

## **Adult Ministries**

# **2020 Lessons for Marriages**

**By Ángel & Patty R. de Rodríguez**  
Mesoamerica Region

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**Church of the Nazarene**  
Mesoamerica Region



**Adult Ministries**

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Marriage Study Guide

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# Presentation

Sunday School and Discipleship Ministries (SDMI) of the Church of the Nazarene is organized by developing Adult Ministries, Youth Ministries, and Ministries for Children.

This material is part of Adult Ministries and aims to help members of the Church of the Nazarene to know the biblical teaching about marriage and how to implement it in their daily lives, in order to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

This book contains 3 main topics and 3 to 5 lessons on each topic

1. Communication in the Marriage.
2. Conflict Resolution in the Marriage.
3. Financial Management in the Marriage

Each lesson contains:

***Objectives.***

These are learning objectives that the student is expected to achieve by completing the lesson.

***Development of the topic.***

These lessons have been written with the thinking that the book is the teacher, so its content is expressed dynamically, in simple language and connected with the ideas of the contemporary world.

***Summary of the main idea studied:***

A brief summary of what has been learned is provided at the end of each Lesson. This summary is useful to use at the end of the class as a closing and at the beginning of the next class to review the topics previously discussed.

***Activities:***

Suggested individual and/or group learning activities that are related to the subject studied are included. These can be reproduced for the participants, although it is recommended that each participant have their own book.

# Introduction

## The 4 Objectives of Communication for Marriages

Nobody gets on public transport without first knowing their destination. Knowing what route to take is necessary to get where you want to go. If you want to "get on board" with communication, you and your spouse need to know what your goals are. So, based on Biblical principles, we've developed 4 objectives of communication for marriages.

### 1. Knowledge

If you have taken up the challenge to begin to communicate effectively in your marriage, your first goal is to reveal something about yourself when you communicate. This means resisting the temptation "to pretend", those efforts of trying to be something you are not. Making yourself vulnerable can be a difficult challenge to overcome (especially in men), you may think that this makes you weak, but in reality it makes your relationship strong.

Genesis 2 establishes an ideal, by showing that Adam and Eve were *"naked ... and they felt no shame."* Adam and Eve were able to have an open and transparent relationship, not only physically, but emotionally and spiritually, and they were not ashamed of each other. When you communicate, reveal something of your reality and identity, show your feelings, thoughts and expectations, don't hide or you can put your relationship at risk.

### 2. Understanding

Understanding is the ability to comprehend or at least validate your spouse's emotions, we all have a "why" as to our behavior, understanding is accepting the answer to this question.

The main enemy us must defeat is our ego. You may listen very strongly to what your soul tells you, but you become deaf to your spouse's emotions.

You must silence your thoughts and emotions so you can hear those of your partner.

*"Husbands, in the same way be considerate as you live with your wives, and treat them with respect as the weaker partner and as heirs with you of the gracious gift of life, so that nothing will hinder your prayers."* 1 Peter 3:7

The NKJV uses the word *"understanding,"* but a literal translation of verse 7 can be "Husbands, live with them according to knowledge." This could mean being a "good student of your wife's heart." Or for women, it would be "a good student of your husband's heart."

### 3. Trust

Each dialogue or discussion must add security to the marriage relationship. How can I add security in an argument?

Here are the 7 commandments to build trust within a marriage:

1. Relinquish what you want, then there will be less to fight about.
2. Always speak the truth with respect.
3. Protect the privacy of your marriage against everything and everyone (even your family, don't go crying to your mom every time you have a problem).

4. Keep your promises.
5. Be totally honest.
6. Be faithful, in the presence and absence of your spouse.
7. Always maintain a healthy spiritual life, centered on obedience to Christ.

One of the most symbolic quotes about what love says: love *"always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres"*. 1 Corinthians 13:7. Love is trust.

An important note, if you have failed at any of these, trust can be rebuilt, it requires a lot of effort but through restitution, trust can be restored.

#### **4. Growth**

*"...but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* Ephesians 4:29

This advise is universal, no matter who you're with, your words should always improve the silence, or they shouldn't be said. But words have special value when it comes to marriage, words can destroy or they can build up, so I recommend:

- Transform criticism into learning opportunities.
- Praise the other persons virtues in public, correct them in private.
- Boost positive change.
- Recognize achievements.
- Always be polite.
- And above all, pray for each other. Pray for God to bless your marriage and grow your relationship.

*God Bless You!*

**Rafael Arévalo.**

P a s t o r

*Salt & Lighy Church of the Nazarene*

# Communication in the Marriage

## Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Reflect** on biblical principles for communication.
- **Reflect** on the diversity of levels and ways in which our spouse communicates with us.
- **Discover** what love language your spouse uses.
- **Understand** the importance of speaking the same language as your spouse.
- **Understand** why we are so different.
- **Decide** to apply biblical teachings on how to daily live a holy life within your marriage in order to grow in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

## Lesson 1.

## *Communicating* WITH MY SPOUSE

### 1.1 Introduction

Words are powerful and have a big impact on us. It is not possible to have a relationship with another person without good communication.

- ✓ Correct communication is important.
- ✓ When the line of communication is interrupted, the result is resentment and hostility.
- ✓ Examining and recognizing our way of communicating will help improve our relationship with others.

In healthy families communication is clear and direct. Good communication is vital for optimal family functioning. Communication is the most important factor in determining the type of interpersonal relationship that you'll have with others.

Communication with my spouse is mostly NOT VERBAL. So, I have to learn to "listen" to my spouse.

But what is good communication?

Have you ever wondered how well you know your spouse in these areas: physical, emotional and spiritual?

A study by Dr. John Gottman and Julie Schwartz Gottman (1980-2000) observed more than 3,000 couples in their daily lives. Their study included couples that were:

- newlyweds,
- married for a long time,
- kind,
- abusive,
- screamers,
- silent.

For more than 20 years they kept track of these couples, some couples remained together and some were divorced, some were happy and others unhappy. And they concluded that:

- ✓ The vast majority of couples fight.
- ✓ Even the happiest couples don't resolve 69% of their disagreements.
- ✓ The key to marital success is not whether or not they fight, but how they fight: gently and without getting angry.

In this study they identified "The Four Horsemen of the Marriage Apocalypse":

- Criticism,
- Contempt,
- Defensiveness and
- Stonewalling

which are usually present in marriages that end in divorce.

Instead, couples who stay together and develop a satisfactory relationship have developed "antidotes" for those four disastrous behaviors and often break the tension with

- jokes,
- expressions of love, and
- proceed to repair the damage or offense.

"... For a marriage relationship to be lasting, a couple has to achieve 3 things: (Gottman)

1. Strengthen your friendship.
2. Find ways to handle the conflicts in your relationship.
3. Support each others dreams.

In good communication there is respect and less monopolization of words; instead of ignoring, blaming, imposing, hurting, or competing, they try to resolve the conflicts between them by giving affirmation and asking clarifying questions. It is very important that you be willing to work at it.

## 1.2 Biblical principles for communication

- **Speak to bless others, including our spouse.**

*"A good man brings good things out of the good stored up in him."* Matthew 12:35

*"Don't let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen."* Ephesians 4:29

- **Listen carefully**

*"Whoever answers before listening is both foolish and shameful."* Proverbs 18:13 (ISV)

- **Our talk is:**

- **Always the truth, in love.**

*"Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to your neighbor."* Ephesians 4:25

- **Saying things directly**

*"... All you need to say is a simple 'Yes' or 'No.' "* James 5:12

*"So in everything, do to others what you would have them do to you,..."* Matthew 7:12

- **Without anger**

"A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger." Proverbs 15:1

"Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice." Ephesians 4:31

- **With Love**

"Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins." 1 Peter 4:8

### 1.3 General Principles of Communication

Communication is not only verbal, but also nonverbal. Most of our communication, within the marriage, is nonverbal.

- The look
- The gestures
- The body movements

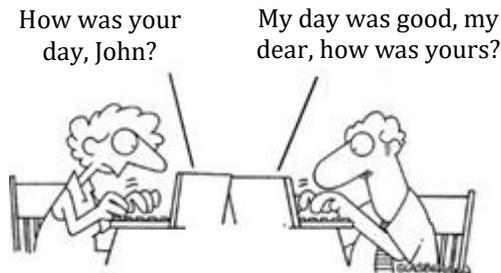
Some things to consider:

- Don't assume what the other person would say or what they mean.
- Don't bring the family into it (children, uncles, mother-in-law, etc.).
- Don't be afraid to share, express what you feel or what happened to you.
- Low self-esteem doesn't allow us to communicate well.

### 1.4 Levels of Communication

#### 1st Level **Phrases or clichés**

A cliché is an idea, phrase or expression that, because it has been widely used or repeated, has lost its strength or novelty and has become common place.



An explanation and a kind face, many times, resolves misunderstandings.

#### 2nd Level **Only the Facts**

Only basic information is shared without showing opinion or emotions. Generally only information about other people is communicated.

##### **For example:**

- Tell about an accident we witnessed,
- Discuss what a co-worker did,
- Tell what happened to one of the children.

#### 3rd Level **Opinions and Convictions**

We share opinions and personal convictions. Conflicts may begin to arise if the spouse does not agree with our opinion or conviction.

***For example:***

- Share how we feel when the house is messy or dirty.
- Express our tiredness when doing housework, because nobody else helps.

***4th Level The Feelings***

Feelings are experienced and we must express our **emotions. Don't repress them.**

Here we enter into a dangerous area in our relationships, we are afraid to "give of ourselves".

It's never too much to tell your spouse: **"I love you!"** And to show it with hugs and kisses. Affection should occur unconditionally, just because you're family.

***5th Level Communication of Needs***

It is a complete emotional and personal communication, which includes sharing our needs with our spouse.

**■ Summary**

- Words are powerful and have a huge impact. It's not possible to have a relationship with another person without good communication.
- In healthy families communication is clear and direct.
- In good communication there is respect and less monopolization of words; instead of ignoring, blaming, imposing, hurting, or competing, they try to resolve the conflicts between them by giving affirmation and asking clarifying questions. It is very important that you be willing to work at it.

**1. Activities**

Take pencil and paper and respond individually:

1. What is the level of communication you have with your spouse?
2. What is the level of communication that your spouse has with you?
3. What biblical principles of communication do you practice with your spouse?

Share your answers with your spouse and respond:

4. What are we willing to do to improve our communication?
5. What biblical principles of communication should we practice more with each other?

***Practice the biblical principles of communicating with your spouse!***

## 2.1 Introduction

Love begins, or should begin, at home. There are basically five love languages: five ways in which people give and receive love.

Consider the following:

- 1<sup>st</sup>. The most important thing is not the love language itself, but that we know our spouse's love language so we can love them in a more meaningful way. So we have to find out what their language of love is.
- 2<sup>nd</sup>. Our most basic need is not that I love, but that others love me. I need to be loved by someone who decides to love me, who sees in me something worthy of love.
- 3<sup>rd</sup>. That love is an action that requires discipline.

Gary Chapman (1995) presents his experience as a marriage counselor, summarizing that there are five ways in which people give and receive love, "The Five Love Languages".

## 2.2 The Five Love Languages

*First Love Language: Words of Affirmation*

One way to express love is to use words that are uplifting. Compliments, *words of encouragement, kind and humble words* are all powerful communicators of love.

To feel *admiration* for your spouse. To have an attitude of *unconditional acceptance*. To be able to accept each other as they are and not put conditions on them, like "I want you to be ....", but to admire them just for being who they are.

Direct and simple statements such as:

- Sweetheart, thanks for washing the dishes!
- You look great in that dress! WOW!!
- It was sure nice of you to help me run the errands, I appreciate your help.
- Thank you, Honey, for cooking dinner!
- You're an excellent writer, you should publish your work!
- The room you painted looks fabulous!

Encouraging requires seeing the world from our spouse's perspective. With these words we are telling them:

- "I care about you"
- "You can count on me"
- "I believe in you."

Forget the scolding! Forget criticism and condemning words! Forget the words of bitterness, resentment, revenge, and demand!

In this language it is very important to express yourself, speak well of and towards your loved one.

### *Second Love Language: **Quality Time***

Ask your spouse what they like to do when you're together. This means you will need to dedicate time to your spouse to do things together. Spend time with them, listen to them, be interested in what they want to tell you, let them express their feelings without judging them. It's a time where you need to give full attention to your spouse, without TV, without cell phones, talking face to face, communicating your thoughts, feelings and desires, and listening to their thoughts, feelings and desires, taking a walk, eating out, paying attention when they talk to you.

The conversation must be a quality conversation. In this language it is very important to know how to listen without interrupting.

### *Third Love Language: **Receiving Gifts***

Who doesn't like to give gifts? When someone brings me a gift it means they were thinking of me. No matter what it costs, they were thinking of me.

