



## Calvary Chapel Tustin Couples Fellowship

### *Love & Respect*

#### Session 1: Chapters 1-4

This session introduces what is referred to as the Crazy Cycle—how it starts, and why it often continues indefinitely. Most importantly, you will come to understand how to slow the Crazy Cycle, and eventually bring it to a halt.

**Note:** The following questions and discussion topics are primarily for you to answer and discuss privately as a couple. Some of these topics may also be discussed in a group setting at the next meeting. In the group sessions, the following ground rules apply: (1) Do not share anything with the group that would embarrass your spouse; (2) You may pass on any question you don't want to discuss.

#### Chapter 1: “The Simple Secret to a Better Marriage”

1. On page 1 of *Love & Respect*, Emerson “absolutely disagrees” with the Beatle’s conclusion that “all you need is love.” He goes on to say that five out of ten marriages are ending in divorce because love alone is not enough. Love is vital for the wife, but what we have missed is the husband’s need for respect. *Love & Respect* is all about how the wife can fulfill her need to be loved by giving her husband what he needs—respect.

Do you agree or disagree with the paragraph above? Can a wife get the love she needs simply by showing her husband respect? What if he doesn’t deserve respect? Do you think Emerson is talking about conditional respect, or unconditional respect? Put down some of your thoughts here:



Compare what you wrote. Be aware that this very first question in the study could possibly be a sensitive area for you, so be cautious as you declare your “firm opinion.” If you disagree with each other on the answers to the questions above, you may want to hold off your discussion until later in the study.

2. On pages 2-4 of the book, are different testimonial statements by wives who have attended a Love & Respect conference, or read Emerson’s books:

*“I never realized how important, how life-giving, respect was to my husband.”*

*“Just a few days ago, I decided to tell my husband that I respect him. It felt so awkward to say the words, but I went for it and the reaction was unbelievable!...I watched his demeanor change right before my eyes.”*

*“I wrote my husband two letters about why I respect him. I am amazed at how it has softened him in his response to me.”*

*“I GOT IT! God granted me the power of this revelation of respecting my husband...[it] has changed everything...my approach, my response, my relationship to God and my husband.”*

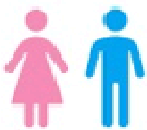
From your point of view as a spouse, what do these statements say to you?



As a husband I think:



As a wife I think:



Compare your answers and talk about what you have covered so far. Some couples may find it easier to talk than others—do not force it; be sensitive to each other’s feelings. Your study is just getting started, and you should have many good times sharing as you get farther into *Love & Respect*.

3. In an Introduction to Part One (page 6), Emerson writes:

“I wrote this book out of desperation that turned to inspiration. As a pastor, I counseled married couples and could not solve their problems. The major problem heard from wives was, ‘He doesn’t love me.’ Wives are made to love, want to love, and expect love. Many husbands fail to deliver. But as I kept studying Scripture and counseling couples, I finally saw the other half of the equation. Husbands weren’t saying it much, but they were thinking, *she doesn’t respect me*. Husbands are made to be respected, want respect and expect respect. Many wives fail to deliver. The result is that five out of ten marriages land in divorce court (and that includes evangelical Christians).

“As I wrestled with the problem, I finally saw a connection: without love from him, she reacts without respect; without respect from her, he reacts without love. Around and around it goes. I call it the Crazy Cycle--marital craziness that has thousands of couples in its grip.”

You will be learning and talking about the Crazy Cycle a lot more as this study progresses, but for now, understand that Crazy Cycles come in all shapes and sizes, as Emerson's daily mail attests. One man caught in a severe Crazy Cycle wrote:

*"We were in the middle of one of our fights...My wife was saying things that made me fume. She had no respect for me at all. I knew she loved me, but her belligerence was too much. Fed up, I turned and went into my computer room. I left her screaming in the kitchen."*

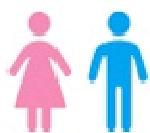
Granted, the above letter describes a marriage with the crazy cycle out of control. But there are other ways to be on the Crazy Cycle or to start one. Here are three more examples based on mail Emerson has received:

A husband and wife are looking at jewelry together while shopping. The husband points excitedly and says, "Look, honey, I think those earrings are what you're looking for!" Her condescending response: "No, they aren't! Those are yellow gold and I don't like yellow gold. I want white gold!"

