

*The Fruit of the Spirit is
love, joy, peace, patience,
Gal 5:22*

Grows



Love Grows

Themes

Anger

Forever Love

Time with God

Communication

You are the Greatest

Forgiveness

Self-Image

God's Perspective

Forever Friends

Christmas Gifts



This resource was originally compiled and prepared by Eleanor and Raymond Roy of ME 132 Weekend. The original 10 sessions were conducted during the Love Circle Sessions of the ME 132 Weekend members and was found to be helpful for the growth in spousal relationship of married couples.

Love Circle Link Service Team has modified this resource for the use of today's Love Circles. We are deeply grateful for their inspiring contribution.

Hope your Love Circle will benefit from this added resource..

Love,

Love Circle Link Service Team.

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Theme: Anger

Love Song : (Chose a suitable Love Song)

Opening Prayer : (Lead by Host Couple)

Purpose: To discover ways to express anger in the family.

Ever so often we get angry at something done or not done. We will look into the feeling of anger, understand it more and discover ways to deal with our anger.

Activity One

Read through the 8 statements and state whether you Agree or Disagree on the ways you express anger most of the time. You have 3 minutes to complete the exercise. Share your answers with your spouse.

Anger

1. I find it hard to curb my temper.	Agree/Disagree
2. I often rationalize when I am angry	Agree/Disagree
3. When I am angry I enter into a cold war.	Agree/Disagree
4. I hate feeling angry with my spouse.	Agree/Disagree
5. When I am angry, I keep it until I cannot take it and then I tend to explode all of a sudden.	Agree/Disagree
6. I seldom get angry with my spouse.	Agree/Disagree
7. I usually vent my anger with my spouse on others.	Agree/Disagree
8. I express anger in very negative ways (e.g. shouting, slamming the door, throwing things, walking out etc)	Agree/Disagree

Activity 2 – Personal Reflection (10 minutes)

Read silently these readings. Reflect on God's word silently. There will be no sharing.

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Ephesians 4:26-27

If you become angry, do not let your anger lead you into sin, and do not stay angry all day. Don't give the Devil a chance.

James 1:19-20 - Remember this, my dear brother! Everyone must be quick to listen, but slow to speak and slow to become angry. Man's anger does not achieve God's righteous purpose.

Matthew 5:21-24

You have heard that people were told in the past, 'Do not commit murder; anyone who does will be brought to trial.' 22But now I tell you; whoever is angry with his brother will be brought to trial, whoever calls his brother 'You good-for-nothing!' will be brought before the Council, and whoever calls his brother a worthless fool will be in danger of going to the fire of hell. So if you are about to offer your gift to God at the altar and there you remember that your brother has something against you, 24leave your gift there in front of the altar, go at once and make peace with your brother, and then come back and offer your gift to God."

Question: Which text touches you most? Share your reflection.

Activity Three (Optional)

I will now read out to you two situations where you may have cause to be angry and let us discuss quickly how you will respond to these situations,

Situation 1

Mrs Ivy Tan planned a surprise birthday party for her husband George on Monday night. She called some mends to her house and got a food caterer to supply dinner for 50 persons. On that eventful night, forgetting his-birthday, George and his office colleagues left work and headed for directly for a Karaoke Lounge. He returned home at about 11pm that

Question: How can you respond to this situation more positively if you were Mr/Mrs Tan?

Situation 2

You are late for work one morning and barely have enough time to rush to your office in your car for an important meeting. As you get into your car, you find that the petrol gauge is on empty. Your spouse had used the car last night and had not topped up the petrol. You now have to stop at the petrol station and be

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even later for your meeting.

Question: How can you respond to this situation differently?

Dialogue Question: Recall a recent incident when you felt angry with your spouse? Share your thoughts and feelings in loving detail. What were your options? How can you do better?

Share with your love letter with your spouse.

Group sharing on Dialogue question

Wrap Up - Leader to read.

In getting angry, we get all heated up and it is not good for our health. Take two eggs for instance, one boiled till its hard boiled and the other fresh from the fridge. The one from the fridge is versatile. I can enjoy this fresh egg in many varied ways. I can fry it., scramble it, boil it, make cakes and several other delicious things whereas, with the hard boiled egg, I can only make a sandwich or an egg salad with it. In response to heat, this egg has hardened and has very limited use.

In tonight's session, we have seen that scripture tells us we should be slow to anger and learn to forgive yourself and your spouse as soon as possible.

Closing Prayer

Next Meeting:

Theme: Forever Love

Love Song

Opening Prayer : (Host Couple)

Purpose: To translate love as defined by God into action in our couple relationship

Love is greatly misunderstood in our society. Television, songs and the internet today creates a misconception of about true love. Let us examine in our couple relationship which of the following applies. You have 3 minutes. No couple sharing.

