

THE WHOLENESS METHOD

A Guide to Healing Married People - Using Marriage

Jacob Reeve

Credibility-edited edition

Copyright 2025 Jacob Reeve. All rights reserved.

thewholenessmethod.com

EDITORIAL NOTE

This edition preserves the author's theological framework, voice, arguments, exercises and overall content. Changes are intentionally limited to claims that could materially affect factual credibility, including etymology, Scripture references, scientific wording, research attribution and statements that could be mistaken for established clinical consensus.

DEDICATION

Dedicated to my children. I am so grateful for you all in my life. It is each of you I think of most as I write this book. I discovered so many of these things too late to apply during your younger years, and you know my regret for that, but I thank all of you for your incredible resilience, your strength, and your constant willingness to grow in forgiveness, acceptance, respect and love, for me as well as for each other. Also dedicated to you Kimberly. You are the best decision I ever made.

INTRODUCTION: Kimberly and I have been offering counseling to individuals and couples for over two decades. Over the years, we have come to classify individuals and couples into two categories; For the first category, we would say they attract "secure relationships." In a secure relationship the individual or couple can talk freely and honestly, having challenging conversations and facing constructive criticism without triggering defense mechanisms from deep wounds or unresolved conflict. For the second category, we would say they attract "insecure relationships." In an insecure relationship, it is very hard for the individuals or the couple to have challenging conversations and receive constructive criticism without being triggered to a degree that would sabotage any relational progress that might be made. We approach those who have these two types of relational traits in a totally different manner.

For secure relationships, we can help them identify the next conversations they need to have to initiate the next stages of growth and intimacy in their relationships. But for insecure relationships, we recommend the individuals within the relationship first do the individual work of healing within themselves so they can get to a place of peace and security that would enable them to begin engaging in challenging conversations and constructive criticism without feeling threatened, getting triggered or falling into counter-productivity with their loved ones. Enlightenment begins when you can start to distinguish the thoughts of your fear-made self-or superficial self, from your love made self-or genuine self. Until you can recognize the superficial self that you have created to protect yourself from others, your attachment to others will remain dysfunctional, hurtful and even harmful, and your entire operating system will remain detached from peace, truth and love.

Until you know your authentic self, personal and relational wholeness will be impossible. So long as the fundamental belief in your own detachment remains unchallenged, so will the insecurities, fears and accusations that prevent true connection and relational growth with those you share life with. The Wholeness Method does not focus on improving the actions of an insecure and detached nomad. Instead, our goal is to bring you home altogether, healing the very thing keeping you separate from the bliss of secure attachment.

The wholeness process begins with the exposure of the false self, or self created image, that we have all invented out of the fundamental belief in our separation and disconnection from each other and God. Throughout this book, I use the term "ego" to describe the false, disconnected self - the small separated identity we construct around fear, insecurity and perceived separation. The word ego itself comes from Latin and simply means "I"; the specific meaning I use here is my own conceptual shorthand. Christian theologians have often used terms such as the "sin nature" for related ideas." Regardless of what we call it, it's a disconnected heart that manifests in our own personal and relational dysfunction and is in no place more directly magnified than in our own marriage and family.

God gave us our closest relationships as a means to heal our hearts and teach us the true self-the connected self. This is the Wholeness Method. A Christ-centered guide to healing the human soul.

DISCLAIMER: This book assumes you are not in danger of physical abuse. If you are with someone who is abusive, we want you to seek help as quickly and safely as possible. We do not condone abusive relationships. While we don't like separation, and hate divorce, we do not hold judgment against anyone for what they feel they need to do to find safety.

We encourage you to set healthy boundaries for yourself. If your life is in danger, please contact the authorities.
THE WHOLENESS METHOD A CHRIST-CENTERED GUIDE TO HEALING THE HUMAN SOUL by Jacob
Reeve

PART ONE: PERSONAL WHOLENESS Relational wholeness is impossible without the individual wholeness of those within the relationship. For this reason the first half of this course is dedicated to personal wholeness, or salvation. This is not as much about getting "saved" in the classical evangelical sense, but a salvation that removes our disability to love. The second half of the book is dedicated to understanding relational wholeness.

SESSION 1: THE TWO IDENTITIES - ISOLATED OR ATTACHED

THE LIE Long ago, before our time or even that of our ancestors, humanity was infected with a lie-the lie of separation. The conflict between truth and lie goes back to the beginning of time and rages on to this day. Just about every major ancient tradition revolves around this idea of the two dueling systems. We can see the lie personified in the Serpent of Judeo, Christian, and Islamic traditions, Mara in the Buddhist tradition, Maya in the Hindu tradition, or the illusion of duality in the Taoist tradition.

In the Bible, we read that "God created man in His own image... male and female He created them." (Genesis 1:26-27) This passage tells us that we were made in God's image and likeness. That means we both look like God and we are like God. In other words, we are the DNA of God. It might be hard for some to believe that we are the literal children of God.

Yet the scriptures suggest that the failure to believe in our own divine identity and connection to God is the fundamental source of all the emotional pain, conflict and dysfunction we have ever experienced. 9 Genesis 3:1-5 shows us how the lie of separation was first introduced to us by the serpent, in the Garden of Eden when he said, "You certainly will not die! For God knows that on the day you eat from it your eyes will be opened, and you will be like God..." (Genesis 3:4-5 NASB) -Did you catch it? Even though they were already made in God's image and likeness (Genesis 1:26-27), the serpent suggests they could only be "like God" if they ate of the tree. At first glance, it may not seem like such a big deal to doubt our likeness with God, but when we do so, God becomes "other" or "alien." In other words He becomes a threat, and so does everyone else born of His image, and this is what sets the stage for all fear, insecurity and disharmony between us.

This belief drives us to invent our own divided identities-and with them, perpetual war. This war continues to rage on to this day, playing out in nations, neighborhoods, and families. The Bible says all of us are born "into Adam", in other words, we all enter this world pre conditioned with the insecure and detached Adamic identity. The Bible also goes on to describe God's plan to rescue us and return us to a secure attachment within God.

This is called being "in Christ." 1 Cor in th ia ns 15: 21-22 sp ea ks o f t he se t wo o pp os in g systems when it says, "For since death came through a man, the resurrection of the dead comes also through a man. For as in Adam all die, so in Christ all will be made alive." In this passage, we see the two operating systems identified. "Adam" represents the lower fear-based operating system of our "sin nature" and Christ represents the higher love-based operating system of our "divine nature." The sin nature operates from the belief that we enter life unattached, insecure and alone in a fight for survival against all "others" and in fear of all "others", while the divine nature operates from the belief that we are all expressions of God's life, intentionally placed in this world as vital members of a larger body. The lower fear-based perspective is the root source of all war, sickness and suffering, and the higher love-based perspective is the root source of all peace, health and prosperity. Every story in the Bible offers examples of these dueling systems and the consequences of each is always playing out in every nation, tribe and family.

THE SELF-CREATED IDENTITY Our sin nature is the identity we each create to deal with the fear and anxiety that result from believing ourselves separate, disconnected and insecure in relationship to those around us. When we believe the lie of separation it drives us to treat everything as a potential threat, whether subtly or outright, as if we were perpetually in a fight for survival. Yet, this separation is a falsehood-a distortion that obscures the truth of our inherent oneness with God and each other. You might think you do not suffer from Adam's delusion but you do.

You can't help it. Everyone is born with it. Romans 3:23 says, "All have sinned and fallen short of the glory of God." This means everyone operates out of the lower fear-based identity. We can't help it.

This tendency is in our genes. The only escape is to be born again to a new reality -a Christ-conscious one. 9 The term "ego" comes from the Latin word meaning "I" and has taken on different meanings in philosophy, psychology and spiritual traditions. Throughout this book, I use the term to describe what I call the "small separated self." In other words, it is an identity built on the idea that you are a small isolated life form, who exists in autonomy, alone and in contrast to others, by yourself. This is in comparison to a larger sense of identity, which is that although you are completely unique, you are a reflection and manifestation of the Creator, and One in Him, along with the rest of creation, all playing a special role through the connections you have to each other member of His body.

It is the belonging you share within His body that defines your highest purpose and where you will find your true identity. As we transition from a smaller, isolated and disconnected position of insecurity, to a larger, united and connected position of security, we will tend to create peace and prosperity wherever we go. The larger your sense of oneness is, the more connected you will feel, and the less of your existence you will feel you are at war with. The less you feel the threat of war, the less defensive you will have to be and the less you will react to things that your separated identity would otherwise see as a threat.

When your identity is attached to the whole, and you see yourself as one with those around you, you cannot be at war with them, it would be like going to war against your own body, like your arm declaring war with your foot. When you have the Christ-conscious identity, even if a dispute comes up among you, you are not threatened, because the big You is outside of the realm of threat. Disputes only threaten detached identities. Nothing is a threat to love, because love sees others as itself.

That is why Jesus tells us, "You shall love your neighbor as yourself." - Matthew 22:39 (ESV). He is teaching us how love thinks. Love is not insecure, nor is it threatened. You don't need to defend your small separated self, because there is no small separated self-and by this behavior you disarm the separate identities in those around you and bring peace.

SEPARATION IS A LIE The Bible teaches us that we are born into sin (Psalm 51:5, Romans 5:12). This means that we each inherit the insecurity of separation and detachment from our parents, and they from their parents and so on-all the way back to Adam and Eve. Each of us enters this world with some measure of this survival-against-all mindset. We each believe to some degree that we are the center of all life, that we are our own source of life and that we are the reason all life exists-as if our own existence was a creation of our own will or power.

The truth is we were created by Another and for Another but given free will, so it is not until we make the free will choice to recognize and submit ourselves to our Creator that wholeness becomes possible. Colossians 1:16-17 says, "For in him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible, whether thrones or powers or rulers or authorities; all things have been created through him and for him. He is before all things, and in him all things hold together." 9 Acts 17:28 says, "For in Him we live and move and have our being, as even some of your own poets have said, 'For we are also His offspring.'" The truth is everything that exists is, is held together in Him. You are within Him, and you always have been.

There is no sin so great that could remove you from Him-except in your own mind, and by your own free will. The root of all sin is the idea that you are detached from God and you exist without need of Him. When a separated identity thinks of a sinner, it wants to disassociate from them to steer clear of punishment, which is delivered by further separation. When love thinks of sinners, it wants to associate with them to lessen the punishment they will receive from their own separation.

Jesus was called the friend of sinners (Luke 7:34). Sin is a broken operating system. Jesus showed us the system was a lie. He drew near to sinners, showing God's real opinion.

YOU ARE NOT ALONE Hebrews 6:1-2 tells us there are six "elementary teachings about the Christ." One of these six fundamental teachings is "the laying on of hands." Why is the laying on of hands one of the six most vital concepts to understand about Christ? Because most ancient cultures believed sickness was punishment for sin and no one wanted to be associated with a sinner, yet Jesus healed the sick through His touch and taught us that if we would do the same, we could heal people too. The only way to heal separation is by reversing the idea of separation and isolation-through nearness, association and touch. The revelation of the gospel is that you are not alone.

The Almighty knows you, loves you and is attentive to you. Nothing can separate you from God's love (Rom. 8:38-39). The root of all sin is the very idea of separation. Psalm 139:7-8 says: "Where can I go from your Spirit?

Where can I flee from your presence? If I go up to the heavens, you are there; if I make my bed in the depths, you are there." The only separation that exists is within your imagination. We are not even remotely abandoned. We are not even remotely separate.

