

# SESSION NINE

## In-Session Guide

### The Rewarded Cycle: Part 1

#### A. The Rewarded Cycle Rewards Forever, Resulting in the Unending First

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**Revelation 22:12** Behold, I am coming quickly, and **My reward is with Me**, to render to every man according to what he has done.

**James 1:12** Blessed is a man who perseveres under trial; for once he has been approved, **he will receive the crown of life**, which the Lord has promised to those who love Him.

**2 John 1:8** Watch yourselves, that you might not lose what we have accomplished, but **that you may receive a full reward**.

**Mark 12:19-25** Teacher, Moses wrote for us that if a man's brother dies, and leaves behind a wife, and leaves no child, his brother should take the wife, and raise up offspring to his brother. There were seven brothers; and the first took a wife, and died, leaving no offspring. And the second one took her, and died, leaving behind no offspring; and the third likewise; and so all seven left no offspring. Last of all the woman died also. In the resurrection, when they rise again, **which one's wife will she be? For all seven had her as a wife.** Jesus said to them, "Is this not the reason you are mistaken, that you do not understand the Scriptures, or the power of God? **For when they rise from the dead, they neither marry, nor are given in marriage, but are like angels in heaven.**

**Revelation 21:9** Come here, I shall show you the bride, **the wife of the Lamb**.

#### Unconditional Respect is Rewarded.

**Ephesians 6:7-8** With good will render service, **as to the Lord**, and not to men, **knowing that whatever good thing each one does, this he will receive back from the Lord**, whether slave or free.

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**Ephesians 5:22** Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, **as to the Lord.**

**Ephesians 5:33** ... and the wife must see to it that she **respects her husband.**

**2 Corinthians 5:10** For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, that each one may be **recompensed** for his deeds in the body, according to what he has done, whether good or bad.

### **Unconditional Love is Rewarded.**

**Matthew 5:46** For if you **love** those who **love** you, what **reward** have you? Do not even the tax-gatherers do the same?

**Luke 6:32-34** And if you **love** those who **love** you, what **credit** is [that] to you? For even sinners **love** those who **love** them. And if you do good to those who do good to you, what **credit** is [that] to you? For even sinners do the same. And if you lend to those from whom you expect to receive, what **credit** is [that] to you? Even sinners lend to sinners, in order to receive back the same [amount].

**1 Peter 2:20** For what **credit** is there if, when you sin and are harshly treated, you endure it with patience? But if when you do what is right and suffer [for it] you patiently endure it, this [finds] **favor with God.**

## **B. The Rewarded Cycle Deepens and Demonstrates Our Love and Reverence for Christ as We Do This “ \_\_\_\_\_ ” Christ.**

### **“You did it to Me” principle.**

**Matthew 25:37-40** Then the righteous will answer Him, saying, “Lord, when did we see You hungry, and feed You, or thirsty, and give You drink? And when did we see You a stranger, and invite You in, or naked, and clothe You? And when did we see You sick, or in prison, and come to You?” And the King will answer and say to them, “Truly I say to you, **to the extent that** you did it to one of these brothers of Mine, [even] the least [of them], **you did it to Me.**”

**Matthew 25:45** Then He will answer them, saying, “Truly I say to you, **to the extent that** you did not do it to one of the least of these, **you did not do it to Me.**”

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**Unconditional love reveals a husband’s imitation of Christ and thus love for Christ. He shows his love for Christ as he loves his wife.**

**Ephesians 5:2** And **walk in love, just as Christ** also loved you, and gave Himself up for us, an offering and a sacrifice to God as a fragrant aroma.

**Ephesians 5:25** Husbands, **love your wives, just as Christ** also loved the church and gave Himself up for her ...

**Ephesians 5:29** For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, **just as Christ** also [does] the church ...