Activity 1- Against each sentence below, tick those that apply to your perception of your relationship with your spouse right now.

1. Love is lust. ()
2. Love is commitment. ()
3. Love is sex. ()
4. Love is hard work. ()
5. Love is security. ()
6. Love is selfless. ()
7. Love is hurting. ()
8. Love is not counting the cost. ()
9. Love is immediate. ()
10. Love is sacrifice. ()
11. Love is healing. ()
12. Love is give and take. ()

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(Distribute Handout - Activity Two. One sheet per person)

Activity Two

Instruction: Host couple to give one definition of love based on Corinthians below, each to different couples based on number of couples present. Each couple has to put up a skit to illustrate a common situation where one spouse can demonstrate the positive virtue as portrayed in that definition.

Read the following passage from

1 Corinthians 13:4-7

Love is patient
Love is kind
Love is not jealous
Love is not conceited
love is not ill-mannered
Love is not irritable
love does not keep records of wrongs
Love is happy with the truth
Love never gives up
Love always hopes
and patience never fail.(15)

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Activity 3 (Optional)

As a couple tick which of the following applies to your relationship most of the time. Put a circle on areas which you feel you can continue to improve.

1.	Love begins as a friendship, takes root and grows into something deeper.	
2.	We accept each other unconditionally.	
3.	We trust each other completely	
4.	We enjoy being together around other people as well as being alone with each other.	
5.	We encourage each other to spend time with each other's families.	
6.	We enjoy talking together.	
7	We give each other private time and space.	
8.	We keep our talks confidential.	
9.	We want the best for each other most of the time.	
10.	The other areas of our lives have become fruitful because of our relationship.	
11.	We enjoy doing things for each other without expecting anything in return.	
12	We spend sharing our life as a couple to reach out to other couples.	

Dialogue question: Share a time when I felt loved by my spouse. Share your feelings as you recall the time in loving detail.

Couple sharing

Group sharing

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Wrap Up.

Many great writers throughout history has not come to an agreed definition of what True Love is. Each writer has found some difficulty 'in defining what True Love is. Perhaps it is easier to say what True Love is not. That is why we see in 1 Corinthians 13, describing more of what True Love is not.

True Love is a result of each spouse having needs met through positive behaviour and then reciprocating through positive behaviour. When you do loving things for your partner, he/she experiences the relationship as rewarding and is more likely to do and say loving things that pleases you. '

You may think that doing loving and affectionate things for your spouse is 'forced' or 'mechanical', because you don't feel loving and affectionate then. That's OK! That forced. mechanical feeling will soon be replaced by spontaneous. warm feelings if you continue to do these things.

Love is not a feeling. Feelings are never constant. They come and go, like emotions. True Love is more an active process than an emotion. You do not fall into True Love. Both you and your spouse create it. Love is a decision.

Homework: Exercise one of Corinthians definition of love that is most difficult for you for at least one week if not a whole month to show your love for your spouse. Share your experience at the next meeting.

Closing Prayer

Next meeting:

Theme : Time with God

Love Song:

Opening Prayer: (Lead by host couple)

Purpose: To discover our spirituality as a couple.

Activity One

Read aloud the following letter:

Dear Friend,

I'm writing to let you know I've missed you lately. I've called and called, and I've not been able to reach you. I've been to all the usual places we hung around together, but you don't seem to be in any of those places anymore. The last time you told me we'd get together, you never came!

I see the letters I sent you lying around unread. I just know if you started reading them, you'd be back speaking with me and hanging around with me because you'd know how much I care about you.

I see you struggling with so many things and you're so confused. It hurts me. I know I can help you, but you have to read my letters. You have to spend time with me or I can't help you.

I really hope you read this letter before we're so far apart you completely lose your desire to know me. I'll keep calling you. If you want to reach me, you know where I am - I haven't moved.

Sincerely,

Your Best Friend

Question:

What were you feeling when this letter was read? How is ignoring a best friend like not sending time with God? In what ways does this letter apply to you?

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Activity Two

Though there are many examples in scripture of the importance of a personal devotion time with God, Jesus' example is perhaps the strongest. Let's look at how Jesus felt about his personal devotional life.

Invite a different person to read each Readings

Matthew 14:22-24

Then Jesus made the disciples get into the boat and go on ahead to the other side of the lake, while he sent the people away. After sending the people away he went up a hill by himself to pray. When evening came; Jesus was there alone and by this time the boat was far out in the lake tossed about by the waves, because the wind was blowing against it.

