



Calvary Chapel Tustin Couples Fellowship

Love & Respect

Session 2: Chapters 5-7

This session continues with a discussion of what is referred to as the Crazy Cycle, and deals with some of the most frequently voiced issues raised by thousands of couples that have been helped to slow or stop the Cycle.

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 5: “She Fears Being a Doormat; He’s Tired of ‘Just Not Getting It’ ”

1. In the opening paragraph of Chapter Five (page 73), Emerson relates that during the many years of counseling couples, he has observed that old Crazy Cycle habits are hard to break. She may want to change, but “the rat needs to earn my respect” attitude dies hard. He would like to be different, but he fears looking like an unloving fool--again. As you begin this session, where are you on this continuum?



Do you have any fears of being a “doormat” if you really try to respect your husband unconditionally? Write your honest thoughts here:

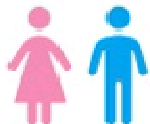


Do you have any fears of looking like a fool if you try to unconditionally love your wife and fail--or if she doesn't respond with respect: Write your honest thoughts here:



One (or both) of you may feel a little uncomfortable discussing your answer(s) to the questions above. Admitting your fears and then talking about them can be beneficial, but only if both of you are willing to share your hearts.

2. The concerns described in Question 1 raise another major question that spouses have. Read “Who Should Make the First Move?” (pages 74-75) carefully. What is Emerson’s answer to spouses who wonder: “Should I make the first move?” Why does Emerson claim that the spouse who makes the first move can rarely lose?



This is another question that you may feel reluctant to discuss. Even so, being willing to discuss this is, in a sense, being willing to make the first move! If one of you is willing to take the risk, the rewards will be well worth it.

3. In “Not a Doormat but a Woman with Power” (pages 75-77), Emerson attempts to assure wives he is not a chauvinist in disguise, trying to lure them into a life of subservience. Read this material carefully, then go down the “list of a wife’s fears” below and check off anything that you believe is a concern in your marriage.

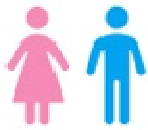


Which of the following fears concerns you to some degree at this time?

- If I respect him, he won’t really be more loving.
- If I respect him, I will wind up a doormat, and doing whatever he wants.
- If I respect him, I’ll have to bury my brains, never think for myself or speak my mind.
- If I respect him, he will ignore how I hurt and where I’m vulnerable.
- If I respect him, he’ll become arrogant and self-centered.
- If I respect him, I’ll have to do something I don’t really feel, and that’s impossible.
- My fear, in my own words, is:

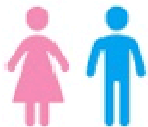


Do you see anything in the above list that may be of concern to your wife? Check those concerns and be ready to talk about them.



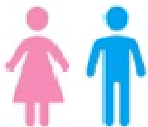
This question provides plenty of opportunity for sensitive sharing. Wife, if you don't have any of these fears, you should tell your husband, which will be a big encouragement to him. Husband, if your wife does have fears about showing you unconditional respect, you can do several things: First, be thankful that she is courageous and humble enough to tell you. Second, remember she is a good-willed woman who wants your love. Third, do not dismiss her fears as "silly" or just say, "Oh, you don't have to worry about that." Fourth, seek to understand her and empathize as much as possible.

4. According to "Not a doormat but a Woman with Power" (pages 75-77), one of the ways a wife feels empowered is when she corrects or "mothers" her husband (page 76). According to Emerson's counsel, why doesn't this work? Finish his observation on page 77: when a wife continues to mother, correct, or goad a husband into changing, she wins the battle but loses



As you discuss this, be careful of stepping on each other's air hose. If the two of you can share without arguing, it will be helpful for him to explain when he feels he is being "corrected and mothered," and for her to learn how she can come across a little differently as she constantly sees things that need putting right. Remember, if you can avoid battling each other, and see each other as an ally, not an enemy, you will win the war of the Crazy Cycle.

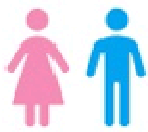
5. Read the story of how "This Husband Decoded in Jail" (pages 82-85). As he spent the entire weekend in jail, this man had an "epiphany experience" that helped him to finally understand his wife's angry messages. What stands out in this story from your view as a spouse?