**1 John 4:21** And this commandment we have from Him, that **the one who loves God should love his brother also.**

**Unconditional respect reveals a wife’s reverence for Christ. She shows her reverence for Christ as she respects her husband.**

**Titus 2:3** Older women likewise are to be **reverent in their behavior** ...

**Ephesians 5:21** And be subject to one another in the fear of Christ [“**reverence,**” NIV].

**Ephesians 5:22** Wives, [be subject] to your own husbands, **as to the Lord.**

**Ephesians 5:33** ... and the wife must see to it that she **respects her husband.**

**Ephesians 6:7** With good will render service, **as to the Lord,** and not to men.

**Titus 2:4-5** That they may encourage the young women to **love their husbands** [phileo] ... that the word of God may not be **dishonored.**

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# Discussion Questions

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

Testimony Time: Did any of you experience *the Energizing Cycle*? That is, did your respectful actions (related to **C.H.A.I.R.S.**) motivate your husband's loving responses (related to **C.O.U.P.L.E.**)?

For example, wives . . .

- Did your shoulder-to-shoulder time with him motivate your husband's desire for closeness face-to-face?
- Did your positive response to his insights motivate your husband's desire to be more understanding of you?
- Did your positive response to his leadership and authority motivate your husband's desire to cooperate as a peacemaker?

Husbands, please feel free to participate in this discussion.

Couples, share specific examples of how you saw this connection work in the past week.

### 1. The Little Engine That Could

Imagine if you were offered five million dollars to be loving and respectful toward one another for five weeks. The catch is, a film crew would follow you around 24/7 to see if you showed any signs of hostility and disdain. For five million dollars, would you refrain from being unloving and disrespectful?

This begs the question: Do we lack the ability to be loving or respectful or do we lack the incentive? Discuss.

If one decides to "rationalize" that they can't do this, this is comparable to "rational lies." We could all learn something from *The Little Engine That Could*: "I think I can, I think I can, I think I can."

### 2. Some Spouses Won't Respond\*

True or false? Sometimes a wife will not show respect for her husband no matter how hard he tries to show her unconditional love.

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But, can he continue to show unconditional love?

True or false? Sometimes a husband will not show love for his wife, no matter how hard she tries to unconditionally respect him.

But, can she continue to show unconditional respect?

In the eyes of God, no act of love and respect is wasted, even if one's spouse is unresponsive. Everything matters! What does this mean to you?

### 3. The Rewarded Cycle

When a spouse does not respond, you have the potential of getting on **the Rewarded Cycle**, which is summed up like this:

*HIS LOVE BLESSES REGARDLESS OF HER RESPECT  
HER RESPECT BLESSES REGARDLESS OF HIS LOVE*

Do you believe God blesses or rewards unconditional love and respect? Why or why not?

### 4. The Lord Rewards\*

Ephesians 6:8 says, “You know that the Lord will reward each one for whatever good they do, whether they are slave or free” (NIV). What do you think Paul means by “the Lord will reward each one”?

This truth applies to all believers, and especially to what Paul had just written earlier in Ephesians 5 about the married. Share your thoughts on the following statement: If you love your wife who is disrespectful or respect your husband who is unloving, there is a cha-ching effect in Heaven.

### 5. The Unending First Moment

On pages 273–74 of Emerson's book entitled *Love & Respect*, we read:

Envision the scene as believers ascend into Heaven and stand before Christ. To one husband He says, “Well done. You've put on love toward your disrespectful wife. You are about to receive back every act of love you did toward her.” To a wife He says, “Well done. You've put on respect toward your unloving husband. I watched. You are about to be rewarded for every act of respect.”

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Next, Jesus directs you to enter the place called Paradise (see Luke 23:43). He has brought you “safely to His heavenly kingdom” (2 Timothy 4:18). As you enter with Jesus, you experience a holy rush. “You stand in the presence of His glory, blameless with great joy” (Jude 24). At that moment, unexpectedly, you behold a gift of such great value you gasp a holy “Ahhh!” What you behold is beyond anything you could imagine. Suddenly, instantly, you are enveloped by love and glory. You are literally “in glory” never to leave (Colossians 3:4).

Not only will you be overwhelmed by that first moment, but that first moment will last forever.

In your own words, describe how incredible you think glory will be.

Consider how remarkable it is that God will reward a person forever and ever who chooses to put on love or respect for many decades, a mere blink of the eye! For the person who says, “It isn’t worth it for me to love or respect,” is this person a true believer in Christ and Paradise to come?

If this person is a believer, discuss why they might say such a thing, and how you might respond to them.

## 6. The Desire: To Touch the Heart of God

When you love or respect unconditionally regardless of the outcome, you are following God and His will for you. You aren’t primarily loving your wife or respecting your husband for what it can do to improve your marriage. Your real desire is to touch the heart of God.