Mark 1:35-37

Very early the next morning, long before daylight, Jesus got up and left the house. He went out of the town to a lonely place, where he prayed. But Simon and his companions went out searching for him and when they found him, they said, "Everyone is looking for you. "

Luke 6:12-13

At that time Jesus went up a hill to pray and spent the whole night there praying to God. When day came, he called his disciples to him and chose twelve of them whom he named apostles.

Luke 22:39-41

Jesus left the city and went as he usually did, to the Mount of Olives; and the disciples went with him. 40When they arrived at the place, he said to them, "Pray that you will not fall into temptation."Then he went off from them about a distance of a stone's throw and knelt down and prayed.

Sharing Question: How do we feel spending time with God during the day by ourselves

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Activity Three

2 Corinthians 1 :8-11

We want to remind you, brothers. of the trouble we had in the province of Asia. The burdens laid upon us were so great and so heavy that we gave up all hope of staying alive. We felt that the death sentence had been passed on us. But this happened so that we should rely, not on ourselves. but only on God, who raises the dead. From such terrible dangers of death he saved us. and will save us~ and we have placed our hope in him that he will save us again, As you help us by means of your prayers for us. So it will be that the many prayers for us will be answered, and God will bless us; and many will raise their voices to him in thanksgiving for us.

2 Thessalonians 1:11-12

That is why we always pray for you. We ask our God to make you worthy of the life he has called you to live. May he fulfill by his power all your desire for goodness and complete your work of faith. In this way the name of our lord Jesus will receive glory from you, and you from him. by the grace of our God and of the Lord Jesus Christ.

James 5:16 .

So then, confess your sins to one another and pray for one another so that you will be healed. The prayer of a good person has a powerful effect.

The above texts reveal the importance of praying for one another.

Group Sharing Question: Choose one

- 1. Recall an incident/event when you prayed very hard for your spouse. Share your feelings in loving detail.**
- 2. Recall an incident/event when you and your spouse prayed very hard for a child/children? Share your feelings in loving detail.**

Dialogue Question: How do you feel about praying together as a family regularly?

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Wrap Up

In today's exercise, we have looked into our experience of praying for ourselves and for others. Jesus wants us to respond to his call for a good prayer life. The bible is his daily letters to us. If we read his letter daily he will help us because he cares for us. Jesus prayed while was on earth. Like Him we also should put aside sometime for prayer by ourselves or with our family.

At Mass, when we say the Confiteor during the Penitential Rite, we ask our brothers and sisters to pray for us. By praying for others we promote love and unselfishness and strengthen the identity of our catholic church. We also become stronger spiritually and can resist temptation.

Closing Prayer

Next Meeting

Theme: Communication

Love Song :

Opening Prayer :

Purpose: To communicate more intimately and openly to strengthen our couple relationship.

There is no area of marriage that communication does not affect. When couples communicate effectively, they are able to pick up potential problems before they are serious, solve them and eventually increase their intimacy and relationship.

Good communication in a marriage does not come easy. Many things get in the way, e.g., false perception, negative interpretation, family background, strong emotions, confusing verbal signals, etc. We can, however, learn to communicate. The key word is "learn". With repeated practice, this communication skill will become instinct and a part of you.

Part 1 – Shared Feelings The most important communication skill in a relationship is the ability to share feelings - positive feelings, negative feelings, scary feelings, hurt feelings, angry feelings or whatever feelings that is present then. The open mutual expression of feelings is essential in a truly intimate marriage.

Expressing feelings take courage. It is a risky business. We risk rejection. Probably, deep within us, most of us doubt whether we are worthy of love. Men especially are strongly conditioned not to express feelings. Wives need to understand and be sensitive to this. Our culture teaches us not to express feelings and to suppress it. Often we hear familiar statements like, "Cheer up", "Don't cry", "Keep smiling" and "Be brave".

The first step is to give yourself permission to express your feelings. Tell yourself: "What I'm feeling right now is all right for me to feel; even though I don't like it and even if others think I shouldn't feel this way."

Many people find difficulty in searching for the right words to describe their feelings. Attached

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(Handout A) is a list of words divided into two categories;

Category 1 - When your wants and needs are met and Category 2 - When they are not met.