Gifts are a visual symbol of love ... and not everyone perceives them the same. Gifts don't have to be expensive, they can be a rose from the garden, or something you make yourself.

An incomparable gift is to be with your spouse at significant moments.

### *Fourth Love Language: **Acts of Service***

Performing "Acts of Service" is doing something for your spouse that they like you to do. You should seek to please them by doing things for them. Acts of Service can be things like:

- setting the table,
- washing the dishes,
- taking out the trash,
- painting a room,
- etc.

These require time, effort and if done in a positive spirit, they are truly expressions of love.

In order to give a service as an act of love, it will sometimes be necessary to break stereotypes, such as: my parents didn't do that, so I've never done that before.

### *Fifth Love Language: **Physical Touch***

It's been proven that children who are held in their parents arms, hugged and kissed, develop healthier emotions. Like children, marriages need:

- hugs and kisses, they strengthen the relationship.
- holding hands.
- caressing.
- the intimacy of the sexual relationship.
- etc...

## Consider

1. If my spouses' love language is a language that is not natural to me to express .... I will do it anyway, for love. It doesn't matter if I don't know how to "speak" my spouses love language, if I want to maintain a good marriage relationship, it is important for me to learn to "speak" the same language as the one I love. Only then can we understand each other.
2. Let's begin to show more affection to our spouses.
3. Love is an action that requires discipline. Do you want to be loved? ... Love them! Show them that you love them!
4. Like most people, we may have believed that our way of showing love is by expressing our love language. But, we must understand that, our love language may not be the same as our spouses love language. We need to discover our spouses' love language because that is the love language we need to use to show them we love them.
5. Practicing the love language of our spouse will help to strengthen our marriage relationship.
6. Let's not put off what we have learned and later say, "If only I had done something before, we could have saved so much time that we wasted trying to fix or negotiate our differences."
7. So far, it has been the grace and mercy of God, that has kept us together, and even without knowing a lot, we have learned to make it work ... and God has blessed us.
8. But we can work harder to make this marriage even better.
9. Amid the differences in a marriage, even the refusal to do something for the marriage, in the end, love can do more than anything else.

## Summary

- The most important thing is not the love language itself, but that **we "speak" our spouse's love language.**
- **Our most basic need is not that I love, but that others love me.**
- **Love is an action that requires discipline.**
- **"Speaking" my partner's love language** means doing what they like ... even if I don't love it.
- The thing that stands out is that **every good marriage relationship starts with a good relationship with God.**

## 2. Activities

Take pencil and paper and respond individually:

1. What is the love language of your spouse?
2. How do you show your spouse that you love them? Has that been effective?

Share your answers with your spouse and respond:

3. What are you willing to do to improve your nonverbal communication?

***Discover the love language of your spouse!***

## Bibliography

Chapman, Gary. (1995). ***The Five Love Languages. The Secret to Love that Lasts.*** Chicago, IL.

## Lesson 3. *The Character* OF MY SPOUSE

### 3.1 Introduction

Personality is formed by the character and temperament of a person.

From a psychological perspective, character refers to the traits of a person, that is, we understand character as a set of features that define who a person is.

Some authors affirm that the character can be modified throughout the life of the person, according to their experiences in relation to education, the environment, health, life experiences, among others.

In short, it is considered that having one character or another is the result of the person's experiences from birth.

Character traits have the possibility to change as the person faces new situations.

### 3.2 The Character

A set of features and traits that form the individual nature of a person is known "character".

Character is:

- My true self.
- What I am when I am alone.
- What determines how I act.
- What influences all facets of my being.

Character is formed with:

- Moral principles. Awareness - Sin.  
*They show that the requirements of the law are written on their hearts, their consciences also bearing witness, and their thoughts sometimes accusing them and at other times even defending them.*  
Romans 2:15
- Integrity  
*Furthermore, just as they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, so God gave them over to a depraved mind, so that they do what ought not to be done.* Romans 1:28
- Self-discipline - Temperament.
- Self-esteem
- The sense of justice and mercy: Childhood experiences.

Character differentiates and makes an individual special. It is determined by the social environment and culture in which each human being belongs, which helps to establish the conduct and morality of the person.

For example:

Sometimes we say that a person "has character". This describes an individual who imposes their decisions and doesn't change their ideas for any reason, they tend to adopt a position of leadership. Each person has a different character, which influences their emotions, their way of reacting and their ability to respond to the various situations they face. There are people who are emotional, passionate, sentimental, nervous, and indifferent, etc.

### 3.3 Character Types of a Person

- A. A **patient** person:
- Is a persevering and methodical (disciplined) person who achieves what they set out to do.
  - Is indifferent to the possible difficulties that may arise.
  - Has difficulties in making decisions because they tend to worry about the consequences of their actions.
  - Is a person who has principles, is calm, controlled, introspective, etc.
- B. A **weak** person:
- Has no principles.
  - Follows the path of least effort.
  - Instead of resisting temptation, they surrender to it.
- C. A **strong** person:
- Imposes their decisions.
  - Doesn't change their ideas for any reason.
  - Takes a position of leadership.
- D. A **hostile** person:
- Is self-centered, dominant, aggressive, difficult, and
  - Doesn't respect the laws of man or of God.
- E. An **outgoing** (impulsive) person:
- Tends to be in a good mood, however, they can get angry quickly.
  - Is a person with great intelligence and courage.
  - Easily adapts to new situations, they like change.
  - Likes to be active, so they are not usually very patient or disciplined.
  - Often tends to exaggerate what happens to them.
  - Gets carried away by their impulses.
- F. An **apathetic** person:
- Lacks interests and ideas.
  - Has a hard time relating to other people.
  - Likes loneliness.
  - Doesn't need the company of others to be able to feel good and be happy.
  - Is a melancholic person, callous, stubborn, passive, indifferent, lazy, difficult to get to know and likes a routine.
  - Generally has emotions that are negative and persistent, lasting a long time.
  - Feels comfortable with themselves.
- G. A **passionate** person:
- Is characterized by being aggressive, determined and giving great importance to honor, loyalty and/or objectivity.
  - Usually likes order and tends to be politically conservative.
  - Tends to value traditions and to show unselfish behavior towards those who are under their authority.
  - Faces obstacles without fear and usually overcomes them, thanks to their strong work ethic.
- H. A **sentimental** person:
- Usually feels very powerful and strong but has persistent emotions, whether negative or positive.
  - Are observant, subjective, retrospective, obsessive, stubborn, idealistic and romantic.
  - Accepts change with difficulty.
  - Generally isn't comfortable with themselves.

- I. A **nervous** person:
  - Has difficulty making decisions.
  - Loses interest quickly and easily.
  - Has moods that change easily.
  - Tends to exaggerate everything that happens to them.
  
- J. An **insecure** person:
  - Has difficulty in carrying out their actions, doubts whether or not they are correct, question whether or not they'll receive negative consequences, etc.
  - Lacks self-confidence.
  - Avoids breaking with routine and encountering new things and situations.
  - Shows fear towards the judgments of their worth that other people might make.
  - Lives with continuous problems in their personal relationships: jealousy, distrust, etc.
  - Has low self-esteem.
  - Has negative thoughts, they see the bad side of everything.
  
- K. An **obsessive** person:
  - Has many routines to reduce their anxiety: sweep, clean, wash their hands ...
  - Worries too much about everyday problems and situations.
  - Is usually a perfectionist, fanatical, tidy person, with an extreme need to clean both the things around them and their own bodies, etc.
  
- L. A **sensitive** person:
  - Are affected by strong sounds and/or smells.
  - Are sensitive to the criticisms that other people may make.
  - Need to be told things softly and tactfully, to avoid being affected.
  - Are too empathetic, they are often affected by other people's problems.
  - Prefer to work as part of a team, but they don't want to have to make decisions.
  - Fears risks. They prefer not to change their situations or daily routines.

### 3.4 Have you ever been told that you have a bad character?

Have you ever been told that you have a bad character? And on whom do you "take it out"?

How do you react when:

- You're late and you're stuck in the middle of traffic.
- your child refuses to listen and obey you.

Anger is a normal and healthy emotion, as long as you know how to face it positively.

Passivity is also normal and healthy, as long as it does not affect your authority in the family. Both passivity and uncontrolled anger can affect your health and your relationships with others. Your character can ruin your relationships. Learn to control your character!

Our character explains our personality, but does not justify our weaknesses. However, the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:22-25

It's thought that having one character or another is the result of a person's experiences from birth. However, character traits have the possibility to change as the person faces new situations, especially experiences with God that transform us into new creatures:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*  
2 Corinthians 5:17

## ■ Summary

- **Character is my true self**, what I am when I am alone, what determines my actions, what influences all facets of my being.
- **Personality** is the expression of oneself towards others, **the external expression of character**. The way we react shows our personality.
- Character explains our personality, but does not justify our weaknesses. However, **the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses**.
- **Your character** can affect both your health and your relationships with others. Your character can ruin your relationships.
- Therefore, **it is essential that you know your character** and that you can **analyze the character of others**, not to condemn them, **but to optimize your potential and help others optimize theirs**.

## 3. Activities

Take a pencil and paper and respond individually:

1. How do you react to situations that you disagree with or dislike?
2. How is your character?
3. Does your character affect your relationship with your spouse?

Share your answers with your spouse and reflect:

4. Are you willing to seek the Fruit of the Spirit in your life?
5. What are you willing to do to improve our marriage relationship?

***Seek to be filled with the Fruit of the Spirit!***

## Lesson 4. *The Temperament* OF MY SPOUSE

### 4.1 Introduction

Personality is formed by the character and temperament of people.

*"..... There were a couple of identical twins in my class. We could barely distinguish between the two ... one was sociable, the other turned away from people. One loved sports, history and literature; the other preferred mathematics, physics and grammar ... What was the cause of the difference between these two young people?"*

*Their temperaments! Your temperament influences everything you do."*

Tim LaHaye (Translated from Spanish)

Maybe you've heard phrases like:

- "Women are very complicated"
- "We don't understand each other"
- "What a character!"

Tim LaHaye defines temperament as a combination of characteristics that we inherit from our parents. No one knows where it resides, but I think it is somewhere in our mind or emotional center ("heart").

It is a person's temperament that makes him open and outgoing or shy and introverted. Temperament is not the only influence on our behavior. Home life, instruction, education and motivation also influence our actions.

Temperament is the main influence in a person's life. Because, like the color of the eyes, the body structure and other physical characteristics, it accompanies us throughout life. For example: An introvert can ever leave his shell and act aggressively, he will never be extroverted.

### 4.2 The Temperament

Why are people so different? Personality is the expression of oneself towards others, the external expression of character. The way we react shows our personality or temperament.

Recognizing our temperament helps us to:

- ✓ Examine and recognize our strengths and virtues to make the best use of them.
- ✓ Examine and recognize our weaknesses to overcome them.
- ✓ Understand others and understand that they are just different from us.

Writer Tim LaHaye identifies 4 temperaments: ***Sanguine, Choleric, Melancholy and Phlegmatic.***

Temperament explains our personality, but does not justify our weaknesses. However, the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*

Galatians 5:22-25

### 4.2.2 4.2.1 Temperament influences everything you do

Your temperament influences everything you do: your sleeping habits, the way you eat, the way you treat other people. Humanly speaking, there is no influence in your life more powerful than that of your temperament.

Therefore, it is essential that you know your temperament and that you can analyze the temperament of others, not to condemn them, but to optimize your potential and help others optimize theirs.

You will see what I mean!

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They talk about time, friends and a hundred things before facing the real problem.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They get straight to the point. They want you to correct your spouse so you can have a peaceful home life.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They sigh deeply as they sit with their depression, self-pity and unhappiness engraved on their face.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They rarely make an appointment, and when they do, they need most of the

These people don't have the temperament they have because of the way they act; on the contrary, they act the way they do because of their temperaments.

### 4.2.3 Temperament and eating habits

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They eat everything in sight ... and usually, they are noticed. In a restaurant, they enjoy talking so much that they don't look at the menu until the waiter arrives.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They are stereotypical diners, they hardly vary their menu from one day to the next. And when the food arrives, they devour it. They talk while they chew.
<b><i>Melancholic</i></b>	They meticulously choose their food. They need an eternity to decide what to order and they savor each bite.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They are deliberate eaters, they eat everything and are the last to finish (slow). They rarely gain weight.

### 4.2.4 Temperament and driving habits

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They are erratic drivers. Sometimes they exceed the speed limit and then, for no reason, lose interest in going fast. Oriented to deal with people, they look people in the face when they are talking to them
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They are reckless drivers. They, take off at full speed, wanting to save time, driving wildly between appointments.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They don't leave home without preparing well for the trip. They study the map, they know the route, they record the story of the trip. Being legalistic, they rarely exceed the speed limit.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They are the slowest drivers on the road. They're the last to leave an intersection and they rarely change lanes.

