

Discussion Questions

For Better, Not Worse: A One-Sentence Success Story

Testimony Time: Several of you state briefly what you applied from the last session.

For example . . .

- I realized as a husband that God calls me to be the head like Christ is the head. I am responsible and need to take those responsibilities more seriously.
- I paid more attention to the sexual temptations that visually bombard men in the culture.
- I did some shoulder-to-shoulder activities with my husband.

1. Share Your Successes

The best way to respect a wife is to love her in ways that are meaningful to her. As Sarah went through the practical application for **C.O.U.P.L.E.**, discuss in the group what you feel, as a couple, are some successful areas for you with regard to loving. Look at the whole list under **C.O.U.P.L.E.** and discuss the positive applications of love that you see in your marriage. Jump in on any item under any of the letters and start talking.

For instance, a wife may share, “My husband still holds my hand when we go for a walk.” Or, a husband may share, “My dad had a problem with harshness and I have really tried to be gentle with my wife.”

2. Share What You Intend to Improve

In the same manner, share with one another areas that you need to shore up.

For example, a wife may share, “I need to let him know that I need a listening ear instead of making him guess.” Or, a husband may share, “I need to be quicker to say, ‘I am sorry. Will you forgive me?’” Remember, for the goodwilled and mature husband who intends to move first, his love can motivate his wife’s respect.

There is a Love and Respect connection! When a husband commits to **C.O.U.P.L.E.** this can energize his wife to respect his desires related to **C.H.A.I.R.S.**

Midweek Devotional

Question: What Is Love? Answer: C-O-U-P-L-E

But each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself.

—Ephesians 5:33 NCV

I received an e-mail from Nathan, and he asked: “Husbands are to ‘love’ their wives. That’s their special command. So what is love?” Excellent question. There all kinds of answers, many of them rather flowery, syrupy, and some very romantic. I wrote back to Nathan with what I believe are practical, down-to-earth, biblical instructions on how a husband can spell love to his wife, providing six things described in chapters 8 through 14 of my book *Love & Respect*, by using the acronym C-O-U-P-L-E.

- **C:** Closeness. You are seeking to be close—face-to-face—and not just when you want sex (Genesis 2:24). This is the idea behind cleaving.
- **O:** Openness. You are trying to be more open with her, sharing more of your heart and definitely closing off in anger far less often (Colossians 3:19).
- **U:** Understanding. You are pulling back from trying to “fix” her and are listening more, trying to be considerate when she’s really upset (1 Peter 3:7).
- **P:** Peacemaking. In order to resolve conflict and be united as a team, you are trying to use the words of power: “Honey, I’m sorry. Will you forgive me?” (Matthew 19:5).
- **L:** Loyalty. You are exerting effort to assure her of your love and your “until death do us part” commitment (Malachi 2:14).
- **E:** Esteem. You are viewing her as your equal before God and honoring and treasuring her as first in importance to you (1 Peter 3:7).

The C-O-U-P-L-E acronym is the first half of *the Energizing Cycle*, which teaches that “his love motivates her respect, her respect motivates his love” (see appendix B, page 275). As Sarah and I receive feedback, we are fairly sure people get it about stopping *the Crazy Cycle*. But we wonder how well husbands and wives are using the ideas in *the Energizing Cycle*. To have a happy, biblically solid marriage, you and your spouse need to do a lot more than just work on stopping *the Crazy Cycle*. And that is where *the Energizing Cycle* comes in. When you keep *the Energizing Cycle* humming, *the Crazy Cycle* stays in its cage and you function as the team God wants you to be.

In this devotional I am suggesting that you and your mate take a few moments to reflect on the love in your marriage. What kinds of loving acts and words are happening? Right here, one or both of you may conclude that I am putting all the pressure on the husband (these six things are, after all, what he is supposed to be doing to connect with his wife). But that’s not what I have in mind at all.

Using the C-O-U-P-L-E acronym, I want you to look for positives and plusses, not negatives and minuses. For many of us, it is all too easy to see the cup half empty instead of looking for the acts and words that make it half full, and often more. As a wife, guard against only seeing what your husband is overlooking; instead, appreciate his loving words and actions. As a husband, guard against feeling that you can never be good enough; instead, receive encouragement from how you

have been obeying God’s command to act lovingly: “Each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself” (Ephesians 5:33).

What is love? It is not a noun but a verb. It is something a husband does—in word and deed. One analogy is to picture the word LOVE, carved from a single block of beautiful oak or maple, bit by bit, day by day. Your marriage is like that block of wood. Love doesn’t just happen; you have to work at it, and many husbands do. Remember, looking at the positive does not mean we are being naïve about the negative, but if any team looks only at its losses and never at its victories, it will grow discouraged. Winners need to celebrate their victories as an incentive to taste even more. Rejoice!

Prayer: Thank the Lord for the love that is evident in your marriage. Thank Him for where biblical love is being spelled out in your marriage: Closeness, Openness, Understanding, Peacemaking, Loyalty, and Esteem.

Action: Explore different ways to share love together. Need specifics? Choose from the sixty ideas located at the end of each chapter in the C-O-U-P-L-E section of *Love & Respect*. For example, just as this devotional encourages you to do, start by talking about the positive, loving things that are happening in your marriage, then go on from there.

For more “husband-friendly devotionals that wives truly love,” see Emerson’s book The Love & Respect Experience (Thomas Nelson, 2011).