Handout A

Feelings

When Wants and Needs are Being Met

absorbed affectionate alive amused appreciative astonished breathless calm cheerful complacent confident curious delighted	eager elated encouraged "engrossed enthusiastic excited exhilarated expansive fascinated friendly glowing good humour grateful	helpful inquisitive inspired intense interested invigorated jubilant keyed up mellow merry optimistic overwhelmed peaceful	proud radiant refreshed relieved secure spellbound stimulated surprised thrilled trusting wide awake zestful
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When Want and Needs are Not Being Met

afraid agitated aloof angry anxious apprehensive beat bored cold confused dejected depressed detached	discouraged disgusted disheartened dismayed downcast, edgy embarrassed exasperated fatigued frightened furious gloomy guilty	hateful helpless hesitant horrible hostile hurt infuriated insecure jealous jittery lonely mean miserable	nervous passive perplexed provoked resentful scared shaky skeptical sleepy spiritless startled suspicious troubled uneasy
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Feelings are neither right nor wrong. Everyone has the right to feel the way he/she does. You may ask questions and seek clarification until you can experience what your spouse is feeling. Describe how you imagine your spouse is feeling and ask if it is like that. Other helpful questions;

- "Have you ever felt this way before?"
- "When?"
- "What makes the feeling worst?"
- "What makes it better?"

Do not spend more than 10 - 15 minutes exploring these feelings or else you may be tempted into solving the problem. You can use the handout A to help you express your feelings

Activity One

(Couple sharing only. Each couple will occupy a quiet corner of the house away from distraction, if possible.)

Wives will answer the question below and husbands will explore and experience what the wife is feeling. A bell will ring at the end of 10 minutes to conclude the exercise. Extra 5 minute allowance will be given for couple to finish off, comfort and compliment their spouse for experiencing such feelings.

Question: What feeling do I have that I think is the most difficult for you to understand?

No Group Sharing

After everyone has finished and returned, invite a different person to read each reading below.

Romans 14: 13

Far from passing judgment on each other, therefore, you should make up your mind never to be the cause of your brother tripping or falling.

Romans 14:19

So let us adopt any custom that leads to peace and our mutual improvement.

Ephesians 4:25-26

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So from now on, there must be no more lies: You must speak the truth to one another, since we are all parts of one another. Even if you are angry, you must not sin; never let the sun set on your anger.

Part 2 – Listening

Communication means message sent equals message received. If message isn't received, no communication has taken place. Communication therefore begins and ends with listening. One great setback in effective listening is our tendency to evaluate. We tend to judge, evaluate, approve or disapprove opinions of others

Active listening is stating in your own words what you think your spouse just said and how he/she is feeling. That is all. You can call it "paraphrasing", "feedback", "checking it out", "reporting back", etc. For Example

Sender : "I can't believe that man ran into my car and then said it was my fault."
Receiver: "You seem really angry that he wrecked your car and then blamed you for it."
"What I heard you say is"
"Sounds as if....."
"In other words....."
"So how you felt was....."
"What happened was....."
"Do you mean....."

Five Keys to Great Listening.

1. Assume an interested body position.

Your body position should tell a person. "I care and I am interested in you".

Sit beside the person, lean towards him/her or be close.

Don't fold your arms or do other actions that make you seem uninterested.

2. Maintain eye contact.

Eye contact lets the person know you are giving him/her your undivided attention.

It also keeps you from getting distracted.

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3. Note non-verbal clues.

Pick up on the speakers body language - posture and facial expressions.

When' you see a clue don't assume you understand it. Ask about it. "You really look down today. Is everything OK?"

4. Reflect words and feelings.

Restate what the speaker has said, so he/she will know you heard and understand.

E.g. "So you're angry at your boss because he put you down in front of the other staff.

5. Give non-judgmental response.

E.g. "That sounds really tough."

Giving advice or dismissing feelings only hurts people and cuts communication.

E.g. "Why don't you tell him off" "You'll get over it."

Let's listen to Jim and Betty do this exercise.

Jim	The one thing you never really understood about me is, Betty, is my need to be alone sometimes. You seem to think I'm rejecting you, but it has nothing to do with you. I just feel I'll explode - I get all frustrated - I just need to be alone.
Betty	You're saying then that there are definite times when you don't want to be near me and that I should understand. Is that right?
Jim	Not exactly. Not just you. It's anybody. When I get like this, I don't want to be near anybody. Not you, the kids, our parents, our friends, our colleagues, or anybody.
Betty	OK. So you want to be totally alone when you feel this way. Right?
Jim	Yes, but only when I feel this way.
Betty	Can you tell me how and why you feel this way? What causes it and can I do anything to help?
Jim	I don't know exactly what causes it. Maybe it's because I always had a lot of time alone as a child and a teenager.
Betty	You mean, it could be because you were a loner as a kid and this need to be alone still exists?

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Jim	No. I was not a loner as a kid. I had lots of friends and participated in many activities. But because I was an only child I had a lot of quiet time by myself, and it was an important part of my life. I could think better. I could work out problems.
Betty	So you mean, these quiet moments help you to solve your problems.
Jim	Maybe it has to do with problems. When I get a lot of stress, I need to be alone and solve my problems.
Betty	So you noticed that when you have a lot on your mind that's when you need to be alone?
Jim	Basically, yes. I think that's it.
Betty	Thank you, Jim, for sharing that. I'll try to be more understanding in the future.