#### 4.2.5 Temperament and buying habits

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They have no price awareness, they buy whatever they like. They are attracted to the wrapping/colors. Their car is the fullest with people.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They don't enjoy shopping and only go to the store when they need something.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They compare prices and quality quite carefully. They touch the items they are considering. They examine it 2 or 3 times. They leave the store and if it isn't sold when they return, they buy it. In the supermarket, they know where things are and use coupons.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They love to buy things. They spend time, undecided. They buy frequently, because they feel they haven't bought enough on their first trip to the supermarket.

#### 4.2.6 Temperament and gardening

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They get up early to work in the garden, they align the tools, they start to work and 30 minutes later they are in a lively conversation with the neighbor. By the end of the day, the work is undone and the tools are put away and they plan to do the work next week.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They hate garden work. When they do work in the garden, they hurry to finish quickly.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They have a natural ability to create things, they have the best garden in the neighborhood. They talk to their plants, pamper them. They take care of the garden.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They just think about resting and are defeated by their impulse to do only what is needed. No more.

#### 4.2.7 Temperament and study habits

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They tend to not be good students but can be if they are motivated. Restless and undisciplined. They have a short attention span and are distracted easily.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	Smart. They like people-oriented topics. They jump from one thing to another, are fast readers and have curious mind. They love to see everything fit together, graphs, diagrams, presentations.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	Good students, enjoy learning. They are inquisitive, sharp and have retentive minds that remember details. Good spellers. Amazing concentration despite interruptions.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They can be good students if their laziness doesn't catch them and they are motivated. Prefer to do short-term work over long term projects. Organized minds, able to analyze and deduct. Good memory.

#### 4.2.8 Temperment and communication skills

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They are intuitive speakers. Excessively expressive and exaggerated.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They are expressive enough to speak freely. Debaters and controversialists. Caustic and sarcastic.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They never speak until they have thought about what they are going to say. They don't like to interrupt, but when they start, they deliver their entire message.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They are not excited about anything. They rarely enter debates or conversations. They answer questions with wit and good humor, they will not say something voluntarily, only when asked.

#### 4.2.9 Temperament and bill paying

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They are terrible at keeping records. They dislike details and momentarily feel bad about their excessive shopping habits. But instead of cutting back on their standard of living, they will try to earn more. They pay, but need several reminders.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They pay their bills on time. They aren't very detailed, but they like to do things in an orderly manner. They put the bills in one place and pay them on the same day of each month.
<b><i>Melancholy</i></b>	They are perfectionists. They are traumatized if they haven't paid their bills on time. They keep all their receipts for the last 5 years.
<b><i>Phlegmatic</i></b>	They are systematic, they have a detailed budget and keep good records. They pay on time or before. At the end of the month they take stock of their finances to make sure that their life is in order and then launch into the following month.

#### 4.2.10 Temperament and disciplining children

<b><i>Sanguine</i></b>	They shout their instructions and corrections. They have no discipline, rarely carry through with their threats. When it comes to disciplining, they have to do it immediately, or they won't do it at all. Their tender heart and forgiving spirit doesn't give the punishment if it's delayed. Their tolerance leads to permissive behavior, which encourages disorder and produces uncertainty in their children. After punishing their children, they take time to love and comfort them. They don't hold a grudge, they love to have fun, they take time to play with their children.
<b><i>Choleric</i></b>	They are prone to be authoritative, they want to rule their home like a military camp. This can produce good robots, but it doesn't do well for children. Their children know very well what their parent demands as far as obedience and rules. They love to give orders. When they discipline, they discipline too strongly and for too long.  They are teachers of excess in everything they do. Their motto is: "If a little is good, a lot is better." They can be good parents, but they have to dedicate themselves to it. They are hard to please. These parents feel they need to do the impossible to show their love to their children.

**Melancholy**

They are perfectionist. They have high and unrealistic hopes for their children. They rarely praise their children. Their children know that a less than outstanding grade is a failure. Legalistic by nature, they have rules for everything and ways of acting that must be carried out. If they say they are going to discipline, they comply. But they rarely discipline in excess.

It is difficult for them to express approval because they expect a lot and fear that their children will get lazy and because they've been successful in the past. They have a great capacity to love their children but they need to learn to express it.

**Phlegmatic**

They can be good parents if they learn to be more affirmative and decisive when necessary. They are patience personified. They love their children, they give them their time, they play with them. They may even allow their children to be argumentative. They are the least likely to discipline, they expect their spouse to do it.

During adolescence children need a powerful parental figure, it is sad when a parent uses work as an excuse to avoid confrontations.

Our temperament explains a lot about our personality, but it doesn't justify our weaknesses. However, the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses.

*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh with its passions and desires. Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit.*  
Galatians 5:22-25

Having one temperament or another does not make us better or worse. However, temperament traits are likely to change as the person faces new situations, especially experiences with God that transform us into new creatures:

*Therefore, if anyone is in Christ, the new creation has come: The old has gone, the new is here!*  
2 Corinthians 5:17

In my personal experience and observing believers throughout their Christian life, I've discovered that the Holy Spirit transforms us, taking us to a point of balance: **being like Christ**.

Regardless of our character or our temperament, which does not go away, they are simply transformed by the Spirit of God in our lives.

According to Dr. Tim LaHaye, you don't have just one of the four basic temperaments, but a combination of temperaments, where some are more obvious. Once we know the strengths and weaknesses of our temperament we can:

- 1) Allow the Holy Spirit to work in our lives.
- 2) Improve our relationship with our spouse.
- 3) Identify the specific spiritual gifts that the Lord has given us.

## ■ Summary

- Temperament explains our personality, but does not justify our weaknesses. However, ***the Holy Spirit helps us overcome our weaknesses.***
- ***Your temper influences everything you do:*** your sleeping habits, the way you eat, the way you treat other people. Humanly speaking, there is no influence in your life more powerful than that of your temperament.
- Therefore, ***it is essential that you know your temperament*** and that you can ***analyze the temperament of others***, not to condemn them, ***but to optimize your potential and help others optimize theirs.***

## 4. Activities

Take a pencil and paper and respond individually:

1. What is your temper?
2. What is your spouse's temperament?
3. Does your temperament affect your relationship with your spouse?
4. Does your spouse's temperament affect your marriage relationship?

Share your answers with your spouse and reflect:

5. Are you willing to seek the fruit of the Holy Spirit in your life?
6. What are you willing to do to improve your marriage relationship?

***To be filled with the fruit of the spirit and to sanctify your marriage!***

## Bibliography

LaHaye, Tim. (1996). ***Theory of Temperament.*** Barcelona: Clie. (All text was translated from Spanish.)

## Conflict Resolution in the Marriage

### Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Think** about biblical principles for conflict resolution.
- **Reflect** on the importance of influencing other marriages so that they also decide to yearn to know God personally and seek to live under the design He has for marriage.
- **Discover** the main causes of conflict with your spouse.
- **Understand** the importance of recognizing that the relationship can improve day by day.
- **Decide** to daily apply biblical teachings about how to grow their marriage relationship to be in the likeness of Jesus Christ.

### Lesson 5.

## *Considering Our Differences* **TO IMPROVE OUR MARRIAGE**

*So they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

Matthew 19:6a

### 5.1 Introduction

Conflict is understood as the clash of interests, opinions or attitudes between two people or within a group. Even Christian marriages must learn to face the conflicts that arise in everyday life.

Sadly, however, many times we find marriages where both spouses are Christians but they have not learned to resolve their conflicts. This will bring serious consequences to the family.

In this Lesson we will study different erroneous ways of dealing with conflict in the marriage. We will associate these bad conflict resolution strategies with what are known as the "stages of marriage". This will help us analyze the way in which our marriage is going.

It will also be a way to prevent us from taking the wrong routes, because in doing so, we are almost doomed to have our marriage fail.

### 5.2 Same, But Different

For those of us who have been blessed with marriage, we need to be alert to what causes marriages to miss out on having life to the full, as Our Lord Jesus offers us in John 10:10.

If we take a look at the official statistics provided by the National Institute of Statistics and Geography (INEGI) we will find that:

- Among couples who decide to live together each year, those who live in free union have increased from 40.3% in 2008 to 57.2% in 2018. It seems that today young people no longer believe in marriage. This gives us the opportunity to be increasingly influential in the lives of other people to encourage them to choose marriage as God Himself has instituted.
- The relationship between divorces and marriages that take place every year has increased from 16% in 2011 to 28% in 2017. That is, for every 100 marriages that take place in a year, 28 couples choose to divorce in the same year. If this trend continues, predictions say that by 2024, in Mexico, 50 divorces will be registered for every 100 marriages. The laws have even changed and made it easier for couples to get divorced.

All this makes us think about the responsibility we have before God to be an example for other marriages and to help them whenever possible. But how can we help and inspire others if our marriage faces serious problems?

Many times we struggle to understand that men and women have strong biological, physiological, psychological and neurological differences. This causes, as Erna Alvarado (2017) points out, men and women to:

- Have their own tools and resources.
- Feel, do, be, see, love and solve problems differently.
- Realize that a women's brain is more interconnected. This implies that they have the capacity to take into account more information to make a decision.

### **5.3 Main differences that cause conflict in the marriage**

God Himself has designed men and women to be different. For example:

#### **Women:**

- Are distinguished by emotions and the quality of the relationships they have.
- According to Virginia Satir, cited by E. Alvarado (2017), hope to find a man who loves her exclusively, respects and values her, and speaks to her in such a way that makes her happy.
- Expect their husband to support them, give them comfort and be at their side in difficult times.
- Have more developed areas in their brain linked to memory, attention and social cognition. That is to say, they are more aware of other people and their environment.

#### **Men:**

- Are more emotionally solemn.
- Give more weight to reason over emotion.
- Prefer to get to the point when facing a problem.
- Virginia Satir, cited by E. out that men want a women who will meet their needs, enjoy their strengths, see them as Alvarado (2017), points wise and are willing to help them when they demonstrate their needs.

These differences can enrich the marriage relationship (Alvarado, 2017).

#### **Women:**

- Are more emotional. They process their emotions outwardly.
- Feel pain in a different way.
- Are more intuitive.
- Focus more on the details.
- Need to receive admiration.
- Like to be protected.
- Need to go beyond intimacy.
- Have natural tenderness (gentle, kind, warm).
- Care more than men. Therefore, they are more sensitive to stress.
- Communicate differently. Sometimes, in dialogue, women only seek to be heard.
- Usually share their feelings more than men.
- Do everything in the name of love.

#### **Men:**

- Are less likely to remember things.
- Are more rational.
- Are more logical.
- Process their emotions inwardly.
- Need to receive respect

- Are pleased to protect.
- Need public recognition of accomplishment.
- Are more aggressive and strong.
- Do everything in the name of duty.

As E. Alvarado (2017) points out, differences are not in themselves a problem. The problem "lies in not recognizing, accepting, enjoying and exercising them."

We must remember that God's wisdom is greater than ours. He designed us to complement each other, not to compete with each other.

## **5.4 Differences that produce the most common conflicts in a marriage**

Before addressing these differences between men and women, it is important to emphasize that the way that men and women think about various issues can vary from one marriage to another.

Presented here are results of the observation, by experts, of various marriages. Please note, these are the trend and not the rule.

### **4.2.11 5.4.1 Parenting**

Women tend to give everything to children. While men look for ways for children to earn the things they get. If an agreement is not reached ahead of time concerning how to will deal with this, children will soon learn to manipulate the situation by approaching the spouse whom they think is more likely to give in to what they want.

Here are some things that both spouses can agree to:

- Distribute tasks to the children.
- Support each other on decisions made about parenting.
- Avoid getting into a struggle to see which spouse will be more accepted by their children, because they give the children everything they want.
- If the family has children from previous relationships, avoid giving priority to those children.
- Agree together on the discipline that will be imposed and the rewards that will be given to children.
- Determine on which issues you can make unilateral decisions about children. Similarly, determine which issues will need to be discussed in order for decisions to be made by both of you, knowing that, if you don't make the decision together, serious conflict can be created.

### **4.2.12**

### **4.2.13 5.4.2 The use of money**

Women tend to use money in ways that influence family safety. Men tend to use money for recreation.

To resolve conflicts arising from the management of family finances, the following can be considered:

- Prepare a budget that you both agree to that reflects how will handle money.
- Include a contingency plan for proper management of any unplanned situation. For example, be prepared for unexpected expenses due to an accident, illness, loss of work, etc.
- Establish set percentages that will be assigned to various expenses: food, education, health, recreation, home, etc.
- Seek to reach an agreement on what each one has as a priority in managing your budget.

#### **4.2.14 5.4.3 Relationships with extended family and friends - Matthew 19:5**

The way we interact with the extended family, once we are married, can cause some conflicts in the marriage. Many times, because of our affection for our parents, we have differences in the way we should relate to them.

Women sometimes think that their spouse's mother is going to compete with her for the love of her spouse. And the husband believes that his mom does what she does to pamper him.

