no big deal!)*

Truth is our friend.

Forgiving means “returning a debt”.

Forgiving is deciding to live with the consequences of someone else’s sin. The reality is, we have to live with the consequences of the offender’s sin, whether we forgive him or not. N. Anderson

To forgive, we must first be honest with ourselves about our own story. This honesty saves us emotional energy, which otherwise is spent on avoiding the memories and associated pain. It brings us to cry tears of grief instead of anger.

A group leader or a friend can pray for the Holy Spirit to help the person overcome his or her fears. He must respect the person’s emotional state.

2) You hurt me.

You are responsible for the harm you did to me.

Sometimes we need to resist lying. We allow for the expression of justified anger.

We should state the wrong: identify and report the sin. We take the time to name the people and the sins involved.

3) Today, I am responsible for what I do with my wounds.

4) In obedience to the Word of God, I choose to lay down the arms of revenge.

Rm 12:19 Do not take revenge, my dear friends, but leave room for God's wrath, for it is written: "It is mine to avenge; I will repay," says the Lord.

Forgiving is renouncing to carry out justice, forsaking our rights, and refusing to take God's place.

Forgiveness is an act of faith in the justice of God.

Gn 50:19 But Joseph said to them, "Don't be afraid. Am I in the place of God?"

The justice of men is valuable and can also have a liberating effect. We can call upon human justice.

5) I also, have sinned.

I reacted poorly. I had side benefits, or advantages.

6) I want to live in the truth.

I forsake lying. I want to act according to Biblical teaching, not according to my former beliefs. What do I want to believe, what I was taught to believe or the truth?

Forgiveness implies a decision and a process.

We must take time to grieve. As we realize little by little the full extent of the offense, we are brought to forgive repeatedly.

Forgiveness is an act of courage and faith.

For Further Study

Forgiveness and Reconciliation

As much as possible, we seek to restore the friendship.

Mt 18:15-17 If your brother or sister sins, go and point out their fault, just between the two of you. If they listen to you, you have won them over. But if they will not listen, take one or two others along, so that "every matter may be established by the testimony of two or three witnesses." If they still refuse to listen, tell it to the church; and if they refuse to listen even to the church, treat them as you would a pagan or a tax collector.

1. How should a Christian behave himself toward heathens?

He prays for them and strives to act with dignity and goodness, but does not treat them as if they were innocent, since they are not.

Unrecognized offenses disrupt the guilty person's relationship with God and the people around him.

Meanwhile, confrontation has the advantage of giving a peaceful heart to whoever has taken the initiative to restore bonds in a manner that is honest and just.

2. What can we do when the guilty party refuses to repent?

2Tm 4:14-15 Alexander the metalworker did me a great deal of harm. The Lord will repay him for what he has done. You too should be on your guard against him, because he strongly opposed our message.

Paul did the only intelligent and effective thing: deliver the culprit into God's hands.

3. Should we forgive to escape personal bitterness?

A Christian should be prepared to forgive, but he cannot offer reconciliation to someone who does not want it. This would give him the power to abuse us, which is in itself sinful.

We must not confuse forgiveness and reconciliation.

4. Who should take the initiative of reconciliation?

Mt 5:23-26 Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift.

It is my responsibility to take the initiative of reconciliation, whether the other person sinned against me, or I against him. The purpose of anger is to drive us to take constructive action, to correct whatever wrong was committed.

Conclusion

Forgiveness is necessary for reconciliation, but reconciliation is not always possible. This can be because the other person refuses to, or because he is dead, or it may simply not be desirable. We need to respect his emotional state and let the Holy Spirit intervene.

(At the end of this lesson, the teacher asks the couples to gather two by two, to isolate themselves as much as possible, and to begin a mutual work of forgiveness.)

Anger and conflicts – (for leaders)

List of subjects

Lesson 7: Managing Anger

I. The challenge of Anger

II. The causes of anger.

III. What are reactions to anger?

Toolbox: What should I do with my anger?

For Further Study: How do I manage my anger?

Lesson 8: Understanding conflict

I. The root of conflict: areas of difference

II. Conflict resolution

III. How do I forgive?

For Further Study: Forgiveness and Reconciliation

The topics of anger, conflict and forgiveness are very complex, and their mastery is absolutely essential to developing a healthy attitude towards our neighbor. In the context of this course, it is not possible to discuss them any further. Therefore, we highly recommend you acquire and read “Anger: Handling a Powerful Emotion in a Healthy Way” by Gary Chapman. (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2007)

In it, the following themes are specifically covered:

How do I manage long standing anger?

Anger in marriage.

Teaching children to manage their anger.

Anger towards God.

Anger towards oneself.

How to react in the presence of an angry person.

LORD,
GIVE ME PEACE
TO ACCEPT THE THINGS I
CANNOT CHANGE,
COURAGE
TO CHANGE WHAT I CAN
AND WISDOM
TO SEE THE DIFFERENCE

Lesson 9: “One Flesh”

Group leaders: We strongly suggest that you divide men and women into separate groups, and lead an informal discussion on this subject. Here is a layout of some important themes followed by questions. Depending on your situation, you may:

- 1) follow the lesson, then use the questions for review (or as an introduction);*
- 2) use the questions as a basis for discussion; or*
- 3) allow questions to flow freely from the participants, then emphasize a few teachings at the end that weren't covered.*

*Whatever method is used, it is important to allow enough time for the participants' questions. If you are able to, prepare yourself to answer by reading *The Act of Marriage* by Tim and Beverly LaHaye (Zondervan, 1998), and(or) *A Touch of Love*, by John and Janet Houghton (Kingsway Publications, 1986). Both of these books were used as references.*

The lesson plan:

- A. Creation of Sexuality**
- B. Sexual Purity**
- C. The Case of Extra-Marital relations**
- D. Responsibilities and Privileges of Spouses**
- E. Toolbox: The Art of Loving**
- F. Knowing One's Body**
- G. Spacing and Limiting Births**
- H. Conclusion: A Life of Love**

For Further Study

Fact or Fiction? (Questions)

Annex 5 at the end of the booklet

A. Creation of Sexuality

1. Who created sexuality?

Gn 1:27 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

In Mt 19:4 and Mk 10:6, Jesus repeats the same words: the Creator made them male and female.

God!

2. Is sexuality good?

Gn 1:28 “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth.”

Gn 1:31 God saw all that he had made, and it was very good.

Gn 2:25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Of course!

3. What structure has God established for practicing sexuality?

Gn 2:24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

Mt 19:6 So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.”

Ex 20:14, 17 You shall not commit adultery... You shall not covet your neighbor's wife.

Hb 13:4 Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

The book of Proverbs warns against binding to the wayward woman (the prostitute), and in contrast encourages man to find his joy in the woman of his youth.

The structure established by God is marriage.

Song 4:9-5:1

Nothing compares to the attraction between a man and a woman.

John and Janet Houghton

B. Sexual Purity

1Th 4:3-8 It is God's will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control your own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the pagans, who do not know God;

Read also 1Cor 6:12-19.

1. What sin should we flee? Why?

We must flee sexual immorality, because it is a sin against our own body. Because our body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, it is also sinning against the holiness of the temple and the Holy Spirit.

2. What is sexual immorality?

Sexual immorality means having sexual relations outside of marriage.

3. Who give themselves up to sexual immorality?

Those who do not know God.

*It is sad to see so many people frequently living miserable lives due to rejecting God in their pursuit of joy and sexual freedom, while Christians, who are despised by these same people for their moral stiffness, enjoy the very things non-Christians seek. The key to happiness taught by the Word of God demands that we learn and follow divine principles.
Tim and Beverly Lahaye*

*Love is giving ourselves to the one we love forever, without holding anything back. The purpose of physical union is to express the fusion of our lives. If this is not the case, the sexual act loses a lot of its meaning. We affirm that we are one, but our lives and actions prove otherwise. It is hypocritical. A merely sexual act is self-satisfaction in disguise.
John and Janet Houghton*

4. Is sexual purity required from both men and women?

Pr 5:3-14.

Jb 31:1-2 "I made a covenant with my eyes not to look lustfully at a young woman. For what is our lot from God above, our heritage from the Almighty on high?