Active listening does not imply agreement. It only communicates, "I know where you're coming from." Don't evaluate or judge the message, just paraphrase it. Remember to feedback feelings.

Activity Two

(Couple sharing only. Each couple will occupy a quiet corner of the house away from distraction, if possible.)

Husbands will answer the question below and wives will explore and experience what the husband is feeling. A bell will ring at the end of 10 minutes to conclude the exercise. Extra 5 minute allowance will be given for couple to finish off, comfort and compliment their spouse for experiencing such feelings.

Question: - How do I feel when I have hurt you?

Invite a different person to read each Scripture Reading below. Personal reflection and no sharing.

Proverbs 17:28

If a fool can hold his tongue, even he can pass for wise, and pass for clever if he keeps his lips tight shut.

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Proverbs 18:2

The fool has no love for reflection but only for airing his opinion.

Matthew 11:15

If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen.

James 1:19

Remember this, my dear brothers; be quick to listen but slow to speak and slow to rouse your temper.

Wrap Up

Practice this skill well. It is the foundation of good communication between spouses. The ability to get into your spouse's skin and experience the feeling your spouse is experiencing is called empathy. Active listening enhances your capacity for empathy which is critical for good communication. If both of you are willing to reveal your true selves, your relationship will deepen. If not, you have settled for a superficial relationship. Practice these skills till they become a part of you.

Closing prayer**Next meeting**

Theme: You are the Greatest Love Song

Love Song:

Opening Prayer: (Lead by Host Couple)

Purpose: To reaffirm each other as God's sons and daughters.

Preparation : Gather in a garbage bag one of the following items for each person in the Love Circle.

a) toilet paper	f) paper plate	k) plastic spoon	p) small cloth
b) plastic fork	g) soap	l) rubber band	q) short wire
c) plastic cup	h) empty can	m) raffia string	r) clothes peg
d) plastic bag	i) sponge	n) empty bottle	s) newspaper
e) bottle cap	j) drinking straw	o) aluminum foil	t) small empty cupboard box

Activity 1

In tonight's program, we are going to do an activity where we will affirm our spouse and ourselves as a couple.

(Ask each person in the Love Circle to take one item from the garbage bag ending with you.)

(Also distribute blank writing paper for each person.)

In this activity, we invite you to think of all the "Selling Strengths" of the item you chose. Imagine that you have to sell the item you chose to another person. What good points and qualities can you describe about the item. You may write the selling points down on the piece of paper if you wish.

You have 2 minutes to think of your "Selling Strengths".

Sharing:- Each person will have 60 seconds to share the "Selling Strength" of his item. (Host couple share first.)

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In this activity which we've just done, some of us found difficulty in identifying the good points and qualities of the item we chose. Most of us think that the item we chose is of little importance. When was the last time you concentrated on the good points of your spouse? In the bible, there are many passages which encourage us to identify and affirm people. Let us look at some of these passages.

Invite a different person to read each scripture reading.

Ephesians 4:29-32

Do not use harmful words, but only helpful words, the kind that build up and provide what is needed, so that what you say will do good to those who hear you. And do not make God's Holy Spirit sad; for the Spirit is God's mark of ownership on you, a guarantee that the Day will come when God will set you free. Get rid. of all bitterness, passion, and anger. No more shouting or insults, no more hateful feelings of any sort. Instead, be kind and tender-hearted to one another and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.

Philippians 2:1-4

Your life in-Christ makes you strong, and his love comforts you. You have fellowship with the Spirit and you have kindness and compassion for one another. I urge you, then to make me completely happy by having the same thoughts, sharing the same love, and being one in soul and mind. Don't do anything from selfish ambition or from a cheap desire to boast, but be humble towards one another, always considering others better than yourselves. And look out for one another's interests, not just for your own.

Hebrew 3:13

Instead, in order that none of you be deceived by sin and become stubborn, you must help one another everyday, as long as the word 'Today' in the scripture applies to us.

Hebrew 10:24

Let us be concerned, to help one another to show love and do good.

Activity 2

Kindly write in each column your responses to the statement given. You have 3 minutes to write.

Three things I am good at:	Three things my spouse is good at:	Three things my spouse and I are good at together.

Couple Sharing:- (2 minutes)

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Group Sharing

Dialogue Question: “Affirming my spouse daily and even when I am upset with him.” How do I feel about this? How can I do better?

Wrap Up.