To resolve these conflicts W. Harley (2013) suggests using the strategy of negotiating a solution that satisfies both spouses. Options may include:

- Inviting parents to eat at your home on a certain day of the week.
- If the parents of one spouse don't get along with the parents of the other spouse, then you can choose to eat with your parents on different days – his parents on one day, her parents another day.
- The treatment for both sets of parents should be similar, try to insure that there is no situation that motivates unequal treatment.
- Care must be taken to respect the fact that unscheduled invitations are made by mutual agreement, avoiding "surprises" with family members at home.

These principles can also be applied to friendships. This is especially convenient to have when couples have friendships with other couples. This way both spouses can enjoy the visits of those friends.

It is recommended that personal friendships of the opposite sex be at a minimum. Many cases of infidelity have occurred within friendships that remain after one of the friends is married.

#### **4.2.15 5.4.4 Regarding sex and intimacy - 1 Corinthians 7:5**

Women seek affection while men seek sexual intercourse to experience intimacy.

You must seek:

- To meet the needs of your spouse, without neglecting each other.
- To experiment with your sexuality together so that you both enjoy sex equally.
- As the husband, to find an opportunity in which you can provide time to meet your wife's emotional needs for affection, closeness, support.

#### **4.2.16 5.4.5 Work obligations and Time management**

Sometimes one of the spouses is forced to take a job that will make it difficult to spend time with their spouse. This can cause conflicts in the marriage. It is not a good idea to take a job that can produce distance within the marriage.

In general, women consider it more important for her husband to spend time with her and her children. Husband often fail to understand how the quality of his relationship with his wife can affect the time he invests in his work. Men tend to place more priority on earning money for their family than on meeting the emotional needs of their family by spending time with them.

To reach a consensual solution you can:

- Discuss the problems and find solutions together.
- If necessary, change jobs. That is less painful than losing your spouse.
- If both work and that causes problems with the time they can spend together, discuss the advantages and disadvantages of changing or leaving your employment. Which decision will have less of a negative impact? Look for family interests to give priority to over personal ones.

- Remember that work is to support your family. The welfare of your family should be a priority over work.
- Value what is more important, your spouse or your job?
- Remember that time together helps meet your spouse's emotional needs.

## ■ Summary

We must learn to dialogue from a brain that listens. We must consider the different ways we have of looking at various situations that every marriage faces.

We must be alert of those issues that often cause conflict because of the different ways men and women have to approaching these issues:

- 1) Parenting
- 2) The use of money
- 3) Relationships with extended family and friends
- 4) Sex and intimacy
- 5) Work obligations and time management

## 5. Activities

Take a pencil and piece of paper and respond individually:

1. Do you think you have been applying correct or incorrect strategies to resolve conflicts within your marriage?
2. What specific strategy has each of you applied? Has that been effective?
3. Are those strategies identified in any of the emotional stages of the marriage described here?

Share your answers with your spouse and respond:

4. What are you willing to do to improve your relationship and how will you improve the way you resolve your conflicts?

***Discover your spouses love language!***

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## Lesson 6. **WRONG WAYS TO *Resolve Conflict*** **AND ITS RELATIONSHIP TO THE STAGES OF MARRIAGE**

*So they are no longer two, but one flesh.*

Matthew 19:6

### 6.1 Introduction

Conflict is understood as a clash of interests, opinions or attitudes between two people or within a group. Marriage, even a Christian marriage, must learn to face conflicts that arise in everyday life.

Sadly, however, there are times we find marriages where both spouses are Christians but they haven't learned to resolve their conflicts. This can bring about serious consequences for your family.

In this lesson we will study different erroneous ways of dealing with conflict within the marriage. We will associate these bad conflict resolution strategies with, what are known as, the "stages of marriage". This will help us analyze the way our marriage is heading. It will also be a way to prevent us from following the same path, because in doing so, our marriage is most likely doomed to fail.

### 6.2 Wrong ways to deal with conflict

Williard F. Harley (2013) reminds us of some ways we tend to face conflict. There are right ways and wrong ways to face conflict. Let's look first at the wrong ways that will eventually bring problems to the marriage and sadly can result in divorce.

#### 4.2.17 1. The strategy of sacrifice

Many times the infatuation people feel during the first stage of marriage causes one of the spouses to begin to give in when the couple addresses an issue that generates conflict in the marriage. It's usually the woman who gives in, due to the machismo culture that still dominates our culture. But those who give in constantly, will begin to increasingly have a sense of unrest that will eventually turn into resentment. This will result in the couple becoming more emotionally distant.

The surrendering person begins to feel undervalued by their spouse. It seems that their input doesn't have any weight when a topic is discussed. That person feels that their emotions, feelings, needs and perspectives are not important to their spouse. Do you know a spouse like that? You can recognize them because:

- There is no openness between them.
- One of them always seems to dominate.
- The sadness and discouragement of the one who yields begins to be perceived.
- One of them always wins and the other always loses.

#### 4.2.18 2. The strategy of the dictator

This strategy is the opposite of the previous one. One of the spouses begins to take control and always wants things done their way. How can we identify it?

- Do they always order their spouse around, telling them what they want their spouse to do without asking their opinion?
- Do they get mad if the spouse doesn't comply with what they've been asked to do?
- Do they threaten to take action if their spouse doesn't obey?
- Do they exercise any kind of punishment when their spouse doesn't obey them?

Usually the man is the dictator. But it is important to recognize that there are also bossy women. This may be caused by different things:

- The influence of their family of origin was also characterized by a matriarchy.
- They may be tired of continuously sacrificing.
- The spouse made a serious mistake and this is a way of showing that they still haven't forgiven them.
- Sometimes women achieve greater professional success which is reflected in a better salary. That leads the husband to be unsure of how their marriage relationship should work, which results in a power struggle within the marriage.

Let us hope that this is not your case. As in the previous strategy, the conflict is not resolved, it's only postponed. It appears that one of them wins, but it's only temporarily. In the long run the loss for both can be catastrophic.

#### **4.2.19 3. The strategy of dueling - Proverbs 17:14**

This strategy may be the result of tiredness on the part of the spouse who has sacrificed for a long time. It can also be the result of not assuming the roles that the Bible establishes for each family member. How can we identify it?

- Each spouse wants what they considered to be appropriate.
- The welfare of the family is not taken into account, looking out only for their own interests.
- Biblical principles are not taken into account when a discussion arises.
- Even the children are left in the middle of the battle, suffering consequences.

#### **4.2.20 4. The strategy of anarchy**

In this strategy it's assumed that each person can do whatever they want, as if they weren't married! The question is, why do they want a family? It's a reminder of today's popular term "friends with benefits." Obviously this model, like the previous ones, has nothing to do with the Bible. How can we identify it?

- Everyone does what they want.
- They can't count on the support of the other person.
- They aren't willing to give account to the other person.
- Everyone seeks to have the resources that allows them to lead their own lifestyle.

### **6.3 The "stages of marriage" and its relationship to poor conflict resolution**

Michael Gurrian, quoted by Williard F. Harley (2013), stated in an article published in the Readers Digest Magazine that marriage goes through five emotional stages. I must warn that their approach does not agree with biblical principles, but it can help us to have a clearer understanding of where not knowing how to make decisions wisely, in marriage, can lead us.

#### **4.2.21 1. The stage of "romance or infatuation"**

As an extension of courtship, the first stage of marriage is characterized by:

- Having the feeling of mutual affection. They feel understood.
- Being enthusiastic about being married. They still "have butterflies in their stomach."
- Not taking into account the other persons differences. They look more at what they like about their spouse.
- Sharing everything. They avoid making the other person angry, even if they have to give in.
- We still idealize the person we married.

### **4.2.22 2. The stage of “disappointment”**

With the passage of time, people appear more as they really are. Sometimes one of the two can try to dominate in the relationship, usually the man. This stage is characterized by:

- The idealization of their spouse ends.
- Beginning to be more aware of each other's defects.
- The differences between the two begin to be more noticeable. Differences arise in matters such as dealing with the extended family, the time they spend with friends, how to spend their money, etc.
- The details that arise in the daily relationship may bother the other spouse.
- The spouse who usually gave in, no longer has the desire to continue doing so.
- Asking the question, “Did I marry the right person?” because of their disappointment in their marriage experience.

The above, together with the arrival of the children, sometimes begins to cause distance to come between the marriage partners.

This may come about because one spouse is exercising the sacrificial strategy while the other spouse has taken on the dictator's strategy. As you can see, this way of resolving conflict doesn't help to improve the marriage relationship.

### **4.2.23 3. The stage of “the struggle for power”**

In this stage:

- Disagreements become more noticeable. Even small things can cause strong arguments within the marriage.
- Spouses aren't able to resolve their differences in a healthy way.
- Everyone begins to want to control the decision making.
- They begin to seek more independence from their spouse.
- They each have their own friends that they seek out separately.
- They want to have the necessary resources to live their lives according to their lifestyle, which may be different from that of their spouse.
- They increasingly doubt if they have married the right person

It's at this stage where more divorces usually occur. Many times it is more because of the grace of God, than what the couple has done, that saves the marriage from dissolving. Undoubtedly, the strategy of dueling to resolve their conflicts is associated with this emotional stage. They must be careful, because of the way the marriage relationship has been operating, there is a serious danger of falling into adultery.

They must remain attentive to signs that anticipate a total breakdown of the marriage and that may be emerging at this stage:

- Animosity or distancing of the couple
- Opposite values, showing no intention of giving up or finding a point of agreement.
- Dialogue is increasingly scarce.
- There is less and less sexual intercourse.
- The relationship seems more like a competition between the spouses.

Previously, there were multiple alarms that indicated that the relationship was already headed the wrong direction, so no one can argue later that the disintegration of their marriage "took them by surprise".

#### **4.2.24 4. The stage of “stability”**

If the couple survives the previous stage, it's possible that they will enter a new stage characterized by a more stable marriage relationship.

With the passage of time the couple begins to mature and accept that one can be happy even in the midst of the differences and the defects that the other person may have. Experts consider it the stage of true love. It is characterized by:

- Seeking common interests are predominate in their decisions.
- Trying to resolve their conflicts in a better way.
- Returning to support each other, which is perceived by the other spouse.
- The solidification of the emotional connection.
- Dialogue and trust are growing in the couple.
- The question changing to “Will I be the person my spouse wants to be with?”
- Being convinced of how much they love their spouse and recognizing how that love has matured.

#### **4.2.25 5. The stage of “long-term marriage” - 1 Corinthians 13**

Over time, maturity arrives in all areas: emotional, spiritual, etc. Therefore, their marriage not only satisfies each spouse, but they seek to support each other and to be a blessing to others.

Possibly, the children have already left home, thus reaching the stage known as the "empty nest." It is possible that this also influences the couple as they seek to be more of a support to each other.

This stage is characterized by:

- Seeking the common good in what they undertake.
- Seeking to show others that you can be happy throughout your marriage.
- Being helpful to others, even those who are not from your family.

What can we learn from all this?

Do all marriages need to go through all of these stages?

The answer is definitely “no”. If, from the beginning, we learn to resolve our conflicts according to biblical principles, our marriages don't necessarily have to go through all the stages of crisis we talked about. So, in the next lesson, we'll study how to properly face our conflicts.

#### **☑ Summary**

We don't necessarily have to experience all of the emotional stages that have been described in this lesson.

God has the power to make marital relationships and the love they profess always improve over time.

All of the strategies presented here remain in the emotional bank of marriage:

- 1) The strategy of sacrifice
- 2) The strategy of the dictator
- 3) The strategy of dueling
- 4) The strategy of anarchy.
- 5) Help me say things with love

## 6. Activities

Take a pencil and a piece of paper and respond individually:

1. Do you think you have been applying wrong strategies to resolve conflict with your spouse?
2. What is the specific strategy that each of you has applied? Has that been effective?
3. Are they identified in any of the emotional stages of marriage described here?
4. What generates the power struggle in your marriage?

Share your answers with your spouse and respond:

5. What are you willing to do to improve your relationship and how will you improve the resolution of your conflicts?

***Discover your spouses love language!***

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Harley, Willard F., ***He Wins, She Wins: Learning the Art of Marital Negotiation***. Grand Rapids, MI.: Revell, 2013.

## Lesson 7. *How to Resolve Conflicts* WITH MY SPOUSE

*"Therefore, if you are offering your gift at the altar and there remember that your brother or sister has something against you, leave your gift there in front of the altar. First go and be reconciled to them; then come and offer your gift. Settle matters quickly with your adversary."* Matthew 5:23-25a

### 7.1 Introduction

Every human relationship is capable of facing conflicts. As Christians it is important for us to consider how we approach those conflicts so that we continue to build a life according to God's design for marriage. "The happiest couples are not those who never disagree, but those who know how to disagree properly."

Have you ever wondered why is it important to be at peace with your spouse?

The next time you face a conflict, consider that the following reasons may be part of the cause and think about how you can change what caused the differences and how to resolve the conflict:

- 1st. My communion with God has been interrupted
- 2nd. God has stopped blessing my life
- 3rd. I can't be happy

Matthew 5:23 says that God does not accept worship if it is not preceded by reconciliation.

So, why don't we reconcile our differences? Why do we become so cold-hearted that we decide to have a problem with another person, in this case our spouse, knowing that it cuts off God's blessing. Doesn't this sound unreasonable? However, we sometimes do this without even thinking about it.

That is why it is important to share the experiences that many scholars in this field of conflict resolution share with us through lectures, sermons, writings, etc. A combination of the contributions of various experts will be presented below in a logical sequence of steps. We hope that it will be a great blessing for you and your family.

### 7.2 Steps to resolve conflict in a healthy way

What we are looking for is a wise way for spouses to negotiate their differences. As Williard Harley (2013) points out, the goal is to reach an agreement where we both spouses feel satisfied. That way we both win, and therefore it is possible to turn the conflict into an opportunity to grow as a couple.

#### 4.2.26 1. Take the initiative

Sometimes we avoid the issue that causes a conflict because we are afraid of being vulnerable. Let's see what the Bible says:

*"He answered, 'I heard you in the garden, and I was afraid because I was naked; so I hid.'"* Genesis 3:10

So when we hear this phrase: "Honey, we need to talk." we react with fear.

But, the Bible says:

*"For the Spirit God gave us does not make us timid, but gives us power, love and self-discipline."* 2 Timothy 1:7

So then, let's get to work. Let's take the initiative to resolve the conflicts that arise in every relationship. We must set a time (make an appointment) to address the problem. This is recommended:

- 1st. Pick a good time. Don't address the problem when either or both of you are upset. Find a place where you're relaxed. If possible, invite your spouse to have coffee to discuss the issue.
- 2nd. Pick a good place. Don't have your discussion in front of other people. Avoid talking about it when you're going to bed.
- 3rd. Have a good attitude. Beforehand, make sure you are in a good frame of mind. If you're not fully convinced of the perspective you're going to take, look for another time for the discussion.
- 4th. Pray before you talk. God is the one who is most interested in the resolution of our problems. Being alone with Him will help you to be sensitive to do your best to resolve the conflict.

#### **4.2.27 2. Confess my part of the conflict**

We must be humble and recognize before the other person that we too share part of the guilt.

The Bible says:

*"Why do you look at the speck of sawdust in your brother's eye and pay no attention to the plank in your own eye? How can you say to your brother, 'Let me take the speck out of your eye,' when all the time there is a plank in your own eye? You hypocrite, first take the plank out of your own eye, and then you will see clearly to remove the speck from your brother's eye."*

Matthew 7:3-5

Let's analyze how much we have contributed to the conflict with our spouse:

- Am I being adamant?
- Am I being unrealistic?
- Am I being too demanding?

Today, many people want to get a divorce based on the grounds that they are *"incompatible"*.

Is that a truth? Isn't the real reason a lack of maturity? Are we behaving like adults or like children?

From the outset, we all tend to be self-centered. We think more about our own needs, before thinking about the needs of others. This is how we get into this dilemma in our marriage or in our relationship with other people: we neither move forward nor backward.

How can I then get out of this dilemma?

Dare to take the first step. What if you start with: *"I'm sorry, I was thinking only of myself."*

Can you imagine how they will react when they see that you have decided to take a the first step towards resolving the conflict?

Remember *"God opposes the proud but shows favor to the humble."* (James 4:6)

#### **4.2.28 3. Listen to the injured person**

We know that "Hurt or injured people hurt others." This causes relationships to deteriorate, lawsuits to be filed, conflict, war. But what if, instead of hiding how we feel, we start by paying attention to what our spouse is trying to tell us. They can be an injured person. Maybe they were hurt as a child, maybe they were hurt by a previous relationship, maybe they were hurt at work ... or maybe you hurt them.

Have you started thinking about what God wants us to do in these cases? First, let's start genuinely caring for the injured person. The Bible says:

*"My dear brothers and sisters, take note of this: Everyone should be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to become angry, because human anger does not produce the righteousness that God desires."*  
James 1:19-20

Notice that God have given us two ears and one mouth. Could it be that God is sending us a message?

Let's learn to listen twice as much as we talk. If you and I get angry, we're not going to accomplish anything, except to make the relationship worse.

*"We who are strong ought to bear with the failings of the weak and not to please ourselves. Each of us should please our neighbors for their good, to build them up."*  
Romans 15:1-2

Patricia Love and Steven Stosney mention that connection (emotional) and not just communication, is vital to resolving conflicts.

Sitting down to talk about it isn't everything, other details are just as important, details that are related to emotion, which translates, in practical way, to hugging your spouse or thinking less about yourself and more about your spouse.

#### **4.2.29 4. Consider the perspective of the other person**

Many times we are taught, in counseling, that we should pay attention to details, like how people feel, how they look, how they touch, how they respond, etc. From the first meeting we become aware of the distance between the couple.

This comes in connection with observing, "Who will be willing to take the first step?" Could you be the one who takes the initiative to consider the perspective of the other person concerning the matter that has caused you conflict?

Let's see what the Bible says:

*"...not looking to your own interests but each of you to the interests of the others. In your relationships with one another, have the same mindset as Christ Jesus..."*  
Philippians 2:4-5

But you may wonder, who will look after my needs? Again the Bible has the answer:

*"You have searched me, Lord, and you know me. You know when I sit and when I rise; you perceive my thoughts from afar. You discern my going out and my lying down; you are familiar with all my ways. Before a word is on my tongue you, Lord, know it completely. You hem me in behind and before, and you lay your hand upon me."*  
Psalm 139:1-5

Yes, don't doubt it. God takes care of your needs. You must learn to rest in God, first. That will help you to look after the needs of your family, starting with those of your spouse ... Do you remember this passage?

*"But seek first his kingdom and his righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well."*  
Matthew 6:33

#### **4.2.30 5. Tell the truth with love**

It is time to put into action what you've learned in the lessons at the beginning of this year about communication within the marriage. Remember, that we all have notable differences in our character and personality, as well as, how we might see common issues in marriage, such as money management, in different ways.

Please, review the biblical principles from lesson 1 because they will be of great importance here. We will only mention some of them:

- Don't use the truth to hurt the other person.  
*"The words of the reckless pierce like swords, but the tongue of the wise brings healing."*  
Proverbs 12:18

The truth wrapped in love is received. So let's learn to say things tactfully, with love.

- You are being wise when:
  - You realize there are things you can never change.
  - You are looking for a win-win relationship.
  - You use words to build the other up, to get closer. Don't attack the person.

#### **4.2.31 6. Fix the problem, don't place blame.**

Let's use our effort to solve the problem. We must keep in mind that in the way we judge, we will be judged. There are things we should not say in a marriage, for they don't build up, but instead divide and destroy. Always remember the rule; you must say at least five positive things for every negative thing when communicating with your spouse.

*"But now you must also rid yourselves of all such things as these: anger, rage, malice, slander, and filthy language from your lips. Don't lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices. . ."*  
Colossians 3:8-9

So let's consider that, when it's time to dialogue, we are not allowed:

- To face a problem when we are dominated by anger. Harriet Lerner, author of several documents, notes that "getting angry indicates that there is a problem, but giving free rein to your fury does not solve it."
- To be spiteful. Don't use words that you know will hurt.
- To utter slander: includes insults, dirty words, labeling people, minimizing the other person.
- To speak lies.

As stated by Héctor G. Barnés "Reaching a satisfactory agreement should be the objectives of our disputes, not to bring dirty rags from the past."

*"Therefore let us stop passing judgment on one another. Instead, make up your mind not to put any stumbling block or obstacle in the way of a brother or sister."*  
Romans 14:13

#### **4.2.32 7. Focus on reconciliation, note on resolution**

Pastor Rick Warren establishes the following definitions in this regard:

**Resolution:** focuses on ending problems once and for all.

**Reconciliation:** focuses on restoring the relationship. Remember that: "It will always be more rewarding to resolve the conflict than to dissolve the relationship."

We must learn to recognize that there will always be conflicts in relationships. The Bible shows us various types of conflicts that arose in the relationships of God's children. The difference is in how they were resolved.

## Final Reflection

"Blessed are the peacemakers, for they will be called children of God."

Matthew 5:9

What will you decide? To build bridges or build walls? To be a peacemaker or encourage conflict?

God calls us to promote reconciliation. If necessary, let's reconcile first with God. This will enable us to be peacemakers.

"For there is one God and one mediator between God and mankind, the man Christ Jesus..."

1 Timothy 2:5

## Summary

God, help me to remember what we have shared here:

- 1) Help me to take the initiative to resolve any conflict that may arise.
- 2) Help me to have the courage to recognize the part of fault that I have in each conflict. Help me to be humble, not to stumble.
- 3) Instead of attacking people, Lord help me to attack the problem.
- 4) Help me see and be sensitive to the wounds of others.
- 5) Help me speak the truth with love.
- 6) Give me the wisdom to solve the problem and not place blame.
- 7) Through your Holy Spirit help me to focus on reconciliation and not merely resolution.

## 7. Activities

Take a pencil and a piece of paper and respond individually:

1. What are the issues that generate the most conflict in your marriage?
2. How have you faced these differences? Has that been effective?

Share your answers with your spouse and respond:

3. What are you willing to do to improve your relationship and how will you improve the resolution of your conflicts?

***Discover the love language of your spouse!***

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# Financial Management in Marriage

## Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Understand** the importance of sound financial management.
- **Learn** to managing their finances in a healthy way.
- **Commit** to God that they will correct what is necessary to have healthy finances.

## Lesson 8

## *God's Purpose* **IN MONEY MANAGEMENT**

**Matthew 25:14-30**

### 8.1 Introduction

Families are facing various problems that undermine the good family development. Among these, the problem of money management within the family stands out. This problem tends to cause a chain reaction that affects other areas of the family. For example, if the basic needs of the family are no longer being satisfied, that causes arguments and bad moods among family members. In turn, this impacts the health of the family and distance between them.

The following data, presented from different sources, explains why personal and family finances are a problem for many:

- The vast majority of people have no understand of finances or financial education.
- Most families don't keep track of a budget.
- Most people tend to spending more than they earn, therefore, they live in debt.
- Those who borrow money and have debt usually don't have a clear idea of what it costs to have a loan. For example, if you pay for an appliance by borrowing money, you will end up paying between 50 and 80% more for it then what it's value is.
- Many people don't know how to work based on setting goals.
- The vast majority of people aren't saving what is necessary for their retirement. This will lead them to live in very unfortunate conditions at that stage of life.
- Many families incur unnecessary or temporary expenses without seeming to affect the quality of life of the people in the family.
- All of this leads us to take our focus off of God and put more focus on material things.

### 8.2 God and money

When we ask for advice because we are in financial trouble, we usually listen to advice like the following: get an extra job, sell some of the things you own, stop spending on the unnecessary, etc. The problem with this advice is that it gives the person **something to do**, but it doesn't get to the bottom of what caused them to get into this economic situation to begin with.

We must open our hearts and analyze whether or not the way we manage our finances is a faithful reflection of our obedience to God. That is why, before doing anything else, we want to focus **on being like Christ**.

You must learn to trust God, starting with a change in attitude. He wants to supply Christians with what they need, but He expects them to be faithful administrators of what He give them. In the sermon on the Mount, Jesus challenges us to seek first the Kingdom of God and his righteousness with the beautiful promise that God will give us what we really need. (Matt. 6:33)

When we study the Bible we find that issues associated with money, property, etc. abound in the Word. In the Bible there are more than 2500 verses related to finance (Doñé, s/a). This implies that God knows that if we don't have wise advice about money, we can find ourselves in serious problems. Consequently, when families begin to have problems, we stop focusing on the mission (if we haven't stopped before) that God has entrusted to us. So in these circumstances, it is the enemy of our souls who has triumphed over us.

It is very important for us to stop going by what the world tells us about having money. We need to see money management from a Godly perspective. When we do, we will discover that if we don't following God's commandments, we could put our salvation at risk Proverbs 19:16.

Given the importance of finances in the daily life of the family, there are many Biblical teachings that give guidance for proper money management. For example, the following principles show that God works through finances:

- God uses money to strengthen the Christian's trust in Him.
- God uses money to develop good administrator skills in the Christian.
- Through money, God shows his love by providing for the needs of His children.
- God shows his power over the whole world through money.
- God uses money as a way for Christians to help each other with their needs (Tripp, 2014, 163). With money we can bless others. We can't think of only spending it for our own benefit.
- God urges the Christian to leave everything in His control. Knowing that He is the owner of everything, even in the midst of scarcity we can trust that He will provide for us.
- God can meet the needs of others (Rodríguez, 2016).
- God gives us the opportunity to share in the expansion of his Kingdom by supporting various ministries of the church. This gives me the opportunity to demonstrate whether I am contributing to the building of His Kingdom or my own kingdom (Tripp, 2014).