Mt 5:27-28 "You have heard that it was said, 'You shall not commit adultery.' But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart."

Man needs to learn to control his eyes and his body.

C. The Case of Extra-Marital relations

1. What two responses are offered in the law of Moses, to deal with two young people who jump the gun?

Ex 22:15-16 If a man seduces a virgin who is not pledged to be married and sleeps with her, he must pay the bride-price, and she shall be his wife. If her father absolutely refuses to give her to him, he must still pay the bride-price for virgins.

Dt 22:28-29 If a man happens to meet a virgin who is not pledged to be married and rapes her and they are discovered, he shall pay her father fifty shekels of silver. He must marry the young woman, for he has violated her. He can never divorce her as long as he lives.

-The father does not think the man is worthy of his daughter. He takes on the responsibility of raising the potential child, and demands a dowry of contribution.

-The young people know and love each other. The father understands and accepts: the two young people get married. In order to discourage and redress the irresponsibility of such behavior, the consequences require for the young man to take full responsibility: he will never be allowed to divorce this young woman.

In response to the question: "If you had to relive your life, share one thing you would do differently." By far, the most common answer was: "I would not have had sexual relations before marriage." Survey by Tim and Beverly Lahaye

Sexual relations before marriage short-circuit the development of the relationship between two lovers. Therefore, a Christian couple will wait to have sexual relations until they are married. This decision gives the lovers a feeling of security and increases their respect for one another. When lovers respect one another, self-control and strength of character become a part of their lives, and this fruit of the Spirit will always be of great help to them. John and Janet Houghton

2. What happens in a case of adultery?

Dt 22:22-27.

According to the law of Moses, rape or adultery are crimes punishable by death.

However, David did not suffer the death penalty for his sin of adultery and subsequent crime.

Mt 1:19 Because Joseph her husband was faithful to the law, and yet did not want to expose her to public disgrace, he had in mind to divorce her quietly.

The letter of divorce was to hide the sin of adultery, as Joseph intended to do for Mary. For this reason, he was called a good man.

Mt 5:29 If your right eye causes you to stumble, gouge it out and throw it away.

Jesus did not sentence the adulterer to death, but he recommends ripping out that which leads to adultery.

Jn 8:3-11 “Then neither do I condemn you,” Jesus declared. “Go now and leave your life of sin.”

Repentance allows for forgiveness.

Many people let themselves get caught up in the irresistible flow of sexuality’s waterfall, either because they under-estimate its power of attraction, or because they over-estimate their ability to swim. John and Janet Houghton

3. What about masturbation?

Most boys masturbate at one time or another, as well as girls.

In my opinion, masturbation is not a very important matter in God’s eyes. It is a normal part of adolescence that doesn’t involve anyone else. It does not cause any diseases, produces no babies, and Jesus did not mention it in the Bible. Dr. James Dobson

***Two reservations when it comes to a regular practice of masturbation:
-We are using for ourselves a gift which is destined to another.
-This practice is generally accompanied by erotic fantasies.
Only compulsive masturbation may cause problems in an introverted and anxious adolescent.
The greatest service we can do for our children is to show them the holiness and beauty of our own marriage. John and Janet Houghton***

A word of caution: Guilt often tears apart young believers because of masturbation. They want to stop, but find they are unable to. The best thing we can do is suggest they speak to God about it. This is a personal matter between each person and God.

D. Responsibilities and Privileges of Spouses

1. How should man love his wife?

Pr 5:15-19 Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well... and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer— may her breasts satisfy you always, may you ever be intoxicated with her love.

Eph 5:28-33 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself...

2. How should the wife love her husband?

Eph 5:33 The wife must respect her husband.

Read the following passage and answer the questions.

1Cor 7:1-6 It is good for a man not to have sexual relations with a woman.” But since sexual immorality is occurring, each man should have sexual relations with his own wife, and each woman with her own husband. The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband. 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. Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. I say this as a concession, not as a command.

3. Is it good to seek satisfaction for our sexual needs outside of marriage?

No, it is good for a man to guard himself, and not to touch a woman.

4. What is the only way to satisfy our sexual needs?

To each his wife, and to each her husband. A spouse cannot be shared.

5. To whom belongs the body of a spouse, man or woman?

To the other spouse, and to no one else.

6. What is the responsibility of each spouse?

1Cor 7:3-5.

Each spouse is responsible for meeting the sexual needs of his or her partner. If he or she does not do it, no one else will do it, or worse, who will?

Sexual deprivation should not be used to manipulate a partner, bring him or her to our ends or punish him. For this, we must learn other methods that are healthy and effective, such as communication!

The quality of our sexual life will be determined by the way we live together the rest of the time.

A few obstacles:

-Unresolved conflict.

-Poor communication.

-Television. Talk about it together.

-Tiredness, stress and anxiety. Go to bed earlier, take a vacation.

-The fear of a pregnancy or the lack of intimacy. Find a suitable solution.

John and Janet Houghton

Our priority is to respond to the other's needs.

A woman needs to feel loved in order to give herself.

A man needs the gift of sexual relations to feel loved.

God created us the way we are so that we could share mutual joy and pleasure...

Our survey revealed that Christians truly experience loving relationships that are mutually enjoyed, and that they give themselves to each other more frequently and with more satisfaction than non-Christians in our society. Tim and Beverly Lahaye

7. In what circumstances can spouses deprive one another?

1Cor 7:6-7.

The separation of two spouses must be for a limited time, of mutual consent, and for a spiritual reason (prayer).

8. Is your spouse your best friend?

Gal 5:22-23. The fruit of the spirit must be at the center of our relationship.

We have a ministry to perform towards our spouse. Our relationship to one another is directly linked to our relationship with God.

9. Is your spouse also your brother, your sister?

Song 4:9 You have stolen my heart, my sister, my bride.

Being married does not mean that we are no longer brother and sister.

To find out how to treat our sister/brother partner, read Ph 2:1-5.

These principles which determine what is good apply first and foremost within the couple.

10. Can we publicly display our affection for one another?

Song 3:4 Scarcely had I passed them when I found the one my heart loves. I held him and would not let him go.

Of course, yet we want to keep in mind the following principle of Scripture: decency. So that in all things God's name can be honored.

E. Toolbox: The Art of Loving

1. How much time does God think newlyweds need to learn to know each other?

Dt 24:5 If a man has recently married, he must not be sent to war or have any other duty laid on him. For one year he is to be free to stay at home and bring happiness to the wife he has married.

One year.

2. In the couple, which spouse should behave with more delicacy?

1Pet 3:7 Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner.

The man.

3. Is sexual union a naturally simple performance?

Song 4:12 You are a garden locked up, my sister, my bride; you are a spring enclosed, a sealed fountain.

If you do only what naturally comes to you during the sexual act, you will almost always be in error. Dr. Ed. Wheat

4. What appeal is found in the following verse?

Song 2:7 Daughters of Jerusalem, I charge you [...] do not arouse or awaken love until it so desires.

Not to go too fast.

There is a big difference between the way in which men and women react sexually. With men, desire comes quickly and falls just as quickly after the

act. For women, it climbs slowly, and then declines slowly afterwards. John and Janet Houghton.

Why go too fast? Husbands, take the time to court your wife: it is one of the best times of life.

5. What essential element of love is introduced by the Song?

Song 1:2 Let him kiss me with the kisses of his mouth—for your love is more delightful than wine.

Song 4:10 How delightful is your love, my sister, my bride! How much more pleasing is your love than wine.

*Loving tenderness should permeate all of the couple's words and actions.
It greatly contributes to sexual harmony.*

6. How is man aroused to love?

Gn 2:23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

Song 4:9 You have stolen my heart with one glance of your eyes.

Through sight and touch.

Adam saw Eve and was captivated by her beauty. John and Janet Houghton

7. How is woman aroused to love?

Gn 2:23 The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh.

Song 2:8 The voice of my beloved! (ESV)

From the beginning, women seem to have been more sensitive to what they hear than to what they see. Eve heard Adam and was seduced by his words. Do not tire from telling your wife over and over again that she is beautiful and you love her. John and Janet Houghton

8. How is an orgasm (pleasure) reached?

*Through tenderness and physical touch. Women need to feel safe.
Men are faster, then they fall asleep.
Women are easily distracted. They need time.*

Women should help their husbands by explaining where their more sensitive areas are, and encourage them to continue until they reach an orgasm. Do not be shy! God made the clitoris for a woman's pleasure. When she expresses her desire, it is a joy to her husband.