In Activity 1 we consider the items we chose to be useless after one use. We never considered the goodness it offered us when we needed it. After using them once, we discard them. In regard to people, each one of us is unique. God does not make junk but gave us some talents and good points. Again we never considered the goodness and qualities people have - especially our spouse. We tend to take things for granted. How often have we affirmed our spouse? When was the last time we concentrated on the good points of our spouse? How often have we taken our couple power for granted? Do we believe that by affirming each other as husband and wife, we also affirm God’s goodness that help us as a couple reach out to others in our family, community and parish. We cannot underestimate the power of affirmation. It is by affirming that we realize God’s plan of allowing those around us to recognize who God is – i.e. when we help each other reflect God’s image and likeness through our unique selves and through our couple uniqueness.

(Get a husband to read the following)

Compliments are like a welcome wind after the scorching heat of summer.

Tell your beloved of the beauty your eyes see.

Speak often of your deep, deep love and your relationship will blossom

It’s still true...you will always reap what you sow.

Speak love and you harvest love.

Let your marriage be a trophy of caring

Closing Prayer

Next Meeting:

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Theme: Forgiveness

Love Song:

Opening Prayer:

Purpose: To forgive oneself and each other

Activity 1

(Invite a different person to read each reading.)

Psalm 103:8-13

- The Lord is merciful and loving, slow to become angry and full of constant love.
- He does not keep on rebuking; he is not angry forever.
- He does not punish us as we deserve or repay us according to our sins and wrongs.
- As high as the sky is above the earth, so great is his love for those who honour him.
- As far as the east is from the west, so far does he remove our sins from us.
- As a father is kind to his children, so the Lord is kind to those who honour him.

Matthew 18:21-22

Then Peter came to Jesus and asked, "Lord, if my brother keeps on sinning against me, how many times do I have to forgive him? Seven times? 'No, not seven times," answered Jesus, "but seventy times seven."

Mark 11:25

Jesus said, "And when you stand and pray, forgive anything you may have against anyone, so that your father in heaven will forgive the wrongs you have done."

Ephesians 4:32

Instead, be kind and tender hearted to one another, and forgive one another, as God has forgiven you through Christ.

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The above passages touch on God's call to love and forgive everyone we meet.

Dialogue: Choose one of the text applies to a recent time when you felt you hurt in your couple relationship and found it difficult to truly forgive.. Share your feelings. (Remember not to blame but just share your feelings)

Input (Read by lead couple)

All of us have interior hurts which are long lasting hurts that come along in our daily life that blind us, or deafen us, or cripple us. We all need to be healed.

One of the great graces of the Sacrament of Matrimony is the capability that spouses have to heal one another and bring each other back to a full healthy life.

In truth, we do hurt one another. We do fail one another.

If there hasn't been reconciliation, it means one of two things.

Either

1. we are callous (thick skin), having no feelings of the suffering of others and have built a protection shield around us so that others can't get close to hurt us,

or.

2. we excuse the other and take the 'privilege' of not being loving because the other was not loving.

The key point is forgiving' and not 'excusing',

'When one person says: "I am sorry for what I did"

We reply:

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- "It was nothing"
- "Its all right"
- "It wasn't that important"

That's *excusing* and not *forgiving*. Does the replies above lead to forgiveness and healing? Have we really made the decision to love despite what happened or decide to be loved? Sometimes, we can forgive only when we see things from the other person's point of view.

Closing Activity: (15 minutes)

Give each spouse, a piece of paper. Get each spouse to read again the other's spouse's love letter. Write a prayer for their spouse in relation to the hurt that was written in the dialogue. Affirm your spouse at the end of the prayer.

(Lead couple can play appropriate hymns and remind couples to maintain silence.) When each spouse is ready, they can hold the hands of the spouse and take turns to recite the prayer they have prepared for their spouse.

Those couples who finish early can meanwhile pray for the other couples until all couples have finished.

End with an appropriate song

Next Meeting

Theme: Self-Image

Love Song:

Opening Prayer:

Purpose: To be the best we can be for our spouse

Do you make an effort to look good for your spouse? Does looking neat and clean (no rumpled or dirty work clothes or stain suffice? Should one do a bit extra?

Should spouses not need any "extra" because you already love each other? Or does a couple always need to look just a bit better than "neat" when seeing each other after a long day, or when meeting for lunch or going to dinner? Does it keep the spark if you do a quick prep?

Husbands, would you prefer seeing your wives look groomed and fresh-faced when you return from work, or is it ok if she's just respectably neat?

What about the wives? When your husband walks in from work, would you be more pleasantly surprised if he was neat and groomed, and smelled fresh with minty breath, rather than rumpled and unkempt or with a stubbly chin? Or even when you go for an occasion together, do you feel at times that you would prefer your husband/wife to put in extra effort to dress up? Are there times when you feel your spouse is not presentable enough to your friends?

