

SESSION FOUR

In-Session Guide

The Energizing Cycle—C.O.U.P.L.E. Part 2

O _____ When You Aren't Secretly _____ at Her

Colossians 3:19 Husbands, love your wives, and do **not be embittered** against them.

Malachi 2:14-15 ... the Lord has been a witness between you and the wife of your youth, against whom you have dealt treacherously, though she is your companion and your wife by covenant ... **Take heed then, to your spirit**, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth.

Judges 19:3 ... her husband ... went after her to **speak tenderly** to her ...

Judges 14:7 So he went down and **talked** to the woman; and she looked good to Samson.

Proverbs 21:19 It is better to live in a desert land, than with a ... vexing woman.

Deuteronomy 28:56 The refined and delicate woman ... who would not venture to set the sole of her foot on the ground for delicateness and refinement, shall be hostile toward the husband she cherishes.

U _____ When You _____ With Her

1 Peter 3:7 You husbands likewise, live with [your wives] **in an understanding way**, as with a weaker vessel, since she is a woman ... so that your prayers may not be hindered.

1 Samuel 1:8 Then Elkanah her husband said to her, “Hannah, **why** do you weep and **why** do you not eat and **why** is your heart sad? Am I not better to you than ten sons?”

1 Samuel 25:3 Nabal, and his wife's name was Abigail ... the man was **harsh and evil** in his dealings.

Job 2:8-9 And he took a potsherd to scrape himself while he was sitting among the ashes. Then his wife said to him, “Do you still hold fast your integrity? Curse God and die!”

P _____ When You _____ / _____ With Her

1 Corinthians 7:28 But if you marry, you have not sinned ... Yet such **will have trouble in this life** ...

Matthew 19:5-6 For this cause a man shall leave his father and mother, and shall cleave to his wife; and the two shall **become one** flesh. Consequently, they are **no longer two**, but one flesh. What therefore God has joined **together**, let no man **separate**.

Mark 3:25 If a **house is divided** against itself, that house will not be able to stand.

Ephesians 5:21-22 ... be **subject to one another** in the fear of Christ... wives ... husbands ...

Isaiah 54:6 Like a wife **forsaken** and **grieved** in spirit, even like a wife of one's youth when she is **rejected**.

1 Corinthians 7:3-4 **The wife does not have authority** over her own body, but the husband does; and likewise also **the husband does not have authority** over his own body, but the wife does.

Genesis 3:12 "The **woman** whom **You** gave to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

Proverbs 30:20 ... She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done no wrong."

1 Corinthians 7:11 If she does leave, let her remain unmarried, or else be reconciled to her husband.

L _____ When You Are Completely _____ to Her

Malachi 2:14 ... the wife of your youth ... she is your companion and your wife by **covenant**.

Malachi 2:16 "For **I hate divorce**," says the Lord. So take heed to your spirit, that you do not deal treacherously.

Hebrews 13:4 Let marriage be **held in honor** among all, and let the marriage bed be undefiled; for fornicators and adulterers God will judge.

Job 31:1 I have made a **covenant** with my eyes; how then could I gaze at a virgin?

Proverbs 2:17 ... that leaves the companion of her youth, and forgets the covenant of her God.

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 . . .

- When my wife talked to me I looked at her eye-to-eye and face-to-face instead of looking away.
- I attempted to move first.
- I noticed the differences in my spouse's nature when it comes to closeness, and said to myself, "Not wrong, just different."

OPENNESS: A Wife Feels an Openness When You Aren't Secretly Mad at Her

1. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Feeling frustrated and angry over losing eight thousand dollars on an investment, Stu says in response to Missy's request to talk, "Look, I'm tired. I do not want to talk right now, okay?" He turns on the news. She tries again later to bring some things up about his day but he only says, "I don't want to talk about it. Can't we just have some peace and quiet around here?"

She then inquires, "Well, when can we talk?" He angrily retorts, "I don't know."

- 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*?

2. Personalizing Conflict

When it comes to intimate relationships, wives tend to personalize conflict more than husbands do. This explains why she asks, "Can we talk?" She wants to connect in order to be reassured that you're not mad at her. On the other hand, men feel interrogated by "Can we talk?"

Does this echo your experience as a couple? Explain.

3. Truthful Yet Loving

As a man of honor, what have you learned about being more open with your wife?

What should Stu have said to Missy to set her heart at rest?

What if Stu had been mad at Missy about something—how can a husband be open without crushing his wife’s spirit?

Wives, share with the group how men can speak the truth in love without crushing your spirit.

4. Sexuality

Though a husband may not be as open as his wife hopes, he can be more open than he has been. And, as he opens emotionally, she tends to open sexually. Does this make sense? Why or why not?

UNDERSTANDING: A Wife Feels Loved When a Husband Understands Her

5. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Missy complains to Stu, “The kids refused to go to bed the night you left for Kansas City. The phone rang at 11:30 p.m., which was a prank call and frightened me, and then the next day the electricity went out in the snow storm. On top of all that, I put on four pounds from Christmas parties and I have nothing to wear.”

Stu, reading the Tribune says, “Do you have to talk about this now? I’m trying to read the stock market listings. You are always interfering with my time. Besides I’ve told you countless times before that things are never as bad as you imagine. You get yourself worked up way too much. You need to do what I do. Let some of these things roll off you like water off a duck’s back.”

- 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. An Understanding Way

In 1 Peter 3:7 Peter wrote, “You husbands in the same way, live with your wives in an understanding way . . . since she is a woman.”

In your opinion, what would it mean for Stu to live with Missy in a more understanding way?

7. Solution Versus Listening Ear

Emerson shares that they experienced a new energy in their marriage when he learned to ask Sarah, “Do you need a listening ear, or do you need a solution to the problem?” Explain the difference between the two and why sometimes getting to a solution is not what is needed at the time.

8. Teapot

Like a teapot that boils and then whistles to release the steam, a wife can experience an emotional overload and need to ventilate to someone who empathizes.

Women, do you agree that talking about your problems and receiving assurance that you are understood brings you relief even though there’s no solution? Explain.

Since the husband is the Christ figure and the wife is the church figure according to Ephesians 5, it is natural for her to want to place her burdens upon her husband in the same way the church places its burdens upon Christ. What are your thoughts on this?

9. Emotional Release Versus Sexual Release

A husband says, “Well, I know she needs emotional release, but it is the same thing over and over again.” Similarly—without being crass—most husbands need sexual release and it is the same thing over and over again!

Many times we are critical of our spouse because we do not have the same need that they have and consequently we view their need as excessive or marginal. But when we look more deeply we realize we have a comparable need—though different—which is equally as intense. What are your thoughts when Emerson says, “Not wrong, just different,” related to this issue?

PEACEMAKING: A Wife Feels at Peace When Issues are Resolved

10. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Missy drove the restored '57 Chevy to the grocery store because Stu took the van to work. While driving through puddles, mud splashed all over it. When Stu saw it, he was mad. He had recently waxed it. Missy kept saying, "I'm sorry," but Stu ignored her and went to the garage. She came out to say again she was sorry, but he gave her the cold shoulder. He didn't talk to her until later that night when she again approached him. But all he said was, "Just drop it!" Several days later another argument arose on some other topic, and she brought up the '57 Chevy, that he hadn't forgiven her, and didn't love her.

- He reacted, "What's the car have to do with this? You just look for things to criticize me for." Missy walks off crying.
- 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*?

11. Trouble

This bears repeating from Session 1. The apostle Paul says in 1 Corinthians 7:28 that if two people marry they have not sinned but they will have trouble. For example, in 1 Corinthians 7:4 we read that the wife does not have authority over her own body but the husband does, and the husband does not have authority over his own body but the wife does.

In this instance, each has equal authority in the sexual realm. Therefore, who decides if they are going to be sexually intimate tonight?

From this verse, we clearly learn that some conflict is designed by God. Therefore God expects couples to learn to resolve things in a peacemaking way.

How does this knowledge that God orchestrates some conflict in marriage, give you a greater confidence that He will help you resolve issues?

12. She Gets Historical

We make the point that it can be the honorable thing for a husband to say, “Let’s just drop this argument and move on.” How does this feel unloving to a wife?

Most women, though not all, have a tendency to want to talk things through more fully. This includes a need to talk about how each was feeling, and to make sure that there are mutual apologies. With this in mind, explain what is going on when a husband says “drop it” and his wife gets “historical,” resurfacing past issues from other arguments.

LOYALTY: A Wife Feels Loyalty When You Are Completely Committed to Her

13. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Missy asks Stu, “Will you always be with me? Will you still want me when I am old and gray? What if I become an invalid or lose my mind?”

Stu comments, “Hey, I told you I loved you the day we married. If anything changes, I’ll tell you. What’s the matter, scared I’ll trade you in for a new model? Just keep yourself looking good and I’ll keep you around.”

- 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?
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14. The Covenant

Malachi 2:14 says about one’s wife, “she is your companion and your wife by covenant.” Would several men in the group share what it means to them that they have made a covenant with God and their wives?

15. A Husband’s Commitment

In Dr. James Dobson’s February 2001 newsletter, he shared this story: “My friends Keith and Mary Korstjens have been married for more than forty years. Shortly after their honeymoon, Mary

was stricken with polio and became a quadriplegic. The doctors informed her that she would be confined to a wheelchair for the rest of her life. It was a devastating development, but Keith never wavered in his commitment to Mary. For all these years he has bathed and dressed her, carried her to and from her bed, taken her to the bathroom, brushed her teeth, and combed her hair. Obviously, Keith could have divorced Mary in 1957 and looked for a new, healthier wife, but he never even considered it. I admire this man, not only for doing the right thing, but for continuing to love and cherish his wife. Though the problems you and I face may be less challenging than those encountered by the Korstjens family, all of us will have our own difficulties. How will we respond? Some will give up on marriage for some pretty flimsy reasons. If we are going to go the distance, nothing short of an ironclad commitment will sustain us when the hard times come.”

What do you think it takes to make the kind of commitment Keith made to Mary?