9. What outcome should we hope for?

Ideally, both reach the pinnacle of pleasure at the same time; but for this to happen, the husband needs to take time to caress his wife, and wait for her desire to mirror his.

This is not difficult if two people love each other with a true love, and want to control themselves to learn to give the most affectionate and physical satisfaction possible to their partner. Tim and Beverly Lahaye

Careful! Sexual acts must never be degrading, humiliating or painful. We cannot force the other to do something which repulses them.

10. How frequent can sexual relations be?

The frequency depends on a number of factors including age, health, social, financial and work constraints, grudges or guilt, communication problems and many other things. However, according to two surveys on sexuality, frequency is not nearly as important as the degree of satisfaction. Tim and Beverly Lahaye

The marital act is a wellspring of joy in life which is exclusively and intimately shared by the husband and wife.

F. Knowing One's Body

Ps 139:13-16 For you created my inmost being; you knit me together in my mother's womb. I praise you because I am fearfully and wonderfully made; your works are wonderful, I know that full well. My frame was not hidden from you when I was made in the secret place, when I was woven together in the depths of the earth. Your eyes saw my unformed body; all the days ordained for me were written in your book before one of them came to be.

For those who need to learn and understand how the male and female reproductive systems work, the book written by John and Janet Houghton, A Touch of Love: Discovering the Joys of Pure Sex, contains illustrations on the topic. We therefore encourage you to acquire the book.

G. Spacing and Limiting Births

1. Why raise children?

Gn 1:28 God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.”

Ps 127:3-5 Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one’s youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them.

According to Jewish tradition, there were five arrows in a quiver.

Nothing can compel someone to mature and overcome his own selfishness more than being responsible for his own child.

Those who deliberately decide to not have any children bypass a fundamental part of God’s plan for their marriage. John and Janet Houghton

The Problem of Infertility

According to estimates, 10% of married couples are not able to have children, and 15% have less than planned because they have problems conceiving. John and Janet Houghton

Careful, children are not the foundation of the couple!

2. What methods of birth control do you know?

- The male condom
- The “pill”
- The diaphragm
- The intrauterine device (IUD)
- Spermicides
- Periodical Abstinence
- Coitus interruptus (the penis is withdrawn prior to ejaculation)
- There are two irreversible birth control methods:
- Sterilization of the man or vasectomy, and sterilization of the woman through tubal ligation or fallopian tube occlusion.

3. Are there advantages and disadvantages to each?

Here are a few examples of answers:

- The male condom: available without medical prescription.
- The pill: must be prescribed by a doctor. There are secondary health effects.
- The IUD: it is almost useless without some form of spermicide.

- Spermicides: *less reliable than the first two.*
- Periodical abstinence: *unreliable*
- Coitus interruptus: *not recommended.*

Generally speaking, there is no risk for the woman in the week preceding her menstrual cycle, until about five days after the cycle is complete. Another method of contraception can be used the rest of the time.

Conclusion: A Life of Love.

Most people who get married intend to remain together for the rest of their lives. For many of them, this dream does not work out in the end... With God's help, it is perfectly possible to overcome the ups and downs of communal life. The uncertainty and inexperience of young couples will progressively develop into an increasing assurance and know-how. Most married women fully blossom sexually in their forties. John and Janet Houghton

Nothing will ever replace the exclusive learning within the couple. Each couple blazes their own unique path, scattered with forgiveness.

For Further Study

Fact or Fiction? Questions to assess common ideas.

Answers to the questionnaire:

- | | | | |
|----------|-----------|-------------------|-----------|
| 1) false | 6) false | 11) yes for some* | 16) true |
| 2) false | 7) false | 12) true | 17) true |
| 3) false | 8) true | 13) true | 18) false |
| 4) true | 9) false | 14) false | 19) true |
| 5) true | 10) false | 15) true | |

**Quite variable; depends on mutual consent*

Test your knowledge on sexual love.

Answer the following questions with "True" or "False"

- 1) _____ In the Bible, the forbidden fruit in the garden of Eden, and the original sin, was sexual intercourse between Adam and Eve. (Implication: sex is bad.)
- 2) _____ According to the Bible, procreation is the only legitimate objective of sexual intercourse. ("fill the earth").
- 3) _____ Pleasure in sex is mostly for the husband's benefit.

- 4) _____ In the physical expression of love, the main goal for each partner is to give the other as much pleasure as possible.
- 5) _____ By far, the thing couples say they regret most is by far that they had sexual relations before they were married.
- 6) _____ It is good for men to have experience with sexuality before marriage.
- 7) _____ The best sexual experiences in marriage are at the very beginning.
- 8) _____ The first penetration is rather painful for women.
- 9) _____ The first penetration inevitably causes a flow of blood in women.
- 10) _____ Adults who are deprived of sexual relations are at risk of becoming mentally disturbed.
- 11) _____ Having sexual relations once a week is normal.
- 12) _____ Christians have sexual relations more often and with greater satisfaction than non-Christians (according to a survey in the US cited by LaHaye, *The Act of Marriage*, page 116).
- 13) _____ Generally speaking, the husband makes love to feel loved; while the wife makes love because she feels loved.
- 14) _____ It is not good for women to initiate the physical expression of love.
- 15) _____ The husband tends to reach an orgasm (the moment of greatest pleasure) before his wife.
- 16) _____ Succeeding in the expression of sexual love is a learned process.
- 17) _____ The wife is not fertile during the four or five days that immediately follow her monthly period.
- 18) _____ It is dangerous for the baby when parents make love while the mother is pregnant.
- 19) _____ Certain birth control methods can cause permanent sterility.

Lesson 10: Raising Children

A. The parental role

God calls us his children.

Jesus calls God his Father, and invites us to do the same.

Father is a Christian name for God.

In the same way that God, the Father, does for all of his creatures, a human father is responsible for providing for the needs of his earthly children.

God also compares himself to a mother in her relationship with her children: he is faithful in his love, compassionate and thoughtful (Is 49:15; 66:11-13).

God compares himself to a father and a mother. Our position as father or mother is probably one that gives us the most opportunities to reflect God's image.

God's plan for family is for parents to model Him to their children.

And now here is the other side of the coin:

Do we realize that our perception of God was shaped by our relationship with our parents?

A child gives divine characteristics to his parents: what they say is Truth, what they ask is Law, and the way they treat him is Love. Jim Craddock

Our idea of God is marked by our parents' example, particularly, by our relationship to our earthly father. If he was strict and distant, we naturally struggle to feel God's proximity and to approach Him (even with a good knowledge of the scriptures). We naturally tend to view God and behave before him as we would with our earthly father.

B. A Biblical model of a thriving family.

What kind of a family did God want for each of us? To answer this question and the ones that follow, determine the key idea in the following biblical passages:

1. What is a child's responsibility towards God (his heavenly father)?
 - a. **Ec 12:1** Remember your Creator in the days of your youth, before the days of trouble come and the years approach when you will say, "I find no pleasure in them"

To meditate on God, the creator.

- b. **Ps 119:9** How can a young person stay on the path of purity? By living according to your word.

To observe the Word of God.

c. **Ps 148:12-13** Young men and women, old men and children. Let them praise the name of the Lord.

To praise the name of the Lord

2. What is the child's responsibility towards his parents?

a. **Pr 1:8-9** Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching. They are a garland to grace your head and a chain to adorn your neck.

To listen and accept his parents' teaching.

b. **Pr 3:1-3** My son, do not forget my teaching, but keep my commands in your heart, for they will prolong your life many years and bring you peace and prosperity. Let love and faithfulness never leave you; bind them around your neck, write them on the tablet of your heart.

To remember his parents' teaching and keep them in his heart.

c. **Eph 6:1-3** (Ex 20:12) Children, obey your parents in the Lord, for this is right. "Honor your father and mother"—which is the first commandment with a promise—"so that it may go well with you and that you may enjoy long life on the earth."