Christ will never leave you or forsake you. Our union in Christ is the solid Rock our psychological security is built upon. This is the foundation of our emotional and relational health and wholeness. In even the closest of relationships, the root of all problems is the thought, "I am alone and must fend for myself." **INSECURITY COMES FROM BELIEVING**

THE LIE When we see through the Adamic lens of separation, we are automatically utterly insecure, treating others as threats and seeking wholeness outside of Christ. This counterfeit system lures us into codependencies, where we seek security and identity from individuals, institutions, and ideologies rather than Christ. Such codependencies are destined for disappointment as they do not cure the sickness of separation. They only breed group-division, justifying judgments and prejudice against "outsiders." These ideologies can even overrule love between husbands and wives or parents and children.

A crucial shift comes when you choose to stop seeing "others" as part of your problem instead seeing them as part of God's solution to your real problem-aloneness. Those who surround you are your only opportunity to achieve God's purpose for your life. Love is the only thing that can rescue you from the dysfunction of a separated identity. Our true identity involves the vital role we play in Christ.

Regardless of your circumstances, you play a vital role within His being. We need you to be the best version of yourself and you need each one of us to do the same. When we fail to do so we hurt the whole. By embracing wholeness, we reject the illusion of separation and live by the law of love, even for our enemies (Matt. 5:44).

You might be questioning the idea of losing yourself to Oneness. We don't blame you. The thought of losing yourself can be scary-but we are not asking you to lose your real identity, only your imaginary one. Much of your real self is likely still locked away in the illusion of separation, but by freeing it, you will finally be able to live without fear and become who you truly are.

Ego only exists in perception-it is not reality. Your sin-nature is your own invention, not God's. It is an invention you created, not from inspiration, but from separation and desperation. For this reason, a detached soul's entire viewpoint is skewed.

It interprets everything through a lens of self survival-even love. Within this broken system, the mind sees resources as scarce and others as competition so it obsesses over strategies of how to survive and win. Everything your sin nature does only serves these made up strategies of survival-your love is conditional, your relationships

transactional, and you justify using others if it supports your gain. The only way out is to let the whole system of our separated identity die.

"For whoever wants to save their life will lose it, but whoever loses their life for me will find it." - Matthew 16:25 (NIV)

DEVIL WORSHIP IS EGO WORSHIP Many Christians think the devil wants our worship and obedience-not quite. Aleister Crowley's Thelema famously used the maxim, "Do what thou wilt shall be the whole of the Law." That phrase should not be treated as the singular commandment of Satanism generally. In the New Testament, the Greek word *diabolos* is commonly translated "devil" and carries the sense of slanderer or accuser. In this book, I use division and separation as theological images for the devil's work, rather than as a literal definition of the Greek word.

While Christ-consciousness is Oneness, devil-consciousness is division. Believing in a separated self is "sin" at its core-not just bad actions, but living by the satanic identity of disconnection and failing to do the internal work that loving others requires. The Bible teaches us that we inherited the lie of exile and separation from Adam and Eve. That lie is the exile.

By believing this lie, we are not only driven to invent our own detached egos, but to project detached egos onto those closest to us, especially God, imagining them as adversarial, judgmental, or competing against us- instead of One with us, in love with us, and on our side. The truth is God has no separate identity-God is love, and love is our link to the truth beyond the illusion. This truth is a source of healing, just as it says in Acts 10:38, "God anointed Jesus of Nazareth with the Holy Spirit and power, and how he went around doing good and healing all who were under the power of the devil..." Through His incarnation, Christ came to awaken humanity out of the deception: He revealed we are not alone, not cast out, and that He has bound His fate eternally together with ours. Christ's consciousness restores our awareness of divine unity, dismantling the lies of a detached heart and healing the wounds of separation.

ACCEPTING THE IDENTITY OF CHRIST AND HIS BODY "For just as the body is one and has many members, and all the members of the body, though many, are one body, so it is with Christ. For in one Spirit we were all baptized into one body-Jews or Greeks, slaves or free-and all were made to drink of one Spirit." - 1 Corinthians 12:12-13 (ESV) The title "Christ" is not Jesus' last name. The term "Christ" comes from the Greek "*Khristos*", meaning "Anointed One." It comes from the root word, "*khrio*" or "to anoint." The title is applied to Jesus as the Anointed One. In the theological framework I use here, the Holy Spirit is the divine anointing poured out and shared with Christ's people; I describe our participation in that life as Christ-consciousness.

His presence in our lives is the antidote for the disease of separation. 1 John 2:27 (NASB) says, "And as for you, the anointing [*khristos*] which you received from Him remains in you, and you have no need for anyone to teach you; but as His anointing [*Khristos*] teaches you about all things, and is true and is not a lie, and just as it has taught you, you remain in Him." Christ is an identity and a Holy Spirit consciousness that we can "remain in" or depart from. We can choose to identify with Adam, as a separate, fearful being, or we can choose to identify with Christ, as a connected loving being. Just as Christ is "the Anointed One", we are also "anointed ones", or more accurately, "One in the Anointing." That is why the Bible calls us "the Body of Christ." When Jesus walked the earth in the flesh, filled with the Spirit (Luke 4:14), He was the body of Christ. But when He was about to ascend to heaven, He told His disciples it was better for them if He left, because then He could transfer the Spirit to them (John 16:7) so they could become the body of the Anointing.

We are now the physical manifestation of the "*Khristos*" just as Jesus Himself was when He walked the earth.

TRUE SALVATION IS WHOLENESS "This is good, and it is pleasing in the sight of God our Savior, who desires all people to be saved and to come to the knowledge of the truth." - 1 Timothy 2:3-4 (ESV) In this passage, the

word "saved" comes from the Greek *sozo*, which can be translated "made whole." Being "saved" is not just about what happens in the future when you die, but about the operating system you choose to live by in the present. Connection with God is the primary source to being healthy and whole in relationship with our family, friends and community. Believing we are all a part of each other, and that every action we take has an effect on the other, is fundamental for healthy relationships. Those who have been made whole can no longer think of themselves from the small separated self because they have been awakened to the truth of their larger identity of wholeness in Christ. This is what Jesus calls being "born again," (John 3:3-7) and this is why we have named this course "the Wholeness Method." We start the Wholeness Method here, with the revelation of the two opposing 9 operating systems; One that manifests peace and life, and the other that manifests war and death. We cannot be whole outside of Christ.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Take a moment to reflect and identify the ways the lie of separation (e.g., believing you are separated, surviving against God and others, or disconnected from God or others). How have these beliefs impacted your life and relationships?
2. In which areas of your life do you feel you are at war (e.g., work, home, marriage, kids, health...)? How might these things teach you to love?
3. Reflect on the way you see those around you. Do you see them as part of your life problems or as God's solution to your biggest problem-separation? How can you shift from seeing them as an obstacle instead of a blessing?
4. Identify any core lies that drive your sense of separation ("I'm not enough", "No one cares...", or "They always abandon..."). Does your ego base your separation on your own deficiencies (I statements) or on the deficiencies of others (they statements)?
5. In which areas of life do you see God present or absent?

SESSION 2: THE TWO TIMES - THEN OR NOW LOVE ONLY EXISTS IN THE PRESENT MOMENT The past is only an emotion, the future is only an expectation, the only real thing you have is the present- everything else exists only in your mind. Both the past and the future only have access to the present by the energy you choose to give them in the present. Whether you choose to allow the stories of the past or expectations of the future to dictate your attitude and actions in the present is up to you. You have a choice. Most people do not consciously make this choice and by default allow their presence to be stolen by the insecurities of the past or future. This is one of the great symptoms of our sin nature. The separated identity is far too anxious to ever be present here and now. It is always obsessed with accusations of the past or speculations of the future. In contrast, love is always present-you cannot go back in time or space to love and you can't travel into a future time or place to love-your only chance to love is in the present moment. Our detached identities were forged in the furnace of an imaginary but brutal war. We designed them to protect us from all potential emotional threats, so they never rest and never stop analyzing the past and the future to see where the next threat might come from. Because of this, a detached identity can never be present. Their eyes always look straight past whatever is present to the anxieties of past or future. Instead of operating out of our eternal state of union in Christ, which is connected and secure, a separated identity drives us to operate out of a temporal state, where the fear of loss, scarcity and "others" are constant paranoias. Connection is only experienced in the present. Real life is that which is present. Everything else is merely a perception of what happened in the past or what might happen in the

future. If we allow separation's anxiety to keep us in it's imaginary realm of the past or future, it will keep us from God's present realm of connection, power and love. The present is the only real time and place, where love's grace and peace is always available, but the sin nature tries to distract us from the present by focusing on past or future illusions. Our sin nature insists on past debts and future fears, reinforcing the perception of division, guilt, shame and debt. So long as your heart holds those debts as outstanding, you maintain the illusion of love-scarcity and will refrain from giving love freely in the present. Love is not a finite resource. It is infinite and you can never out-give it. The good news is that once the illusions of loss and decay have been exposed, and permission to love has been taken, separation's illusions naturally retreat, just as darkness retreats from light. **GOD ONLY OPERATES IN THE ETERNAL PRESENT** "The kingdom of God" is by far the primary subject in Jesus' teachings. In the four Gospels of Matthew, Mark, Luke and John, The kingdom of God - and, in Matthew, the closely related expression "kingdom of heaven" - is one of the dominant themes of Jesus' teaching throughout the Gospels. When Jesus preached His gospel, He said, "Repent, for the kingdom of God is at hand." In other words, "Change your thinking, God is here and now." In Luke 17:20-21, we find Jesus trying to help the Pharisees to understand, "When He was asked by the Pharisees when the kingdom of God would arrive, Jesus replied, 'The kingdom of God doesn't come by watching for it. Nor will they say, "Look, here it is" or "There it is." For behold, the kingdom of God is within you.'" - Luke 17:20-21 (TPT). Again, we see Jesus trying to get us to understand that God always exists in the here and now, not in some other place or time. The apostle Paul also

describes this same concept when he says, "...now is the time of God's favor, now is the day of salvation." - 2 Corinthians 6:2 (NIV). Where is God's reign? Here. When is God coming? He is already here! Our perception is the only thing that prevents us from believing and experiencing Him. There are two concepts of time, one is where fear dwells, and the other is where God dwells. Fear dwells in the limitations, anxieties and frustrations of temporal life. God dwells in the joy and peace of boundless, abundant eternal life. Eternity has no beginning and no end. It is the constant present of God's constant presence. Eternal life is always accessible, but only in the present here and now. It is never earlier and never later, it is always here now. There is no thought that can distract God's mind from loving you in the present. No laws, no debts, no past offense, no fear, no accusation, and no speculation. Eternity is suspended in the consistency of His present love. We access eternal life every time we allow ourselves to be fully present to His love for ourselves and those around us. Love does not worry about the future, and is never limited by the past. It is eternal, anchored in the present moment, giving freely without counting yesterday or tomorrow. In contrast, the detached identity's obsession with time is a trap, chaining us to what was or what might be, instead of the potential of what is in front of us right now. Think of a wife replaying her husband's harsh words from years ago, her heart hardening with each recollection, or a husband fretting over future finances, ignoring his wife's needs in his stress. In relationships, these tyrannical thoughts steal the present, which blocks connection and pushes loved ones away. DISCONTENT ONLY EXISTS BY PERCEPTION OF PAST OR FUTURE The reason you are not content is because you are placing a higher value in some