You must learn to have self-control and start making proper use of family finances to achieve a healthy management style. This will reduce the chances of problems in your family.

In summary, it is important to change from focusing on trying to doing the right things to have good finances to focusing on being like Christ and then reflect it in the way you manage your assets and your finances.

### **8.3 What does the Wesleyan tradition say about the stewardship of money?**

As Christians we recognize that we are only stewards of what God give us, He is the owner of gold and silver and everything in this world (Haggai 2:8; 1 Chronicles 29:11). Therefore, with great responsibility, we must take care of everything that God allows us to have. And we will be commended for being faithful with what he gives us. (Matthew 25:23).

John Wesley had a simple way of summarizing everything God says about financial matters. He used the following phrase: "Earn everything you can, save everything you can and give everything you can." Without a doubt John Wesley teaches us in a simple way how to be good stewards of what God gives us. Fernando H. Suárez (2015) describes these three guidelines of John Wesley's as follows:

#### **Rule 1. "Earn all you can".**

Wesley states that we have the responsibility to work to earn a livelihood for ourselves and our family. However, biblical principles should be observed and the money should be earned fairly,

not by exploiting others, not being usurers, but respecting the rights of others, etc. We will address these principles in more detail in the next unit.

### **Rule 2 "Save all you can".**

We must be smart about how we spend our money. We should spend only what is really necessary and avoid spending on frivolous (unnecessary) things.

This rule challenges us to lead a simple lifestyle. A family budget will be of great help here. This budget must be made in conjunction with the family, considering what is really necessary.

### **Rule 3 "Give all you can".**

This third rule makes sense of the previous two. We are to be good stewards of the money we earn, use it purposefully to save everything we can so that we can use it to extend the Kingdom of God.

We must then consider giving God our tithes and offerings. We must also think about giving to the various ministries of the church such as missions, evangelism, etc. We must also remember the emphasis on relational holiness that John Wesley taught, insisting that it is important to share what God has placed in our hands with those in need.

The Bible is clear in establishing that we must have a generous heart to share what we have received.

This way of thinking was counter-cultural for England at that time, as it is for many of us today. Note that this is totally opposite to what the world says: "Make as much money as you can, as quickly as you can, so you can retire as soon as possible, so you can enjoy a life of leisure as long as possible." (Bentley, 2017)

Undoubtedly, John Wesley poses a great challenge. However, he demonstrated by his example that it is possible to live that way, just as Jesus taught us.

It is important that more and more models emerge that inspire people of all ages to lead lifestyles that show that we want to be like Christ.

We thank God for those who have already been developing the discipline of living on an increasingly smaller percentage of their total income and have been increasing, more and more, the percentage they allocate to the advancement of the Kingdom of God.

## **8.4 Is it bad to have money?**

A common question is: "Is it bad to accumulate money?". If we search the Bible we will find that there were several men who were faithful to God who accumulated wealth. Men like Abraham, Isaac, Jacob, Job, David, and Solomon among others. Deuteronomy 8:18 says: "*But remember the Lord your God, for it is he who gives you the ability to produce wealth*". However, we need to really analyze why we want to accumulate wealth and how we intend to acquire it.

In this regard L. Burkett (1990) tells us that there are some **wrong reasons to accumulate wealth** they include:

- Simply because someone has told you to. The right thing to do in this instance is to seek Godly advice. (Prov. 18:15)
- Envy of what others have, because you want to impress them. (Luke 12:15)
- Wanting to be like others who accumulate wealth.

- Wanting to be admired by others. (1 Tim. 6:17)
- For the love of money. (1 Tim. 6:10)
- Wanting to have protection. In itself this can be healthy as long it's done with moderation and purpose because we should consider having some money set aside for unexpected expenses such as illness, loss of work, etc. (Prov. 6:6-11)
- It's my spiritual gift. For some people, God has provided them with the ability to make money in large amounts so that it may be a blessing to others and to contribute to God's work.

## **8. Activities**

*The following questions are regarding your family:*

1. From the perspective of your family, cite the five main causes for not having a better economy in your family. Put them in order them from most to least important.

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**My commitment to God from what I learned in this unit is:**

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***Holy Spirit, heal our finances!***

## ■ Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Prepare** a diagnosis of your finances and check to see if you are in financial slavery.
- **Recognize** that God has all the power to set you free of your financial slavery.
- **Humble** yourself before God and ask him to help you manage your finances (personal or family) in a way that honors him.

## 9.1 Introduction

There are many passages in the Bible that talk about being slaves. It was not uncommon for a person to become a slave because they or their parents were in debt and couldn't repay the debt. It was common practice for a person to pay back a debt by offering their child or themselves to work for the person the debt was owed to until the debt was settled. One could even be born a slave (Genesis 15:3) because his parents were slaves at the time he was born. On other occasions, when one country conquered another country, the conquering country often made the people they conquered slaves. Sadly today in various countries it is still legal to have slaves.

Undoubtedly, living in slavery is something that nobody would choose, at least not consciously. It wouldn't be nice for someone else to make you their property. Slavery is a state in which you have to do what your owner orders you to do.

The Bible tells us that God wants to give us freedom to live according to his statutes. Through Moses, He led his people, who had been slaves to the Egyptians, out of Egypt. Then when our Lord Jesus came He came to give us freedom from sin. God has given us everything necessary to live in complete freedom. Nothing should curtail our freedom to fulfill God's purpose in our lives.

However, by not obeying God's statutes, we can fall into a state known as financial slavery. This happens when we acquire debt and don't can't pay back what we owe. In anticipation of this, in the Old Testament, God commanded that people who were slaves, after six years of service, would be declared free again (Exodus 21:2). There was also the Year of Jubilee which established that all slaves should be released, even if they had not yet paid back their debt. (Leviticus 25:40)

Unfortunately, those laws don't govern our current society. If you or I incur a debt, we are responsible to the person or company who loaned us the money, until the debt is paid.

## 9.2 What is financial slavery?

We can understand financial slavery as owing someone money for something we are paying for a little at a time. It sounds harsh, but the Bible warns us not to fall into that kind of situation.

*"... and the borrower is slave to the lender."*

Proverbs 22:7b

Literally when you owe money to a car dealer, for example, you have pledged to pay back your debt. If necessary, you may need to work overtime, get a second job or sometimes sadly go and borrow from somewhere else (and now you will have two people/companies to whom you will be a slave).

However, it should be stressed that financial slavery can also be caused when we are controlled by the desire to have more money for vain reasons, and we are out of focus with God's purposes. It is even ironic to think that a person who owns many properties, has savings and even a good income, may exceed their expenses and be under financial slavery. But the Bible warns us that in these cases we are serving Money and we've made it our lord.

Note that this may lead you to be distanced from God because you will be even busier (trying to make more money to pay your debts), exhausted, in a bad mood and sometimes all this even causes illness. There will be no time left to spend alone with God, to attend church services, or church gatherings, much less to get involved in any ministry.

Likewise, when problems like these grow, distance within the family, due to lack of time together, also grows. The stress caused by knowing that debts are growing and exceeding our human capacity to pay, coupled with the fact that we sometimes fail to supply what is necessary, causes the family to start arguing and lose the intimate relationship that every family should have .

To determine if you are in financial slavery, you must consider a series of symptoms that, when reviewed, will allow you to diagnose your personal or family finances. Without a doubt, the list can be very long and it's difficult to list all aspects in an exhaustive way. A family finance expert, Larry Burkett (1993:33-38), gives us a very broad list, of which, we will share some of them below.

However, a key to understanding if you and your family are in financial slavery is that there are aspects in which there has been an irresponsible attitude in financial management (Burkett, 1990, 53).

### **9.3 Symptoms of financial slavery**

1. Having problems, every month, to cover the necessary expenses (Proverbs 27:12). Analyze how often this is happening to you.
2. Wanting to get rich very quickly (Proverbs 28:20). You may have been tempted to start a business that you have been told is very lucrative, but you know that it does not please God. An example of this could be the sale of alcoholic beverages, slot machines for gambling, etc.
3. Not having a consistent job (2 Thessalonians 3:10). If you usually lose the jobs you get, I suggest you check to see if there are any of the principles in the previous section that you've been violating.
4. Act maliciously in their dealings (Luke 16:10). Whether you sell services or products, you should make sure that your dealings with your customers are fair.
5. Wanting to have everything others have. Today, greed is very common, just listen to young people's conversations about wanting to buy a house, car and travel.
6. Act greedily, always wanting to have the best (Ephesians 5:5). Letting yourself be dominated by greed will enslave you. Ask God for forgiveness and get back on the right road.
7. Can't meet family needs because they have made a mess of managing their finances (1 Timothy 5:8). I also recommend seeing if your parents needs are also being cared for. If you have had to divorce, remember that it remains your responsibility to provide for your children until they marry or finish their studies.

8. Sometimes we buy things that were not essential, such as large televisions, the most recent model of cell phone with applications that we often don't use, etc. At other times, we have invested poorly by having large parties for special occasions like quinceañeras, weddings, etc.
9. Being too absorbed by work. This doesn't allow us to rest properly, causes us stress and ends up undermining our health. But even more serious, it ends up influencing our spiritual life in a negative way by having less time to attend church services, activities such as training or small groups, men's gatherings, etc., and it certainly takes away our time to actively participate in some of the ministries of the church.
10. Looking for new loans to pay off other debts. This speaks of the fact that you are trapped and you have not done what it takes to reduce your debts to controllable levels.
11. Act unfairly in your financial dealings with other people. Due to the fact that people don't have work, we can be unfair by hiring them for very low pay. We can also take advantage of the fact that they are in need of selling something of value to pay off their debts, but we want to pay them an amount well below the fair price (Prov. 28: 8).
12. Lack of involvement in the work of God (Pr 3: 9,10). Remember that it is about focusing on being like Jesus. Therefore, we must constantly analyze whether we are fulfilling what God requires of us (see unit II). If we are not doing so, we cannot expect God to prosper us.
13. Feel superior because of your finances. Note that financial slavery is not only when we lack money. It can also occur when having money, we begin to have attitudes that go against what God asks us to be.
14. Feeling inferior because of your finances. There are people who live resentfully because of their financial situation. We don't know how to be grateful to God when we don't have a lot. People often believe that God must give them property in abundance (John 6:27)
15. Have debts that we cannot pay. We have reached a degree of indebtedness that will grow day by day instead of decreasing. It is urgent to stop, ask God for forgiveness and begin to correct the crooked with His help.

#### **9.4 If I find out that I am in financial slavery, what should I do?**

When you and I recognized and accepted Christ by faith as savior, He set us free. Now we need to learn to live in that freedom that Christ gave us. If the family has fallen into financial slavery, the good news is that God has a plan for the financial freedom of the Christian. Although He has not promised to magically rid him of his debts, His desire is for the Christian to rest in Him and bring him peace as he goes through that process of breaking financial slavery.

So get to work. Start executing the plan that will lead you to honor God through the wise management of finances. Let's go by parts:

##### **Part one: Get in touch with God**

Larry Burkett (1993) suggests that we do the following:

1. Refocus on God. We must put the Lord first and put his principles into practice in the financial area.

2. Transfer all your property to God, which includes money, time, family, material possessions, potential to earn money, etc. Recognize that God owns everything. You and I are only administrators. Therefore, we must deliver all that we have to Our God
3. Check again if you have been violating any of the principles given in the previous Lesson. Remember that although the list is very long, it is not extensive. That implies that I could be fulfilling it, but there is something else that I have not yielded to God. Pray for God to reveal it to you if that is the case.

If we have been violating some of these principles, we must be convinced that it is our personal and family responsibility to correct that situation. In that way we will see the beautiful promises of God fulfilled in our life and that of our family.

### **Part Two: Focus on paying your debts.**

Correct what you have identified as the cause(s) of your financial slavery. Start getting rid of debt considering:

1. Prepare a budget. To do this you must prepare a list of all your expenses and identify your family income.
2. List all of your debts from highest to lowest, identifying how much you pay in interest rates, the monthly installment and the amount you owe on each of those debts.
3. Create a written plan to pay each of the debts, starting with the loans with the highest interest rates first. It is recommended to leave only the debt corresponding to the home purchase pending until the end. This is because it is usually the highest amount, with the lowest interest rate and because it is an investment that usually increases in value over time.

In order to do the above, you and your family must learn to:

- Seek the essentials of life,
- Buy wisely,
- Avoid buying on credit,
- Avoid falling into the purchase of things for which we only have a minimum down payment. Discipline plays an important role.
- Be faithful in our tithes.
- Accept God's provision.
- Keep a clear conscience by seeking to restore what has been done unfairly or dishonestly.