Col 3:20 Children, obey your parents in everything, for this pleases the Lord.

To obey his parents and honor them in everything.

Evidently, it is easier for a child to be authentic, respectful and obedient in a stable and loving family. However, even if the parents did not provide this kind of setting, the child is still responsible to be obedient, respectful and honest towards his parents. Robert McGee³

3. What is the spiritual responsibility of parents towards their children?

a. **Dt 6:5-9** Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your strength. These commandments that I give you today are to be on your hearts. Impress them on your children. Talk about them when you sit at home and when you walk along the road, when you lie down and when you get up. Tie them as symbols on your hands and bind them on your foreheads. Write them on the doorframes of your houses and on your gates.

Parents need to model and teach God's character and His instructions in what they say and do, whether it is in success or failure.

³ Robert S. McGee, Pat Springle, and Jim Craddock, *Your Parents and You* (W Pub Group, 1990)

b. **Ps 78:3-4** Things we have heard and known, things our ancestors have told us. We will not hide them from their descendants; we will tell the next generation the praiseworthy deeds of the Lord, his power, and the wonders he has done.

What a privilege it is to share the revelation of such a marvelous God with our children!

c. **Dt 29:29** The secret things belong to the Lord our God, but the things revealed belong to us and to our children forever, that we may follow all the words of this law.

Hearing good words from the Bible is just as important as having a model of them being daily put into practice.

Children naturally imitate their parents' behavior. "Like father, like son". Just like in a mirror, we can often see the reflection of our own spiritual lives through our children's behavior. We need the help of the Holy Spirit all the time so we can model Christ to our disciples, who are constantly observing us.

d. **Pr 22:6** Start children off on the way they should go, and even when they are old they will not turn from it.

Although it is obviously impossible for parents to perfectly model the character of God, it is their responsibility to represent the Lord to their children.

e. **Eph 6:4** Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

Give instructions gently: parents are responsible for educating the child, warning him, correcting him as the authority, helping him shape his identity, encouraging and supporting him. The Bible is the guideline that lays out the path we must follow.

We do not bring up our children according to our changing values or opinions, but according to the Word of our Lord. It is important to show them that in our role as parent, we are also submitted to a higher and well established authority by forgiving our children, or asking them for forgiveness.

We must help children sort through ideas coming from school, daily life, and even Christian circles, by comparing them with the teaching of God's Word.

4. What means do we have for building the spiritual identity of our children?

Bible stories, brotherly communion at church, hospitality towards brothers and sisters, commitment and helping each other out with them as members of the family, having the children participate in ministry.

It is important to have a consistent time of Bible study and prayer as a family. Memorizing Bible verses and hymns together is also a great blessing.

5. What is the financial responsibility of parents towards their children?

2Cor 12:14 After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.

To provide for their material and physical needs.

6. What are the material and physical needs parents should provide for?

- A balanced diet and clean water.
- Clothes and shelter from cold and heat.
- Medical care in sickness.
- Protection against intimidation and physical aggression.
- Rest, athletic and recreational activities.
- Economic safety.

It is normal for children to take care of their parents when they grow old, however, parents should not consider their children to be an economic investment. Instead they ought to teach them to be economically independent. Within their financial means, parents can plan ahead so that they will not be more of a burden than necessary to their children.

7. What is a child weaned from his mother looking for?

Ps 131 I am like a weaned child with its mother; like a weaned child I am content.

As a child on his mother's lap, we find welcome, contentment, protection and peace close to God (emotional security).

Protection from evil: as much as possible, we must make sure our children do not find themselves in situations where they might be tempted beyond their spiritual and social level of maturity.

By her privileged role in childbirth, a mother also reflects God's act of creation.

8. What comes first in the life of a church leader, church or family?

1Tm 3:4-5; 5:8 He must manage his own family well and see that his children obey him, and he must do so in a manner worthy of full respect. (If anyone does not know how to manage his own family, how can he take care of God's church?) [...] Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

A church leader must first manage his own family well.

Children must learn to respect their parents: they need to know that the limits they establish are firm, reasonable and beneficial.

9. How do we prepare children for independence?

Parents need to prepare their children to fly on their own in life. This is a progressive work, in consecutive stages.

a. Social preparation

*Start by being strict (restrictive) at the beginning of adolescence.
Dependent on the child's maturity level, progressively grant them more freedom in handling social situations. Reward their faithfulness and good behavior with more freedom.*

b. Intellectual preparation

Help them reason and make good decisions.

c. Economic preparation

Teach them how to manage an account and balance a budget.

10. Create a summary of the biblical model for a thriving family (What is it that you want to remember from the biblical teaching presented above).

Summary: Clearly, it is God's intention for parents to reflect his love, compassion, protection and provision towards their children; to teach them according to the Word of God; to warn, correct and encourage them so they feel safe and learn to love, trust and serve Him with all their heart.

C. A few parental characteristics

Group work

Bible study: Read 1Th 2:6-10.

According to this passage, what are some parental characteristics?

1. The mother (v7-8) – 3 qualities:

“Instead, we were like young children among you. Just as a nursing mother cares for her children, so we cared for you. Because we loved you so much, we were delighted to share with you not only the gospel of God but our lives as well.”

-Gentleness: As a nursing mother knows her baby is fragile and dependent on her, she treats him with patience and gentleness.

-Care: She looks after the needs of her child, and tends to them.

-Tenderness/self-giving: The tenderness she has for her child drives her to sacrifice herself and be fully committed.

2. The father (v11-12) – 3 actions:

“For you know that we dealt with each of you as a father deals with his own children, encouraging, comforting and urging you to live lives worthy of God, who calls you into his kingdom and glory.”

-Encouraging (exhorting, inviting): Motivating the child to move forward. Helping him to discover and develop his abilities and possibilities.

-Consoling (encouraging, comforting): Encouraging him to persevere in the midst of failure and obstacles, to believe that he can resume the race and that his father believes in him.

-Counsel (insisting, witnessing): reminding the child who he is as member of the family, his own commitments, and constantly inviting him to behave himself accordingly.

The purpose of all of this is for our children to walk in a manner worthy of their family’s identity and mission. We find many examples of these three actions in the two letters Paul wrote to Timothy, his adoptive son in the gospel.

A few comments:

-The father believes in his child and expresses his trust to him. This is very important for the child to thrive. If he asks anything more of the child, it is not because the child needs to prove something to be accepted, but because the father knows that he is capable of it.

The father invites and encourages the child, but he leaves him the responsibility of acting upon his own initiative. Generally, he does not threaten or use force.

Careful! The father carries the greatest human influence on the child’s identity. We must avoid shaping the child’s identity to our own image, interests, or family, but help him find his own identity in Christ and his family.

3. Both parents (v9-10):

*-**Sacrifice** (v9): Parents work “day and night” if necessary to provide for their children’s needs without expecting anything in return, such as a personal reward.*

*-**Provision** (v9): Parents take responsibility for completely providing for their physical needs.*

*-**Teaching** the Word of God (v9): Family is the foundation of the Church, where parents are responsible for teaching the Bible to their children.*

*-**Example** (v10): Parents should behave in a way that they can invite their children to imitate them in (they will do so anyways), just like the apostle Paul.*

Exhibiting behavior that is (You may also refer to verses 3-6 of the same chapter):

-Holy, always seeking to please God.

-Fair, seeking to give each child what he needs without worrying about what others might think on the outside (or even certain family members).

-Above reproach, without impure motives or a resorting to lying, but based on true principles that everyone understands.

All we have learned up to this point concerning verbal communication, including the love languages and anger, can also be applied to our children.

D. The parents' toolbox

1. Unconditional love

In order to help us understand the unconditional love of God the Father, Jesus told a story of the father and his prodigal son. Lk 15:11-31.

Parents have the responsibility to reflect God by loving their children no matter what happens, and regardless of what they do.

Loving them unconditionally, without seeking:

- peacefulness or easiness*
- our own glory through our children's accomplishments*
- the fulfillment of our unfulfilled dreams*
- someone to take over our family responsibilities*

We do not love our child for what he is able to do but for who he is: our child.

- Speak the five love languages to your child. What are they?