distant imaginary world than in the present real world. Discontentment is the fruit of believing in the illusion of a better time or place than here and now to experience the fullness of life and love. The detached identity's discontent is a form of escapism-it's rooted in the desire to escape the present by imagining itself as something other than it is; perhaps something bigger, better, or more successful. It's a refusal to accept and find peace with the present story of your life. You can't cope with this present moment so you imagine somewhere else that's better. The separated identity can even use religion to trick us into forfeiting the presence of God for an idea about God in some other place or time. Every time we do this we forfeit love. When you use discontentment to excuse your detachment, you surrender your power to love. Countless opportunities to manifest love right now have been forfeited to the service of religion. The only true religion is a present religion. "Religion that God our Father accepts as pure and faultless is this: to look after orphans and widows in their distress..." - James 1:27 (NIV): **FAITH ENABLES US TO ACCESS THE PRESENT** We gain access to the eternal present through faith. Faith is trusting you are exactly where you are supposed to be in exactly the right timing, no matter when or where you are. Faith is how you can enjoy the present, no matter the circumstance. Faith is the link to finding acceptance of, and purpose in, your past, present and future, regardless of what they are. Faith has such confidence that its fate cannot escape God's plan, that it puts no limit to the love it can give away presently. "But godliness actually is a means of great gain when accompanied by contentment." - 1 Timothy 6:6 (NASB) 9 Discontentment is a sign that a detached identity has completely embedded itself in our minds-the thing driving us

is not love, but an imaginary status, an imaginary comparison or competition with others. We must ask ourselves why we are trying to escape the present. What are we so afraid of? Are you disappointed in what's in front of you? Are you afraid of the responsibility to bring order to it? Did you imagine something better than what is right in front of you? Do you think it is too much work? -Facing questions like these will give us access to the present. **GIVING YOUR PRESENCE TO ILLUSION OR LOVE?** The kingdom of self and the kingdom of God are two opposing polarities. Which one of these kingdoms we give our presence to will shape everything about our relationships and thus our lives. The separated self spins stories to validate paranoia or manifest discontent. It's the worry about tomorrow's bills, the grudge over last night's argument, or the regret over this morning's decision. It's the voice whispering, "You have more important things to focus on than loving the one in front of you." By following the detached identity's narrative, you forfeit the very substance of life-the present. Now let us not be confused. We are not saying that you should never think of the past or plan for the future. We are saying that there are two systems; one will use the past and the future to rob you of the present, while the other will use the past and the future to magnify love and meaningfulness in the present. When we operate from the heavenly Mind, the past testifies to love and the future anticipates it. Love has no problem making plans for the future or celebrating the past. It just does not allow the past or the future to replace love in the present. **WHEN A FAMILY IS NOT PRESENT** When children grow up with parents who are present in body but whose minds are far away, fighting wars against the past or future, it will likely act as an assault on their self worth, deepening their heart's

disconnection and insecurity. Lack of presence is almost always translated as a lack of love. When spouses are present in body but far away in mind, it does the same thing, insulting their partner's worth, and reinforcing the idea that both members are really on their own. To experience wholeness and healing in our family, we must begin by giving them our presence. TRANSITIONING TO LOVE Shifting from a temporal-absent mindset to the eternal present mindset first requires awareness. Once you are aware of the two systems, you only need willingness and God's Spirit in you will do the rest. You now know that thoughts like, "I'm stressed", or "I'm mad," or "they still owe me" are merely ideas that exist outside of God's present kingdom, and those ideas will only have power to rule your present to the extent that you allow them to. This understanding is all you need to begin the transition into love. By inviting this shift, you invite grace to touch every part of your life. Grace is when you receive what you didn't earn, or when you give someone else something they didn't earn. Those who practice grace find their relationships become a sanctuary of peace and joy. These are the simple beliefs that bring grace to households and closeness to family members. We must take back our moments, and make them pulse with connection. The eternal present isn't just a nice idea-it is the dwelling place of God. Love doesn't live in then or there, where division festers. It lives here, right now, every time you say, "I choose you now, regardless."

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What past memory or future worry steals your presence from yourself, your partner or your family most often?
2. How does a focus on past frustrations or future fears block connection in your relationships? Identify one major distraction and discuss why you think it has the power to overtake your ability to be present and enjoy the things that are real, right in front of you.

3. Reflect on a time when you felt discontent and couldn't find peace in the present. What did you do? What imagination were you comparing your present to that caused you to feel discontent? What were you wanting instead of what you had in that moment?
4. What's one way your separated identity uses the past (e.g., grudges) or future (e.g., anxieties) to avoid responsibility for loving now?
5. In which ways might you incorporate presence to transform how you interact with your loved ones and in life?

SESSION 3: THE TWO PROVIDERS - SCARCITY & ABUNDANCE

TRUE ABUNDANCE "One person pretends to be rich, yet has nothing; another pretends to be poor, yet has great wealth." - Proverbs 13:7 As we mentioned previously, the past is only a memory, the future is only an expectation, the only real thing you have is the present. Everything else lives only in your mind. True abundance is the ability to experience and enjoy the present moment without any distractions. You don't need money to have abundance. In fact, money often distracts us from abundance. There are many things that can prevent abundance; the separated identity's projection of an insecure future, and its insistence on debts owed from the past are two major barriers to abundance. Both of these ideas only exist in the illusionary realm of scarcity. Freedom from scarcity is true freedom. True freedom is the ability to enjoy the present without any thoughts of scarcity. To obtain true freedom, you must believe in abundance. The kingdom of God is the realm of eternal abundance.

9 LOVE GIVES BECAUSE IT IS IN ITS NATURE TO DO SO A detached identity cannot love, or be at peace, or be righteous, or experience abundance. These traits can only grow upon the part of us that is secure and attached, not upon the detached and insecure parts of our identity. So long as you are operating from separation, these qualities can only be mimicked through self inflating performances aimed to gain status, approval or reward. When you are whole, love is something you do for love's sake, not to get something in return. It's only by being freed from our belief in separation that we can truly embody these qualities. When the scripture says, "It was for freedom that Christ set us free", (Galatians 5:1) it is revealing this same principle, Christ liberates us, not to get something in return,

but purely for the sake of freedom. It's not to impose new obligations on us or enlist us in mandatory service. He needs nothing in return from us and holds no obligation over us to respond in any particular way. His leadership, love and help remain extended to us permanently because of who He is, not because of what we do. It is completely up to us whether we take the freedom He gives us, and use it to excuse our degradation, or to empower our self improvement. It's only when we shed our detached psyche, and learn to operate from Christ that we can begin to love as Christ loves, not with expectations or obligations, but because it is who we are-it flows out of us. As we begin to operate from Christ in this way, our families can't help but heal. We are no longer slaves to natural laws of cause and effect, or action and reaction. Our attitudes and emotions are now governed by a level of freedom only citizens of heaven possess. "If one part suffers, every part suffers with it; if one part is honored, every part rejoices with it." - 1 Corinthians 12:26 OUR HIGHEST POTENTIAL IS BOUND TO OTHERS REACHING THEIRS In Christ, our fates are all tied together, interconnected with God. We must recognize that none of us can truly reach our highest potential without everyone else reaching theirs. The detached identity hates this truth, because it fears dependence on anything but itself. The level to which you fear depending on others often reflects the depths to which others have wounded your soul. Our detached identities insist we must achieve our greatness alone. Yet the truth is, we cannot become our best selves without our spouses, parents, or even their ancestors being their best, as our collective brokenness places extreme limitations on our own potential. This leaves us facing a great challenge- instead of indifference, or judgement, or seeing others as competition,

we must acknowledge our need for them to become their best as well as their need for us to become our best. We must also change our definition of perfection. Perfection isn't about flawless behavior; it's about maintaining connection to those around us despite their flaws. We will add two cautions here, first, we must be careful not to enable their further decline into egotism by allowing them to manipulate us through our connection to them, and second, we must be careful not to develop unhealthy levels of codependency, which is when we allow our own behaviors to become dependent on the behaviors of someone else

EXTERNAL WEALTH OR INTERNAL WEALTH Because our separated self offers no actual intrinsic worth or substance, it seeks its value externally, from looks, titles, status, money and possessions (1 Peter 3:3-4). It can only perceive the value of internal treasures like love, peace, patience and self control from an external perspective. Addressing internal values like these will make the separated self insecure, so it will avoid addressing them, or attempt to disqualify them all together. True abundance is secure because it is attached to the infinite giver- God-and receives all its needs from Him. It needs no earthly status or wealth to feel valuable or secure. Instead, it finds its value in obeying personal convictions and love.

SCARCITY IS AN ILLUSION Why does the sun shine endlessly, never demanding repayment for giving its light and life? Does it complain about our ingratitude? No, because the sun does not see the light as its own scarce resource, but as the flow that radiates from its divine connection. Imagine the tragedy if the sun began to see itself separate from its Creator, claiming its light as its own creation and its own material, apart from the infinite source. And what a tragedy if, in its delusion, it decided its light was

scarce, and therefore giving it was too costly and burdensome. To the separated mind, resources are scarce, but to the mind that is whole, there is always enough. Abundance is an operating system, it is not of this world, yet this world is suspended in its provision. Abundance knows no separation, no time, no accusation, no threat, no fear, greed or scarcity. It gives without memory, it gives without worry, it gives without limits, it gives without judgment. Abundance never needs repayment or reason to give what it has to give. It just gives, because it is a giver, and it loves doing what it was made to do. Resources are scarce when you believe they come from you. Abundance however is infinite because it comes from God. A detached identity cannot give from abundance because it believes itself separate from God. God is the only source of real abundance. The separated self can't fathom giving unconditionally because it can only see through the lens of its own finite self-scarcity. To the separated self, giving means loss, so the only way it can consider giving is if it can get something better in return. The ego operates in an economy of scarcity, hoarding love, trust, and forgiveness like paper money, fearing there's never enough to go around. It gives only when it expects a return- kindness for praise, vulnerability for guarantees-turning relationships into a ledger of debts and credits. **ABUNDANCE HAS NO WANT** "The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want." - Psalm 23:1 9 The detached self is tormented by intrinsic emptiness, so it seeks to add external decorations to mask the void. Yet, no matter how many externals it adds, it will never be satisfied because it is empty inside. External additions can never fill internal voids. When we imagine success is about popularity, we can't help but use people to make us feel successful, a

form of codependency or self-service. While insecure egos seek to add things or people to themselves, love cannot help but give, and multiply from itself, wherever it goes. Multiplication is not motivated by the desire to fill its own need, but is merely motivated by an desire to accommodate and provide for the overflow of life. Perhaps this is why the first commandment God ever gave mankind is to multiply; "God blessed them, and God said unto them, Be fruitful, and multiply..." - Genesis 1:28 (KJV) We must note here, that feelings are never good or bad. Suppression of feelings will almost always later manifest in some devilish way. Emotions are the heart's response to the beliefs, stories and interpretation of our circumstance. The feeling of want comes from the belief, story and interpretation of lack. These are real emotions that are not wrong to have, but it can help relieve us of the feeling when we realize lack is based merely on perception. **YOU CANNOT OUT-GIVE LOVE** Love's economy is abundance, an endless wellspring that gives without fear of depletion. It pours out generosity because its source is infinite, never counting any cost. Love overlooks offense, and gives without expectation. Love gives grace, not to gain favor but because grace delights in giving and trusts its supply is boundless. You love because love is your identity, not because they earned it today. Despite your worries, you will find there is always enough when you choose love. You can't out-give love. It is a universal law-you will always be resupplied whatever love you give away. The gospel doesn't demand faith, it supplies faith. In the same way, the gospel doesn't demand love, it connects you to God's infinite supply. **FORGIVENESS IS ABUNDANCE MANIFEST** The separated self maintains a record of wrongs, but love forgets easily. Forgiveness is the ultimate sign of

abundance. When someone takes something from you that you didn't offer them, you have the choice to keep a record of that debt, or to forgive them that debt. I like to think of forgiveness as a decision to give grace before resentment becomes a permanent ledger of debt. This is a spiritual picture, not an etymology of the English word "forgiveness." It is the predetermination to give from God's eternal abundance and resist carrying internal debts against others. Forgiveness is abundance manifest. Forgiveness is a primary tool for dismantling the illusion of separation, for the one being given to, but also and especially for one who's giving. Forgiveness is a complete rejection of separation's illusion of scarcity and ownership, and an acceptance of abundance and shared belonging. Forgiveness is about rejecting the broken system of all debt-past, present and future. As we forgive, we embrace God's economy wholeheartedly and invite God's abundance to infest our potential. If you're holding debts against anyone, let them go and free your soul from their grip. You can be free from scarcity to 9 enjoy the abundance of the present, despite the whirling circumstances of the world. "When you were dead in your sins (separated self) and in the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made you alive with Christ. He forgave us all our sins, having canceled the charge of our legal indebtedness, which stood against us and condemned us; he has taken it away, nailing it to the cross." - Colossians 2:13-14 (NIV - parenthesis added) JESUS CLEARED ALL OUR DEBTS TO EACH OTHER When Jesus died, He wiped out humanity's debts-past, present, and future-making judgment's currency worthless and revealing once and for all the deception of scarcity. His resurrection thus demonstrated the government of abundance. "For our sake God made Him who knew no sin

(separated identity), to become sin (the separated identity) on our behalf, so that in Him we might become the righteousness of God (love)." - 2 Corinthians 5:21 (NASB - parenthesis added) Jesus became our separated identity, then crucified it and buried it so that we might be given as many chances as we need to learn forgiveness from Him. And in doing so, we become God's version of righteousness-that is, someone who is capable of extending His judgement of innocence and forgiveness upon others. In Galatians 2:20, Paul personalizes this idea and says, "I have been crucified with Christ. It is no longer I who live, but Christ who lives in me. And the life I now live in the flesh I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me." (ESV) You and I, and all of Adam-kind, and all of creation were collectively killed that day when Jesus was crucified. The Bible teaches that He embodied humanity's alter ego so that He might crucify its entire structure, then He buried it in hell where it can't escape and cannot be found. This principle is why forgiveness is one of the greatest indications of whether a person is truly "saved" (made whole), and why Jesus tells us that unless we forgive others, we ourselves will not be able to access forgiveness. "For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others their sins, your Father will not forgive your sins." - Matthew 6:14-15 (NIV) FORGIVENESS STOPS THE CYCLE OF SIN F or gi ve ne ss d oes no t ne gat e ac cou nt abi li ty f or wrongdoing; love protects the vulnerable from the vile most of all, and thus, love will certainly remove abusers by force if needs be, to prevent further harm to the vulnerable while maintaining, as best it can, hope in Christ's power to heal and reform the abuser. That said, forgiveness

is the only way to stop the cycle of sin from continuing from person to person. When one person sins against another, the violation is often carried by the victim until they give it to someone else in some form-a father criticizes the career choice of his grown up son, the son goes to work and insults a coworker, the coworker goes home stressed and overreacts to his kids, the kids begin to fight with each other and act out in school, and so on... Forgiveness stops this cycle. Forgiveness doesn't justify or excuse the wrongness of someone else's sin, it just stops the cycle of sin that got handed off to you.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you see the separated identity's scarcity mindset (e.g., hoarding love, holding grudges) in your relationships?
2. Reflect on a time you withheld forgiveness or kindness, fearing there wasn't enough to give. How can practicing forgiveness as an act of abundance transform your connection with your partner?
3. How does the separated belief in scarcity (e.g., "I must protect myself") affect your marriage or family? Discuss a specific way to live from abundance, like giving grace without expectation?
4. What external thing (e.g., status, approval) does your detached identity seek to fill an internal void?
5. How does Jesus' example of canceling all debts (Colossians 2:13-14) inspire you to forgive in your relationships?

SESSION 4: THE TWO POWERS - DESCENDING OR ASCENDING THE SEARCH FOR POWER When we are toddlers and we each begin to develop our identities, we go to work searching for power. When we discover that certain powers give us influence over others, we begin to develop these powers to gain further control and influence. As we grow up we each forge a unique tool set of tactics-whether coercion, charm, or cunning-to manipulate others into serving our agenda. A physically imposing person may wield intimidation to dominate, while a charismatic individual might exploit their allure. Affection, wealth, piety, or even self-pity can become weapons in a detached self's quest to get what it wants from others. When we deploy these powers to get others to serve our own agendas, we are using descending power. Descending power is a type of top-down power. It's the power a separated identity develops to control and coerce people to conform to our will. Whether it is used subtly or outright, it often involves manipulation or coercion in a downward hierarchical structure to impose the will of those at the top. It has no problem exploiting or controlling others for self-serving ends. In contrast, ascending power is bottom-up power. Its power-under instead of power-over. Ascending power uplifts, encourages and liberates, regardless of any benefit to self. Those who perceive the world through the detached lens of descending power see everyone's value according to their placement in the hierarchy-and they show respect and honor accordingly. Those who are seen to exist below them in the hierarchy are there to support them and be used by them to serve their purposes, and those who they perceive are above them are often praised and admired even despite the quality of their soul. The separated identity's self-worth is imprisoned within

this hierarchy, and it cannot escape the desire to climb the ladder, using others as its stepping stones along the way. **THE MOTIVE MAKES THE DIFFERENCE** Descending power can be used by the leaders of any organization. It can be used to lead cliques, or gangs, or businesses, or governments, or even religious organizations. Anytime there is a desire to use people to serve self interests, descending power is at play. Descending power is the chief characteristic that makes any group unhealthy-whether it is a church, business, secular government, or even a family. Descending power is everywhere. It's the power that rules the world-that is, the world that is passing away. "Jesus said, "My kingdom is not of this world. If it were, my servants would fight to prevent my arrest by the Jewish leaders. But now my kingdom is from another place." - John 18:36 The difference between descending and ascending power is in the motives, whether it is motivated from a detached, self-serving psyche or from love. Using physical force to control someone else can be good or bad, it depends on whether it is done to serve your own independent interests or theirs-say for instance in trying to get a child to not run into traffic, or in trying to influence a friend not to drive home drunk. The difference is in motive. Whether the power is being used to serve the detached ego or whether it is actually being used for the best interest of all. This is the core difference between ethical and unethical leadership or inspirational or oppressive leadership, whether in government, business, religious organization or within a family. Descending power wields its power to serve a detached ego and ascending power wields power to serve others. You can know which power you are using by the genuine motivation you have during your interactions with

others. Christ rules with a different type of power-ascending power. Ascending power never seeks to intimidate, manipulate or control you to get what it wants because it has no want. Want comes from the perception of lack and Christ has no such perception. Whatever want Christ might have had has been submitted to a peace that surpasses understanding and a faith that God will work all things out for the good of us all. Christ rests in perfect peace and abundance so He needs nothing from you. He 9 doesn't demand our surrender, He inspires it. He disarms us through His own disarmament. He will never use His power to get us to do anything for Him at all, yet we will all eventually voluntarily surrender to Him, because when we see Him we will know the truth. Ascending power holds a mirror up to you, revealing Christ. It reveals the truth of who you are, where you belong, and what you are truly meant to be. By this method ascending power exposes the emptiness of all lesser identities and breaks the shell of a detached ego into a million pieces. The vision of Christ in us discloses our union, removing threats of insecurity by revealing we are inseparable from His infinite grace. This is why His ascending power will one day inspire every knee to bow and every tongue to confess He is Lord. "God has chosen to make known among the Gentiles the glorious riches of this mystery, which is Christ in you, the hope of glory." - Colossians 1:27 With descending power, we crucified Him, but our power did not prevail. Instead He rose again, demonstrating the superiority of ascending power. Today, these two forces continue to vie for our allegiance: the descending power of a separated ego, wielding force, fear, and manipulation, and the ascending power of Christ, inspiring humility, honesty, vulnerability, and love.

ASCENDING POWER CANNOT BE THREATENED When Jesus was crucified, He crucified humanity's ego, and by doing so He brought a witness to what leadership should look like. His life became a global display of what leaders should do and how they should lead. Never again would leaders be able to justify injustice, usury and corruption-at least not without a historical witness against them. Jesus' life is the witness. His life was a testament to the truth-that our best and most powerful leaders are not those who are being served the most, but those who are serving the most.

"...whoever desires to become great among you shall be your servant. And whoever of you desires to be first shall be slave of all." - Mark 10:43-44 (NIV) What makes ascending power continue to prevail against descending power, is that unlike descending power, it is never afraid of any of the things an insecure self is so terrified of and therefore it is not threatened by the tactics descending power uses to force its will. It is never afraid of losing its power, never afraid of losing control, never afraid of losing approval, never afraid of losing popularity, and never afraid of losing life. For this reason it can never be conquered by descending power. Descending power cannot even comprehend ascending power, because a detached identity only understands separation and fear. Ascending power is the ultimate threat to descending power because it knows separation is a lie so it has no fear. Ascending power was used by Christ, by Gandhi, by Martin Luther King Junior and so many others to overcome tyranny and change the world. Ascending power is love. Real love cannot be intimidated, manipulated, or coerced. It does not act out of jealousy, envy, or pride. Every knee will bow and every tongue will eventually agree to surrender all to Christ without Him even trying to make it

happen. "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." -

Galatians 5:22-23 THE PAIN OF DESCENDING RELATIONS

When a nation comes together to form its laws and leaders democratically, it can be healthy. It is only if the leaders they elect begin to use their power for self-service, despite the best interests of others, that they begin to use descending power. It can be very unhealthy and even abusive when descending power is used in personal relationships between adults or among family members. Patterns of control, coercion, avoidance, dependency and self-protection can appear in many forms of relational dysfunction, including in some people who meet criteria for personality disorders. These disorders are complex clinical conditions with multiple contributing factors, so I do not mean to reduce them to a single cause. "Descending power" is the framework I use here to describe relational patterns in which fear and self-protection lead us to control, manipulate or diminish others. When someone uses descending power in their personal adult relationships, it is a clear indication they are approaching those relationships from a detached sin-nature, instead of from wholeness and love. This is not necessarily their fault, it is simply the fruit of separation, or the fruit of insecurity that comes from a detached and insecure upbringing. Are our thoughts consumed by strategies of how to get people to do what we want, or are we content, and capable of obtaining all we truly want within ourselves and God? Are our words chosen to sway, control, or frame conversations in order to prove a point, influence an outcome, or force agreement, or are they chosen to gain understanding, connection and cooperation? When our

agendas become more important than the well being of those around us, we are often operating out of separation.

DESCENDING POWER TRIES TO CONTROL Descending power would rather have control over others than trust in them. For this reason, descending power will tend to manipulate others' free will to get what it wants. When separated identities rule, they will occupy households with battles of dominance and submission. These battles will be hidden in plain sight, undefined but everywhere, using the weapons of subtle manipulation. We might guilt-trip family members to get them to do what we want, or use the silent treatment to pressure them into compliance. Some dominate decisions, insisting on their way without discussion, while others offer affection or favors that are laced with expectations of obedience in return. Gas-lighting can make loved ones doubt their feelings, bending them to our will, and threats or ultimatums can be used to create fear to enforce agreement. Regardless of how we do it, the separated self believes safety only lies in dominating others, so it finds a way to gain control. To descending power, any objections are seen as attacks on its system of control, as if an attack on its system of control is the same as an attack on itself. A detached identity's need for control forces others to submit or be punished, or worse, exiled.

ASCENDING POWER GIVES FREEDOM In contrast to detached systems of control, Love always offers its adult partners the freedom of choice. The opposite of controlling someone is giving them total freedom, and loving them regardless of how they choose to respond. It doesn't give freedom from a place of indifference or from complacency or absence. It give freedom from a place of trust and unconditional Love. Love gives complete freedom, never seeking to control out of self interest. Even if

you choose to reject Love, Love's embrace will always remain open. Love is happy when the loved one is blessed, even if the blessing comes through another. Love isn't jealous of you, it's jealous for you. It isn't jealous from a place of insecurity because it is not insecure. Love is only jealous when it involves the other's best interest, or the interest of the relationship, but never for its own self interest. Unlike a separated ego, which is jealous purely out of its own self interest and fear of being abandoned or humiliated, genuine love simply wants what's best for you. Remember here that feelings are not good or bad, they are merely your heart reacting to the perception of your circumstance. The feeling of jealousy most commonly comes from the fear of abandonment or rejection. If we use descending power with our children, they will conform to our will out of fear for a time, but as they grow older, if we fail to demonstrate genuine love for them, it could create a handful of psychological traumas and emotional challenges that they will need to overcome and heal as they get older if they want their own healthy relationships. Ascending leadership supports and inspires through love and humility. We can see the impact of descending and ascending parenting by the way children react to their own failures or mistakes. When a child responds by feeling sad for letting themselves and others down and they are able to be honest about it, not trying to hide their mistake, they likely come from a secure and attached upbringing. But if a child reacts by feeling fear of rejection or punishment, and they show this by hiding their mistakes or lying about them, they likely felt less secure and attached in their upbringing. This becomes more and more accurate the older a child gets. If they are still doing this as teenagers, they have likely learned they can't really

trust anyone but themselves. To become whole, a man must kill a false king to become a true king, and a woman must kill a false queen to become a true queen. One who is whole does not need to cling to external power because they are constantly overflowing with internal power. Ascending power is like a spring, constantly pouring out from within, manifesting itself through conscientious gifts of others-awareness and generous service. While descending power finds security through controlling its environment, ascending power's security is anchored in a realm beyond its environment. Descending power rules through fear, while ascending power rules through love. Descending power forces others to comply, while ascending power inspires others to follow. Descending power equates strength with domination, while ascending power finds strength in surrender. Descending power controls, while ascending power liberates. Descending power threatens, while ascending power encourages. Descending power forces external conformity, while ascending power transforms the heart. Descending power elevates itself, while ascending power builds up others. Descending power adds to itself, while ascending power multiplies from itself. Descending power expects to be served, while ascending power expects to serve. Mark 10:42-45 (NIV) says, "Jesus called them together and said, 'You know that those who are regarded as rulers of the Gentiles lord it over them, and their high officials exercise authority over them. Not so with you. Instead, whoever wants to become great among you must be your servant, and whoever wants to be first must be slave of all. For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many.'" 2 Corinthians 12:9-10 (NIV) says, "But he said to me, "My grace

is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. That is why, for Christ's sake, I delight in weaknesses, in insults, in hardships, in persecutions, in difficulties. For when I am weak, then I am strong." Philippians 2:7-8 (NIV) says, "Rather, he made himself nothing by taking the very nature of a servant, being made in human likeness. And being found in appearance as a man, he humbled himself by becoming obedient to death—even death on a cross!" 1 Peter 2:23 (NIV) says, "When they hurled their insults at him, he did not retaliate; when he suffered, he made no threats. Instead, he entrusted himself to him who judges justly." Matthew 5:38-47 (NIV) says, "You have heard that it was said, 'Eye for eye, and tooth for tooth.' But I tell you, do not resist an evil person. If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also. And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well. If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles. Give to the one who asks you, and do not turn away from the one who wants to borrow from you. "You have heard that it was said, 'Love your neighbor and hate your enemy.' But I tell you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, that you may be children of your Father in heaven. He causes his sun to rise on the evil and the good, and sends rain on the righteous and the unrighteous. If you love those who love you, what reward will you get? Are not even the tax collectors doing that? And if you greet only your own people, what are you doing more than others? Do not even pagans do that?"

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Where do you see descending power (e.g., manipulation, control) in your interactions with your partner or family?
How can you replace it with ascending power, like humility or vulnerability (2 Corinthians 12:9-10)?

2. Reflect on a time you used descending power to feel secure (e.g., guilt-tripping, withdrawing). What fear drove it, and how can you trust Christ's love to inspire an ascending response instead?
3. How does descending power manifest in your relationship's conflicts (e.g., domination, criticism)? Discuss a specific scenario where you can choose love's liberating power over control this week.
4. What's one descending tactic you rely on (e.g., silent treatment, intimidation)? How can practicing ascending power, like serving without expectation, transform your connection with your partner?
5. How does Christ's example of ascending power challenge your approach to relational struggles? Plan a practical step to embody love's humility, like apologizing sincerely, and discuss its effect.

SESSION 5: THE TWO NARRATORS - VICTIM OR VICTOR

THE SOURCE OF OUR TRAUMA We all have emotional trauma that negatively affects our relationships. For this reason I want to describe for you, as concisely as possible, how most emotional trauma is developed in our lives; As a baby, you were perfect, beautiful, and innocent, but also deeply needy. And as you grew, you began to understand that if no one cared for you-gave you food, gave you a bed, gave you affection-you wouldn't survive. But one day, you began to experience some intense emotions within your little body. You felt a need, but instead of love, you were ignored, or even punished. You cried, only to see your father's annoyance or your mother's frustration. So you began to question your parents ultimate connection to you and develop self consciousness. Then questions began to come subconsciously; "Do they not like me?" "Could they ever leave me?" "If I did something bad enough, might they completely abandon me?" And at that moment you discovered that expressing certain parts of yourself could put you in danger. 9 Y o u r s u r v i v a l r e q u i r e d y o u r p a r e n t s t o l o v e y o u . B u t because you doubted their love and commitment, that insecurity caused you to begin suppressing those vulnerable parts you perceived were unacceptable. This is a natural part of assimilating into society and learning social cues and boundaries. This is fine when a family demonstrates healthy restoration and repair after a correction, but when repair doesn't happen, or when it is not perceived, you can begin to believe that love comes at the suppression of your authenticity. If you never learn to repair your broken connections, you could grow up believing your genuine self is unlovable and therefore, you must wear a mask to earn love. The little girl who grew up with an

absent father, who left her alone in her feelings of sorrow and fear often becomes the hyper-independent 'boss lady,' who gives off the facade that she needs no one, which attracts the exact same type of emotionally unavailable men who leave her feeling just as abandoned as her father did. The little boy who was yelled at by his angry mother often grows up to be the nice guy, afraid of his own anger and struggling to stand up for himself. He often ends up seeking the nurturing closeness he lacked as a child from a wife who instead is ultra critical, leaving him feeling just as un-nurtured as his mother did. It is a divine set up. Because trauma isn't simply the fact that your mother was violent or your father absent. Trauma is growing up without knowing that you can set boundaries. It's not that your parents weren't present; it's that you grew up unaware of your worthiness of care. Essentially, trauma isn't what happened to you, but the ways you sacrificed your authenticity for the illusion of love. It's the masks you created and stories you told yourself to cope with the rejection of your true self. It's when you are forced to disconnect- disconnecting from self, from God and from others. Disconnection lies at the root of all pain and trauma. Disconnection from the true self most of all. The solution is reconnection-reconnecting to self, to God and to others. WE ARE OUR OWN BIGGEST PROBLEM People are usually only ready to recognize their need for a savior when they have come to understand that their biggest problems are not external, but internal-not in other people, or in an unjust world, but in themselves, or in the depravity of their own separated identity. Whether or not someone else gave you the wound matters not-the trauma now belongs to you. It is now your responsibility to heal it. Until you realize the thing you need to be saved from is not others, or hell, or anything

else, other than yourself, you are not ready for wholeness. Hell is believing in your own utter aloneness, along with the paranoia and self sabotage such belief brings. Our sin nature is the identity we each have built around the insecurities of detachment. Until we understand that we ourselves are our own biggest obstacle, we will continue to think we can save ourselves. It's only when a person realizes they themselves are their own biggest problem that they are positioned to value Christ. Until someone realizes this, they will remain blind to separation's reign over their lives, and will resist the embrace of the Savior. But once a person recognizes their need and accepts Christ as their Savior, their mind will be transformed and their life will change. Jesus called this change "repentance." Repentance means, "to change or transform your mind." "Be transformed by the renewing of your mind" - Romans 12:2

9 THE POWER OF CHANGING OUR MIND

Repentance is a constant habit of those in Christ. Our lives will always regress into self destruction unless constant surrender is made to Christ-consciousness through repentance. We experience Christ-like transformation every time our perspective shifts from detached-consciousness to Christ-consciousness. Your mind is renewed in each present moment that you choose presence instead of absence, closeness instead of distance and connection instead of separation-first to yourself and God, and then to those around you. As you train yourself to be present and surrender your present moments to love again and again, you begin to embody Christ's presence within yourself, and then to those around you, breaking cycles of disharmony and dysfunction wherever you go. This shift in perception, where we choose the Holy Spirit's narrative of love over the illusion of separation, is the foundation of our transformation. "...we

have the mind of Christ." - 1 Corinthians 2:16 (NIV) **THE POWER OF OUR NARRATIVES** The narratives you rehearse in your mind shape everything about you, including how you allow the emotions of your past to infect your present actions; from how much stress you tell yourself to have over running late, to how generous you are to a stranger in need, to how quickly you allow repair when a loved one offends you. The manifestations of your life and the way your relationships play out are the general result of the narratives you rehearse in your mind. "For as he thinks within himself, so he is." - Proverbs 23:7 (NASB) Research on memory shows that human recollection is reconstructive and can sometimes be distorted or even false. That does not mean a fixed percentage of our everyday internal narratives are false, but it does remind us to hold our interpretations with humility. We often see events through the stories, expectations and assumptions we bring to them. The detached ego spins tales of victimhood and separation, constructing a false self rooted in fear, guilt and blame, convincing us we're alone, unlovable, or wronged. Yet, Holy Spirit offers a different narrative-one of unity, love, and wholeness in Christ. In close relationships between husbands and wives or parents and children, a glance, a tone of voice, or even a specific phrase can trigger these false tales. Narratives like "I'm unlovable" or "They don't care," can trap us in the separated identity's downward cycle unless we reframe these stories with positivity, enabling our bodies to replace trauma with healing and closure. Your narratives decide whether you see yourself as a failure or a success, a victim or a victor but most importantly, your narratives decide who has power over your present life. Whoever or whatever you give responsibility to through your

narratives are the ones who hold power over your present, and therefore your future. If you make something or someone else responsible for your attitudes, your limitations, your actions, or your situation, you have no power to change these things. You maintain that someone else has power over your present because of the story you are telling 9 yourself about your past. But the moment you take complete responsibility for yourself, that is the moment you take back power to change your life. If your separated mind tells you to maintain a cold and hardened attitude toward your partner because your feelings were hurt, you are allowing the illusion of that narrative to replace actual love in the present. "The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ." - 2 Corinthians 10:4-5 (NIV) THE POWER TO AUTHOR

YOUR LIFE "Authority" is the power to author. Whoever has been given the power to author your story has authority over your life. The only way for you (or Christ) to be the author of your life is for you to take full responsibility for every part of your story. This even includes the wounds other people gave you.

As long as you are holding them responsible for your current state, and this includes even spouses and parents, you are giving the wound the power to author the state of your present life. The only power the wound actually has over you in this present moment is the power you say it has. The only way it can affect you in this moment is if you choose to let this moment serve the illusion of the wound instead of the reality of love. You have likely known or heard of people who have had radical life changing conversions or experiences that transformed them from the person they were to a radically different person.

Perhaps you yourself have had such an experience. There are millions today who claim that an encounter with Jesus or something else has transformed them and it's truly undeniable that many of them now operate out of a completely new identity than they did before. But for others, they've never had such an encounter, or when they do, the encounter doesn't create lasting change, and they fall back into their former ways-So what's the difference and why do some change while others don't?

THE TWO REQUIREMENTS FOR LASTING CHANGE Research across psychology and neuroscience suggests that lasting change often involves more than a powerful moment of insight. New interpretations, repeated practice, emotional learning and new patterns of response can all contribute to durable change. In the framework I use here, transformation includes reshaping the narratives we rehearse and changing the emotional and behavioral patterns

associated with them. Taking full responsibility for our attitudes can feel overwhelming, even sickening, because our bodies can become addicted to the stress chemicals, like cortisol and adrenaline, that ego-driven narratives trigger.

These narratives tether us to familiar pain, like depression or anger, as a way to avoid the responsibility that comes with accepting ownership. When we experience a traumatic emotional event, our adrenal glands immediately flood our nervous system with these chemicals as a survival mechanism. Meanwhile our minds race trying to create a story to explain why this happened. When our minds can't find a sensible way to bring a positive conclusion to the story, a detachment theory will often try to hijack the storyline, casting us as the victims and others as the devils, creating an open emotional wound which then acts as a lens through which we see future interactions of similar resemblance.

Each time we are then reminded of the story, our bodies release the same chemicals, forcing us to relive the same emotional pain, keeping the wound festering. This cycle will continue on until your mind can find a positive closure or resolution to the story and your body can rewire itself to release different chemicals, replacing negative emotions with positive ones, thus initiating closure and change. In other words, the same things will continue to trigger you until you exchange the negative emotions you experience from that story to positive ones. We can break it down like this; Your life is controlled by 2 invisible forces-your STATE and your STORY.

Your State is your moment-to-moment emotions and your Story is the meaning you give to your life events. If you want to gain control over your life, you must gain control of both your state and your story. You might have heard the saying, "change your story, change your life." This is true, but it's incomplete unless your state is changed with it. In relationships, detached or wounded narratives and the emotions they provoke are the primary source of major dysfunctions.

Something as small as a one-word response, a facial expression, or a tone of voice can trigger the wounded emotion with its rehearsed narrative, "I'm unlovable" or "They don't really care about me." The wound freshly opened drives them to launch their defenses-coping mechanisms of fight, flight, or shutdown. These come across as offensive overreactions, triggering the opposing partner's insecurity, and the cycle continues to spiral further down into the false narratives of separation. To change these patterns and end the downward cycle you've got to pick up the author's pen and write a better ending to your stories. By realigning them with a higher truth, you can replace your negative emotional response with positive emotion, like finding ways to replace regret or anger over the things that hurt with thankfulness and gratitude for the things that went right.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. What ego-driven narrative (e.g., "I'm unlovable") shapes your reactions in your relationships? How can you reframe it with Christ's truth of victory and love (2 Corinthians 10:4-5)? 9 72 . Reflect on a recent trigger that sparked a victim narrative in your marriage or family. What's one step you can take to rewrite this story with a positive, Christ-conscious ending this week?
3. How does holding onto a victim narrative (e.g., blaming others for your pain) limit your ability to love? Discuss a way to take responsibility for your story and choose love's authority instead.
4. What past wound fuels a negative narrative in your interactions? How can you invite the Holy Spirit to replace its emotional pain with thankfulness or healing (Romans 12:2)?
5. How does choosing Christ's victorious narrative over the detached mind's victimhood change how you respond to your partner's actions? Plan a specific act of love that reflects this shift and share its impact.

SESSION 6: THE TWO APPETITES - FLESH OR SPIRIT

THE NEED FOR MEANING Every person is born with a need for meaningfulness-and the greatest manifestation of meaning will always come through our connection to others, especially God. When we accept this truth, our lives will tend to attract adventure as well as grace and peace. But when a detached identity convinces us that we are disconnected and separate from God and others, we are left with a deep spiritual void that longs to be filled. The separated soul tries to distract us from feeling the void of meaninglessness by creating a carnal appetite that masks our real desires for meaningful connection and replaces them with unfulfilling desires for immediate gratification. We can recognize these unfulfilling desires by the fact that they leave us feeling empty or unfulfilled, with our conscience often feeling shame or remorse as soon as we finish them. This is in contrast to acting on spiritual (or meaningful) desires, which always leave our conscience feeling good about what we just accomplished.

9 THE SPIRIT OR THE FLESH The word for "spirit" in the New Testament Greek is "Pneuma." Pneuma is also the same Greek word used for "wind" or "breath." The thing about wind and breath is, they have to be moving to exist. Your spirit is the movement behind your motives. The Holy Spirit is the One who aims or influences you toward holiness. An evil spirit aims or influences you toward evil. God's Spirit within us is the inner witness that constantly aims us toward our highest purpose in life-Love, which is utmost meaningfulness. The Spirit within us tends to suggest we give our present moments to the permanent eternal fruit of Love. The separated soul on the other hand, uses lust to tempt us toward a counterfeit purpose, which is simply to gratify our carnal desires, with no regard to

meaningfulness, besides instant gratification. Separation is ever suggesting we give our present moments to short-term pleasures and the avoidance of discomfort at the expense of long term meaning, responsibility and integrity. These carnal pleasures cannot fulfill spiritual needs so we are left feeling empty even when we fulfill these desires. Meaningfulness can only be achieved by the Spirit. "But each one is tempted when he is carried away and enticed by his own lust. Then when lust has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it has run its course, brings forth death." - James 1:14-15 (NASB) The English word "lust" as seen in the passage above, is translated from the Greek word "epithumia." In this passage, it is used to describe the desires that result from a wounded or separated soul. When our souls are consumed by lust, we get tricked into giving our life energy (or presence) to sin (or serving the desires of a detached identity), which can rob our relationships of love and even eventually kill us if it remains uncured. Just about all of us have seen the destruction that lust can bring to individuals and families. A separated soul takes healthy desires, like hunger, affection, or entertainment and perverts them, turning them into all consuming appetites of addiction. Detachment causes us to lust or desire things from a twisted, unhealthy perspective, so when we obey these lusts, we allow them to steal the present from meaningfulness. Lust is when we crave more than what we have been given, or something more than what is healthy. To illustrate this, imagine you are seated at a table along with twenty others and servers begin to bring out food. As they are bringing out plates, you notice everyone is receiving huge, oversized portions. The plates are overflowing with food. But when your plate is finally brought out, you notice your portion is far

smaller than everyone else's. It is still enough for you to be satisfied, but the idea that you got less than everyone else causes you to become bitter and ungrateful for the food you got. This is the detached soul creating lust and discontent out of comparison rather than finding peace in the truth. The truth is, you have plenty of food. The truth is, you don't even need this meal to be happy. The truth is, you don't even need to eat all week and you can still be content and grateful. Yet the illusion tricked you into creating an offense and missing the joy of the moment because of the idea of comparison or the idea that someone somewhere was trying to insult you. Even if they were, why allow them to succeed and steal your present state of joy and love? There is no rule anywhere that says you have to let it affect you. That is only an imaginary rule. The truth is that when we are aware of what we truly have, we need not lust for anything more. WHEN OUR LIFE LACKS PURPOSE, WE PURSUE CARNAL PLEASURE The detached soul tries to use carnal food to satisfy spiritual hunger, but carnal food is only really satisfying when consumed with spiritual meaning, never in absence of it. Our Creator has given us the five senses of smelling, tasting, touching, hearing, and seeing. Our noses and mouths crave smells and tastes, our eyes and ears crave images and sound, and our hands and bodies crave physical touch and emotion. These gifts were given to us so that we could express, enjoy and experience love, but when we operate out of separation instead of love, these desires overtake our purpose, and if unchecked, they will become all consuming addictions. The desires of the soul and flesh are not evil. So long as these desires remain within healthy boundaries, they are some of the greatest gifts God has ever given to us and they should be fully received, appreciated and explored as

part of an incredibly rich human experience. Marriage and family is the healthiest of boundaries in which to explore these pleasures and the extent to which your marriage experiences the pleasures of the body and soul is really the determining factor that most of us can't help but use to measure our satisfaction and enjoyment of life. When our lives lack purpose, we will pursue carnal pleasures. So instead of using our senses to serve love, we forfeit love and simply serve our sensual desires. The separated mind fools us into believing that we can experience love without sacrifice, connection without intimacy, and belonging without commitment. Absent from love, things like food, sex and entertainment, have no lasting meaning, but when practiced in love, these are full of meaning. The same act, like sex, can feel utterly meaningless and even shameful when done to fulfill lust, or totally meaningful and life giving when done to fulfill love. **WHICHEVER APPETITE YOU FEED WILL GROW** Your presence can be used to serve the spirit (love) or the flesh (ego). The Spirit and the flesh are always at war over your present. Whichever appetite you feed is the one that will grow. If you choose to feed your lust, your lust will grow. If you choose to feed your spirit, your spirit will grow. What you choose to give your presence to will determine the fruit or "produce" of your life. In other words, if you give your presence to the flesh you will produce carnal fruit, but if you give your presence to the Spirit, you will produce spiritual fruit. When the New Testament uses the word "flesh" it is often not merely a reference to the "meat" of your body, but to the carnal desires of the ego. We can see this through the context of many passages, but perhaps the clearest is in Galatians 5:13-26 (NIV). 9 "13 You, my brothers and sisters, were called to be free. But do not use your freedom to

indulge the flesh; rather, serve one another humbly in love. 14 For the entire law is fulfilled in keeping this one command: "Love your neighbor as yourself." 15 If you bite and devour each other, watch out or you will be destroyed by each other. 16 So I say, walk by the Spirit, and you will not gratify the desires of the flesh. 17 For the flesh desires what is contrary to the Spirit, and the Spirit what is contrary to the flesh. They are in conflict with each other, so that you are not to do whatever you want. 18 But if you are led by the Spirit, you are not under the law. 19 The acts of the flesh (ego) are obvious: sexual immorality, impurity and debauchery; 20 idolatry and witchcraft; hatred, discord, jealousy, fits of rage, selfish ambition, dissensions, factions 21 and envy; drunkenness, orgies, and the like. I warn you, as I did before, that those who live like this will not inherit the kingdom of God (Love). 22 But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, 23 gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law. 24 Those who belong to Christ Jesus have crucified the flesh (ego) with its passions and desires. 25 Since we live by the Spirit, let us keep in step with the Spirit. 26 Let us not become conceited, provoking and envying each other." - Galatians 5: 13-26 (NIV). The passage above shows that the flesh (or ego) influences us to spend our present energy on divisions and carnal pleasures, instead of connection and meaningfulness. Many people have heard of the ten commandments but we rarely hear much about the original five commandments, which were given to Adam and Eve in the Garden of Eden. These five commandments reveal humanity's original purpose. "Be fruitful, multiply, fill the earth, subdue the earth and rule over it..." - Genesis 1:28 (abbreviated). In essence, be productive, build family and make everything around you

beautiful and functional. To this day, these continue to be the things that will bring the greatest sense of meaningfulness to our lives. Research indicates that a primary cause of depression is meaninglessness. Depression has a hard time growing on a meaningful life. The goal of this lesson is to recognize the differences between the appetite of the flesh, which is meaninglessness, and the appetite of the Spirit, which is meaningfulness. By following the Spirit, instead of the flesh, we will fill our lives with meaning, which is the antidote for the disease of our sin nature. "It is for freedom that Christ has set us free. Stand firm, then, and do not let yourselves be burdened again by a yoke of slavery." - Galatians 5:1 (NIV) Freedom in Christ is not a license to indulge in sin but a complete liberation from the sin nature itself. Our sin nature is the separated mind of slavery. It's the idea of a detached world seen from an isolated psyche, an insecure existence obsessed with survival in the vengeful system of actions and reactions. In contrast, the revelation of our life in Christ changes our perspective, freeing us from our sin nature, allowing our minds to be rebirthed into a new world of secure connection. "Don't you know that when you offer yourselves to someone as obedient slaves, you are slaves of the one you obey-whether you are slaves to sin, which leads to death, or to obedience, which leads to righteousness?" - Romans 6:16 POWER OVER SLAVERY Freedom is power. It is power over slavery. Many of us are slaves in more ways than we are willing to see. In today's world, almost everyone faces some form of addiction at some point, whether it's to substances, technology, or even to stress. As discussed in earlier lessons, repeated stress can become a deeply conditioned pattern, reinforced by familiar states of physiological arousal. More commonly

though, addiction is developed when your brain becomes hooked on activities that spark intense emotional highs, such as using drugs or alcohol, excessive sugar, watching pornography, playing video games, or scrolling social media. Dopamine plays an important role in motivation, reinforcement, learning and reward-seeking; it is not simply a "happiness chemical." God designed your brain's dopamine system to reward you for natural, healthy and meaningful actions, like helping others or achieving goals, but when we trigger the release of dopamine artificially, we allow God's reward system to be hijacked, and meaningfulness to be bypassed. These man made addictions are often intentionally engineered to generate a dopamine rush far stronger than everyday joys so it is easy for our lives to be overtaken by them. Doing this repetitively will make us lose motivation and capability for experiencing the lasting joys of a meaningful, real life. In the same way that detachment hijacks the present moment, giving it to frustrations of the past or fears of the future, addiction steals the present moment as well, giving it to artificial and meaningless pleasures instead of real ones. Addiction isn't the primary problem, in fact, it's a solution-albeit a temporal and superficial one. Addiction provides a brief respite from the relentless momentum of wearing ego's masks and avoiding feeling-but the only way to heal the emotion is to allow yourself to feel it. The stress of maintaining separation is the primary source of our real problems in life, causing anxiety, division, inflammation, and even chronic illness. But the good news is that union in Christ can redeem us, heal us and set us free from disconnection. "So if the Son sets you free, you will be free indeed." - John 8:36

THE FOUR C'S OF ADDICTION If you have ever been close to an addict, you might have heard of

"the Four Cs of addiction." The four Cs are a framework used to identify and describe the core characteristics of addictive behaviors. They are: Craving, Compulsion, Control and Consequences. You can recognize and assess addiction in your own or someone else's life by these four C's; - Intense CRAVINGS triggered by cues or emotions- A COMPULSIVE drive to engage in harmful behaviors despite wanting to stop- An inability to CONTROL or limit the behavior 9 - Persistence in the face of negative CONSEQUENCES to health, relationships, or finances Addiction is often fueled by an attempt to escape from the negative emotions like stress, trauma, or meaninglessness, that stem from a detached psyche. Studies show that early childhood trauma, like abuse, neglect or instability, feeds our sense of detachment and can scar our ability to handle negative emotions throughout our lives, which only instigates further insecurity and isolation. Obviously, distracting ourselves with artificial stimuli is not a cure and can make returning to wholeness and meaningfulness even harder. Instead of treating the symptoms of separation with artificial stimuli, we must cure the disease altogether. The Bible tells us that reconciliation and reattachment to God through Christ is the medicine that cures the disease of separation. From there we can pursue wholesome and healthy relationships with loved ones. "For God was pleased to have all his fullness dwell in him, and through him to reconcile to himself all things, whether things on earth or things in heaven, by making peace through his blood, shed on the cross." - Colossians 1:19-20 "All this is from God, who reconciled us to himself through Christ and gave us the ministry of reconciliation: that God was reconciling the world to himself in Christ, not counting people's sins against them." - 2 Corinthians 5:18-19

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Which ego-driven desire do you most commonly do that you later feel shame or regret for most?
 2. How do ego's appetites disrupt your marriage or family?
 3. How does choosing the Spirit's appetites over the flesh's transform your relational joy?
 4. Consider the Four Cs of addiction (Craving, Compulsion, Control, Consequences). Do you notice these patterns in your own habits in any way? Have you created healthy boundaries for things that are potentially addictive to you?
 5. What do you do to escape or process negative emotions? Do you cover them with dopamine or do you process them in some other way? What is your process?
- PART TWO: RELATIONAL WHOLENESS** When we were deciding on a subtitle, we almost chose: "The Wholeness Method; A guide to healing married people - using marriage." Ultimately, we selected, "The Wholeness Method: A Christ-centered guide to healing the human soul" because it invites everyone to read and this book, not just married people, as its contents have universal application. The previous title also gives the impression that married people need healing because they got married, and that single people are whole because they avoided it, and this is certainly not the case. In fact, most unmarried people cannot even begin to comprehend the healing process yet-as marriage itself is the primary catalyst that unlocks the healing our souls so desperately need but also fear. You might protest, "But a lot of single people don't seem to have any of the issues that married people have..." Oh yes they do. It's just they have never been examined as deeply as the married people you know. Marriage is the examination. Until marriage, it's hard to even begin to understand the depth of all 9 detachment your soul carries within. Until you enter a voluntary permanent commitment, it is almost impossible to even grasp that you have anything broken about you-and perhaps this is because the infection didn't even originate with you. You inherited it from generations that stretch back to the beginning of time. The first half of this course was dedicated to personal wholeness, or salvation. This is not as much about getting "saved" in the classical evangelical sense, but a salvation that removes our disability to love. Now in PART 2, we will begin to focus on relational wholeness, or how to manifest wholeness as an individual in your marriage and family.

SESSION 7: THE TWO COMPANIONS - SICK OR HEALTHY UNHEALTHY RELATIONSHIPS COME FROM UNHEALTHY INDIVIDUALS

An unhealthy relationship is most often the result of the two emotionally wounded individuals who are involved in the relationship. We can give unhealthy individuals all the relationship tools that are proven to make their relationships succeed, but if those partners continue to lack wholeness in body, soul and/or spirit, the relationship will be severely compromised. The foundation of all healthy and meaningful relationships begins with our own, individual, physical and psychological health. Without our own strong sense of self-worth, self-enjoyment and inner strength, any relationship we have will be strained by our underlying need for wholeness, and likely lead us into unhealthy codependencies or compounded egotism.

Focusing on self might sound contrary to the focus of this course, but it is not, because in the end, the health we cultivate within ourselves sets the tone for the health of every relationship we build. When we neglect our own well-being, we carry unresolved stress, insecurities, and fatigue into every relationship we have, often unknowingly transferring those burdens 9 onto our loved ones.

Conversely, when we prioritize our health- feeding our body with nourishment, our soul with gratitude and joy, and our spirit with purpose-we naturally radiate stability, kindness, and love to those close to us. **INTERACTIONS ARE**

EXCHANGES OF EMOTION Just about every interaction you have with another person will generate an exchange of emotions. The underlying emotion that you were feeling before the interaction, along with the emotion the interaction itself triggers, will both be cast onto whomever you are interacting with, and vice versa. If you are stressed and your

child comes to you needing help, a measure of your stress will likely be transferred to them during the interaction. In the same way, if you are at peace and your child comes to you with a need, a measure of your peace will likely be transferred to them during your interaction. This is true for spouses, parents, friends, coworkers and everyone else. Your emotions are contagious. There is almost always a give and take of emotions that are transferred in every one of our interactions whether overtly or covertly. The emotional part of us is called different things in different circles. Ancient Greek philosophers used the word ψυχή (psuche), which English scholars originally translated "soul." The soul is classically understood to represent a person's mind, will and emotions. Later, Greek to English translators would replace the word soul and invent a new English word by transliterating the Greek word "psuche." This is how we got the English word "psyche," which is the root word in "psychology." Psychology is the study of the soul. In more modern secular circles the word "psyche" is still often used to describe the inner emotional part of us, but other terms like "inner child," "emotional mind," or "shadow child" are also commonly used, to name a few. **HEALTHY SOULS ARE A GIFT TO ALL** People who have strong psychological health are a life source to others. They cannot help it. If you watch them in public, it quickly becomes clear that they are overflowing in abundance; they seem to thoroughly be enjoying life, they are totally secure and confident within themselves, and they interact among others with open positivity and a loving curiosity. It feels like a gift whenever you get to share any time with one of these. They make you laugh easily and they effortlessly pull intimate truths right out of you. Just about everyone gets high off their presence

so it's easy to see why everyone would want to be their friend. They clearly do not need anything from you, yet they seem to be overflowing with grace toward you. A detached soul might be jealous of such a person, but the favor they experience is not based on random chance or special gifting from God as much as it is simple psychological health that anyone can access. In contrast, those who are unhealthy psychologically often carry a heaviness and an edge that make them intimidating to interact with. Their internal insecurities, and accusations surround their presence like a fortress wall, making others feel anxious and agitated in their presence. They might project neediness, defensiveness, or even hostility. Their wounds make them emotionally closed off and intimidating to engage with. A detached ego will likely go into high alert in their presence as it is easy to judge such a person but their presence is really just a projection of their broken connections through life. When you operate out of ego, other ego's are provoked, but when you operate out of connection, love is provoked. While you can often guess the psychological health of strangers by the way they carry themselves, nothing is a better indicator of emotional health than the presence and quality of long-term relationships in your life. Relational health almost always reflects your individual psychological health. So, what truly goes into personal psychological health? Self-love is perhaps the most essential. When asked what makes a relationship healthy, many overlook the primary factor: individual psychological health. Personal health is rooted in the love and joy you find within yourself -not your egotistical self, but your true self.

THE MARKINGS OF CHRIST CONSCIOUSNESS When someone becomes truly Christ-conscious, they become aware of their interconnectedness with others and

naturally begin to love them. But Christ-consciousness also cultivates an unbiased, overwhelming sense of love for oneself—a deep appreciation and celebration of your own unique qualities. This revelation makes you unashamed to steward your own health and make its maintenance your highest priority. Because healthy love for others can only flow from those who genuinely love and accept themselves. Your ability to love others will always be limited by the degree of your physical, emotional and mental health.