Share this question with your spouse lovingly.

How does my expectation of the way you dress for a special occasion affect my attitude towards you?

OR

What about your appearance/dressing draws me to you? HDMAMMF?

Wrap up

You take your spouse for granted and no longer maintain your appearance. Relationship experts agree that it is very important for partners to keep themselves attractive for each other. While not typically communicated bluntly that one partner is no longer happy with the other's appearance, subtle changes in behavior may speak for the dissatisfied partner. A lack of enthusiasm in the bedroom or a desire to do things you'd normally do as a couple separately may be indicators that one person is not happy with the other's appearance. This problem is easily remedied.

Remembering your courtship and the effort you put into your appearance when you were first dating should inspire. As well, keep in mind that there is no one you'd rather look good for than your spouse, as they are the most important person in your life and making an effort to maintain

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your appearance is more important for your self-esteem as well as for your relationship.
(<http://www.surfnetparents.com/952/marriage-101-signs-of-trouble-and-how-to-fix-them/>)

Theme: God's Perspective

Love Song:

Opening Prayer:

Purpose:

In today's program, we will look into our lives from God's perspective.

We always put up defenses to keep other people from discovering the 'real' person we are. As such, we put on a mask and pretend to be someone else so as to gain respect and admiration. Let us look at what God has to say about worthiness. We have self-doubts which prevent us from being loved and being lovable. For example, our sense of insecurity can cause us to be jealous of our spouse's relationship with his colleagues. We may start questioning our spouse on why he/she works late or does not pay enough attention.

Read the Psalm below about how God sees us.

Psalm 139:1-15

Lord, you have examined me
- and you know me.

You know everything I do;
- from far away you understand all my thoughts.

You see me,
- whether I am working or resting; you know all my actions.

Even before I speak,
- you already know what I will say.

You are all round me on every side;
- you protect me with our power.
- your knowledge of me is so deep;
- it is beyond my understanding.

Where could I go to escape from you?

Where could I get away from your presence?

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If I went up to heaven, you would be there;
- if I lay down in the world of the dead, you would be there.

If I flew away beyond the east
- or lived in the farthest place in the west
- you would be there to lead me,
- you would be there to help me.

I could ask the darkness to hide me
- or the light around me to turn into night,
- but even darkness is not dark for you,
- and the night is as bright as the day.

Darkness and light are the same to you.

You created every part of me;
- you put me together in my mother's womb.

I praise you because you are to be feared;
- all you do is strange and wonderful.

I know it with all my heart.

When my bones were being formed,
- carefully put together in my mother's womb,
- when I was growing there in secret,
- you knew that I was there ~
- you saw me before I was born.

Dialogue: How have my self-doubts affected our couple relationship? Share your feelings. How can I do better?

Couple Sharing

Activity 2

Write out your response to each of the following opening statements about your spouse.

1. The qualities you bring to our family no one else does are

2. The things you do best are

3. The qualities you have to offer the world are

4. The thing I most appreciate about you is

Couple Sharing

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Group Sharing

Wrap Up

How did you feel when you viewed yourself from God's perspective?

Why is it hard to accept ourselves the way God does?

What can we do to change wrong thinking about ourselves.,

The most constructive thing we can do is to praise each other. There are in fact, far more things to praise in each other than to criticize. The trouble is, we do not focus on the good things.

If we take the positive approach and focus on each other's plentiful good qualities, we expand and deepen these qualities in each other. As a result. our deficiencies do not appear so great and they gradually erode as our goodness expands.

The call to love one another is a call to compliment each other.

Closing Prayer.

Theme: Friends Forever

Love Song:

Opening Prayer:

Purpose: To treasure the Love Circle community

What does friendship mean? Is it being close, understanding and agreeable to someone whose behaviour is acceptable to us?

One of the greatest friendships in the Bible was between David and Jonathan. Let us take a look at what made that friendship so special. Invite a different person to read each Scripture Reading below,

1 Samuel 18:1-5

Saul and David finished their conversation. After that, Saul's son Jonathan was deeply attracted to David and came to love him as much as he loved himself (committed love). Saul kept David with him from that day on and did not let him go back home. Jonathan swore eternal friendship with David because of his deep affection for him. He took off the robe he was wearing and gave it to David, together with his armour and also his sword, bow and belt (willingness to sacrifice). David was successful in all the missions on which Saul sent him, and so Saul made him and officer in his army. This pleased all of Saul's officers and men.