Compare your answers, which may be quite different. Concerning this story, Emerson says: "Husbands and wives please note: physical violence against a wife is reprehensible and evil. Sharing this man's letter should not be construed as sanctioning such evil in any way. The story shows what can happen when God work's in a husband's life and he learns how to decode his wife."

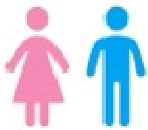
Chapter 6: "She Worries About Being a Hypocrite; He Complains, 'I Get No Respect'"

1. Chapter Six opens with a letter from a woman who was trying to respect her alcoholic husband, but she did not "want to be a hypocrite." How does Emerson answer this concern (pages 87-88)? Why does continuing with criticism and anger only mean that a wife shoots herself in both feet?



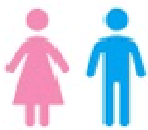
This could be a delicate question, especially if the wife has any feelings about being a hypocrite as she tries to show her husband unconditional respect. Go slowly and gently and remember that practicing Love and Respect isn't about feelings; it's about doing what the Scriptures teach.

2. On page 89, Emerson tells of having asked a wife: "Are you afraid that your respectful manner will lessen your chances of motivating your husband to change?" Read her response, then write your own. According to Emerson, "Obeying God's Word does not make a wife a powerless hypocrite." Do you agree? Explain.



Husband, while this question is directed to your wife, write your answer as well, then discuss it with her. As your wife shows you respect, especially when you are not as loving as you could be, do you see her as "power-less" or "power-full"? Why?

3. Read the letter from a wife at the bottom of page 90, plus the paragraph at the top of page 91. What did she get out of being respectful? What has she made sure to do in response to all his loving acts? How do you think the husband feels when he comes home to a clean house, a hot meal, and a wife who looks good and acts like she is happy to see him?



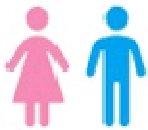
You and your mate may see this question as rather simple, not to mention that it flies in the face of culture where a stay-at-home-spouse is unrealistic in many households. Nonetheless, there are principles here any couple can apply. Today's woman expects her emotional needs to be met, even if she has a career, because her traditional need for love has not changed. Conversely, a husband has a traditional need for respect, but when he expresses it, some want to tar and feather him. If the way your spouse wants to be treated seems unrealistic or outdated, look beyond all the cultural baggage and see the deeper need to be loved or respected. Talk about why the Love and Respect Connection is so simple, yet sometimes so difficult. Why can it be so powerful when used by two good-willed people?

4. In "I used to say, 'I'll Show Her!'" (pages 92-94), Emerson confesses how he reacted badly to Sarah when feeling disrespected. Then he discovered a way to motivate her to be more respectful, which in turn motivated him to be more loving! Read this section carefully, and find the combination of short sentences Emerson used to develop what amounts to the Love and Respect 'I' Message." Also turn to Appendix A, page 306, "To Communicate Feelings or Start Discussion," where an example is given for the wife as well as the husband. To start memorizing the "Love and Respect 'I' Message," fill in the blanks below:

As a husband, you can say: That felt _____. Did I just come across as _____?”

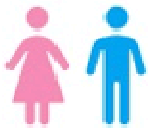
As a wife, you can say: “That felt _____. Did I just come across as _____?”

Note on page 306 what you are to say if your spouse answers yes to your question. Is the “Love and Respect ‘I’ Message” something you can use in your marriage? Write your thoughts:



Compare your answers and also discuss what Emerson and Sarah have done when angry, which is stated in Ephesians 4:26 (see “It Works-Even on Our Bad Days,” page 94). Read this verse together. Could this verse change the way you deal with anger?

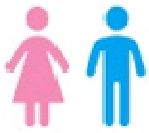
5. Read the story of “The Husband Who Never Stopped Loving” (pages 97-99). Note two or three things that stand out for you in the wife’s letter about how her husband wouldn’t give up on her, even when it seemed hopeless.



Compare notes, then talk and pray about your own marriage. Emerson adds this note on the value of prayer: “As you go through this study of *Love & Respect*, you may have moments of feeling overwhelmed. All husbands and wives who are believers in Christ have His promise: “Come to me all who are weary and heavy-laden, and I will give you rest” (Matthew 11:28). And Peter adds: “[cast] all your anxiety on Him, because He cares for you” (1 Peter 5:7), If you are feeling weary and heavy laden, will you pray to the Father? Will you cast your anxieties on Him? Do this because He cares for you. Jesus, the Perfect One, depended on the Father while on earth. All God’s children are free to do the same. Depend on God for all your needs. He is eager to help you!”