A wife greets her husband as he comes in from work. She wants to share what happened that day while she visited a friend. He cuts her short with: "Don't bother me. Traffic was a nightmare. I just want to kick back and watch the news until dinner."

A husband and wife have had a disagreement (the same one they usually have). She wants to talk about it; he clams up. As she badgers him to share his feelings, he picks up a newspaper and is soon engrossed in the sports page.

Choose one or more of the situations reported above. What is going on? Why could the husband feel disrespected or the wife feel unloved?



Compare notes on the examples above of how the Crazy Cycle can start up (or just keep going). If you don't seem to have a lot to discuss at this point, move on. You are just getting introduced to what the Crazy Cycle is and how it affects marriages.

4. What is your response to the term, Crazy Cycle? Does it seem to apply to your marriage—at least some of the time?

Yes

No

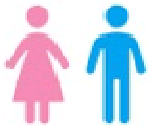
Maybe

I think:

Check any of the following that apply.

**I see the Crazy Cycle starting up when:**

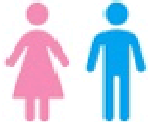
- a. My spouse appears unreasonable
- b. I appear unreasonable
- c. My spouse doesn't make sense
- d. I don't make sense
- e. My spouse is harsh and/or critical
- f. I am harsh and/or critical
- g. My spouse is inconsiderate
- h. I am inconsiderate
- i. We argue about sex, money, in-laws, or \_\_\_\_\_
- j. My spouse won't talk
- k. I won't talk
- l. My spouse talks too much
- m. I talk too much
- n. Other (describe your experience or viewpoint):



Share your answers. Take note of what each of you has checked, but do not get into a lengthy discussion at this time. The main idea is that you both recognize how either of you could start the Crazy Cycle

**5.** In Song of Solomon 2:15, the lovers resolve to “Catch the foxes...the little foxes that spoil the vines.” In other words, they don't want anything to spoil their relationship. What are some “little foxes” that threaten to spoil your marriage and keep the Crazy Cycle rolling along?

Though we will have “trouble” in marriage (1 Corinthians 7:28), that doesn’t mean we should assume trouble is always inevitable. Some trouble can be caused because we have not dealt with the “little foxes” that we know are there. What could you do to reduce some of the crazy negativity that causes unnecessary trouble? Write down some different steps you can take to drive out the “little foxes.”



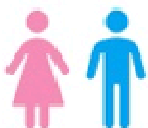
Share ideas on how to go “fox hunting.” Each spouse will do well to think of the things he or she needs to do, not what the other spouse needs to do.

6. In “The ‘Secret’ Hidden in Ephesians 5:33” (pages 14-15), Emerson explains how God helped him see the secret to defeating the Crazy Cycle. This secret is in Ephesians 5:33 (NIV):

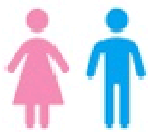
***However, each one of you must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.***

In “How God Revealed the Love & Respect Connection” (pages 15-17), Emerson explains how his study of Ephesians 5:33 began to show him a definite link between love and respect. He realized that a husband is to obey the command to love, even if his wife does not obey the command to respect, and a wife is to obey the command to respect, even if the husband does not obey the command to love. As Emerson saw it, Ephesians 5:33 didn’t leave much wiggle room. A husband can’t say, “I will love my wife after she respects me.” Nor can a wife say, “I will respect my husband after he loves me” (see page 16). A husband’s love for his wife must be unconditional, and a wife’s respect for her husband must also be unconditional.