1. Quality time: time and attention.

It is essential to invest amounts of time in our child:

- To set aside time for one on one, with him or her only,*
- To look our child in the eyes with tenderness and admiration,*
- To listen, to be attentive and available when the child is ready to open up,*
- (for example: before going to bed, on the road together, whenever the child shows signs)*

2. Words of Affirmation

Col 3:21 Fathers, do not embitter your children, or they will become discouraged.

We need to communicate to our children in a positive and constructive manner, and be generous with our encouraging words.

It is important to defend children who are verbally attacked or manipulated by people on the outside as well as other members of the family.

3. Physical Touch; 4. Gifts; 5. Acts of Service

- What love languages do your children have?

Open Answer

These languages allow parents to fulfill their child's fundamental needs. In particular to reassure them of:

- Their value

We communicate that:

- The child is important to us.*

- He is valuable because he is God's wonderful creature.
- He contributes positively through his gifts and services for others' well-being.
- He is capable of improving his abilities.

ii. Our acceptance

- The child knows he is welcomed, desired and appreciated just as he is.
- He has a "home" where he is safe.
- He is free to experiment, develop himself, and welcome others without fear.

iii. Their belonging: they have a well-established identity.

- He knows who he is and to whom he belongs.
- He is able to make the right choices and set boundaries.

Family stories, regular interaction with grand-parents, visiting places of origin... these are all good ways to build his sense of family identity.

2. The angry child

Eph 6:4 Fathers, do not exasperate your children; instead, bring them up in the training and instruction of the Lord.

The main reason for anger in children is the feeling they sense in their heart that they are not loved enough. Children do not know how to explain it, nor are they able to express it, but they instinctively know that they need unconditional love to live happily, and that this should come from their parents. The truth is few parents know how to communicate the love they feel in their hearts, to the heart of their child...

Parents quite simplistically believe that their children should just know that they are loved. But children do not believe anything simplistic. What they do know, is how they feel.

Many parents today experience way too much stress, and in no way have the necessary energy to handle normal childish behavior calmly. Family life is therefore sacrificed...

When their children are very young, parents have no trouble accepting when they act their age (eating, speaking, playing, etc.). But they make an exception when it comes to anger.

Many parents have anger issues themselves. They feel frustrated when their child becomes irritated, and just when the child needs love and acceptance, they withhold it from them. As a result, the child becomes even angrier because he is being treated harshly. Dr. Ross Campbell

a. Be a role model.

The principles to be applied are easy to understand, but difficult to apply.

Let us love our children unconditionally, and speak the five love languages to them. In doing so, we remove one of the main causes for childhood and adolescent anger. Gary Chapman

b. Guide the child.

*If he yells at you in anger, listen to him. Try to understand. Focus your attention on the source rather than the manner of his anger.
-By nature, a child is immature. He is in the process of becoming. He has not yet perfected his anger management.
-Parents, who are older, have had the time to mature. If they have not yet been able to find a more suitable response to anger, they should at least admit this is their problem, and not their children's problem.
Gary Chapman*

c. Teach the child.

Use the stories of Cain and Abel, Joseph and his brothers, Jonas and God, Jesus and the money exchangers in the temple. Memorize key passages in Proverbs: Pr 14:17, 29; Pr 29:11, 22; Eph 4:26-27. Gary Chapman

The two greatest gifts parents can give to their children are loving them unconditionally, and teaching them to handle their anger with more and more maturity. Dr. Ross Campbell

3. Discipline and correction

a. The “rod”

Pr 13:24 Whoever spares the rod hates their children, but the one who loves their children is careful to discipline them.

Pr 19:18 Discipline your children, for in that there is hope; do not be a willing party to their death.

Pr 22:15 Folly is bound up in the heart of a child, but the rod of discipline will drive it far away.

Pr 23:13-14 Do not withhold discipline from a child; if you punish them with the rod, they will not die. Punish them with the rod and save them from death.

Pr 29:15 A rod and a reprimand impart wisdom, but a child left undisciplined disgraces its mother.

Pr 19:17 Discipline your children, and they will give you peace; they will bring you the delights you desire.

Physical correction of a child is a parent's privilege.
--

These proverbs highlight the need for correcting and disciplining our children if we want them to follow the path of wisdom.

Why? Because of the reality of the Fall of man after Creation.

As a result, every human being is born with an inclination for rebellion against God and every kind of authority.

When children transgress established boundaries, parents need to know how to appropriately reestablish and restore them.

The goal of discipline is to train up the child in personal discipline and responsible behavior; to help him recognize the way of the Lord and develop his desire and habit to follow Him.

Hb 12:5-11 ...because the Lord disciplines the one he loves...

(This text is quoting and commenting Pr 3:11-12) My son, do not despise the Lord's discipline, and do not resent his rebuke, because the Lord disciplines those he loves, as a father the son he delights in.

Discipline is good for the child who receives it.

It is an unpleasant and difficult mark of love for both the child and the parent; but it produces good fruit in the long run.

There is no need to reject a method entirely just because it is improperly used. Hitting babies or children less than fifteen to eighteen months of age is inexcusable.

Most corporal punishment should be over with by the time the child enters primary school. They should grow more and more scarce from that point on, and be completely ended between ten and twelve years old.

Spanking should be reserved only for those times of greatest rebellion.

James Dobson

According to the Bible, the worst sin a child can commit is deliberately or provocatively showing a lack of respect to either of his parents.

Respect must go both ways.

An attitude of resistance on behalf of the child always contains a message for the parents, one they need to decode before they respond. The art of good parenting relies on interpreting the hidden messages behind a child's behavior.

The crucial objective in discipline is to obtain and keep the child's respect.

James Dobson

The rod should inspire respect, but not fear or terror – love casts away fear!

1Jn 4:18 There is no fear in love. But perfect love drives out fear, because fear has to do with punishment. The one who fears is not made perfect in love.

The shepherd does not use his rod to strike his sheep, but to guide them in the right direction. He does not wound them with harsh blows on their backs, but gently taps their sides.

The goal of discipline is **not primarily to punish** –for an offense committed **in the past**, but to **remediate**– to avoid the child repeating the offense **in the future**.

It is important to show the **correlation** between the offense and the correction.

Ps 103:13 As a father has compassion on his children, so the Lord has compassion on those who fear him.

Concerning the harshness of discipline:

I.e.: one does not take away a child's privileges for a whole month because he forgot to greet a guest.

-If possible, have the discipline match the offense when choosing a method of discipline to correct the poor behavior.

I.e.: We noticed that our son was starting to behave in a rebellious and arrogant manner following his relationship with an older boy in our building. I was on the verge of spanking him, but his mother had the sense to intervene and insisted that we should forbid any further contact with this boy. We explained this disciplinary measure to our son (who was under 3 at the time) and the poor behavior disappeared immediately.

b. Structural elements of good discipline

i. A well-established routine

Rules that are clearly established, reasonable, apply to everyone equally, are more or less permanent and upheld by both parents, will normally be accepted by the children.

ii. Firmness and faithfulness

Without threats

Without lies – Do what you promise to do in terms of discipline.

Careful! Do not threaten to throw them out the window!

Do not take any decisions under the influence of anger.

Tell them what you intend to do and stick to it.

The same thing applies if you promise your children rewards to motivate them to change their behavior.

Never give in to manipulation.

iii. Understanding.

Take the child's needs into account – hunger, tiredness, confidence, security.

Example: If the child is grumpy before dinner, give them something to eat quickly before deciding whether or not discipline is necessary.

Try to understand his anger.

Learn his love language.

Make sure that he knows you love him.

iv. Dignity.

Avoid disciplining them in public – It is humiliating!

*Reprimand the child in private (for example, leave the room).
If you use physical discipline, make sure it is done in a way that preserves their dignity and safety.*

v. Grace and justice.

*Promote a rule of grace rather than a rule of justice.
In quarrels between the children:
Seek to understand and listen, then... instead of seeking to establish who is guilty (such as the referee in a competition), invite them to be the first to forgive the other.*

vi. Forgiveness

Forgiveness is learned as a family. Once again, parents must lead by example by asking one another for forgiveness, as well as to their children when they realize they have wronged them. Likewise, we need to grant forgiveness, without revisiting offenses that have already been dealt with in the past.

vii. The “evangelical code” trap.

