

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 found that when he is more open emotionally, it makes our relationship more romantic.
- When I spoke more openly and truthfully, I also tried to say it more lovingly as a man of honor.
- I held my tongue when tempted to put my wife down. I realized anew this is unnecessary, dishonors her, and makes her feel inferior.

1. Motivation

We said earlier, “The key to motivating another person is meeting their deepest need.” What is your understanding of this idea?

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

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

CONQUEST: Respecting His Desire to Work and Achieve

2. What Is Going On in This Story?*

Missy says to Stu, “I am sick and tired of you choosing work over the family. You get up early and come home late. You don’t care about me or the kids. Yes, I got your message about your promotion, but I don’t care. This is all about you. You have fun all day long, and give me very little of yourself. When you are home, you fall asleep watching TV. We never talk. Well, I am thinking about going back to school and I need to talk to you about this tonight. You are going to need to financially support me in this. Right now, though, you need to pick up the kids again from their lessons. And, you need to take the check over to Molly Maids; I forgot to pay them for cleaning the house. I stayed too long at the athletic club today talking to my friends.”

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

3. Call Versus Freedom of Choice

A husband feels called to work outside the home. On the other hand, a wife views her own work outside the home as a freedom-of-choice issue—an option, not an obligation. She wants the freedom to have babies and freedom to take care of them full-time. If she decides to be a full-time mommy, she expects her husband to care for her and the family. If she wants a career, that is her choice for herself.

Do you agree or disagree? Explain.

4. What Do You Do?

Genesis 2:15 says, “The Lord God took the man and put him into the garden of Eden to cultivate it and keep it.” In Paradise, Adam was created to work!

What is the first question every man asks another man when meeting for the first time?

Agree or disagree?

1. There is something deep in the soul of a male that finds his personal identity in what he does.
2. A woman finds her identity related to her family (she is her son’s mother, to quote one famous female radio broadcaster).

5. The Helper Suitable

In Genesis 2:18 God says, “It is not good for the man to be alone; I will make him a helper suitable for him.” What does this say about God’s design for women?

When first dating your husband, did you admire him and his dreams and cheer him on about his longings to make a difference in his world? Did you come across as one who wanted to help him in these pursuits? As couples, reflect on whether this has changed in your relationship and why.

Midweek Devotional

If Only We Didn't Have Money Problems

*And my God will supply all your needs according to
His riches in glory in Christ Jesus.*

—Philippians 4:19

“Emerson, we agree with the Love & Respect message, but we have money problems. We'd have a really great marriage if we didn't have these financial pressures.”

I receive many e-mails just like this, from couples who believe lack of money is the root of their marital problems. I understand why they say that. Financial problems can cause tremendous pressures and frustrations. In fact, many marriage experts claim that money mismanagement is the main source of marital discord. Yes, money problems are very real, but they are not the root reason that friendship and intimacy fade as she feels unloved and he feels disrespected. Money squabbles don't undermine love and respect; they simply reveal unloving and disrespectful attitudes, which are the real reason why a marriage can start to wobble on *the Crazy Cycle*.

During a heated discussion about money, it is all too easy to appear hostile, sarcastic, or even contemptuous. It may be for only a few seconds, but it is enough to deflate the spirit of your spouse. Mark it down: money problems simply reveal what is in our hearts, how mature or immature we really are. Ouch! That hurts, I know, but it can be true of any of us.

Think of a toddler who throws himself kicking on the floor when he realizes he cannot have what he wants at the store. Being deprived of what he wants does not cause his temper tantrums; it simply reveals his immaturity. But what about us when we are deprived of what we want? Does being an adult guarantee that we will not overreact when we find ourselves in a financial situation contrary to our liking?

Some spouses think, if we just had more money, then we'd be happy. How different, really, is this reasoning from that of a little kid, lying there kicking on the floor, thinking, if I can just get Mom to buy me that piece of candy, then I will be happy?

Immaturity on someone's part may or may not be at least part of any couple's money problems. But what exactly do you do when once again there is more month than money and you find tempers are about to flare? All kinds of money problems can suddenly descend. The question is, will a couple confront these problems together, showing each other love and respect, or will they turn away from each other and even the Lord because of anger and frustration?

When money problems close in, we have our best opportunity to deepen our maturity. The struggle to deal with money will remain real, but how glorious to wade through this quagmire as a team and be confident in God to lead us out of the predicament. The choice is always ours. Ultimately, financial needs should cause two people to turn to Christ for His supply, and what a glorious promise in today's key verse! God will supply our needs, but He wants us to be able to tell the difference between our needs and our wants.

Suppose, for example, you need transportation to work, and you have just enough cash to pay for a pre-owned vehicle with decent miles that has been well cared for. But at the last second, you

spot a practically new convertible in mint condition. Of course, it costs a lot more, but you manage to finance it and drive off the lot feeling you got what you always wanted. Yes, you did. But in six months the big payments are putting you under severe financial stress. What happened to that promise in Philippians 4:19? It is still there. He nicely provided for your need with that older vehicle, but you wanted that convertible and you wound up with money problems.

King Solomon, who knew quite a bit about making poor decisions, said, “The stupidity of a person turns his life upside down, and his heart rages against the Lord” (Proverbs 19:3 GW). Raging against the Lord for not providing enough for our wants is childish. Instead, we can put James 1:5 into action. Does it say God will drop the money into our laps? No, but it does promise the wisdom to budget carefully and find the Lord providing a way when there seems to be no way. As He parted the Red Sea for Moses, the Lord can part our “seas of red”—if we let Him!

Prayer: Thank the Lord for any money problems you may have at the moment, because they give you the opportunity to trust Him more. Ask Him to supply your needs, as He shows you what to do to meet your financial obligations.

Action: Sort out together your needs and your wants. Be honest with each other, but always with love and respect. If your financial challenges are severe, you may want to 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).