In the long run, husbands and wives should be practicing Love and Respect principles first and foremost out of a desire to obey Christ and His command in Ephesians 5:33. The believer obeys in order to affect the Lord Jesus and to hear from Him, “Well done, good and faithful servant.” Do you agree or disagree?

If you agree, is this mere intellectual assent or do you find that you have a desire to touch Christ’s heart and to hear, “Well done”?

### 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.

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# Midweek Devotional

## To Overcome the Past, Focus on the Prize

*Forgetting the past and looking forward to what lies ahead, I press on to reach the end of the race and receive the heavenly prize, for which God, through Christ Jesus, is calling us.*

—Philippians 3:13–14 NLT

We are living in a time and culture that is obsessed with winning. As one Indiana high school basketball coach put it, “Oh, Hoosier basketball fans love you—whether you win or tie.”

He said it tongue in cheek, of course, but the point is well made. In any endeavor, losing is not really permitted. If you lose, especially if you get on a losing streak, people label you “loser.” When I got a chance to speak to the New York Giants players and their coaches, wives, and girlfriends about Love & Respect, I was able to chat afterward with head coach Tom Coughlin, who shared with me about enduring some rough stretches before the Giants became Super Bowl champions. We discussed a lot of the problems he had faced: pressure from the press and being hounded by fanatical fans, especially during losing streaks. As we talked, he mentioned that in the NFL coaches are hired and fired like flies swatted on the wall. If you don’t win, “So long!”

Thinking I might glean some wisdom to share with Love & Respect couples, I asked, “How do you deal with adversity?” His answer was immediate, spoken with conviction: “You keep your eye on the prize.”

Tom lives by his “eye on the prize” credo and preaches it constantly to his players and assistant coaches. When pressure mounts and difficulties multiply, you focus on the big picture and ultimate goal. Tom became head coach of the Giants in 2004, and in a town like New York nothing will do but winning the Super Bowl. Despite being the target of withering criticism and cynicism, the Giants improved each year, kept making the playoffs, and finally, on February 3, 2008, the Super Bowl championship was theirs as they upset the heavily favored New England Patriots, 17–14.

A nice sports story, you may be thinking, but exactly what does it have to do with my marriage? Quite a bit—maybe everything. You and your spouse are a team, and like any other team you have your wins and your losses. Sometimes adversity seems to hit from within and without, and you go on a losing streak. What then?

It helps to have some extra motivation to deal with setbacks, and we find it in today’s key verse: Philippians 3:13–14. If anyone knew something about dealing with adversity, it was Paul the apostle. He was hounded by those who hated him, rejected when he preached Christ, and even stoned and left for dead, but he pressed on, with his eye on the prize. And what was the prize? Not a Super Bowl ring, but a crown of righteousness awarded at the judgment seat of Christ (2 Timothy 4:8).

In basketball-crazy Indiana, high school coaches may be loved only if they “win or tie,” but because of your faith in Christ, you are loved, *win or lose*. You and your spouse can press on, knowing that something glorious awaits you if you persevere. No matter what form adversity takes,

no matter what the setback might be, *do not see yourself as a loser*. Your race is not over. You have another day to run.

In a letter to the sports-happy Corinthians, Paul observes: “All athletes are disciplined in their training. They do it to win a prize that will fade away, but we do it for an eternal prize” (1 Corinthians 9:25 NLT). The question for every Love & Respect couple is, how important, really, is that eternal prize? When you fail to love or respect and *the Crazy Cycle* roars into action, what will you do? Become your own worst critics, because this Love & Respect thing seems just too difficult? Not if you take the long view. Marriage is not a fifty-yard dash; it is part of the marathon all Christ followers run. As Paul says, forget the past with its setbacks and its losses, and press on. The prize is waiting.

**Prayer:** Ask the Lord to help you overcome the pain of the past, real as it still may be, as you focus on heaven’s prize. Ask Him for the courage and perseverance to keep your eye on the prize—His upward call in Christ Jesus. Thank the Father that He loves you—win, lose, or tie.

**Action:** Agree together that when setbacks occur, you will say to each other, “Forget yesterday’s loss. Let’s focus on today’s opportunity, because of tomorrow’s prize.”

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