We naturally have well established expectancies in our evangelical communities concerning what behaviors are and are not acceptable. Every good Christian will, at some point or another, feel the pressure to comply with the “evangelical code” of his church. He will also have a tendency to want to apply this same code with his own family (this phenomenon is kind of similar to the umma).

Sometimes our children put us to the test, breaking such rules to see if we truly love them unconditionally – even when we dislike their behavior and it causes us shame. This is completely normal, and is even necessary for the child to sooner or later develop his own spiritual and intellectual independence.

Careful! We do not correct using shame and guilt, so we can achieve outer legalistic perfection. Rather, we aim for conversion – a change of heart, and developing a soul motivated by the Spirit of love and truth. We are not trying to manufacture perfect children.

viii. Our example

May we remind ourselves of our responsibility for being a model of faith and deeds in the things we teach. May we make sure that our example leaves a powerful impact on our children: A good example will make the task of correcting easier; whereas a bad example...!

ix. Encouragement

*Encouraging words and the trust we give our children go a long way in encouraging them to follow the good path God has laid out for them.
“Verbal complements are way more motivating than admonitions (criticisms).”*

x. Prayer

As figures of authority and spiritual shepherds of your children under God, your prayers for their spiritual development are particularly effective. If you haven't already done so, give it a try when your children stray from the narrow path. Praise the Lord! Amen.

4. Blessing

Just as God blesses all men (Gn 9:1) and in particular his children –those who have faith in Jesus Christ (Gal 3:14; 4:6-7), parents should bestow their blessing onto their children.

Jacob gathered all his children to solemnly bless them before his death (Gn 49:28). At the end of his life, Moses did the same thing, tribe by tribe, for all of the children of Israel (Dt 33:1).

The elements of blessing are:

- a. Prayer – Invoking God's grace and assistance onto the person.
- b. Encouragement – giving him the confidence to face life with God's help.
- c. Through words of prophecy – predisposing him to hope and success.

*(In the same way, cursing leads to discouragement and failure)
We don't need to wait for the end of our lives to bless our children!*

How painful it is for a child when the father's blessing is withheld. Esau cried bitterly following the deception of his brother Jacob, and the refusal of Isaac, his father, to bless him (Gn 27:34-38).

A Christian friend of 25 years had just received his university diploma. He had a very successful ministry with his fellow students on campus, and many young believers sought his counsel. Following this success, he went home to his father who criticized him continuously and told him he would never do anything good in life. Indeed, he lost all his self-confidence. He struggled to make decisions and find the strength to look for work. Thankfully, my father spent time with him to encourage him and help him face life a year later.

*What do we want to raise: "nobodies", "chetanes"?
or "beloved" children.*

What do we call our children?

May our words and prayers communicate to our children our affirmation, trust and approval towards them. May our Father bless them.

Ps 127:3-5 Children are a heritage from the Lord, offspring a reward from him. Like arrows in the hands of a warrior are children born in one's youth. Blessed is the man whose quiver is full of them. They will not be put to shame when they contend with their opponents in court.

For Further Study

5. In order to better model God the Father, let us ask ourselves the following questions:

- Have I been affected by a negative family atmosphere?
- What has God done for me?
- How does the Lord want me to respond to my parents now?
- What are my parents' love languages?
- What do I want to change for my children?
- What are my children's love languages?
- How would my heavenly father treat me in certain situations?
- Am I the father or mother God wants me to be?

6. Give the elements of a strong education.

Parents are responsible for teaching the child about God, his own identity, life, and the behavior to imitate, and to prepare him for living independently in the world.

7. For further study, read:

- Dobson, James, *The New Dare to Discipline*
- Campbell, Ross, *How to Really Love Your Angry Child*
- *Preparing for adolescence*, James Dobson (for teenagers)
- *How to Really Love your Teen*, Dr Ross Campbell
- *Father Hunger*, Robert McGee
- *Your parents and you*, Robert McGee
- *Réussir sa vie (Safe People)*, Henry Cloud (especially the section 'How to Become an Adult')
- Etc.

Annexes

Annex 1: To Become One; Divorce

⊗ Group work. The marriage covenant according to the Bible, or according to culture?

On the French family license, respective rights and responsibilities are thus presented:

- The spouses owe each other mutual faithfulness, help, assistance.
- They are bound to communal living.
- They ensure together the family's moral and material direction. They provide for their children's education and prepare their future.

American spouses promise each other to be faithful and loving...

“What about in your country? Do you have a family code?”

⊗ Comparison of the Bible with the code in groups.

Divide the participants into the groups that have already been made of 3-8 people. Spread the articles between the groups (2-4 per group) and ask them to correct them and record their changes in the last rubric. Tell each group to designate a presenter. At the end, this person will give a report to the other groups during the time devoted to synthesis. Any groups that have finished can move on to the questions for personal reflection which are given in their manual (question 5 p.15) or question 6 “For further study” p. 16)

Commitment and the Algerian family code.

Compare Algerian laws with the following Biblical teaching. What can we keep from this code, and what should be changed? Rewrite the code by correcting (only) the texts that are in conflict with the Biblical teaching.

The Algerian Code	The Bible	The corrected Code
Art. 2. Family is the basic unit of society. It consists of people who are united by the bonds of marriage and kinship.		<i>Correct, no modifications</i>
Art. 4. Marriage is a contract that is made between a man and a woman through legal action. Its purpose is among others to establish a family on the basis of affection, leniency (gentleness and tolerance) and mutual assistance, to morally protect both spouses and preserve the family bonds.	Gn 2.24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. Gn 1:27-28 So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it.	<i>Marriage is a full commitment to establish an intimate and exclusive relationship (and even inseparable) between a man and a woman. Good elements: affection, protection, mutual help; but more than just this!</i>
Art. 31. A Muslim woman cannot marry a non Muslim.	2 Cor 6:14 Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. 1 Cor 7:15 But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace. 1 Cor 7:39 ...she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.	<i>Neither a man nor a woman should make a covenant with a non-Christian. (On the other hand, a covenant with a non-believer must be honored by the Christian spouse as long as their partner remains faithful. 1 Cor 7:10-20)</i>
Art. 36. Both spouses have the following obligations: 1) To protect the marital bonds and duties of communal life. 2) To contribute together to the safety of family interests, the protection of the children, and their wholesome education. 3) To maintain good relations and the bonds of kinship with parents and relatives.	1 Cor 7:5 Do not deprive each other except perhaps by mutual consent and for a time, so that you may devote yourselves to prayer. Then come together again so that Satan will not tempt you because of your lack of self-control. 1 Tim 5:8 Anyone who does not provide for their relatives, and especially for their own household, has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever. Gn 2:24; Matt 15:4 For God said, ‘Honor your father and mother’ and ‘Anyone who curses their father or mother is to be put to death.’	<i>Overall acceptable. A word of caution should be added for the need to set limits to the bonds of kinship, in order to protect the couple’s union.</i>

