

SESSION THREE

In-Session Guide

The Energizing Cycle—C.O.U.P.L.E. Part 1

We have been looking at *the Crazy Cycle*: Without love, she reacts without respect. Without respect, he reacts without love.

Now we wish to consider *the Energizing Cycle*. His _____ motivates her _____. Her _____ motivates his _____.

The question is raised: Who moves first? The one who sees himself or herself as the most mature moves first!

“But Emerson I feel out of control. They cause me to be crazy!” What happens when the phone rings while in an argument with a spouse? True or false: we thought we were out of control but we calmly answered, “Hello.”

Put it this way. What if a film crew followed you for six weeks to film you in order to see if you ever got angry at your spouse? What if the reward for not getting angry was \$20 million tax free. Would you get angry? No. So, the moral of the story is simple: we just aren’t getting paid enough to do the loving and respectful thing!

We have to decide, “Do I have it within me to motivate?” Far more than you can imagine! God would not call you to love and respect but render you impotent in doing this. There is no absolute promise a spouse will respond, but they respond far more than we can imagine. We would respond to them if they acted on this!

Here Is a Principle:

- We can’t motivate a spouse to meet our need for love and respect by refusing to meet their need for love and respect.

We need to be reminded and encouraged: it is never natural to love someone who fails to show respect or respect someone who fails to be loving. This is counter-intuitive. However, this is

normal and there is nothing wrong with us. We are not a fool for obeying Ephesians 5:33. God's command is there because we do not always do this naturally.

So... husbands, here's the overview for you on loving your wife. This will motivate her to respect you! You can do this because you are an honorable man who loves and trusts God's Word! You won't do this perfectly and it will not always feel natural, but you will be amazed at what happens as you act on these six truths!

What Is a Husband's Love?

How to See Through Pink Sunglasses - Loving Her for Who She Is in God's Image!

- When You Want to Be with Her _____ to _____
- When You Aren't Secretly _____ at Her
- When You _____ with Her
- When You _____/_____ with Her
- When You Are Completely _____ to Her
- When You _____ Her above All Else

Will any husband do this perfectly? No! Read Proverbs 24:16!

Emerson prayed, "Why is there not more in the Bible for the pre-married?" The Lord spoke to his heart, "My truth for the married is the game plan I want the pre-married to know."

When a husband loves his wife this way, it keeps them off *The Crazy Cycle*.

C _____ When You Want to Be with Her _____ to

Genesis 2:24 For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and shall **cleave** to his wife; and they shall become one flesh.

Genesis 29:34 ... my husband will become **attached** to me ...

Genesis 30:20 ... my husband will **dwell with** me ...

Deuteronomy 24:5 When a man takes a new wife, he shall not go out with the army, nor be charged with any duty; **he shall be free at home one year** and shall give happiness to his wife whom he has taken.

Song of Solomon 3:4 ... When I found him whom my soul loves; **I held on to him and would not let him go ...**

Song of Solomon 2:6; 8:3 Let his left hand be under my head and his right hand **embrace** me.

Proverbs 7:11 She is boisterous and rebellious; Her feet do not remain at home ...

When it comes to closeness, the physical act of sex demonstrates to a wife that we desire to be one with her emotionally and spiritually. When we connect sexually, she needs to know this symbolizes that we are connected face to face, heart to heart, and spirit to spirit.

Women give the report face to face to build rapport heart to heart.

Decoding Is Important

Decoding is so important. When a wife reacts in a way that feels disrespectful, a husband should ask himself: Did I just come across in a way that felt unloving to her? Did I send a message to her that I do not want to be close to her face to face and heart to heart?

When it comes to openness, Emerson meditated on Colossians 3:19, asking, "Lord, why should a man love his wife who's making him embittered?" As he reflected, he felt the Lord say to him, "Whatever it is that he thinks she's doing to make him mad, she's not. She's doing what she's doing to be sure that he loves her." And so Paul goes right to the heart: "Just love her. That's the need. She's not trying to make you mad."

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 chose to trust my spouse's goodwill instead of judging their motives as bad, which I have unthinkingly done before.
- I realized that God has designed some marital conflict to happen so I relaxed more than usual when some tension arose.
- Instead of immediately engaging in *the Crazy Cycle* as I would normally, I tried communicating with my spouse that something they had just done or said had come across as unloving or disrespectful.

1. The Reason for the Command*

In your opinion, why would God command a husband to love his wife even when she appears disrespectful? And why would God command a wife to respect her husband even when he appears unloving?

Discuss how *the Crazy Cycle* can be stopped when a husband and wife obey God's command in Ephesians 5:33.

How is the protective wisdom of God revealed in His commands?

2. Who Moves First?*

If each obstinately refuses to budge until the other changes (she says, "I will be disrespectful until he becomes loving!" or he says, "I will be unloving until she becomes respectful!"), the craziness will continue in this marriage.

How effective is this in motivating the other to love and respect?

The one who sees himself or herself as the most mature moves first.

Every wife knows that if a husband is positive and loving in tone and facial expression, it will touch her heart. Therefore, as a wife, in the quietness of your heart will you commit to move first

and meet your husband's need to feel respected, trusting God for the outcome?

Every husband knows that if a wife is positive and respectful in tone and facial expression, it will touch his heart. Therefore, as a husband, in the quietness of your heart will you commit to move first and meet your wife's need to feel loved, trusting God for the outcome?

3. Motivation

Discuss your thoughts on this idea: "The key to motivating another person is meeting their deepest need."

Does **The Energizing Cycle** make sense to you?