Believing in God's promises and working diligently and steadfastly, we can experience financial freedom. As a family at the beginning of our marriage, inflation reached 100% levels. This caused the interest rates of our different debts to rise stratospherically. What we had as income was barely enough to pay interest and we made the minimum payments. There seemed to be no human way out. But trusting in God and making proper use of income, God allowed us to be free from that financial slavery. Yes, He keeps doing it when we do our part.

Sometimes this plan will require additionally:

1. Act carefully in the search for new income.
2. Seek first to reduce expenses.
3. Limit the time dedicated to work, so that time with the family, your time with God, and involvement in ministry aren't affected negatively.
4. Always seek family advice, brothers in the faith, and even experts, to manage your finances.

**Part Three: Establish plans with goals that help you fulfill God's purpose in you and your family**

What follows is to make a financial plan. It must be initiated by asking God to help us transform our attitude towards financial management, seeking that God's principles prevail. Some elements to consider in the integration of the plan are:

- Learn to have flexible plans that don't depend solely on increasing income (Phil. 4: 12-13).
- Plans must include short-term elements, with well-defined goals.
- Plans must be in writing.
- Limit the use of credit.
- Don't disassociate your work with your Christian life. Through him we must glorify the name of God.
- The plans should also be long term considering: having high but achievable goals, such as using what God provides to bless others, obeying God's principles, having a family plan for basic needs, contingencies, retirement and possible inheritance (Rodríguez, 2016).

**9. Activities**

1. Analyze the symptoms of being in financial slavery applied to your family or person. Next, describe which symptoms you mainly notice that are significantly affecting your sound financial management.

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2. It is important that you remember that God keeps saying "Believe in me." We invite you to ask God for direction in organizing your finances. Acknowledge before Him that not following his biblical principles has brought you difficulties in your family.

Ask God to give you self-control to start managing your finances. Begin by praying and commit to implementing the steps suggested here. Ask with faith, recognizing that there is nothing impossible for God.

What do you think are the changes you need to make?:

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3. Why do you think many people tend to consume everything now, without saving, but borrowing more, spending income that they don't have yet?

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**My commitment to God from what I learned in this unit is:**

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***Lord, give us wisdom to organize our finances!***

## ■ Objectives

*That couples...*

- **Prepare** a diagnosis of their finances and check if they are in financial slavery.
- **Recognize** that God has all the power to set them free in their finances.
- **Humble** themselves before God, asking him to help manage their finances (personal or family) in a way that honors him, through their healthy management.

## 10.1 Introduction

Once the emphasis has been made to change inwardly and seek to be like Christ, we can now focus on doing. Here we can attack two fronts:

- 1) improve income and
- 2) reduce expenses.

Particularly in this lesson, we will focus on the second point. It is important to note that everything learned in the previous lessons of this year should be applied to achieve this goal of reducing expenses.

Constant dialogue, good communication, and the correct solution of the conflicts that arise are vital. Remember that decisions to be made should always be consistent with biblical principles, and therefore should benefit the family and not just one of its members.

## 10.2 Identify the necessary expenses

Many times, how much I spend and how I do it are more important than having a lot of income. We must be very wise to keep to a budget. Start by itemizing expenses for:

- Home
- Food
- Transportation
- Education
- Entertainment
- Health care

In each of these items, investigate everything that is included in that expense, to analyze what expenses can be cut or how better purchases can be made. Larry Burkett (1993) suggests that before making a purchase, we ask ourselves the following questions (Prov. 18:15):

- Can I live without it?
- It is necessary?
- Is it the best possible purchase?
- Will it depreciate quickly?
- Will it require expensive maintenance?

## 10.3 Cost Reduction

### 4.2.33

#### 4.2.34 10.3.1 Avoid using credit cards.

It is widely proven in various studies that when purchased with a credit card, purchases are made greater than those that would be made if paid with cash (Panasiuk, 2016). So, if you don't have control over your cards and the ability to pay the total amount of your purchases monthly, it is best to start getting rid of all your cards.

Analyze the cost of interest to receive financing through your cards. Here is an example to help you understand the high payment for financing through this medium.

#### **Example:**

By buying a new car on credit, you usually end up paying 60% - 70% more than its value.

In addition, the car is devalued the moment you take it out of the agency. It is estimated that in less than three years, it will devalue up to 30%.

I describe it in more detail below:

- If you buy a car whose list price was \$20,000 and you had to sell it by the third year, they would give you about \$14,000 for the car.
- Assuming you paid in installments, you possibly paid a total of \$30,000.
- Do you realize the huge difference between what you paid and what they will give you when you sell it at the end of the third year?
- You paid in total (principal plus interest) \$30,000 and they will only give you about \$14,000 when you sell it.
- There is a difference of \$16,000 non-recoverable, which is what it cost you to have a new car and buy it on credit.
- This amount is equivalent to wasting about \$450 every month

Do you think that is being good stewards? Does it go through the filter of building the Kingdom of God? Doesn't it sound more like building my own kingdom (my ego)?

#### 4.2.35 10.3.2 Eliminate unnecessary expenses

- Avoid impulse purchases. Plan the purchase of home appliances in time for you to look for good prices and preferably buy it in cash.
- Always compare prices and look for the best time to make a purchase
- Don't confuse real needs with desires. You may need a computer, but it does not necessarily have to be new, of a certain brand, etc.
- Avoid throwing the house out the window at every birthday party, quinceañeras or weddings. People tend to spend the budget of several months at a party ... although tomorrow, or after, you have to eat ... and end up borrowing from other family and friends.

#### 4.2.36 10.3.3 Discover and eliminate ant expenses

Today there are many expenses that can be suppressed. Sometimes they are relatively small, which is why they are known as "ant expenses." But let's do the exercise of adding them and then estimate what proportion of your income they represent:

- Going out to eat. For two people, eating out at a restaurant can cost between \$35 and \$50.
- Having pets. Several studies show that having a cat or dog at home can involve a monthly cost that ranges from \$67 to \$350 per month
- Payment of streaming services such as Netflix. The monthly payment can range from \$10 to \$20 and more according to the plan that is selected.

- Going to the gym. The cost can vary between \$20 and \$200 per month. The price varies depending on the area, the number of equipment and the activities available. To this must be added other expenses such as sportswear, nutritional supplements and even food changes.
- Purchase of designer brands clothes. Usually a polo shirt can cost you \$20 if it is not from a recognized brand. But if you buy recognized brands, that same garment can cost you from \$50 (on sale) up to \$200. Notice that we are only talking about a particular garment.
- Usually each family member has a mobile phone with Internet access. Each phone can cost \$20 and up.
- Purchase of beauty items. According to a recent data analysis and consumption trends by Nielsen, women spend an average of \$12 out of every \$100 to purchase products in the Hygiene and Beauty categories. A study showed that, despite economic crises and challenging financial situations, women spend more and more on makeup.
- Personal care as you go to the beauty salon. The amount ranges from about \$46 each visit. However, one can spend up to \$200 in a single day.
- Buy more clothes and shoes than we need. How many pairs of shoes do you have?
- Go out often to drink coffee (from the franchises) with friends. On average per person consuming coffee and bread in a cafeteria can cost between \$4 and \$6.
- Go to the movies. If the family is made up of four people on average, it would cost them between \$60 and \$80 to go to the movies. This includes the cost of admission and a combo of soda and the classic popcorn. This cost does not include the cost of transportation. (Merca2.0, 2017).
- Many times food is bought at work. You can bring ready-made food from home.
- Other services such as cable television, Internet, Spotify, etc. This adds costs that exceed \$50/month.
- Water bottles. Each 600ml water bottle costs approximately \$1. If you buy one each day, you would have an outflow of \$30 per month for a daily bottle.

Would you dare add quickly the expenses that you have in your home?

What percentage of your income does it represent?

Are they needs or simple desires? Would you change your quality of life if you dispense or reduce them?

#### **4.2.37 10.3.4 Suggestions to save on these expenses**

- Reduce the number of outings with friends, or at least the ones that cost money.
- Temporarily suspend eating out.
- Buy only necessary clothes and shoes. You should not necessarily look for designer brands.
- Reduce trips to the beauty salon or look for a similar service at a lower cost
- Do exercise routines at home, so as not to spend money going to the gym.
- Temporarily cancel the streaming service or share expenses with another family.
- You can change the current mobile phone plan you have.
- You can sell things that you no longer use.
- Do without a pet.
- Bring your own bottle of bottle water from home.
- You can buy used items that you require, without necessarily being new.

## 10. Activities

Together with your family, determine what expenses you can do without (temporarily or permanently).

From what date can they do it?

For example, if they are going to cut the cable television service, but have a contract that lasts until December, they must specify it.

Try to cut everything that can be dispensed with without affecting the basic needs of the family. Everyone must commit.

Determine the sum of the total to be cut per month. Compare against total current expenses and calculate the percentage by which current expenses will be reduced.

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**My commitment to God from what I learned in this unit is:**

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***Lord, lead us to organize our finances!***

## ▣ Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Reflect** on your purchases, have they been smart purchases?
- **Prepare** a plan to improve your income.
- **Humble** yourselves before God and ask him for direction to handle your purchases and blessing for your income in such a way that you honor Him through healthy management.

### 11.1 Introduction

We have made the emphasis of inward change to seek to be like Christ. Now we can focus on doing. We said in the previous lesson that we can attack two fronts:

- 1) improve income and
- 2) reduce expenses.

Particularly in this lesson we will focus in the latter, but we will also give suggestions on how to improve income.

Again, we insist that constant dialogue, good communication, and the correct solution of the conflicts that arise are vital. Remember that decisions to be made should always be consistent with biblical principles, and therefore should benefit the family and not just one of its members.

### 11.2 Making smart purchases. Suggestions to reduce costs on major purchases.

#### 4.2.38 11.2.1 Buying a house

The house to buy should not necessarily be new

- You can start with a small house.
- Delay the purchase until you have collected at least 20% - 30% for the down payment. Don't buy it before.

Here are two comparative examples so you can see the high cost of financing a house.

#### 4.2.39 11.2.2 Buying a car

- Before going out to look at cars, determine your ability to pay.
- If you are going to buy it on credit, analyze who can give you a loan with the best conditions in terms of term, interest rate, amount of down payment, etc.
- Then go out to look for various car dealers, keeping in mind the characteristics of the car you want and the ability to pay.
- Keep in mind that it is a purchase whose value depreciates rapidly in the first three years. Remember that it depreciates about 30% between the first and third year.
- Try to buy it with cash. This will save you almost 60% (interest charges). You will be free to choose where to buy car insurance at a better price.
- If you buy again, don't change vehicles before the first three years because you will lose a lot of investment.
- Don't buy insurance with financing from the car agency.

- If you have money to buy an agency car, try to see if they have “Demo” cars. That is, cars they use to show to customers. They will sell it to you with a good discount off the original price.
- When shopping for a car, don’t make the decision on the first visit. Many times the seller has the option to offer a lower price on the purchase, but will only use it only if he sees that “you are a difficult sale”.

### 11.3 Improving your income

Before analyzing the possible ways to improve our income, it is worth taking into account the suggestion of John MacArthur (2019a), who in one of his sermons asks us to meditate on the following questions:

1. Do I need more money to meet the needs of my family?
2. Has God been testing our faith?
3. Have we misused what He has given us?
4. Have we violated biblical principles about financial management?

Andrés Panasiuk (2016) takes up some ideas to improve our income. He challenges us to think creatively. Next, I will describe some ideas of this author along with mine:

#### **Seek to improve and even diversify your job skills.**

If the current job does not offer you enough remuneration to meet your needs, improve your skills through training. If you cannot continue in that same job, start with time to see what other trades you can develop, and invest in preparing for it.

#### **Search for what to undertake.**

You don’t need to start with great things; start doing what you like to do and that can help you generate new resources. Remember that many great entrepreneurs today started their first businesses in a garage or at home.

- Tere Cazola proudly remembers that her first sweets, which today report good profits, were made with only her blender and her oven. Note that her startup budget was not much.
- Felicitas Garcés is an example that there is no age limit for the venture, since at the age of 92 she opened her seventh clothing store. She started from the age of 13 to sew.
- Steve Jobs and his partner Steve Wosniak started Apple computers in their garage.
- Jeff Bezos started his Amazon company by selling a book in 1995 through his computer.

Do you realize that man or woman, professional or not, youth or adult, with low capital or a lot of initial capital, God can give you the ability to undertake his dream for you.

#### **Find a part-time job.**

You can start doing what you know how to do from home. Prepare reports on a computer, translate documents, give advice to students, buy online, sell products that you can produce or get at a good price, etc.

Look to your friends or the church for people who can help you get information on government social support. There are supports for student scholarships, senior citizens, etc. If you really need that resource, you can apply to get it.

You can teach music, coach a sport or at a gym; you can prepare food to sell from home.