The Algerian Code	The Bible	The corrected Code
Art. 37. The husband is responsible for: 1) Providing for the ongoing care of his wife to the extent of his ability, except when it has been established that she has permanently left the marital residence. 2) Acting fairly with his wives when he has more than one.	Eph 5:33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband. Ti 1:6 An elder must be blameless, faithful to his wife...	<i>The husband's responsibilities are much greater than mere financial support –he must love her and seek her interests first. He is allowed one wife! He should also respect his in-laws (and educate/raise his children).</i>
Art. 39. The wife is responsible for: 1) Obeying her husband and granting him honor as head of the family. 2) Breastfeed her children if she is able to do so and raise them. 3) Respect her husband's family, parents and relatives.	Eph 5:22 Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. Eph 5:33 Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.	<i>Pretty close at first glance. Beware of the difference between obedience and submission! She is her husband's helper, which implies commitment and direct collaboration. It is also not required to breastfeed children.</i>
Art. 41. A child is traced through his father's line by means of legal marriage, because of probable marital relations, unless there is a disavowal of fatherhood according to legal procedure.	Ps 27:9-10 Do not hide your face from me, do not turn your servant away in anger; you have been my helper. Do not reject me or forsake me, God my Savior. Though my father and mother forsake me, the Lord will receive me. Heb 13:5 Because God has said, "Never will I leave you; never will I forsake you."	<i>Even if the relationship to a child is tense or cut off, parents forever retain their parental status towards their children.</i>
Art. 46. Adoption (Tabanni) is forbidden by sharia and the law.	Gal 4:4-5 God sent his Son [...] to redeem those under the law, that we might receive adoption to sonship.	<i>Biblical adoption is the belonging to a new family and its identity to the fullest extent.</i>
Art. 47. The termination of the marriage ensues from divorce or the death of a spouse.	1 Cor 7:37 A woman is bound to her husband as long as he lives. But if her husband dies, she is free to marry anyone she wishes, but he must belong to the Lord.	<i>Death terminates the marriage. The Bible strongly discourages divorce, but recognizes its legitimacy in terminating a marriage.</i>
Art. 48. Divorce is the termination of a marriage. It occurs as the result of the husband's will, by mutual consent of both spouses, or at the wife's request within the	Matt 19:9 I tell you that anyone who divorces his wife, except for sexual immorality, and marries another woman commits adultery." 1 Cor 7:10 To the married I	<i>Yes, divorce is a termination of marriage. It can occur in the event of unfaithfulness (adultery and remarriage) or by the initiation of a non-believing</i>

limits of the provisions found in articles 53 and 54.	give this command (not I, but the Lord): A wife must not separate from her husband. But if she does, she must remain unmarried or else be reconciled to her husband. And a husband must not divorce his wife.	<i>spouse.</i>
Art. 55. In the event where one of the spouses permanently leaves the marital residence, the judge will grant divorce and the right to compensation to the party suffering the offense.	1 Cor 7:15. But if the unbeliever leaves, let it be so. The brother or the sister is not bound in such circumstances; God has called us to live in peace.	<i>The important thing is not winning the case, but living in peace and shunning evil.</i>
Art. 77. Providing for the elderly is the offspring's responsibility and vice-versa, according to the abilities, needs, and the degree of kinship held in the order of succession.	Mk 7:11-12 But you say that if anyone declares that what might have been used to help their father or mother is Corban (that is, devoted to God)— then you no longer let them do anything for their father or mother. 2 Cor 12:14 After all, children should not have to save up for their parents, but parents for their children.	<i>Provision for one's offspring rests upon the elders until the house is left. Providing for elders is the offspring's responsibility within their means.</i>

*Extracted and translated from “Codes de la famille, de la nationalité et de l'État Civil” Berti Éditions, Alger, 2004.

Synthesis/Group correction

Group reports – after each report, lead a short moment of discussion for other groups to approve or ask questions.

Write the answers (on a board, to be copied by the participants, or to be typed and printed for distribution).

Annex 2: Becoming One and Differences

For Further Study

1. Who should do what?

(Exercise on distributing domestic tasks between the husband and the wife, in the student guide.)

2. How can we take advantage of the differences within our couple?

Read “Mayhall, Jack and Carole, *Opposites Attack: Turning your Differences into Opportunities* (Navpress, 1009) (260 pages)

3. Differences between men and women. What has helped you better understand your spouse?

The book “Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus” by John Gray is helpful in understanding there are differences between men and women.

Annex 3: Communication

Snowball game for thirty participants

(This game can serve as a small break or as an introduction to the subject of communication, and can be organized either the evening before the teaching on communication, or at the beginning of the course (in the morning).)

1. You each have five minutes to find five words that define communication.

*Personal examples: **To listen**, acceptance, understanding, to explain, **honesty**.*

2. Gather into pairs. You have ten minutes to find, between the two of you, five words which define communication.

I.e. To listen, exchange, dialogue, respect, understanding.

3. Make groups of four, and do the same thing in ten minutes.

I.e. Exchange, to listen, dialogue, acceptance, expression.

4. Make groups of eight, and redo the activity in the same amount of time.

I.e. Exchange, to listen, dialogue, expression, respect.

5. Make two large groups of 15 people each.

To listen, respect, dialogue, expression, sharing.

6. The whole group is led by the teacher.

I.e. Dialogue, to listen, expression, understanding, respect.

Note: You will often find different words that mean more or less the same thing. Lump them together, and choose one.

During this exercise, the teacher manages facilitating, regulating, evaluating and teaching.

Assessment of the snowball game

1. How did we come to this conclusion?

I.e. By sharing, and confronting one another.

2. How was your personality expressed in this discussion? (How do I picture myself in three to five words?)

I.e. I am willing to let go of certain words. I promote making progress. I help choose the leaders.

3. Choose one or two people, and write them a letter telling them how you saw their personality expressed.

*Examples: Evelyn— gentle and considerate and involved.
John— controlled, patient and firm.*

4. How do I feel when I tell others how I perceive them?

I.e. It's an opportunity to encourage them.

We can allow ourselves to make judgments on someone we barely know.

5. How did we choose the others?

I.e. We know them, he seems friendly.

6. How did it feel to hear someone else express how they perceive me?

Open Answer

7. Some participants did not receive any letters. How did it feel?

Open Answer

8. What happens when we do not communicate, or when we communicate poorly?

(This question can be studied in groups.)

-Misunderstanding

-Distortion

-Exacerbation

-We don't know each other

-We back away from each other

-Separation

-We don't reach our goals

-We do not satisfy others

“How can they get along if they don't speak to each other?” Françoise Dolto (Translated)

Annex 4: The Challenge of Anger

How can we manage our anger towards God?

Eph 4:26. When you become angry *towards God*, do not sin. Anger towards God is always an illegitimate, unjustified kind of anger. God never does us anything wrong.

Ph 4:7. Divine peace comes from the certainty that the difficulties that I am going through in no way mean God has abandoned me. We will come to a stage of acceptance when we believe God is sovereign and benevolent, and that he makes no mistakes.

Expect a new mandate from God.

Jer 29:11. “For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.”

As long as we live, God does not give up on us.

How should I respond to someone who is angry?

Don’t copy the same angry behavior! It is already bad enough that one person has lost control.

Ja 1:19-20. Pray along the lines of this verse.

An individual who gets so infuriated that he loses control does not need an opponent in battle, but rather, a friend who will lead him through the nebulous clouds of emotion back to the cause of his irritation.

It is easier to put out a fire when we do not add more fuel.

Pr 15:1. A gentle answer turns away wrath.

This is how a Christian should react when confronted to an angry person. The goal is to help the irritated person adopt healthy and constructive solutions to his anger.

What is a relationship triangle?

A “triangle” occurs when we reduce our anxiety in one relationship by turning our attention towards another. The result is that hidden problems in one relationship will feed the fires of other relationships.

An example of such a triangle would be:

—Mother and son form an exceptionally close relationship to compensate for a marriage in which the partners are distant from each other, and keep the father out of the family circle.

Wife/Mother-in-law; Husband/wife

Which relationship legitimately is the priority?

Such triangles are used to cover up the problems which are provoking anxiety. Children for instance are very sensitive, and may attempt to help the family by drawing everyone’s attention to themselves. Focusing our attention on a “problem child” is wonderful for reducing our awareness of problems we have with a spouse or a parent.

Triangles take many forms. They may grow over several generations, and are found in all types of human relationships. A harmless triangle may gradually harden into something like a cast, where the harder it is, the harder it becomes to escape. It usually involves someone who is weaker than the others and greatly increases the chances of more serious aggression. People may

shift around their position in the triangle, but it remains nonetheless. Usually, members describe it as an alliance formed for a good cause rather than a coalition formed against the third person.

How can we escape a family triangle?

When we become aware of the problem, we need to apologize to the third person and try to stay out of the triangle.

Abstain from counseling, helping, criticizing, giving reproach, or even cutting off the relationships. Do not take sides.

Learning how *not* to help

When we do not put energy into resolving our own personal problems, we take on the problems of others as if they were our own burden. It is difficult to keep our distance from others who need time to face their own suffering, and resolve their own problems.

What can we do?