What do you think? Is there any “wiggle room” in Ephesians 5:33? Many wives believe (some with good reason) that their husbands don’t deserve respect. What is Paul saying to wives who may feel like this deep down?



Keep in mind each other’s comfort zone as you discuss these issues. The key point Emerson is making is Ephesians 5:33 clearly teaches that husbands must unconditionally love their wives and wives must unconditionally respect their husbands. 1 Peter 3:1-2 also teaches unconditional respect for husbands. This can be new and striking information for a wife, so the husband should be sensitive to her need to process this idea over time.



Talk about what this chapter has been saying to both of you. Share any “light bulb moments,” questions, or concerns you may have. Perhaps you are ready to make the same decision about each other’s good intentions that Emerson and Sarah have made (see page 20). Perhaps each one of you isn’t quite ready. Wives, in particular, if your husband seems unwilling or uncomfortable about taking this step

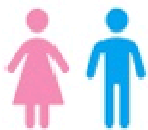
so early in your study together, do not be critical or disrespectful. Do not rush something like this. Be willing to pray or think about it. Both of you may need more time, or more information about the Crazy Cycle and why people can’t seem to slow it down. As Emerson says, there is much more he wants to tell you. In Chapter Two, he will talk about how husbands and wives can learn to communicate, despite their differences as men and women.

## Chapter 2: “To Communicate, Decipher the Code”

1. On page 25, Emerson opens Chapter Two by asserting that husbands and wives communicate in ‘code’ and must learn to decipher the messages they send to each other. What do you think?

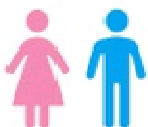
How often does your spouse seem to communicate in a “code” that is hard to decipher or understand?

Constantly\_\_\_      Often\_\_\_      Now and Then\_\_\_      Seldom\_\_\_



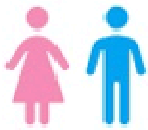
Discuss this question gently and sensitively, particularly if your answers fall into the “constantly” or “often” range. If you do have a communication problem, this chapter is designed to get you talking about it and learning how to work on it. Guard against getting into an argument about “who communicates the worst.”

2. Read the story of the “Tenth Anniversary Card” that turned out to be a birthday card (page 25-27.) When the wife responded in anger, what coded message was she sending to her husband? What coded message was he sending to his wife when he responded defensively by saying, “I made an honest mistake; give me a break?” How did they start the evening anticipating a wonderful tenth anniversary and wind up on the Crazy Cycle?



Compare notes with your spouse. Talk about how the couple wound up on the Crazy Cycle on a night when they should have been celebrating.

3. In “Why do Couples Communicate in Code?” (page 30), Emerson paraphrases a well-known explanation of why and how we send messages in code and don’t communicate: “What I say is not what you hear, and what you think you heard is not what I meant at all.” Read the story about Emerson and Sarah almost getting into a serious argument about who was listening to what on the radio. How did Emerson finally break the codes they were sending and stop the problem from escalating?



You can learn a lot about communicating as you discuss your answers to this question. The way Emerson stopped the Crazy Cycle from spinning was to realize he was not being clear (and not very loving either). Once he broke the pattern of miscommunication, he and Sarah were able to understand each other and prevent sparks from becoming a fire.

4. On page 40, Emerson gives the secret to at least start decoding your spouse’s messages: “Whenever a wife is complaining, criticizing, or crying, she is sending her encoded message: ‘I want your love!’ And whenever a husband is speaking harshly, or sometimes not speaking at all, he is sending his encoded message: ‘I want your respect.’”



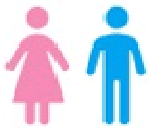
How well do you decode your wife’s complaints? Though not all of her complaints are cries for love (she can just be having a “bad hair day”), it helps to think first that her complaint might be rooted in her cry for love. Describe a time when you heard her cry for love underneath her complaint and responded lovingly. (If you can’t think of any, just write your thoughts about how willing you are to listen better and decode her complaints.)