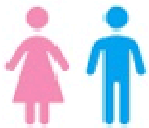
Chapter 7: “She Thinks She Can’t Forgive Him; He Says, ‘Nobody Can Love That Woman’”

1. As he has counseled wives over the years, Emerson often hears comments like these: “Forgive him? Yes, I know what Jesus said about seventy times seven, and I’ve forgiven him at least that many times! But when is he going to ask me for forgiveness? When is he ever going to care about how much he hurts me? Is there some truth in comments like these? Shouldn’t a husband ask for forgiveness in order to be forgiven? Can granting forgiveness, even when it isn’t wanted, really help the situation at all? Read the opening pages of Chapter Seven (101-3). Then put down your response to Emerson’s teaching:



Talk about what it means to forgive. Do you agree with Emerson's assertion that when you forgive someone for being unloving, you give up your right to hold a grudge? Note the letter from the wife on page 103. What insights does she provide that might make forgiveness possible, even if it doesn't seem practical? Husbands, don't skip this material because it seems to be directed to wives. You may need to do some forgiving yourself, or perhaps it is time you asked for forgiveness. Forgiving someone, or being forgiven, can be a humbling experience. Each of you should try to be sensitive to the other's needs at this time.

2. At the bottom of page 105, Emerson writes, "Nothing is easier than judging, nothing is harder than forgiving, and nothing can reap more blessings." Read the letters from the wife whose husband strayed into adultery (pages 104-5). How did she find it in her heart to forgive him? What was her driving motivation?



Compare notes on what you see in this woman's letters. She faced having to decide to forgive her husband at the hardest level: for his immorality. For the woman who wrote the letters, her strongest motivation was, obviously, her faith and trust in God. She had no trust for her husband, and little or no inclination to forgive. But when she did, he responded. Emerson adds, "Situations like this do not always have such a happy ending, but God calls us to obey Him and His Word, one step at a time, and to accept what happens as His will."

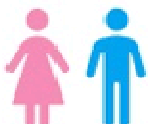
3. Read page 106, "If You Fail to Love Her, Rebound," then respond to the following:



How good a rebounder are you? (In other words, how well do you bounce back when you are unloving and get clobbered with contempt?)

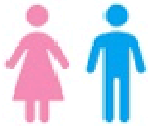


How good a rebounder is your husband when you criticize him with good reason? (For that matter, how good a rebounder are you when he reacts to your disrespect?)



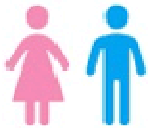
Talk together about Emerson's "rebound" analogy. Even if you know nothing about basketball, the principle is there to use: a good rebounder is determined to try again and again. Do one or both of you need to be a better rebounder?

4. In “Marriage--A Two-Become-One Proposition” (pages 109-12), Emerson claims that when couples practice Love and Respect, “Bad marriages become good, boring marriages become exciting, and good marriages become better.” Note these words from a husband who from all appearances had a good marriage (and even was conducting marriage seminars with his wife): “On a scale of 1-10, we were living with a 5-6 marriage most of the time.” When he and his wife started making Love and Respect a priority, that number went way up. How would you rate your marriage right now on a scale of 1-10, with 10 being “great?” Our Marriage is a _____.



Be aware that this question could be difficult to discuss. Be sensitive to each other and willing to hear the other person’s reasons for the number he/she chose. Concentrate on agreeing about how you can work together to make that number higher.

5. In “From the Crazy Cycle to the Energizing Cycle” (pages 112-13), Emerson reminds spouses that you can slow or stop the Crazy Cycle, but you can never get off completely. He and Sarah know they have to work continually at controlling the Crazy Cycle, and some of the best ways they have learned to do this are stated in capsule form in *Love & Respect* Appendix A, especially in “Always Ask Yourself” and “Things to Remember (pages 305-6). Take time to go over these suggestions now, and write down several ideas that stand out as things you want to practice as you move into Part II—The Energizing Cycle.



As you complete your study of Part I: The Crazy Cycle, share and pray together concerning these questions:

1. How much progress have we made in slowing and stopping the Crazy Cycle?
2. What can we do, as a couple, to keep the Crazy Cycle under control?

My current thoughts about our marriage: