

4 Read “What Matters to God, Matters!” (book pages 274–76). Does the “cha-ching!” effect offer any hope and encouragement? Note that Emerson is not talking about earning your salvation; but he is talking about earning rewards (see 1 Corinthians 3:11–15). Which of the following quotes from this section give you hope and encouragement? Pick one and write down why it appeals to you.

- ___ a. To the world it makes no sense to respect a harsh, unloving husband or to love a contemptuous, disrespectful wife. “But it makes sense to God. These seemingly fruitless efforts matter to God because this is the kind of service He rewards. What is wisdom to God is foolishness to the world” (see 1 Corinthians 3:19; also 1 Peter 2:19; 4:13).
- ___ b. “. . . look at Ephesians 2:10. We are to do the good works that God has already planned for us. Why? Not to appease the Lord or somehow pay ‘just a little bit’ for our salvation, but simply to please Him. And when we please Him, He rewards us.”
- ___ c. “Yes, the rewards are waiting. Nothing we do is wasted. The Lord is watching with intense interest. A husband who loves his wife as Christ loved the church, and the wife who respects her husband ‘as unto the Lord,’ will be rewarded throughout eternity (see Ephesians 5:22–33).”

About rewards, I think:



It may be hard, if not impossible, for the two of you to think about “rewards in heaven” right now. You are having enough struggles on earth. Nonetheless, Scripture does promise rewards for those who earnestly seek to do God’s will, however imperfectly. If you have chosen one of the paragraphs above, talk about what it means to you and how its truths can energize you right now. Emerson heard a wife who had been ready to divorce her husband tell a large group of women

that the Rewarded Cycle had gotten her eyes off her husband and on the Lord. God revealed to her heart that her first step was to respect her husband unconditionally, “as to the Lord.” Until that realization she was feeling defeated and without energy. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: be sure to look at what Emerson has to say about “not needing rewards, just wanting to reach heaven” [book pages 275–76]. Rewards are important because Jesus reveals them as important. Thank God together for your marriage and any rewards He may have waiting for you.)

5 Read what Emerson says in “It’s About You and Jesus Christ” (book pages 276–78). Then answer the three questions below:

- a. What is the vital prerequisite if love and respect are to work in your marriage?

- b. What is the difference between the successful couple and the unsuccessful one?

- c. What is the epitome of immaturity?



The previous three questions are important ones for the struggling couple to answer.

Concerning *a*: if Christ is not the Lord of your life, Love and Respect will not work in God's eyes. Only love and respect done in faith pleases God. If one of you "isn't quite sure" where he or she stands with Christ, this spouse can pray what Emerson suggests: "Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief. I want to follow You, and I want to do this as unto You." (See Mark 9:24.)

Concerning *b*: the difference between the successful couple and the unsuccessful couple is found in Proverbs 24:16. Only Christ can make us righteous, but only we can get up after we fall. Couples who have gotten on the Energizing Cycle have kept dealing with the issues. They never give up!

Concerning *c*: the epitome of immaturity is wanting everything to come easy, with no struggle. Read the letters starting at the bottom of book page 277 to see how two wives took the high road to maturity. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: read Proverbs 24:16, then talk about why you are successful and what you must continue to do to be successful.)

6 Read in "Lord, When Did I Feed You?" (book pages 278–80). What is the basic principle we can take from Christ's parable of the last judgment? Write your answer here:



Do you agree with what Emerson spells out beginning at the bottom of page 279?
 "... ultimately, whatever you do toward your spouse by way of love or respect is not

done to motivate your spouse to get off the Crazy Cycle, nor is it to motivate your spouse to meet your needs. Ultimately, you practice love or respect because beyond your spouse you see Jesus Christ and you envision a moment when you will be standing before Him at the final judgment, realizing that your marriage was really a tool and a test to deepen and demonstrate your love and reverence for your Lord.”

Write your thoughts here. Tell God what you really feel right now:



For the struggling couple, the questions above could produce a critical moment. If both of you can agree with what Emerson is saying, you can take a giant step forward in your marriage. If one of you is reluctant or just not sure, the other spouse should be patient and wait for God to work according to His timing. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: talk about why you show each other love and respect. Is it because you want a happy marriage? Because you are trying to get your spouse to meet your needs? Because you want to serve Christ and reverence Him? All of the above—at least to some degree?)

A JOURNAL OF MY JOURNEY TO LOVE AND RESPECT

Emerson's Scripture Meditations may serve as a basis for new entries in your journal or you may prefer to record insights and thoughts that have come to you during this session.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS

1. Scripture acknowledges that we can be afraid, and at least one passage teaches that although we have fears we can deal with them. As Peter told his flock, "Do what is right without being frightened by any fear" (1 Peter 3:6). As a husband, are you afraid of loving your wife, especially if she is disrespectful? Why? As a wife, are you afraid of respecting your husband, especially if he is unloving? Why?
2. "Don't pay back unkind words with unkind words. Instead, pay them back with kind words" (1 Peter 3:9 NIRV). Next time your wife says something disrespectful to you, say something loving; next time your husband says something unloving, say something respectful. Watch what happens. Yes, I've often heard the complaint: "My spouse is different! You don't know my spouse. What you think will happen with my spouse won't happen!" Perhaps not, but why deprive yourself of God's reward by imitating your spouse's negativity? Care enough about God's heart, and what He has in store for you, to do things His way. In all likelihood, the tone of the conflict will turn more positive.
3. "Watch out that you don't lose what you have worked for. Make sure that you get your complete reward" (2 John 1:8 NIRV). The apostle John is teaching something here that has staggering implications. You can go twenty years in your marriage loving and respecting, building up your personal "reward account." Then something could happen in your twenty-first year of marriage and you wind up having contempt, even hatred, for your spouse. John is saying, "Beware, God is gracious; your salvation is assured, but you could fall into sin that would negate some

of the rewards God has planned for you.” John is not naïve; he knows believers are being tempted by sin of all kinds, all the time. He is warning his flock because he knew people wouldn’t slip into sin when times were good. No, it was far more likely they could lose some of their rewards because they would lose heart in the face of unexpected challenges. John’s words are also for you, today, in your marriage. Are you determined to finish faithfully no matter what?

My current thoughts about our marriage:

SESSION FOURTEEN

In preparation for this session, read Chapter Twenty-four, “The Truth Can Make You Free, Indeed” and the Conclusion, “Pink and Blue Can Make God’s Purple.” The following questions are for an individual or a husband and wife studying together. As in Session 13, the suggestions for spouses studying together are of two kinds: (1) for couples who have slowed the Crazy Cycle, but can’t quite get on the Energizing Cycle to their satisfaction; (2) for couples who are on the Energizing Cycle but who can still benefit from what the Rewarded Cycle has to say about how central Jesus Christ should be in a marriage. Remember to answer all unmarked questions first, then answer questions marked by the male or female icon (whichever applies to you). Finally, answer the questions with the couple icon, if you’re studying with your mate. (Suggestions for anyone planning to use this study with a small group can be found in *Workbook* Appendix I, page 201.)

Questions for Chapter Twenty-Four

Q Read “Heaven Will Wait—What About Now?” (book pages 281–83). On page 283 Emerson shares his boyhood experiences, when he watched how his mother handled his father’s fits of rage. What did she do as she lived with a less-than-perfect spouse? How many things can you learn from her? Write some of them here:



If the two of you are struggling but can still talk together, rejoice in that fact as you begin this session. Compare notes on what you found in the example Emerson's mother set for him as she coped with his father's anger. How easy is it to fall into a "victim mindset"? How hard is it to "choose to be positive"? Do either one of you see yourself having a victim mindset? Are you willing to confess it and move on by making the choice to be positive? (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you will find much in this session about how to stay there and keep the Crazy Cycle in its cage. Talk together about what it might mean for the two of you to look for "creative alternatives" when you do have a conflict from time to time.)

2 In "Sometimes the Issue Is Me!" (book pages 283–85), Emerson states the Rewarded Cycle Principle (which he admits is useful for anyone on the Energizing Cycle as well). That principle is: no matter how depressing or irritating my spouse might be, my response is my responsibility. What if you are doing everything you can to love or respect your spouse and you still get back cruelty, harshness, contempt, unreasonableness, or indifference? Read the letter from a husband beginning at the bottom of page 284. Then write your thoughts about the Rewarded Cycle Principle. Are you willing to take responsibility for your response, no matter what?



If at all possible, discuss this question together. Talk about Emerson's admission on book page 284 that "in my own marriage, Sarah doesn't cause me to be the way I am; she reveals the way I am. When my reactions to her are unloving, it reveals that I've still got issues. There is still lack of love in my character and soul, and I have to own up to this." Even though Emerson and Sarah are on the Energizing Cycle, there are always moments when they need wisdom from the Rewarded Cycle. As Emerson puts it: "When we are on the Energizing Cycle, we are also on the Rewarded Cycle, given that we are conscious of loving and respecting each other because we do it as unto Christ. The point is, everyone trying to live out the Love and Respect Connection is on a continuum, trying to become a more loving, respectful

spouse. No one is perfect; everyone struggles at some point.” Do Emerson’s words encourage you in your own situation? (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: realize that, like Emerson, you still have “issues” like everyone else. When you talk together about whatever happens in your marriage, each of you should always say, “My response is my responsibility.”)

3 Read “What’s Inside Will Come Out” and “Inner Freedom Develops Greater Maturity” (book pages 285–87). The grain of sand illustration on page 285 teaches that when your spouse puts heat or pressure on you, you always face a choice (fill in the blanks): “to react in a _____ way or in a _____ way.” The “secret” to reacting in a godly way is found in John 8:30–36. In an exchange with Jewish leaders, Jesus reveals the way to true spiritual freedom. What do His words have to do with your marriage? See page 287 for answers and then put some of these truths in your own words here:



If you are struggling as a couple, the key to ending (or starting to end) your struggles is in the lengthy paragraph at the top of page 287. Read this paragraph together, down through the principle it entails: I can experience hurt, but it is my choice to hate. What is all this saying to each of you? To both of you? (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you can find much in this section to talk about and digest. Share especially how John 8:36 can keep you on the Energizing Cycle: “So if the Son makes you free, you will be free indeed.”)

4 Under “You Can Be Free in Any Circumstance,” Emerson continues to describe how you can have inner freedom no matter what situation you are facing. Read 1 Peter 2:16–17. Also, be sure to study Endnote 1 for Chapter Twenty-four, book page 324. Where are you right now with putting Peter’s instructions into practice in your marriage?

- a. “Not sure I can do it. You don’t know what my spouse is like!”
- b. “I’m willing to try, but I feel so weak and unsure of what to do.”
- c. “Through God’s grace I will do this; I am trying to do it already!”
- d. I think:



If you and your mate are on the Rewarded Cycle, or trying to be, your answers probably ranged between *b* and *c* above, or perhaps you had your own way of putting it. Look together at the letters on page 289. How did these wives conquer their contempt and lack of respect for their husbands? Also discuss the top paragraph, page 290, in which a husband writes, “It was freeing to reflect on the fact that she was well-intentioned and good-hearted toward me.” As Emerson points out, if you believe at all that your spouse is “good-willed” despite those times of being unloving or disrespectful, it can put you on the road to the Rewarded Cycle, and you can build on that. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: talk about how Peter’s

instructions in 1 Peter 2:16–17 can apply to your marriage. Are you living as “free men” while you work on your Love and Respect Connection? Look together at End-note 1, Chapter Twenty-four, page 324. Do you agree that “. . . the greatest evidence of submission is Love and Respect”?)

5 Read “Inner Freedom Rewards You with a Legacy” (book pages 290–93). Which of these quotes from this section speak to you the most?

- a. “Parents want their children to love and respect them, but if they aren’t showing love and respect to each other, what kind of legacy are they leaving behind?”
- b. “Each day you are on the edge of something; you face some kind of crossroads. Today could be the day something happens that will make all the difference. . . . As your children see you living out Christ’s words, ‘The truth shall make you free,’ you will set them on the path of following Jesus as well.”
- c. “You’re thinking about mistakes you’ve made, the times you haven’t been a good example, and those numerous scenes where you didn’t show love or respect to your spouse. Don’t despair. God has a unique way of eliminating past mistakes. Where there has been sin, His grace abounds. He erases your mistakes and puts grace in their place.”

My thoughts about leaving a legacy:



If you can discuss this kind of question together, be sure to do so. How does thinking about the legacy you are leaving (how your children see you and how they will respond to Christ) relate to where you are in your marriage? For what happens when love and respect are tried, see the letters on book pages 291–93. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you will want to think about the legacy you are leaving. Have you even thought of how your Love and Respect Connection looks to your children? What specifically can you do, or continue to do, when your kids are watching that which will prepare them for having their own families some day?)

6 “The Reward of Winning Your Spouse God’s Way” (book pages 293–96) includes several letters from husbands and wives who are moving forward on the Rewarded Cycle by living out Love and Respect. Which of the following excerpts contain kernels of truth you can use right now?

- a. “I wanted her to respect me and be my friend—neither of which I was experiencing Thanks be to God for knowledge that leads to understanding and allows me to act lovingly in service to Jesus Christ.”
- b. “I changed my attitude. I changed my tone of voice and my facial expressions. I even changed my prayers from ‘bless me and change him’ to ‘change me and bless him.’”
- c. “My situation is not any easier at home, my husband has been ‘on the run’ from the Lord for many years now, but I do not feel so hopeless and, therefore, do not need to have the final word . . . , worry about a decision, etc. And by honoring my husband . . . I am choosing life, Christ’s life, and then I am blessed. Even if my husband never changes, I know the Lord wants me to honor Him.”

Most meaningful to me of the quotes on the previous page is ____ because:



As you have seen while studying Sessions 13 and 14, the Rewarded Cycle is for couples in many different states of mind. They know love and respect is the way, but walking in that way is a struggle. If the two of you have been able to discuss any of the questions in these sessions, thank God for a major step of progress. If one or more of the quotes above speak to you, talk about why and what it might mean to your marriage. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you may complete this final session in the Rewarded Cycle and have one of two basic reactions: (1) "All of this is nice, but we really didn't need it" or (2) "Now we see what love and respect is really about. It's not about us; first and foremost, it is about our relationship to Jesus Christ. When that is strong, our marriage is strong." Carefully read the paragraphs on the bottom of page 295 and the top of page 296. Do you agree that once a couple attempts the vital step toward marital maturity that the tests will come? How can you be ready?)

Questions for Conclusion

7 Read book pages 297–98. Why did one husband find the Love and Respect Conference to be a “breath of fresh air”? What is the real purpose behind showing each other love and respect? Put your thoughts in writing here.



Do you agree with the husband who wrote in to say that at a Love and Respect Conference he was impressed the most by the Rewarded Cycle? If you have not attended one of these conferences, perhaps it is time to do so. For information on how to attend a Love and Respect Conference, or how to purchase a video of a conference, please go to <http://www.loveandrespect.com>. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: set aside time to go over C-O-U-P-L-E and C-H-A-I-R-S and how you can live out these principles by keeping your eyes on your ultimate goal—glorifying God and obeying His Word. During a Love and Respect Conference, Emerson asks each husband and wife in attendance to “see” with the eyes of faith that just beyond the shoulder of his/her spouse stands Jesus Christ. Jesus is saying, “This is about your spouse, who may not deserve love or respect. This is about your living with love and respect as you show reverence for Me.” With this image in mind, husbands and wives can go through C-O-U-P-L-E and C-H-A-I-R-S and receive divine help for living out any of these principles. A husband may not want to say, “I’m sorry,” but he makes peace with his wife anyway, because just over her shoulder he sees his divine Master, and he does what he needs to do as unto Christ. A wife may rebel against acknowledging her husband’s authority, but she does so anyway, because just over his shoulder she sees the Lord, and she does what she needs to do as unto Him. Living out C-O-U-P-L-E and C-H-A-I-R-S “as unto Christ” does not prohibit disagreeing

with each other and confronting issues; the couple living on the Energizing Cycle “as unto Christ” can deal with any problem. They look at each other, and just over each spouse’s shoulder is Jesus Christ. This is not just “incentive to be good”; it is power to live with love and respect.)

8 On book page 299 Emerson relates how “two can become one” as stated in Ephesians 5:31–33: “. . . as a husband puts on love, especially during conflict, his wife will feel one with him. When a wife puts on respect during those moments, the husband will feel one with his wife. A disagreement may not be solved, but oneness will be experienced. When a wife feels her need for love is met, she bonds with her husband. When a husband feels his need for respect is being met, he bonds with his wife. This can happen simultaneously. Two do, indeed, become one!” Do you think what Emerson says is possible for you and your spouse? What stands in the way?

Before writing your thoughts, consider these additional ideas by Emerson:

“In order to be ‘one’ as God intended, the Bible teaches we need to depend on Christ. Do you find encouragement in these words spoken by Christ: ‘Apart from Me you can do nothing’ (John 15:5)? As a man do you feel it is ‘unmanly’ to depend on Christ? Can you show love to your disrespectful wife in your own natural strength? As a wife, you can love naturally (it is the way God created you), but you don’t respect naturally when you feel unloved. As a man, or as a woman, do you admit you need Christ’s help to show your spouse love or respect? What a comfort to know God has sent ‘the Helper,’ His Holy Spirit, to help the one who looks to Him! Does knowing God is here to help you uplift your heart?” Write your thoughts:



Like so many questions in these sessions covering the Rewarded Cycle, this may be difficult for you and your mate to discuss. But if you can talk about it at all, rejoice in your progress! Talk about your conflicts and disagreements. Why do these differences of opinion leave you feeling your needs are not being met—hers for love, his for respect? What would happen if you had a disagreement, agreed to disagree, and assured each other of your mutual love and respect? Be sure to look at the last paragraph of this section starting on the bottom line of book page 299. The best kind of help is available for the asking. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you can benefit from evaluating how well you “agree to disagree.” During times of conflict or disagreement, does she still feel loved? Does he still feel respected? How can you both be sure of this? [For ideas, review *Love & Respect* Appendix A, “A Lexicon of Love and Respect . . . ,” especially pages 305–6. Also see *Love & Respect* Appendix C, “How to Ask Your Mate to Meet Your Needs.”])

9 In “Have You Really Tried Prayer?” (book pages 300–3), Emerson uses another analogy to describe being one in Christ. When pink (the wife) blends with blue (the husband) the result is purple (God’s color of royalty). The challenge is in the blending. The answer to “how to blend” is in the verse that began this book: Ephesians 5:33. Write that verse here, followed by your statement of commitment to pray—really pray—for the power to allow God to fulfill His desires in you.



If one or both of you is still struggling, blending your pink and blue to make God's purple may sound too difficult. But do not put the idea totally out of reach, because it may be only a prayer away. Read the letters on book pages 301–2. Then consider the Prayer of Commitment on page 302. If you can pray this prayer, do it now. (Couples on the Energizing Cycle: you will also want to go over the Prayer of Commitment. It may be of benefit to write out this prayer, inserting your own thoughts and decisions as you go.)



A JOURNAL OF MY JOURNEY TO LOVE AND RESPECT

Since this is the final session in your study of Love and Respect, you may want to look back to where you were when you started and record your thoughts about the progress you have made.

SCRIPTURE MEDITATIONS

1. “For from within, out of the heart . . . proceed . . . envy, slander, pride and foolishness” (Mark 7:21–22). What is Jesus saying to each one of us? That our response is always our responsibility! Our Lord does not let us rationalize our sins. When we do wrong, it is a choice of the heart, who we are deep within. There is no copping out, no blaming others. The husband who barks, “I was unloving because I get no respect” only confirms Christ’s words. The wife who shrills, “I can’t respect him; I get no love!” speaks from a heart that needs Christ’s touch. Pray daily for His touch, and always begin, “Lord, help me. My response is my responsibility.”

2. Paul told Timothy, “Set an example . . . in speech, in life, in love, in faith and in purity” (1 Timothy 4:12 NIV). We all know the overwhelming power of example, especially in the home in front of the children. When we come across as unloving, angry, disrespectful, or harsh, it drowns out all our advice, teaching, instruction, or admonition. When one of our personal needs goes unmet and we lash out with hate or contempt, the kids only learn that our faith in Christ appears meaningless. If you have already blown it, ask God for His abundant grace and forgiveness. If you are

blowing it right now, with children still in the home who are watching you, ask God for help—the power to love, the strength to respect. He will grant what you need, as you trust in Him.

3. It is right and good for a husband to love his wife and for a wife to respect her husband. But a husband will suffer when loving a disrespectful wife, and a wife will suffer when respecting an unloving husband. What incentive is there, then, to suffer like this? Peter tell us: “. . . when you do what is right and suffer for it . . . this finds favor with God” (1 Peter 2:20). Yes, as you endure the suffering your spouse may be causing you, it wins God’s favor. This is something of which the carnal world knows nothing. The unbeliever sneers, “You are stupid for suffering this way. Be done with this!” But the believer knows that the day is coming when those who suffer this way will be seen as wise, not stupid, because the favor of God rests on them. Be encouraged. You have God’s Word on it!

Now may the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ,
by the power of the Holy Spirit, bless you with wisdom
and strength to grace your marriage with love and respect.

And may He eternally reward you because you chose
to trust and obey Him. Amen.

My final thoughts as I conclude my study of *Love and Respect*:

APPENDIX I

Suggestions for Group Leaders

USING THE *LOVE & RESPECT* WORKBOOK IN A GROUP SETTING

Before using this workbook with your small group . . .

1. Read the introductory pages, read the introductory pages, “Before You Start Your Study of *Love & Respect*” (page 6). Become familiar with the workbook’s primary purpose: to take an individual spouse or a couple through each chapter of *Love & Respect* as they interact with the thinking of its author. Dr. Emerson Eggerichs, in addition to seminary degrees, has an M.A. in Communication and a Ph.D. in Child and Family Ecology. Beyond that, he spent more than twenty-five years in the pastorate, where he counseled many couples struggling in their marriages. In 1998, as a result of meditating on Ephesians 5:33, he experienced a significant breakthrough in his understanding of this marital struggle. At that time, he recognized why this struggle happened between good-willed people. Emerson felt that God illumined his heart, so to speak, to see the remedy to these marital tensions. The *Love & Respect* message is this remedy. In 1999 Emerson left a thriving congregation of 2,000 to found Love and Respect Ministries. Since then, he and his wife, Sarah, have conducted Love and Respect Conferences in churches and other settings throughout the nation.
2. Complete several sessions of the workbook to become thoroughly acquainted with its design and function. You should always be a session or two ahead of the group to provide adequate time to internalize the material and decide which questions to emphasize with your group. If possible, have your spouse study along with you and use the discussion ideas for couples throughout the workbook. (Look for the icon that indicates questions for spouses studying together.)

Additional helpful information for the group leader is contained in Appendices II–VI (see pages 205–223). All of these additional resources are a gold mine of information for a group leader. Read and study them, then use what works for your group.

3. Check your leadership style. Facilitating a group study of a book like *Love & Respect* is a great responsibility. The spouses in your group represent marriages in different circumstances and stages—some strong, others weak. As you lead your group, seek to be:

Relaxed and casual, but organized and able to keep things moving. Let people share, give opinions, and even disagree a bit, but don't be afraid to sum things up and move to the next question or topic.

Caring and sensitive, always trying to be aware of what others might be thinking or feeling at the moment. Some couples in your group will probably see a lot of humor in certain questions and be quite able to enjoy what is going on. Others could be hurting and unhappy, not finding the proceedings to be as much fun. You may spot couples or perhaps individuals you need to contact outside the group, to guide them in their study, pray with them, or possibly refer them to someone who can give help that you cannot.

Acceptant and nonthreatening. For example, if someone comes up with an opinion that is totally counter to what Emerson sometimes refers to as “typical” or “generally speaking,” do not be defensive or argumentative. Let everyone who wishes to give opinions, then sum up by saying, “According to Emerson's extensive experience and research, this is what he finds to be the norm or what is typical of men and women, husbands and wives. He knows there are exceptions to any ‘general rule,’ but he has also found that regardless of how people think or act, they all need love and respect.”

Experienced and empathetic. Ideally, you and your spouse have studied the workbook together, and you have learned how to slow and stop the Crazy Cycle. You know what it takes to keep the Energizing Cycle humming. And you know and readily admit that at times you need wisdom and humility that you can get only from the Rewarded Cycle. Your enthusiasm and transparency about sharing your own problems and what you and your spouse have learned will do much to get the rest of the group to relax and open up to what *Love & Respect* has to offer. (You don't have to have a perfect marriage to qualify to lead a small group through the workbook. Ideally, however, if you and your spouse are leading the group together, it would be beneficial for you to have

worked completely through the workbook and be in agreement about living in the Rewarded Cycle in your own marriage.)

Willing to use tough love in regard to everyone doing the homework. As a rule, any couple willing to join a study of *Love & Respect* should be highly motivated to put in the necessary time to improve their marriage. If you are holding meetings once a week, suggest that couples will need to invest a minimum of two hours weekly to the workbook. As they get into their study, they may soon be spending much more than that. Remind everyone: “Your study of *Love & Respect* should be top priority because your marriage is top priority. Your *Love & Respect Workbook* assignments are ‘homework’ done for the sake of your marriage and your home. This study has to do with improving (even saving) your marriage. It deserves your best effort because your marriage deserves your best effort.”

Dependent on God’s leading. Prayer must be a major part of your preparation for every meeting. And while leading a meeting, be praying silently: “Lord, help us all right now; give me the right words to say, or prompt another member of our group to share something that can help someone else.”

If you get a question you can’t answer, admit it and say you will try to find an answer by next meeting. Throughout the week, pray for each of your group members, and for each marriage represented. Contact your group members during the week to see how they are doing. If a couple is on the Crazy Cycle, offer to pray with them over the phone. Never be pushy, but always be available and interested.

4. Plan your meetings and what you want to cover. As you have probably already seen, there is a lot of material in this workbook. The fourteen sessions are organized around the flow of material in *Love & Respect*, as you move from the Crazy Cycle to the Energizing Cycle and finally the Rewarded Cycle. Some sessions cover one chapter of *Love & Respect*; others cover two chapters, and a few cover three. Obviously many sessions contain far more material than you can cover in one meeting. You will want to pick and choose questions that you believe will meet the needs of your group.

Also important is how much time you have for each meeting. You should plan on one hour minimum, but ninety minutes or two hours would be better, particularly as people get involved in discussing their problems and sharing insights they have gleaned from reading *Love & Respect*. As you divide the material to develop meeting plans, keep these points in mind:

- a. Go through a session and decide how much of it you will use for a meeting.
- b. Choose questions that cover the key truths of a given chapter in *Love & Respect*. All of the material is interesting but keep in mind your goal for the meeting—the essential points you want to make.
- c. Go over all the questions you think you might use and analyze each one for how suitable it is for “public group consumption.” Some of the questions asked in this workbook are sensitive; the answers people write will be, in some cases, things they want to keep private. Some questions are probably best avoided altogether; others could be used if you do some checking with your group members and also give some introductory explanations. Always stress that no one has to talk or share what is written in his or her workbook.
- d. For more help planning meetings, see <http://loveandrespect.com/LEADER/> and view “Meeting Plans for Your Small Group,” which gives ideas for planning fourteen meetings that cover the fourteen sessions in the workbook. They can easily be expanded to cover more meetings, according to the interests of your group.

APPENDIX II

1 PETER 3:2: ADDRESSED TO GOD OR TO WIVES?

I am sometimes asked about my emphasis on 1 Peter 3:2 and why I take the position that the Greek word *phobos* should be translated “respectful behavior” toward husbands, which is the way the New American Standard Bible translates it.

Those who challenge my preference for the NASB translation refer to the New International Version of 1 Peter 3:2, which translates *phobos* as “reverence of your lives.” This translation implies that wives are not commanded to show respectful behavior toward their husbands; instead their respect, or reverence, is to be given to God. My reply is that a wife who reverences God will come across in respectful ways to her husband. First Peter 3:2 is part of a larger passage—1 Peter 2:12–3:7—within which context it is clear why the NASB translates 1 Peter 3:2 as it does.

Peter’s theme throughout 1 Peter 2:12–3:7 is that Christians are first to have vertical respect (or reverence) toward God, and then live out their reverence for Him with horizontal respect toward others. As Peter puts it, because of our vertical relationship to God we are to show “excellent behavior,” specifically submissive behavior that comes across to others as honorable and respectful. For example:

In 2:12, why are we to show excellent behavior among the Gentiles (unbelievers)? Because it will glorify God.

In 2:13, why are we to submit to human institutions and authority? For the Lord’s sake.

In 2:15, why are we to do what is right before other people? It is God’s will.

In 2:16, since we are free, why should we be sure never to use that freedom as a cover for evil? Because we are God’s bondslaves.

In 2:17, when we are commanded to honor all, love the brotherhood, and honor the

king, we realize this means unconditional love and honor. Those we are commanded to honor and love may not deserve such treatment.

In 2:18, why are servants to submit by showing respect toward those who are harsh and unreasonable, not just toward those who are gentle and good? Because this finds God's favor.

In 2:19, why should a believer do what is right toward people? Because this is how to follow Christ's example.

Regarding wives, what is Peter's application of his concept of living with excellence? Go to 1 Peter 3:1, which begins, "In the same way, you wives be submissive to your own husbands . . ." In the same way as what? In the same way Christians are to be submissive to (have respect for) those already mentioned in the total passage: kings, governors, other believers, masters (review 1 Peter 2:13–18). In 3:1–2 why are wives to act in this same submissive way in order to win their disobedient husbands? Because their actions and attitudes are precious to God.

So, coming back to the original question, does 1 Peter 3:2 say a wife wins her disobedient husband through her respectful behavior (NASB translation) or through her reverence for God (NIV translation)? As I like to say with questions like this: Yes! These choices are the front and back of the same coin. When a believing wife reverences God, her behavior spills over onto her husband as respect. On the other side of the coin, when she shows respectful behavior toward her husband, it comes out of her reverence for God, her "excellent behavior," which is what Peter has been talking about throughout the last half of 1 Peter chapter two!

The overall tone and message of 1 Peter 2:12–3:7 teaches us to show excellent behavior and a reverence for God, which displays itself through submissiveness that comes across as unconditional respect.

APPENDIX III

FORGIVENESS HAS TWO LEVELS

When counseling a couple on the Crazy Cycle, I find it helps many spouses to understand that forgiveness involves two levels:

1. Forgiving a person for having a personal preference at odds with your own personal preference.
2. Forgiving a person for a moral transgression.

First, how should you forgive someone for “wronging” you by preferring something you do not? Consider some examples:

- A husband prefers to leave the sink or a room (or the entire house!) less than neat, but his wife prefers everything neat and clean.
- A wife prefers to drive the car on a full tank or nearly so, but the husband prefers to live on the edge and drive it another twenty miles with the red “Fuel Low” indicator blinking merrily.
- A husband prefers to save “discretionary money” but his wife prefers to spend it.

All of the above examples are personal preferences, not moral transgressions. But the “rub” comes when one spouse starts resenting the other spouse for having different personal preferences. Then the personal preference can become a supposed moral transgression. The “logic” runs thusly: “If I mattered to you, you would do it my way. I can see, however, that you don’t care. Obviously, I don’t matter!” Easily carried a bit further, this kind of logic continues: “Because you don’t care and think I don’t matter, you are wrong, unloving, disrespectful—even ungodly!”

