



WORKBOOK

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LIVE CONFERENCE AND 10-WEEK STUDY

SESSION TWO

In-Session Guide

We asked 7,000 people this question: When you are in a conflict with your spouse or significant other, do you feel unloved at that moment or disrespected?

83% of the _____ said they feel disrespected.

72% of the _____ said they feel unloved.

During conflict, when you see the spirit of your spouse deflate, the issue is no longer the issue! When the issue isn't the issue, what is the issue? We believe that she is feeling _____ and he is feeling _____.

God revealed this truth 2,000 years ago in Ephesians 5:33!

Is This Why We React and Things Get a Bit Crazy?

She reacts in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband when feeling _____. He reacts in ways that feel unloving to his wife when feeling _____

This description of *the Crazy Cycle* is not presented so that we can justify our disobedience to Ephesians 5:33.

Proverbs 30:21-23 The earth quakes ... under an unloved woman when she gets a husband ...

Ezekiel 16:45 ... who loathed their husbands ...

Genesis 30:1 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children, she became jealous of her sister; and she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die."

Genesis 30:2 Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

How Do I Get My Spouse to Meet My Need?

A wife sees her acts of love as respectful and a husband sees his acts of respect as loving. Thus both wonder, "Why should my spouse feel disrespected or unloved?"

However, a wife tends to overlook the demoralizing power of her disrespectful reactions, and a husband is inclined to ignore the devastating power of his unloving reactions.

We have a propensity to see our goodwill deposits and miss the impact of our negative withdrawals, and then wonder why the marriage borders on emotional bankruptcy.

Proverbs 14:12 There is a way which seems right to a man, but its end is the way of death.

What if He Says, “I Don’t Know if I Love You” and She Says, “You Don’t Deserve My Respect”?

Ignorantly she said, “You don’t deserve my respect.” Though she uttered this line, she is trying to awaken her husband to her need to feel his love. Besides, he should know that she doesn’t really mean it!

Ignorantly he said, “I don’t know if I ever loved you.” Though he aired these words, he did not say what he meant. He meant to say, “I don’t know if I ever loved you the way you need to be loved.” He failed to finish the sentence.

If a spouse did mean what they said, was this a mere snapshot comment at a point in time? If so, we must not hold on to this one-liner as representative of their deepest sentiments. We must look at the whole script to the marital movie.

Proverbs 12:18 There is one who speaks rashly [thoughtlessly] like the thrusts of a sword ...

James 3:2 For we all stumble in many ways. If anyone does not stumble in what he says, he is a perfect man, able to bridle the whole body as well.

Can a Good Marriage Become Better and a Poor Marriage Become Good? Yes!

If goodwill exists, then most conflict is due to a misunderstanding of each person’s core value.

Healing comes when both believe in the other’s goodwill even though the reactions have felt unloving and disrespectful.

1 Corinthians 7:33 But one who is married is concerned about ... how he may please his wife ... how she may please her husband.

Proverbs 31:11 The heart of her husband trusts in her ...

Proverbs 31:12 She does him good and not evil all the days of her life.

Ecclesiastes 9:9 Enjoy life with the woman whom you love all the days of your fleeting life which He has given to you under the sun; for this is your reward in life ...

1 Corinthians 7:11 ... let her ... be reconciled to her husband.

I Hold My Spouse Responsible (to Blame), So How Do I Get Him/Her to Move First?

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

Placing blame isn't the way to go. Put it this way: it won't work when a husband insists, "I will love her only after she starts showing me more respect. After all, she is causing me to be unloving." It is ineffective for a wife to put her heels in and contend, "He must first love me before I will show him any respect! He's to blame for my disrespect."

My Response is My Responsibility! My response is not my spouse's responsibility. Mature people get this!

James 3:13 Who among you is wise ...? Let him show ... his deeds in the gentleness of wisdom.

Matthew 7:24 Therefore everyone who hears these words of Mine, and acts upon them, may be compared to a wise man, who built his house upon the rock.

Genesis 3:12 And the man said, "The woman whom Thou gavest to be with me, she gave me from the tree, and I ate."

Genesis 3:13 Then the Lord God said to the woman, "What is this you have done?" And the woman said, "The serpent deceived me, and I ate."

Proverbs 30:20 This is the way of an adulterous woman: She eats and wipes her mouth, and says, "I have done no wrong."

Malachi 2:15-16 Take heed then, to your spirit, and let no one deal treacherously against the wife of your youth. "For I hate divorce," says the Lord ... So take heed to your spirit ...

What Can I Do When My Immature Spouse Makes Me So Mad?

Your spouse doesn't "make" you mad. What happens during a fight when you feel that you have lost emotional control and the phone rings?

Galatians 5:19-20 The deeds of the flesh are evident, which are ... enmities, strife, jealousy, outbursts of anger, disputes, dissensions, and factions.

What if I Choose to Act on This?

Love empowers a husband to energize his wife.

Respect empowers a wife to energize a husband.

The key to motivating another person is meeting that person's deepest need, especially during conflict. Over time, acting on Ephesians 5:33 increases one's influence and energizes the marriage.

Proverbs 24:5 A wise man is strong, and a man of knowledge increases power.

1 Corinthians 7:16 For how do you know, O wife, whether you will save your husband? Or how do you know, O husband, whether you will save your wife?

Hosea 3:1 The LORD said to me, "Go, show your love to your wife again, though she is loved by another and is an adulteress. Love her as the LORD loves the Israelites" (NIV).

Judges 19:3 Her husband ... went after her to speak tenderly to her ... to bring her back ...

1 Peter 3:1 Even if any of them are disobedient to the word, they may be won without a word by the behavior of their wives, as they observe your ... respectful behavior.

Isn't This Too Simplistic Since So Many Other Problems Exist?

The problems are not the problem; the root issue is an unloving and disrespectful attitude. Though a plethora of issues envelope you (we will have trouble in marriage!) like money problems, in-law struggles, child-rearing frustrations, health concerns, and the list goes on, it is your loving and respectful response to your spouse during these tensions that leads to marital success. It is hostility and contempt that lead to marital failure, not the troubles.

Will we believe the revelation from God that Love and Respect is His final word (so to speak) to the church on what makes a marriage successful?

1 Corinthians 7:28 If you should marry, you have not sinned ... Yet such will have trouble in this life.

Ephesians 5:33 Nevertheless, each individual among you also is to love his own wife even as himself, and the wife must see to it that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 3:3 ... that by revelation there was made known to me ...

2 Peter 3:15-16 ... our beloved brother Paul, according to the wisdom given him, wrote to you, as also in all his letters ... which the untaught and unstable distort, as they do also the rest of the Scriptures, to their own destruction.

Psalms 19:7 The testimony of the Lord is sure, making wise the simple.

Psalms 119:130 The unfolding of Thy words gives light; it gives understanding to the simple.

What Is a Major Mistake Couples Make?

We believe that he can be unloving to get respect and she can be disrespectful to get love.

We cannot use unholy means to achieve worthy ends. We cannot be negative to motivate another person to be positive.

We cannot deprive another person of what they need in order to motivate them to meet our needs.

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

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

Proverbs 12:4 She who shames him is as rottenness in his bones.

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

Genesis 30:1-2 Now when Rachel saw that she bore Jacob no children ... she said to Jacob, "Give me children, or else I die." Then Jacob's anger burned against Rachel, and he said, "Am I in the place of God, who has withheld from you the fruit of the womb?"

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 . . .

- While we were having a little spat I kept saying to myself, “My spouse isn’t wrong, just different.”
- I realized that when the spirit of my spouse deflated, the topic we were talking about was no longer the issue, but this was a love and respect issue.
- This week I said, “That felt disrespectful (or unloving). Did I just come across as unloving (or disrespectful)?”

1. The Crazy Cycle*

Men, when your wife reacts negatively in a conflict, try to explain how that comes across to you as disrespectful. Women, when your husband reacts negatively in a conflict, try to explain how that comes across to you as unloving.

Do you find yourselves going round and round, with each negative reaction triggering a negative reaction in the other?

2. The Continuum

A wife still needs R.E.S.P.E.C.T. and a husband still needs love. However, why is there not one greeting card from a husband to a wife that says, “Baby, I really respect you”? Alternatively, why during conflicts does a husband not say, “You don’t love me” but announces, “I don’t deserve this disrespect!”?

How is it that a husband could be assured of his wife’s love, yet not feel she likes him as a person?

3. The Command from God

Read Ephesians 5:33.

Since God commands the husband to love his wife, why is he always wrong when saying, “I will not be a loving person when my wife fails to show respect”?

Since God commands the wife to respect her husband, why is she always wrong when saying, “I will not be a respectful person when my husband fails to show love”?

4. Decoding the Code*

Discuss how husbands and wives often send messages to each other “in code” (i.e., what they say is not what they really mean).