In acknowledging that we will all face challenges in marriage, Dr. Dobson states the following: “How will we respond? Some will give up on marriage for some pretty flimsy reasons.” Share your thoughts on the importance of decoding unloving and disrespectful attitudes to avoid divorcing for “flimsy reasons.”

16. God Hates Divorce

What does Malachi 2:16 mean to you? “For I hate divorce,’ says the Lord, the God of Israel . . .”

ESTEEM: A Wife Feels Esteemed When You Treasure Her Above All Else

17. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Feeling like a failure as a mother, Missy was depressed. With tears in her eyes she says to Stu, “Mothering is everything to me, but I feel like I am flunking. Am I doing anything right?” Stu replies, “Well, I can see what you are saying. Maybe you need to get together with some older mothers for help.”

- 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*?

18. Honor Her as an Equal

What does the following verse mean to you? “You husbands . . . show her honor as a fellow heir of the grace of life” (1 Peter 3:7).

Because a wife has equal worth in the eyes of God, she is to be treated with esteem.

Though a wife fails, as a husband fails, how can a husband build his wife up?

Though she is inadequate as he is weak in many areas, how can he express appreciation for all she does and let her know he treasures the person she is to him? Give specific examples.

19. She Has a Different Point System

What seems to be an insignificant action by the husband, like buying a diet book, can put him a million points in the red. On the other side, writing a little love note, letting her know that he prizes her for the many sacrifices she makes as a mother, which the kids do not acknowledge, can be three million points in the black!

Do you agree or disagree that women have a different point system when it comes to feeling esteemed?

Immediate Application

Write down in the space below one or two things that came to mind during this session that you already know you need to begin applying or practicing this week.

Midweek Devotional

Sex and Affection: A Two-Way Street

*The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife,
and likewise the wife to her husband.*

—1 Corinthians 7:3 NIV

Feeling that his sexual appetites are waning, the husband asks his doctor if something might be wrong. The doc says, “Walk five miles a day for the next three weeks and call me and tell me how you’re doing.” Three weeks later the husband calls, and the doc asks, “So . . . how is the sex?” The husband replies, “How am I supposed to know? I haven’t seen my wife in three weeks, and I’m 105 miles from home.”

“So . . . how is the sex?” If there was ever an issue that can quickly become a love and respect issue, it is this. Fortunately, Paul leaves some good advice to help couples keep sex in a positive perspective, providing they are willing to work together to benefit one another. He says, “The husband should fulfill his marital duty to his wife, and likewise the wife to her husband” (1 Corinthians 7:3). That’s what it says in the New International Version, and almost the same wording is in the New American Standard Bible. At first glance it sounds as though Paul thinks sex is an obligation, to be done begrudgingly if necessary. And, true enough, the Greek word here for “duty” means we are to give the other person what is due, as if we have a debt to pay.

There is, however, another way to translate this Greek word that throws light on the problem: “Husbands and wives should be fair with each other about having sex” (CEV). And in the Phillips translation we read: “The husband should give to his wife what is due to her as his wife, and the wife should be as fair to her husband.” When fair play precedes foreplay, husband and wife are tuned in on satisfying each other sexually and affectionately: “Let the husband render to his wife the affection due her, and likewise also the wife to her husband” (NKJV). Each is focusing on giving, not receiving, and that makes sex an entirely different ball game from the one too many couples play, which often leads to making it an issue that obscures the Real Issue: feeling unloved or disrespected.

Over the years I have received literally thousands of emails from spouses who struggle with the issue of being fair with each other about sex. Typically, the husband’s primary need is for sexual release, which only his wife can meet, and the wife’s primary need is for affection and a feeling of emotional connectedness. (There are exceptions to these general leanings. For example, I get e-mails from a substantial number of women who say they are the ones who need sex more often.)

Not surprisingly, if one spouse’s need is not met, he or she will not be inclined to want to focus on the need of the other. And so it seems to be a standoff. The wife can say, “Lovingly meet my needs for affection and connection and I’ll respond sexually.” The husband can answer, “Respectfully meet my sexual need, since you alone can meet that need, and I’ll respond to your emotional needs.” This is the kind of quid pro quo dance many couples do, but it is not what Paul means in 1 Corinthians 7 when he talks about being fair to one another. Obviously, Paul is not saying one spouse can mandate “sex for affection” or that the other can mandate “affection for sex.”

Sex and affection are the best proving grounds to help you and your spouse grow in love and respect for each other—physically, emotionally, and intimately. Look at the sexual aspect of your relationship as a compliment to how important you are in your spouse’s life. You are the only person who can meet this need in your spouse!

If one partner is not being as responsive as the other might like, Christ is calling someone to make the first move. (Maybe He is calling both of you!) As two mature people, can you talk it through and work it out? There is no need to go three weeks without sex or affection and wind up “105 miles from home.”

Prayer: Thank God that you both have needs only the other can meet. Pray for the wisdom to meet those needs fairly with mutual concern for one another.

Action: Having devotions about sex can draw you closer or possibly start up *the Crazy Cycle*. Share honestly with each other about your needs on this two-way street. Talk together or possibly write each other notes about your needs as lovingly and respectfully as you can. If sex continues to be a serious issue, consider seeing a skilled Christian counselor.

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