To complete this exercise, fill in the following: “The next time my wife complains or criticizes, I will show her love by...”



How well do you decode your husband’s actions or words when he needs respect? Silence or harshness are not always cries for respect, but they can be. Sometimes pride, or the inability to verbalize his need for respect can keep the need covered. Never forget that his “Respect Tank” is there and that you could be stepping on his air hose. Can you think of any times recently when you heard his cry for respect underneath his silence or harshness? (If you can’t, just write your honest thoughts about how willing you are to decode his behavior and try to show respect.)

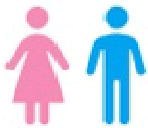
To complete this exercise, fill in the following: “The next time my husband appears unloving or harsh, I will show him respect by...”



Talk about what this chapter has been saying to both of you. Share any “light bulb moments,” questions, or differing perceptions.

### Chapter 3: “Why She Won’t Respect; Why He Won’t Love”

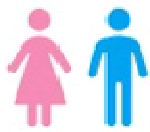
1. No one has ever expressed the Crazy Cycle dilemma better than the husband whose letter appears on pages 41-42 of *Love & Respect*. Read his letter carefully. What do you hear him saying from deep within his soul? What is his wife saying about him and their marriage? What do you think it does to this man to hear, “You’re not the man I thought you were?”



Compare notes on how you think a husband might feel when told, “You’re not the man I thought you were.” Then, to add a “fair and balanced” tone to your discussion, also consider this question: “What do you think it does to a woman when her husband angrily delivers his own message, which blames her for their problems?”

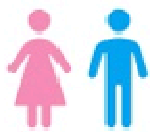
2. Read, “Unconditional Respect-An Oxymoron?” (pages 42-44). In his many years of counseling, Emerson has often heard women say they have never heard the words “unconditional respect” put together in the context of a relationship (page 43). To these women, unconditional respect sounds like an oxymoron (a term created by putting together two words that appear to be incongruous or contradictory). Why do you think so many women feel this way? Choose from the following ideas, or write your own:

- a. They think respect is something a husband has to earn.
- b. They think husbands are so unloving, they don’t deserve respect.
- c. They think that giving a husband unconditional respect is giving him license to do anything he wants.
- d. I think:



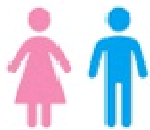
Discuss the answers you chose above. You may also want to tackle questions like the following: Why does telling a husband he has to earn his wife's respect put him in a lose-lose situation? What is the difference between showing respect and feeling respect? Is it okay for a wife to show respect, even though she doesn't feel respect? What do facial expressions and tone of voice have to do with how a wife shows her husband unconditional respect?

3. In "It All Goes Back to Pink and Blue" (page 45), a wife is quoted: "We think so differently, I don't even relate to what he considers respect (or the lack of it)." How could this wife adjust her pink sunglasses and pink hearing aids so she might begin to understand her husband's need for respect? Would it help if she remembered her husband's need for respect is just as great as her need for love? At the same time, how could this woman's husband adjust his blue sunglasses and hearing aids? How crucial is it that he responds patiently to his wife's struggle with the new idea of "unconditional respect" for him, especially if he has done things to deeply hurt her? Write your thoughts here:



Talk about your respective perceptions of "respect." What positive things could happen if each of you made a slight adjustment?

4. Under "Husbands: Do Not Say, 'I Told You So!'" (page 54), Emerson cautions husbands that the concept of unconditional respect can be a "huge piece of information" for a wife to process. Why should a husband *never* say, "I told you so!" or try to use unconditional respect as a weapon?

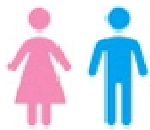


Talk about what each of you is thinking and feeling. Obviously, a wise husband will not "rub it in" if his wife is struggling to process what Scripture teaches. Also, read together on page 55 the two letters from husbands after they attended a Love and Respect Conference. What insights did each man receive, and how did this information affect his attitude toward his wife?

