

Small Group Study

The Gift of Relationships: Communicating with Understanding I

Ice Breaker: Use the questions below to help people open up and to focus your meeting. It is very helpful to go around in a circle with the leader going first. (Remember if you have new members or guests you should take time to introduce everyone.)

1. For the women: When have you felt the most loved in life? What made you feel so loved?
2. For the men: When have you felt the most respected in life? What made you feel that way?

Questions

1. Dr. Emerson Eggerich in his book, “Love and Respect,” wrote the following about he and his wife, Sarah:

One night as we were driving home from a small group Bible study, Sarah expressed some strong feelings that had been built up in her several weeks.

“You were boring in our Bible study tonight,” She said, almost angrily. “You intimidate people with your silence. And when you do talk, you sometimes say something insensitive. What you said to the new couple came across poorly.”

I was taken aback but I tried to defend myself. What are you talking about? I was trying to listen to people and understand what they were saying.”

Sarah’s answer went up several more decibels. “You need to make people feel more relaxed and comfortable.” (The decibels rose some more.) “You didn’t draw them out.” (Now Sarah was almost shouting.) “Don’t be so into yourself!”

I didn’t respond for a few seconds because I was feeling put down, not only by what she said but her demeanor and her tone. I replied, “Sarah, you can be right but wrong at the top of your voice.”

Sarah recalls that our conversation that night in the car was life changing for her. She may have been accurate in her assessment of how I was acting around people, but her delivery was overkill. We both dealt with things in our lives due to that conversation.

Emerson responds to Sarah’s criticisms by saying: “Sarah, you can be right but wrong at the top of your voice.” What does he mean by this statement? Recount a time when you were “right but wrong at the top of your voice”.

2. “When a husband feels disrespected, he has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel unloving to his wife. When a wife feels unloved, she has a natural tendency to react in ways that feel disrespectful to her husband. The connection between love and respect is clearly within Scripture, but so is the constant threat that the connection can be strained or even broken. And then came the “aha” moment: this thing triggers itself. Without love, she reacts without respect. Without respect, he reacts without love—ad nauseum. Thus was born the Crazy Cycle!”

Does this make sense? Why or why not? How do Emerson’s ideas apply to your marriage? Husband, do you think you understand how to love your wife? Wife, are you certain you know how to respect your husband? What are some examples of how you believe you are doing this?

3. Read Ephesians 5:33 and I Peter 3:1-2.

Ephesians 5:33 *However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.*

1 Peter 3:1-2 *Wives, in the same way be submissive to your husbands so that, if any of them do not believe the word, they may be won over without words by the behavior of their wives, when they see the purity and reverence of your lives.*

What kind of a husband is Peter talking about? How can a wife feel respect for a man who does not believe in Christ, or is not treating her lovingly? Is she supposed to feel respect or is Peter asking her to do something else?

4. Dr. Eggerich proposes 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. 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? Do you think there is any wriggle room in Eph. 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?

5. The Love and Respect Golden Rule: The wife should respect her husband as she wants to be loved; the husband should love his wife as he wants to be respected. Why is practicing this particular rule difficult? How can you help each other do it more consistently?