For instance, what does a wife mean when she vents, “You never spend any time with me!”? Is she meaning to be disrespectful and condemning, or is she crying out to the man who matters to her the most because she wants to experience the love that only he can give her?

What does a husband mean when he says, “I don’t want to talk about it. Drop it”? Is he saying that he does not love his wife? Or, is he saying that he is losing energy in some of these “talks” because it comes around to him being inadequate and he feels disrespected for who he is as a human being?

5. The Wife Who Died*

In the video Emerson told the story of the all-night bus ride. In that story we learn that a father had gotten on the bus with his three children, all of whom were running wild and disturbing the passengers.

Further, the father did nothing to stop them but only stared out the window. With each passing moment the passengers grew livid. But the wrath of the passengers vanished when learning that his wife, their mother, had just died in the hospital. Suddenly the father’s behavior made sense. He was in shock, and his kids were acting out since they had never lost a mommy before.

When first observing this father and children, we believe the father is a permissive parent and the children are disobedient. We feel ourselves being “offended.”

However, we stop feeling “offended” when the facts come out. This new information enables us to decode. We realize our interpretation was wrong and we quickly feel compassion instead of anger. Did you feel the same? Why or why not?

6. Wrongly Taking Up Offense*

We can also wrongly take up “offense” against our spouse on the marital bus ride.

For example, when your wife receives the diet book from you, she hears a message of disapproval. She feels unloved. She reacts defensively. But here’s what happens. Her reaction feels disrespectful to you. You are offended when she shouts, “You men have two brains. One is lost and the other is out looking for it!”

Though you feel offended by her put-down, how can you decode your wife’s vulnerability?

Or, when your husband receives the third marriage book from you, he hears a message of disapproval. He feels disrespected and he reacts defensively. But here’s what happens. His reaction feels unloving to you. You are offended when he stonewalls and refuses to read the book.

Though you feel offended by his neglect of the marriage, how can you decode your husband’s vulnerability?

7. Getting Too Defensive and Thereby Becoming Offensive

As a husband (who refuses to read the marriage book) or wife (who reacts emotionally after getting the diet book), explain how your defensive reactions come across as offensive even if this is not your intention.

What is our responsibility as believers to go the extra mile and not appear offensive (1 Corinthians 10:32)?

If you softened your defensive reactions, how would this stop *the Crazy Cycle*?

8. Judging My Spouse as Childish

We can too easily judge our spouse’s weaknesses because where they are vulnerable, God gave us natural strengths. For example, because a husband is not bothered by a diet book (he doesn’t feel unloved when receiving a diet book), he can wrongly judge his wife as childish for feeling unloved and reacting negatively to the diet book.

And, because a wife is not bothered by the third marriage book this year for the two of them to read (she wouldn’t feel disrespected if he bought a marriage book), she can wrongly judge her

husband as childish for feeling disrespected and reacting negatively to the marriage book.

Explain how *the Crazy Cycle* will slow down if couples stop judging one another in their areas of weakness.

9. Claiming My Spouse Lacks Goodwill

During moments of craziness, a wise person does not impugn motives.

About the diet book: A husband needs to discern that after his wife receives the diet book, she is not seeking to emasculate him, but to awaken him to the longing of her heart to be loved by him. She is not intending to be mean. And, a wife needs to discern that her husband isn't seeking to be condemning and unloving for getting the diet book, but after she complained about being overweight he got the diet book to be helpful. (Every guy makes this mistake once!)

About the marriage book: A wife needs to recognize that after her husband receives the third marriage book this year to read, he is not trying to crush his wife's spirit by ignoring the book, but to alert her to his feelings. He is not intending to be cruel, but is feeling criticized as unacceptable and losing energy in the marriage. And, a husband needs to detect that his wife isn't seeking to be judgmental and disrespectful by giving him the third marriage book, but is trying to be helpful.

When two people give the benefit of the doubt to the other, trusting each other's goodwill, what happens? Why?

10. Disagreeing with What the Bible Says about Good Intentions*

The Bible says that a husband is concerned about how to please his wife and a wife is concerned about how to please her husband (1 Corinthians 7:33–34).

Paul, who penned this line, knew full well about the total depravity of the human heart. God used him to write the book of Romans, which unfolds the sinfulness of humanity! Paul understood that we need the Savior because of our condition.

Yet, in marriage Paul inspires us with the idea that in general a spouse, though sinful and sometimes intentionally nasty, does not intend to be displeasing or unconcerned.

Paul recognized that we can act on the image of God within us, not enough to be redeemed by our good intentions, but enough to want to please a spouse. In other words, Paul assumes basic