#### **Chapter 4: "What Men Fear Most Can Keep the Crazy Cycle Spinning"**

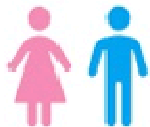
1. As he starts Chapter Four on page 57 of the book, Emerson discusses a powerful factor that can keep the Crazy Cycle spinning: the male fear of criticism, and especially contempt. Men may look powerful and impervious to their wives' words, but underneath they are very vulnerable. The male species is often labeled as the one that likes to get into fights, and as Emerson pointed out in Chapter Three, it is the male who primarily responds to the call to war, to protect home and family.

Nonetheless, males do not handle conflict with their wives well at all when they feel disrespected (see survey questions results, page 58). Emerson writes: “Men know deep down that their wives love them, but they are not at all sure that their wives respect them.” Are men being overly sensitive or perhaps a bit arrogant by being so concerned about being respected? Write what you honestly think:



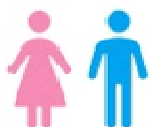
Share what you wrote with each other. Also, read together Emerson’s idea that among men there is an “honor code”—from boyhood men learn there are certain things men just don’t say to one another. A woman will talk to a husband in the home in a way a man would never talk to him. “He can’t believe she can be so belligerent, so disrespectful” (bottom of page 59). Does your experience as a husband bear this out? As a wife, do you think you talk to your husband in a “belligerent” manner?

**2.** Read “Are You a Criticizer or a Stonewaller?” (pages 60-61), then answer these questions: Who is the criticizer and who is the stonewaller in your marriage? Why do men (as a rule) stonewall their wives?



This can be a delicate question for a husband and wife to discuss, so go easy on each other. Be sure you both define *stonewalling* the same way. Simply put, stonewalling is refusing to talk, period.

**3.** In “A Wife’s Self-Image May Depend on Her Husband’s Approval” (pages 62-63), read the letter from the wife who realizes that negative confrontation (being way too demanding and critical of her husband) doesn’t work. As you analyze her confession of mistakes, what would you suggest that might work much better?



Compare your findings on the wife’s letter. Discussing this question can be a real opportunity to work together positively to understand how Love and Respect principles apply to your marriage. Can both of you fill in the Crazy Cycle maxim below, without going to the diagram on page 5 of *Love & Respect*?

Without \_\_\_\_\_ she reacts without \_\_\_\_\_.

and

Without \_\_\_\_\_ he reacts without \_\_\_\_\_.

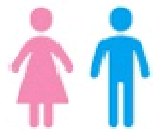
4. On page 71, Emerson states he believes married couples are at a crossroads. Then he asks some penetrating questions. These questions appear below, restated to apply directly to you and your spouse:



Will you appreciate your husband's need for respect, or will you denounce his feelings? Will you discover that the best way to love a husband is by respecting him in ways that are meaningful to him? Or, will you focus on what you might feel is the key to a happy marriage—your womanly feelings—and dismiss his needs as antiquated chauvinism or male arrogance?



Will you appreciate your wife's need for love or just continue to ignore her feelings? Will you discover the best way to love your wife is to look beyond her criticisms and complaints to see why she isn't feeling loved? Or will you just cower before her apparent contempt and retreat to the shelter of your "stone wall?"



Spend some time in prayer as you answer these questions. It may be that you and your spouse are at the crossroads Emerson mentions. Will you take the fork labeled "Love and Respect?" Read the letter from the wife who, together with her husband, took that fork (page 72). At this point in your study, are you gaining confidence that the simple message of *Love & Respect* can really work? Why or why not? These questions can be heavy for both of you to deal with, but they can pay off handsomely in slowing and stopping the Crazy Cycle. Be honest, but sensitive to each other and share from the heart.

**My current thoughts about our marriage:**