Actually, the only thing “ungodly” that is going on is that you have made a moral mountain out of a personal preference molehill. God knew that Christians, especially

spouses, would experience tension over personal preferences, and He inspired writers such as the apostle Paul to lay down helpful principles about how to handle this kind of thing (see, for example, Romans 14). If you ignore God's principles and become bitter and unforgiving over personal preference problems, it reveals a character flaw in you, not your spouse. Because your husband has his own standard of cleanliness (that is, being comfortable with less-than-perfect neatness) does not mean he is ungodly. Because your wife is not as frugal as you are and loves to find a good sale that may blow the budget for that month, she is not a loose woman. To get upset to the point of becoming angry and unforgiving is to be judgmental and self-righteous.

When I am counseling a couple, right about here is where the wife may get a bit exasperated. Her husband is driving her nuts with his sloppiness. Can't he do anything to help just a little? My reply is that having differences on personal preferences leaves plenty of room for disagreement, debate, and even some anger (as long as the anger doesn't last past sundown (see Ephesians 4:26–27). If a couple has truly bought into *Love & Respect* principles and techniques, they can work out any disagreement. Messy husbands can reform (at least to a point) because they want to love their wives better. Spendthrift wives can reform (at least to a point) because they want to respect their husbands more.

But what cannot happen is for one spouse or the other to stay angry and unforgiving over differences in personal preferences. You may become upset by your spouse's choice to act in a certain way (the personal preference), but to stay argumentative and bitter about it is overkill. To repeat: *a personal preference is not a moral transgression*. To take offense at something that is not a true offense flies in the face of all that the Love and Respect Connection stands for in your marriage.

But what about the other level of forgiveness? What about forgiving things that are true offenses because they are moral transgressions? And within the boundaries of marriage, how does one tell the difference between a personal preference and something serious enough to fall in the category of "moral transgression"? I believe this kind of sin is committed consciously and willfully. In the New Testament there is no final summary of such trespasses, but in Galatians 5:19–21 Paul mentions such sins as immorality, idolatry, and drunkenness and ends a rather long list with ". . . and things like these . . ." Obviously, Paul is intending to be illustrative, not exhaustive. He is talking about following after the flesh (the sinful nature, see Galatians 5:16–17) in such a way that it grieves God's heart and deeply wounds your spouse.

If you are the spouse who is wounded, how do you respond to “things like these”? First of all, you must confront such sins in the right spirit. For example, suppose you learn of your mate’s act of adultery. You may be stunned, devastated, and extremely angry, but you should not confront your spouse with lasting bitterness and contempt. God forgives a momentary angry response, but a continually bitter person cannot be God’s instrument to restore a straying spouse. The confrontation needs to be done with a respectful and forgiving spirit, even if your heart is breaking. A forgiving spirit says, “I refuse to become a bitter and contemptuous soul, though you have wounded me with a near fatal blow.”

“But,” you may object, “if I display a respectful and forgiving spirit, my spouse will not repent!” The error here is to think that a contemptuous and continually angry spirit is the means God intends to use to motivate a spouse to repent. This is not God’s means to achieve His holy end. Your truthful and humble confrontation of sin by stating the clear facts can lead to another’s repentance when your belligerence never will.

“Okay,” you might respond, “what if my sinful spouse remains unrepentant after being confronted and accuses me of being judgmental and unforgiving?” Unrepentant spouses often make this claim. The typical line is, “You are so intolerant and self-righteous. Don’t judge, lest you be judged!” The offender uses this kind of line to shame the godly spouse into the conclusion, “to prove I am forgiving and not judgmental, I will no longer confront my spouse’s wrongdoing.” The spouse who has been wronged must not fall for this kind of manipulation. Confrontation must still occur, but in a forgiving manner.

Some spouses may question me right here because they know what Jesus says in Luke 17:3: “If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” What if your spouse refuses to repent? Is Jesus saying that you don’t have to forgive as long as your spouse remains unrepentant? That’s a fair question. My answer is that the kind of forgiveness Jesus mentions in Luke 17:3 (the ending of the confrontation or rebuke) is different from the spirit of forgiveness, which Jesus also teaches in many places (see for example, Matthew 18:21–35). A spouse who has been wronged can forgive the offending spouse (with a spirit of forgiveness from the heart), but still confront the offender until he or she repents. Having a forgiving spirit does not mean that you announce, “Because I have a forgiving spirit, I will no longer confront your adultery and alcoholism. Go ahead and continue in your sin.” Jesus would not want you to be so foolish or uncaring. He intends that you care enough to confront, but in a loving and respectful way.

For example, a husband can have a forgiving spirit toward his wife for her alcoholism, but for her sake there must be confrontation and consequences. Having a forgiving spirit does not mean letting the transgressor off the hook. The wife may adamantly insist she has changed (alcoholics often do), but somehow she turns up drunk again. The husband must say, "Honey, I love you and I forgive you, but I cannot trust you."

It is important to differentiate between forgiving and trusting. To be real, repentance must lead to some kind of change in behavior or attitude. Paul taught his listeners to "repent and turn to God, performing deeds appropriate to repentance" (Acts 26:20). Some evidence should exist that the sinner has sincerely turned the corner on his or her sin. When this "fruit" is plainly there, the offended party should be encouraged and thank God. Yes, the fear that "it could happen again" may always be there, but it should not be allowed to control the situation. If an offending spouse repents and has a real change in behavior, full forgiveness should be extended. You should not be in your spouse's face confronting a grievous sin that is no longer there. You stop dwelling on the past and look to the future.