1 Samuel 19:1-3

Saul told his son Jonathan and all his officials that he planned to kill David. But Jonathan was very fond of David. 2and so he said to him, "My father is trying to kill you. Please be careful tomorrow morning; hide in some secret place and stay there. I will go and stand by my father in the field where you are hiding, and I will speak to him about you. If I find out anything, I will let you know. (loyalty)

1 Samuel 20:12-13

And Jonathan said to David, "May the Lord God of Israel be our witness. At this time tomorrow

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and the following day I will question my father. If his attitude towards you is good, I will send you word. If he intends to harm you, may the Lord strike me dead if I don't let you know about it and get you safely away. May the Lord be with you as he was with my father.(trustworthiness)

1 Samuel 23:15-18

David saw that Saul was out to kill him. David was at Horesh, in the wilderness near Ziph. Jonathan went to him there and encouraged him with assurances of God's protection, saying to him, "Don't be afraid. My father Saul won't be able to harm you. He knows very well that you are the one who will be king of Israel and that I will be next in rank to you." The two of them made a sacred promise to each other. David stayed at Horesh and Jonathan went home.
(encouragement)

Activity

Each person will write their name on the Handout for Activity 1 and pass it to the couple on their right who will write one thing they are thankful for that person. The handout will continue to be passed to the next couple on the right till every couple has written something on your handout. Our spouse will be the last person to write what he/she is thankful in your friendship.

Name : _____

I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

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I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

I thank you for _____

At the end, each couple takes time to read the Handout.

Wrap Up

All of us know what we want in a friendship. People say friendship and marriage is like, a contract. Each of us plays our part in keeping the relationship alive. However, when friendship turns sour, we split and go our separate ways. Not so with marriage, where unconditional love plays a vital role. Unconditional love means, "I will do my part even if you do not do yours.

Though marriage is more than a contract, it begins with a contract. We develop an understanding of certain rules, conditions and commitments in our relationship,

In a marriage the friendship tools we need to possess are commitment, sacrifices, patience, mutual respect, shared feelings understanding and consultation.

We should thank our spouse for the good things our spouse has done for us just as we thank God for all the wonderful things he has done for us.

Closing Prayer

Next Meeting

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Theme: Christmas Gifts

Love Song:

Opening Prayer:

Purpose: To share the gift of ourselves this Christmas

Christmas is a time of giving and sharing. People exchange gifts and wishes with their friends and relatives. Let us see what kind of gifts we have received at previous Christmas's.

Activity 1

Share on the best and worst Christmas present you ever received.

Activity 2

Invite someone to read the following scripture passage.

Luke 2:1-20

Now at this time Caesar Augustus issued a decree for a census of the whole world to be taken. This census - the first - took place while Quirinius was governor of Syria and everyone went to his own town to be registered. So Joseph set out from the town of Nazareth in Galilee and travelled up to Judaea, to the town of David called Bethlehem, since he was of David's House and line, in order to be registered with Mary, his betrothed, who was with child. While they were there the time came for her to have her child, and she gave birth to a son, her first born. She wrapped him in swaddling clothes, and laid him in a manger because there was no room for them at the inn. In the countryside close by there were shepherds who lived in the fields and took it in turn to watch their flock during the night. The angel of the Lord appeared to them and the glory of the Lord shone around them. They were terrified, but the angel said, "Do not be afraid. Listen, I bring you news of great joy, a joy to be shared by the whole people. Today in the town of David a Saviour has been born to you; he is Christ the Lord. And here is a sign for you; you will find a baby wrapped in swaddling clothes and lying in a manger." And suddenly with the angel there was a great throng of the heavenly host, praising God and singing;

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"Glory to God in the highest heaven, and peace to men who enjoy his favour."

Now when the angels had gone from them into heaven, the shepherds said to one another, "Let us go to Bethlehem and see this thing that has happened which the Lord has made known to us." So they hurried away and found Mary and Joseph, and the baby lying in the manger, When they saw the child they repeated what they had been told about him, and everyone who heard it was astonished at what the shepherds had to say. As for Mary, she treasured all these things and pondered them in her' heart, And the shepherds went back glorifying and praising God for all they had heard and seen; it was exactly as they had been told,

Question 2: In what way can I be a gift to my spouse this Christmas? HDMAMMF?

Wrap Up

Christmas is one of the most beautiful and wonderful feast of the year. It is a holy time and we celebrate the coming of Christ. However, in today's materialistic world, the birthday of Jesus is overshadowed by merchants. It is of primary importance that the religious significance of Christmas be preserved especially in the home.

God came into the world as a homeless infant - a helpless baby born in a manger in the outskirts of a humble village. He challenges our greed with his poverty. He became poor as that we might be rich. He came innocent in a world where the innocent were being killed. He was a symbol of hope – the messiah who was to save the world through love and sacrifice. Jesus was the Father's gift to the world.

Closing Prayer

Next Meetings