*HIS LOVE MOTIVATES HER RESPECT
HER RESPECT MOTIVATES HIS LOVE*

In your opinion, why is a wife energized by love to be respectful, and a husband by respect to be loving?

4. What Spells Love to a Wife?

Love to a wife is spelled Closeness, Openness, Understanding, Peacemaking, Loyalty and Esteem (C.O.U.P.L.E.). Briefly state how this acronym is helpful to you as a husband in knowing why your wife might react negatively (*the Crazy Cycle*) and also in assisting you in knowing how to love her better (*the Energizing Cycle*).

CLOSENESS: A Wife Feels Loved When a Husband Is Close Face-to-Face.

5. What Is Going On in This Story?*

[NOTE: As we go into more detail concerning the principles behind C.O.U.P.L.E. and C.H.A.I.R.S. in sessions 3–6, there will be situations with the imperfect but goodwilled couple Stu and Missy to discuss among the group. Though they are fictional, their situations are not. As you discuss, please answer the questions concerning their various activities and conversations honestly among yourselves.]

Missy asks, "Can we be together tonight to talk?" Stu reacts, "What's with you? We just went out a

couple nights ago to that Disney movie. We had dinner with the Smiths at the country club. And last week, we went to the zoo with the kids. You are never satisfied. What do you want? Are we to be Siamese twins? Give me a break.”

- What does Missy need?
- Does Stu decode this?
- As a wife, in the past what would your response have been to Stu?
- As a husband, in the past what would your response have been to Missy?
- How does this lead to *the Crazy Cycle*?

6. Cleaving

In Genesis 2:24 we learn that a husband is to cleave to his wife. What do you think “to cleave” means?

1. Sexual intimacy
2. Face-to-face talking
3. Heart-to-heart closeness
4. All of the above

7. The Nature of a Woman

Already at age four my daughter Joy was saying, “Daddy, look at me!” whenever she wanted to talk. She wanted to talk eye-to-eye. At that age she had already concluded that if I was not looking, I was not listening. She would grab my cheeks and turn my face toward her.

As well, around the world women gather to talk. Go into any cappuccino café and you’ll see two or three women seated at a round table talking face-to-face expressing their concerns and wishes for at least an hour.

Men, reflect on your own marriage. How does your wife express her need to spend time with you alone, face-to-face? How have you seen this result in her feeling loved?

8. The Nature of a Man

Men tend to look away during times of conflict and provocation, seeking to prevent things from escalating out of control. Why do some couples fail to see this as an honorable approach?

Midweek Devotional

Who Makes the First Move in Your Marriage?

Solid food is for those who are mature, who through training have the skill to recognize the difference between right and wrong.

—Hebrews 5:14 NLT

People always ask, “Who moves first to get off *the Crazy Cycle* and onto *the Energizing Cycle*?” I always reply, “I prayed about the answer, and I heard the Lord’s inaudible voice: the one who sees himself or herself as the most mature moves first.”

Early on, when I shared that answer, I wondered if people would resist the idea because it suggests somebody always has to make the first move, and this doesn’t sound “fair.” Most of us want the other person to move first at least half the time. After many years, however, I have the confidence to say that this comment positively motivates most people. Why? Because most spouses see themselves as mature and able “to recognize the difference between right and wrong” (Hebrews 5:14).

A husband writes: “Who moves first? If it is the one who is the most mature (and I believe that I am mature), I have no excuse. It doesn’t matter who hurt first. I’ve shared that insight with a lot of people because of the difference it made in my conduct.”

Another man says: “We have two young daughters, aged four and seven. I want to be the mature one who breaks the cycle and turns things around. I know that this is what God wills and what is best for my family. It is difficult and I am not perfect, but I am working to show my wife unconditional love.”

A wife e-mails: “I made a decision at that moment that my life was going to count for something for the kingdom. To me, that meant learning my Bible and obeying God in my marriage and every part of my life. I am the mature one and I needed to go first. That always made me mad before, and now I am accepting that God requires it of me. God got hold of my heart that day in a way as never before.”

As these letters attest, mature moves by goodwilled spouses positively influence the marriage in God’s direction. But what does moving first look like? Maturity manifests itself in multiple ways. Some examples:

During a moment of “heated fellowship,” Steven softens his raised voice in response to Tanya’s even louder voice. She clearly hears his olive branch.

After Susan spouts off disrespectful words on the heels of Richard’s unloving comments, she apologizes first, saying, “I am sorry for my disrespect.”

Gary makes a to-do list of undone tasks around the house that are driving Lisa nuts. He takes an entire Saturday to take care of them, even though Lisa won’t listen to his pleas to be more disciplined about the budget.

Even though Tom fails to spend as much time with Lindsay as she wishes, she resolves to stop her tardiness so he doesn’t have to wait for her in the car.

Is moving first always fair? No, of course not. There are times when it seems crystal clear which one should move first. But this isn't about "justice" or what is fair. It's about sucking it up and biting the bullet to stop the insanity of *the Crazy Cycle* and enjoy the motivation of *the Energizing Cycle*. As Hebrews 5 says, spiritual milk is for babies and solid food is for the mature ones who can recognize the right thing and then just do it.

First move, anyone?

Prayer: Thank the Lord for setting the example of always making the first move. Ask Him for the wisdom and strength to make the first move for each other in every situation, minor or major. Ask Him to help you stop *The Crazy Cycle* and stay on *The Energizing Cycle*, motivated by love and respect

Action: This coming week (or month), practice being the mature one who makes the first move. Talk together about how it feels when one of you makes the first move to end a stalemate—and *The Crazy Cycle*.

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