Taking some distance and allowing others to struggle with their own problems is not the same as emotionally withdrawing. “That is not my problem” is a reaction of emotional distance. It is difficult to maintain emotional ties when we have initiated a change in the relationship. It takes effort because we must overcome the resistance of our own anger.

It involves being present, but allowing others to struggle and confront their own emotions.

Another way to help others is to share our own struggles and vulnerabilities. We can ask the other person what they think about our problem.

Finally, learning not to help involves recognizing that we do not have the answers or solutions to another’s problems. In fact, we do not even have the answers to all of our own problems. We can only offer our advice when we recognize that it may or may not be useful to the other person.

When a triangle is destroyed, the real problems surface.

Children will inherit unresolved problems from previous generations.

We are all vulnerable to intense and futile reactions of anger in our current relationships, if we do not first resolve our own families’ emotional problems. This is especially true when it comes to loss or separation.

Staying out of a triangle means we remain calm while being emotionally present. We can offer the other person the blessing of doing what is best for himself or herself.

We focus on our own individual personal relationships. When our anxious, angry energy is no longer used up on someone else, we have a lot of energy left to spend on ourselves. Then we will be able to ask ourselves: “From now on, what do I want to do with **my** life?”

⊗ **Groupwork: How to leave a family triangle**

Reply using “true” or “false”.

I should:

1. _____ - help the two other opposing parties.
2. _____ - counsel.
3. _____ - cut off my relationship with one, or even both of them.

4. _____ - rebuke.
5. _____ - distance myself emotionally by saying “that is no longer my problem.”
6. _____ - not talk about my personal struggles.
7. _____ - offer solutions.
8. _____ - become angry.
9. _____ - be doubtful the other two are able to solve their problems without me.
10. _____ - stay calm.
11. _____ - not help.
12. _____ - take some distance.
13. _____ - criticize.
14. _____ - be present.
15. _____ - let the other person struggle and learn to face his or her own emotions.
16. _____ - ask the other what he or she thinks about my problem.
17. _____ - remain humble.
18. _____ - give my opinion.
19. _____ - ask myself, “What do I want to do in **my** life?”

(As you explain the answers, emphasize the importance of the word “should”)

Answers:

- 1) *false*
- 2) *false*
- 3) *false*
- 4) *false*
- 5) *true*
- 6) *false*
- 7) *false*
- 8) *false*
- 9) *false*
- 10) *true*
- 11) *false*
- 12) *true*
- 13) *false*
- 14) *true*
- 15) *true*
- 16) *false*
- 17) *true*
- 18) *false*
- 19) *true*

Annex 5: One Flesh

Everything that follows has been taken from “The Act of Marriage” by Tim and Beverly LaHaye

I - For wives only

1) Maintain a positive attitude or state of mind

Pr 27:19 “As water reflects the face, so one’s life reflects the heart.”

The brain is the control center of physical love for the woman.

Three important types of thought can affect the success or failure of the wife:

- a - What she thinks about sexual intercourse.
- b - What she thinks of herself.
- c - What she thinks of her husband.

2) Relax!

3) Forget your inhibitions.

4) Remember that men are stimulated by what they see.

5) Do not yell, do not criticize, and never ridicule your husband.

6) Remember that you are the one who responds.

7) Practice daily intimate hygiene.

8) Communicate freely.

9) When everything fails, pray.

Jn 16:24 Until now you have not asked for anything in my name. Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete.

II – The unsatisfied wife.

Some causes, and remedies for the inability to have orgasm:

1) Ignorance.

2) Resentment, and a desire for revenge.

This resentment can come from a poor relationship with her father or other men, despite her husband being very kind.

This kind of a spirit is not only destructive to our spiritual lives but also to interest in sexuality.

3) Feelings of guilt.

The guilt is often associated with sexual experiences previous to marriage.

4) Fear is no doubt the greatest challenge.

5) Passivity.

6) Love takes time.

7) Fatigue.

8) Illness; certain medicines

9) Obesity

10) An angry [active, dominant, pushy, easily angered if frustrated] temperament.

In a female orgasm, the sexual excitement comes from the act of giving ourselves up.

11) Weak vaginal muscles

III – The key to feminine response.

The vagina can be a source of sexual satisfaction, despite the fact that it has virtually no nerve endings. The muscles just below the mucous membrane of the vagina are, on the other hand, well supplied with nerve endings.

Kegel exercises

According to LaHaye:

When the P.C. contracts, it prevents the flow of urine. The weaker external muscles also help prevent the flow of urine. When the knees are spread apart, the muscles also spread, so that when urination has started, it takes more of an effort to stop the flow.

The Kegel exercise consists of tightening the P.C. muscle and maintaining the tightened position for about two seconds. After learning to control the P.C., it is recommended that women repeat the exercise five or ten times a day, before getting up in the morning. In the beginning, the exercises should also be practiced each time one urinates. Then, the general advice is to repeat this exercise six times a day, doing about ten contractions each time.

The most important part of these exercises can be done anywhere—sitting, lying down, or standing, with the legs held a little apart. At first, concentrate on doing the exercise correctly. It will help at first to do it when you go to the toilet, with the legs held well apart. First contract the muscles that control the anus, then those which surround the vagina. Contract them as if you were trying to hold back the flow of urine. Count to four, then relax the muscles. Repeat this movement ten times. Carry out the exercises several times a day, for instance while you are washing the dishes. Continue for at least three months, as often as possible. If you do the exercises correctly, you will soon be able to introduce a finger into the vagina and then hold it by contracting the muscles. Your husband will surely notice the difference. John and Janet Houghton

IX – For husbands only

1) Learn as much as possible.

2) Exercise self-control.

Ph 2:4 Each of you should look not only to your own interests, but also to the interests of others. A husband can obtain satisfaction in a matter of seconds.

A wife needs more time to warm up than her husband. She needs about 10 to 15 minutes of stimulation in order to achieve an orgasm. The husband must learn to control the timing of his ejaculation so as not to do it prematurely.

3) Focus on your wife's pleasure.

4) Remember that the things that excite a woman are different from those that excite a man.

A husband is stimulated by the sight of his wife.

A wife is stimulated by what she hears: her husband's voice, his words of love; and also by soft touch and gentleness.

5) Protect her private life.

6) Beware of unpleasant odors.

7) Don't suddenly hurry into making love.

The husband desiring to be a good lover must learn to fully enjoy the preliminaries. Depending on the culture, its duration varies between two and thirty minutes.

8) Communicate openly

9) Love your wife as a person.

If the husband can convince his wife that their intimate relations are the expression of his deep love for her, she will become much more cooperative.

V – The impotent husband.

What are the causes of sexual impotence in men?

1) A decline in vital energy.

The need for sexual satisfaction is the greatest between 18 and 22 years old in men.

2) Anger, bitterness and resentment.

A domineering mother may be a contributing factor.

3) Fear

Fear of being rejected, fear of being unable to satisfy one's wife, fear of being compared to other men, fear of losing one's erection, and fear of being unable to reach the point of ejaculation.

4) Ridicule.

5) Guilt, particularly due to extra-marital relations

6) Unreasonable expectations about one's sexual vigor

7) Obesity

8) Poor physical condition

9) Smoking

10) Emotional tension

11) Depression

12) Using alcohol, drugs, or certain medications

13) Masturbation

14) If the wife has weak vaginal muscles

15) A passive wife

16) Disapproval

17) A domineering wife

18) Premature ejaculation

19) Delayed ejaculation

The problem is rarely caused by just one of these factors.

If a man suspects even one of these factors, he should make every effort to get rid of it. If he changes his attitude towards the problem and anticipates success, he has every chance of overcoming this impotence.

He may also find the most effective help directly from his wife. She will need to consider the problem as a challenge they must overcome together, and therefore take initiatives sexually. An important part of her contribution may be keeping her P.C. in good condition.

Nevertheless, it is essentially an issue of masculinity, and the answer ultimately lies with the husband:

- Pray about this.
- See your medical doctor, and follow his advice.
- Speak honestly about it with your wife.
- Read good material on the subject.
- Begin a physical exercise program.
- Lose weight if necessary.
- Don't try to make love when you are tired.
- Don't hastily start making love.
- Don't give up!

If he chooses to do so, almost any man can rediscover a satisfying sexual life, until he is quite old.