Sadly, a spouse may commit grievous sins, but after supposedly "forgiving" those sins the offended party ends up committing worse sins. I have watched this kind of thing happen all too often over the years. The sinful spouse comes clean in repentant humility, but the offended spouse chooses to be relentless with questioning and accusing. For example, a husband commits adultery and then repents, asking God's forgiveness and his wife's. His fellowship with God is restored, but his wife is bitter and judgmental. Even though the husband turns his heart back to Christ and tries in every way he can to restore the marriage, his wife continues to defame him to anyone who will listen, including their children.

What is more common than the repentant spouse who remains unforgiven is the spouse who refuses to repent, or the spouse who claims repentance but the "appropriate deeds" don't follow. Returning to the example of the alcoholic wife, her husband can have a forgiving spirit, but that does not include allowing her to go to a bar or to stay home alone for any period of time. The facts are clear: at present, her addiction does not make her trustworthy regarding alcohol. The husband should say, "I love you, but you must go to the rehab center at the hospital. You are too weak to fight your addiction alone."

There is no contradiction between extending forgiveness and enacting consequences for the offender. Because you forgive someone doesn't mean that everything goes on

just as it did before, that nothing has to change. For example, a wife may forgive her husband's adultery with his secretary, but that does not mean the husband can continue to work with the secretary. The forgiving wife need not "prove" her forgiveness by allowing her husband to do whatever he chooses in relationship to the secretary. But the husband does need to prove that he is truly repentant and intends to be loyal to his wife by "bear[ing] fruit in keeping with repentance" (see Matthew 3:1–10).

I know of one man who committed adultery with a female associate at work, and he decided his only course of action was to resign. He did this not only to remove further temptation, but also to demonstrate to his wife that his repentance was real. He knew her forgiveness was real, but he also knew he had to reestablish trust. The onus was on him, not his wife. This marriage has been restored now for over fifteen years. When the husband quit his job he took a huge hit financially, but God honored his decision. Today, he owns his own company and loves what he is doing. He and his wife love each other more than ever and are actively involved together in ministries at their local church.

But what about the wife who confronts her husband's sin and he refuses to repent? In 1 Peter 3:1–2 the wife is called upon to win her disobedient husband "without a word." Peter understood that after awhile a wife's words of rebuke repulse a disobedient husband. Her fire and brimstone preaching just turns him off. From a human perspective, "without a word" makes no sense, especially to a wife who is continually being wronged. However, God's revelation is to be obeyed. When it is clear that her husband will not listen, she must cease her confrontation. She must walk in a quiet, gentle, respectful, and forgiving spirit, trusting that God will defend her and convict her husband.

Does Scripture teach that a wife should go quietly on and on while her unrepentant husband continues, for example, to commit adultery? If the transgressing party refuses to repent and cut off the adulterous relationship, divorce may be inevitable (see Matthew 5:32; 19:9). The innocent spouse may have a forgiving spirit, but ongoing hardness of heart, unfaithfulness, and betrayal by the guilty spouse can kill whatever is left of the marriage.

What about physical abuse? The abused spouse can have a forgiving spirit, but immediate physical separation may be necessary. An abused wife need not "prove her forgiveness" by subjecting herself and her children to more violence. That would not only be absurd, it could be fatal. My counsel is that an abused wife should bodily remove

herself and her children from a violent husband. There are people in every community ready and able to help abused wives.

I do not know your situation. Every marriage, every family, is different. But I do have a strong conviction. In any Bible-believing church there should be at least one person who can counsel you with godly wisdom. Paul says as much when he writes, “Is it possible that there is nobody among you wise enough to judge a dispute between believers?” (1 Corinthians 6:5 NIV). God is saying that there is such a person and that you must seek that person out and ask for help. For the sake of your children, for your own sake and for God’s honor, find that person! God will direct your steps. I have seen it happen.

Do not assume that the only person who can help you is the pastor. It may well be that your pastor or an elder could be this person, but there may be others. Every church I have ever visited has a handful of happily married compassionate people who are humble servants ready to respond to a person in deep crisis. The ground rule is simple: when you turn to this person or couple for assistance, your attitude must not be, “I want to tell you the evils my spouse has committed against me to destroy me.” Instead, your attitude is to be, “My spouse has stumbled and sinned. I need God’s wisdom to restore our marriage. I want to face my own sin, which has contributed to this problem, but I also want to confront my spouse’s sin in the right spirit. Will you help me?”

One last word: Jesus instructs us to do this. Humanly, there may be no reason to believe a sinful, straying spouse will respond to confrontation. I have seen, however, that when God’s word is obeyed, it brings God’s convicting power. When you step out in faith and in the spirit of forgiveness, love, and respect, God shows up. One person who had been confronted by his spouse and me said, “You have restored my confidence in the church.” This carnal Christian knew what was happening and was thankful that people cared enough to get involved.

In another situation the person who was confronted told me, “After the confrontation, I lived in fear that God would take my life.” I never advise telling someone, “You better shape up or God will get you.” Nonetheless, loving but firm confrontation can bring people under deep conviction! The confronted person may act indifferent or rebellious, but things can be happening in his or her soul. I cannot count the number of small groups who confronted a wayward member of their Bible study for wrong behavior and that person returned to the fold. This works more often than most want to believe. And the reason it works is because God tells us to do it, and He backs up His commands.