Having studied the characteristics of Millennials, you can set up a beauty salon or service from your home.

**Learn a new trade.**

On a few occasions, I was surprised at the charge for some service we came to require, such as fixing some plumbing, maintaining the garden, etc. The charge seemed very high from my perspective as a university teacher, with various postgraduate degrees, etc.

But as Panasiuk (2016) would say, if I tell the plumber that I, as a Doctor of Education, did not earn \$100 in one day, and the plumber charges me that amount for fixing something that did not take more than four hours, maybe he would answer: *"I didn't earn that much as a teacher either... that's why I'm a plumber now."*

**11. Activities**

1. Together with your family, determine a plan to make smart purchases.

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2. As a family, make a plan to improve your income. Remember not to violate the principles given by God. If necessary, consider that all family members work for a while, preferably from home. Determine what the increase in revenue per month could be.

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**My commitment to God from what I learned in this unit is:**

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***Lord, direct us to decide our purchases and bless our income.  
We want to honor you with our finances!***

1. MacArthur, John, ***The Fulfilled Family***. *God's Design for Your Home*. Nashville, Tennessee.: Thomas Nelson, 2008.

## Lesson 12 **VIOLENCE IN THE MARRIAGE** *Breaking the Secret*

*“Love the Lord your God with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength.’ The second is this: ‘Love your neighbor as yourself.’ There is no commandment greater than these.”*

Mark 12:30-31

### Objectives

*That couples ...*

- **Recognize** that violence is a sin, because it lacks the command to love.
- **Become aware** that violence terribly affects marriage.
- **Learn** how to help the victim and the offender in the case of violence between spouses.

### 12.1 Introduction

It is very hard to hear news like some that have been reported in the local media: a young woman abused in a school, a young woman assaulted by her partner, etc. Given this, most human beings see home as a place of love, shelter, security, protection, peace and companionship. At the end of a long day at work, we return to our homes to share the rest of the evening with our loved ones. There we eat, talk, play, rest, and sleep. In the best cases, the home is a place of refuge where we are safe from the evils that plague society.

However, many homes are far from shelters, but are more like battlefields. Every day the media narrates more passion crimes, more murders, and more personal crimes. Police statistics inform us that most acts of violence against women occur in the home, since they are caused by their husbands, lovers, or former partners. In the face of this scourge of the forces of evil, what can the Church of Jesus Christ do?

What can be some of the strategies that the Church can use to combat domestic violence? I invite you to meditate on some questions on the subject: What is domestic violence? Who generates it? Who are the victims of domestic violence? And what can the Church do in the face of domestic violence?

### 12.2 Violence between spouses is evil on a grand-scale

Consider the following statistics according to the “Panorama of violence against women, 2016,” a National Survey on the dynamics of relationships in households:

- About 47% of married women have suffered violence within their marital life. Of the percentage of women who have suffered violence, we have:
  - Emotional violence - suffered by 43.1%. (Insults, contempt, intimidation)
  - Economic and patrimonial violence - suffered by 24.5%. (Denied necessary resources at home, denied permission to work, not given access to possessions)
  - Physical violence - suffered by about 14%. It consists of intentional use of force to cause damage (pushing, slapping, causing injuries even to death).
  - Sexual violence - suffered by about 7.3%. This includes abusive contact, even forcing her to have sexual relationships.

These percentages and injuries are even higher among women with children of special needs. Many of them have children with some type of mental retardation. These women are extraordinary mothers. The problem is that in most cases, they are rejected by their partners because they blame them for their children being born with some abnormality. They are attacked in many ways.

### 12.3 Those who suffer violence don't report it

The abuser confuses authority with authoritarianism and the abused woman confuses submission with subjugation. Perhaps the most distressing part is the constant failure of the wife's will. After each particular wild beating, she resolves that "next time" she will abandon her husband. "Next time" is repeated indefinitely and she anxiously clasps her hands, unable to take action.

<b>Reasons for not reporting violence</b>	<b>%</b>
• It was something unimportant, or he won't change	72.7 %
• Her children or the family convinced her not to	8.9 %
• He said that he was going to change	8.8 %
• Shame of what people will say	9.0 %
• Because of fear	7.0 %
• She didn't know she could report it	6.1 %

<b>Another source adds the following causes:</b>	<b>%</b>
• Doesn't have their own income	56.7 %
• Because they care about them	29.7 %
• Has nowhere else to go	28.5 %
• Afraid of being alone	21.9 %
• Because it's "normal"	17.1 %
• Religion tells them it's wrong to leave their spouse	0.8 %

The alternative of separating from the husband is so frightening. They feel better "with the bad name." In Mexico, it is known as the "fighting love." In Ecuador there is a very similar expression: "He is the husband; even if he hits, even if he kills, he is the husband". In Brazil, "Bad with him; worse without him. " In Peru, "the more you hit me, the more you love me".

#### **Damages caused by violence**

The sufferer:

- Has a lack of emotional stability,
- Often has mental health problems,
- Feels guilt
- Experiences shame
- Is invaded by fear in all areas of their life
- Experiences impotence by not doing something about the problem
- Feels a lot of anger

### 12.4 We must talk about how violence affects marriages

We must touch on this issue for two reasons. The first: we must truly know the area where we minister if we want to carry out the ministry that Jesus left us as a church. According to Luke 4:18-19, He came to restore the dignity of all people, men and women. The humanity (men and women) was oppressed, enslaved and hopeless because of sin; but Christ comes to free us all, women and men. Jesus favored women's freedom and restored their dignity in the eyes of men. Let's learn this important truth today.

The second reason is that the church is not exempt from experiencing family violence. John declared: "*The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.*" John 10:10

Let's not forget that the enemy prowls around like a roaring lion looking to destroy our homes. (1 Peter 5:8)

## **12.5 The Bible gives us examples of domestic violence and violence against woman, and its serious consequences.**

The Bible shows us many cases of violence in the family and especially against women, starting in Genesis with Cain and Abel. In some cases, it is better for family members to separate in peace, like Abraham and Lot, then to live together, dominated by envy like Joseph's brothers.

In Genesis 34, we read that Dinah was raped, which caused Simeon and Levi to go on a killing rampage. It is possible for a man to be attracted to a woman and be kind to her for reasons that have little or nothing to do with love. In their desire to connect in a romantic way with a man, women often forget this.

2<sup>nd</sup> Samuel 13:1-38 tells the tragic story of Amnon and Tamar. This story of rape and subsequent violence comes after David's adultery with Bathsheba, perhaps to highlight the relationship between the two cases. Amnon told Tamar: "Lie with me." She protested, appealing to the law (no such thing is done in Israel!), and saying it would be crazy. She warned him that if he wanted to marry her, he must ask the king for her hand. They were half siblings, but at that time, marriage between siblings was allowed. But Amnon didn't listen to her (he didn't want to marry her). He raped her and then expelled her angrily. This behavior can be understood from the perspective of a man who wants to show his superiority over a woman. Has this changed in the context where you live?

Uncontrolled anger can lead us to show aggressive behavior against our family members. When you act violently against loved ones, there is domestic violence. This type of violence manifests itself in various ways. The most subtle way of assaulting other members of the household is emotional violence. This is manifested through harsh words, humiliating acts, intimidation and psychological games. When a father continually insults his children; when someone humiliates their spouse in public; When a teenager threatens their grandparents, or when the spouse is unfairly accused of infidelity, there is emotional violence.

But domestic violence also manifests itself through physical abuse and sexual abuse. Usually, a "cycle of violence" develops in the home affected by this disease. After a time of harmony, tensions in the home increase until they lead to aggression. The aggression is followed by a short period of reconciliation after which the fights start again and another aggressive act occurs. This cycle must be stopped in time, before the aggressor reaches the extreme of killing the attacked person.

Although in a smaller percentage, women can also exercise violence. Remember Joseph, who was accused by Potiphar's wife. He went to jail, lost his job ... but never fell from the grace of God (Gen. 39). Remember also Jezebel, the wife of Ahab (1 Kings 18:4), who gave the command to kill the prophets of God. She also killed her neighbor to give the vineyard to her husband the king.

## **12.6 Jesus was our model; He showed dignity to women who suffered violence and/or oppression**

The woman who had been subject to bleeding for 12 years approached Jesus fearfully (Matt. 9:20-30), because women who were bleeding were said to be impure. Therefore, no one could touch them due to their impurity. But the reaction of the Lord Jesus was contrary to what was established by society and religion. He went to her and seeing her fear, told her: "*Take heart, daughter . . . your faith has healed you.*" (v.22).

In the Gospel of Luke, Jesus turned his attention to a woman who had been hunched over for 18 years because of a spirit of illness. Jesus called her and said: "*Woman, you are set free from your infirmity.*" (Luke 13:12).

It should be noted that Jesus "... *put his hands on her, and immediately she straightened up...*" Christ could have healed her without touching her. But he wanted to touch her with his hands to heal her and show her that for Him, she was important. Thus, he also teaches us that He gives his blessing to all who seek him, be they male or female.

On another occasion, Jesus was teaching in the temple (John 8:2) when suddenly the religious men took him to a woman who had been caught in the act of adultery. But, by the way, they didn't have the man with whom she committed adultery. Today it remains the same. Women have been losing more, as a consequence of the prejudice mentality of men. They tried to test Jesus, in addition to showing their rejection of that sinful woman. They asked him to tell them what to do and how to punish the adulteress. But Jesus remained bowed, writing with his finger on the ground. Then he asked the one who was free from sin to throw the first stone, but none of those who accused her wanted to throw the first stone.

When Jesus is alone with the woman, without justification, he treats her with dignity and mercy. Jesus knows that the woman is in need of forgiveness and restoration. He says "... *neither do I condemn you*" and strongly urges her; "*Go now and leave your life of sin.*"

## 12.7 Myths that surround domestic violence and normalize it

- 1st. **"It can't happen to me."** The truth is that anyone can be involved in a situation of domestic violence. Many women say they would never allow their spouse to attack them. However, when it happens, they feel so fearful and disoriented that they are paralyzed, thus allowing the spouse to continue the violence.
- 2nd. **The belief that the woman seeks aggression and therefore, she is responsible for things turning violent.** It is common to hear phrases such as: "the woman is beaten because she likes it," "she was looking for it," or "they only fight to make up."
- 3rd. **"Between husband and wife, no one should meddle."** This myth asserts that aggression is a matter between spouses and no one should intervene.
- 4th. **The belief about "provocation"** of violence is a myth that tries to justify and tolerate it.
- 5th. **A wife must obey her husband in everything** he orders.

## 12.8 What can the Church do about domestic violence?

A Church full of the Holy Spirit can do much to combat this evil.

1. **The Church of Jesus Christ must condemn domestic violence:** we are called to fight all kinds of sin, and domestic violence is sin. We must not silence this.
2. **The Church is called to minister to the needs of victims of domestic violence:** The Church is a healing community, created by God to proclaim the Gospel of the Kingdom. Therefore, we must show love to others by developing ministries of compassion to help the victim first.
3. **The Church must look for ways to help the aggressor:** John 3:16 teaches us that Jesus died for every sinner who believes in Him. The power of God can transform the aggressor into a new creature that does not hurt others, but loves them.

4. **The Church must educate society:** The government has various offices that help people affected by domestic violence and who try to educate society. It is necessary that as a Church we develop educational programs to combat this evil.
5. **The church must teach husbands how to love their wives.** Through sermons, discipleship, counseling, etc. And by any means at our fingertips, the church has a responsibility to help the sinner be restored.

## 12.9 Conclusion

We cannot say that we are Christians if we are violent against others. Where is our relational holiness? Where is the fulfillment of the great commandment: after loving God with all your heart, soul, strength, and mind, how are you loving your neighbor?

We end by urging every Christian marriage to condemn domestic violence. Domestic violence is a sin that moves our society away from God and fragments the personality of abused people. Let's use our sermons, our Bible studies and our pastoral counseling sessions to guide our parishioners about this evil. The God of Life calls us to fight domestic violence.

It is also time for the church to change some of its attitudes towards women. It is time for a fresh look at the matter within the church.

## 1. Activities

1. If Jesus was a husband, would he do to his wife something like:
  - curse at her.
  - yell at her
  - insult her.
  - hit her
  - be rude to her.
  - treat her like a slave.
  - tell her to shut up.
  - demand that she serve him.
  - be unfaithful to her.

If He would not do these things, neither should we.

2. Would you dare receive support to speak with a church counselor if you are being a victim of violence?

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3. If you are engaging in violence against your spouse, now that you know it is a sin, would you be willing to attend a counseling session together as a show of love to your spouse?

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**My commitment to God from what I learned in this unit is:**

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***Lord, forgive me if I am violating my spouse!  
Sanctify our marriage!***



CHURCH OF THE  
NAZARENE  
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**M**arriage  
**Ministries**

**Sunday School and Discipleship Ministeries**  
Adult Ministeries