Without this foundation, authentic connection and love will remain elusive, and dysfunction will likely persist. "Then Jesus said to His disciples, 'If anyone wishes to come after Me, he must deny himself, and take up his cross, and follow Me.'" Matthew 16:24 (NASB) When the scripture says we must deny ourselves to follow Christ, it is not talking about our true selves, but about the fear-made self. A true self is one with Christ and its interests should not be resisted. It loves the things Christ loves, and enjoys the things Christ enjoys. All the natural joys of body, soul and spirit are not only allowed but demanded of us if we are to be as healthy and free as we can be. Union with Christ does not deny our unique individual desires, it brings them to their greatest significance. "Delight yourself in the LORD; And He will give you the desires of your heart." - Psalm 37:4 (NASB).

FEEDING THE THREE LEVELS OF OUR BEING Exceptional personal health comes from feeding the three levels of our being; the body, the soul and the spirit. While this course helps you step out of your detached identity to reconnect and embrace your larger identity with others in Christ, it must be constantly reminded that connection in Christ does not suppress your true identity, it liberates it. Your greatest identity is not found in yourself alone, but in your connection

to God and others. It is detachment that suppresses your true identity, making you a slave to perceptions instead of truth. It's only when you see yourself in the mirror of Christ that you can even begin to know who you truly are. There is a version of your body, soul and spirit that only Christ can reveal to you. Once you can see your body, soul and spirit through His eyes, it then becomes your stewardship to maintain these three realities. If you don't take care of yourself in these three areas, it will end up making you sick, burning you out, making you bitter, or killing you entirely. If any of those things happen to you, your family and friends will suffer. When your health suffers, your family's health suffers. **PHYSICAL HEALTH** If you sit in an office chair and work all day, then you skip dinner and just eat a huge desert full of sugar and then stay up late binge watching shows, and then you toss and turn and only get an hour or two of sleep before you have to get up the next day to do it all over again, your ability to connect to your family is going to be severely compromised. Your patience, kindness, tolerance for stress, your temper and your ability to process information and think-all of it will be severely compromised because of your physical health. Your family will undoubtedly feel the brunt of your dysfunctional physical health as you interact with them. There are three primary things that go into being physically healthy; diet, sleep and exercise. Obtaining understanding in these three areas is one of the most important investments you will ever make. Do it. Your diet affects your energy, your looks, your mood and your sleep. Your sleep is vital for your organ health, energy levels, cognitive ability, physical recovery and muscle growth. Consistent exercise keeps you mobile, capable and strong. Studies have shown that if you get poor sleep, one way to negate the negative effects of bad

sleep is exercise. Exercise forces breath to go deeper and blood to be circulated faster. These three areas are crucial for your physical health. When you feed your body these three things, your body has energy for life, making decisions to choose meaningful activities far less intimidating. Making the necessary adjustments to your schedule and life to incorporate physical health will offer one of the greatest life-long returns on your effort. No more excuses! SOUL HEALTH In the New Testament, the English word for "soul" is translated from the Greek word, ψυχή, pronounced "psyche." It is where we get the terms Psyche, Psychology and Psychiatry. These all have to do with the human soul. Classical theory on the soul suggests your soul includes your mind, will and emotions, or your thoughts, wants and feelings. When you feed your soul your soul becomes optimistic, happy and healthy. A happy soul can easily say, "I love my life" with the utmost enthusiasm. A good indicator that you do not have a healthy soul is when it is hard to say "I love my life" with enthusiasm. This might seem obvious, but someone who loves their life has a far higher threshold for conflict and stress than someone who hates their life, thus making the lover of life a far healthier companion to those around them. 9 When you learn to feed your mind, will and emotions, you tend to feel full emotionally. It is hard not to be optimistic, happy and thankful and ready to help others see the bright side of life when your soul is full. When you have a healthy soul, you have the emotional energy your family needs you to have for it to be its best. To feed your mind, invest weekly in things you find interesting or mentally stimulating. To feed your will, invest in healthy experiences that make you feel alive; whether you are competitive, social, spiritual, adventurous or creative, you know you are feeding

your will because you come alive when you experience the things your will or desire loves. To feed positive emotions, the first place to start is finding thankfulness. Practicing daily thankfulness and getting into the habit of daily thankfulness is really step number one to having healthy emotions.

Beyond thankfulness, there are many ways to strengthen your positive emotions. Comedy, music and time in nature are all things that can take you out of negativity and into positivity in an instant! When you feed your soul, you tend to love and enjoy life. Your spouse will feel it and your kids will feel it. Your positivity will tend to be infectious. You will smile easily and have emotional energy and positivity for those around you. This is a major priority for the best marriages.

SPIRITUAL HEALTH Your spirit is what drives you, aims you and guides you. Your spirit is your connection to your divine destiny and purpose. It nags you, convicts you and tells you right from wrong constantly. In the New Testament, the Greek word for "Spirit" is Πνεύμα (Pneuma). Πνεύμα is a noun that can be translated "wind", "breath", or "spirit". In the New Testament, it is often used to refer to the Holy "Spirit," but it is also the same word used to refer to the human "spirit."

What is the difference between wind and air? Wind is the invisible force that moves air. The same is true of the idea of a spirit. Wind is invisible but very real. You cannot see it directly but you can see the evidence of it wherever it goes. This is the same as your spirit. You have a spirit that is the chief motivating factor behind what drives you toward meaningfulness. It is the thing that aims you, the thing that pulls you toward your purpose or your destiny. Our conscience will often feel cursed or vexed when we violate our spirit's guidance. It is the 'God conscious' part of you. Your spirit is related to your why, and your where. It points

you to your destination. It's your driver, your "highest-good" motivator and it is always compelling you of your need for God. When you violate the direction of your spirit, you might begin to feel cursed. For instance, if your spirit warns you not to take a job for some shady guy that will pay you lots of money but you do it anyway, you might start feeling like every bad thing that happens to you is because you now have bad luck from taking that shady job. The more you violate your spirit, the less you will believe in your own goodness and the more you will tend to despise yourself for making morally compromised decisions. The result is either you live with guilt and shame, or you try to cut off access to hearing your spirit's voice so you don't have to feel the conviction anymore, which results in total moral collapse. This is what Ephesians 4:18-19 is referring to when it says, "...They refuse to listen so they cannot have the life that God gives. They have lost all feeling of shame, and they use their lives for doing evil..." (NCV) But Psalm 34:17 says, "The Lord is close to the brokenhearted and saves those crushed in spirit." So if you have a broken spirit and desire wholeness, ask God for help and seek out help from others who know Christ. It is very hard to have healthy relationships without yourself being healthy. Your own health is the number one gift you can give your loved ones. Personal health is the primary magnet of quality relationships, whether new or old. Your own health is the most important thing you can work on if you want to bless your loved ones and make life easier for them.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

- 1. Can you say you genuinely love the life you are living now?**
- 2. Can you see any areas where a lack in your personal health is negatively impacting your relationship with loved ones?**

3. Can you see any weaknesses you have in any of the three areas of a healthy body? If so, list the things that you would need to do to change in order to upgrade your health.
4. Can you see any areas where your soul is being starved? If so, list the things that you would need to do in order to feed it.
5. Do you feel like you are in alignment spiritually, or do you feel like you have somehow gotten out of alignment? Please explain.

SESSION 8: THE TWO SYSTEMS - DETACHED OR SECURE

THE IMPORTANCE OF OUR CONNECTION From the moment we come into existence, at the point of our conception, we enter life attached to another human being. We are 100% dependent on the attachment we have to the woman who carries us in her womb and she gives us everything we need for life and growth through her connection to us. When we are born, we are yet again 100% dependent on the attachment we have to our mother for our survival and we remain totally dependent on our parents or caretakers for many, many years. We were not meant to be alone. We were made dependent. We were made to need others. We long for attachment because we were designed for attachment. We will never escape this basic human need. While we are in the womb, if there is a complication and something is causing the attachment we have to our mother to be compromised, we could become malnourished or even die. As we transition from infancy to adulthood, the nature of our attachment evolves, but the underlying need remains unchanged. Our physical dependence on our mothers gradually gives way to an emotional dependence on the people around us. Just as a baby's body requires an unbroken umbilical cord to thrive, an adult's heart requires a sense of emotional attachment to others to stay nourished and alive. When our ability to form healthy attachments deteriorates, we can become emotionally stunted or stuck in patterns or relational brokenness.

THE CONNECTING PART OF US The thing inside of us that connects us is also the same thing inside of us from which we feel emotion. Happiness, sadness, fear, pride, embarrassment, and every other emotion comes from this delicate part of our being. The connections we have with other people are emotional connections. When you feel

connected to someone it is because you connected to them emotionally. They made you feel something. That feeling registered in your memory bank and now when you see them or think of them a feeling is associated with them. The English New Testament is primarily translated from ancient Greek, and uses the word "psuche" or "soul" about 100 times to refer to the "inner self." However, the word "heart" is used more frequently to convey this concept, appearing over 800 times. Both terms have similar meanings. Based on word count, the subject of the heart or soul is one of the top five subjects in the Bible. Here are a few passages that mention "heart." Proverbs 4:23: "Above all else, guard your heart, for everything you do flows from it." Psalm 139:23-24: "Search me, God, and know my heart; test me and know my anxious thoughts. See if there is any offensive way in me..." Ezekiel 36:26: "I will give you a new heart and put a new spirit in you; I will remove from you your heart of stone and give you a heart of flesh." Romans 10:10: "With the heart one believes unto righteousness, and with the mouth confession is made unto salvation." There are literally hundreds of passages like these in the Bible. As you can see, the Bible uses the word "heart" to symbolize the concept of inner life, emotion, and the place your "belief" comes from. In the secular world, the term "Inner Child" was coined over the 20th century by many brilliant intellectuals who were developing and defining several concepts to help us achieve a better understanding of human psychology. Here in this lesson, we use "heart," "soul" and "inner child" interchangeably. Regardless of what you choose to call it, the point is, we all have a place inside of us that longs to feel genuine connection. Our soul thrives when we sense a strong and genuine attachment to the people around us. The depth of connectedness our heart 9

feels with those closest to us really is the primary factor that determines not only the quality of our relationships, but the meaningfulness, fullness and greatness of our soul's interpretation of life. In other words, the thing that most significantly determines your quality of life will be the depth of connection your heart perceives you have with those closest to you. Rich people are miserable if they don't have it. Poor people are happy if they do have it. The quality of your connections determines the quality of your life far more than anything else. This is why your closest relationships (like marriage and parenting) deserve to be your top priority in life. You win at marriage, you win at life. **FEELING REJECTION IS THE OPPOSITE OF FEELING CONNECTION** Connection can be felt as an emotion, "I feel deeply connected to you." The opposite emotion of connection would be rejection. Rejection is an incredibly destructive force when it comes to the development of our psychological selves and our experience of meaningful relationships. For all of us, at some point, we experience our first feeling of disconnection or rejection from the ones we were seeking connection and belonging to. This happens to everyone, but every heart is different and has different needs and different reactions to the feeling of rejection. At a very young age, without knowing what we are doing, or why we are doing it, we develop strategies for avoiding those terrible feelings of rejection, disconnection, lack of belonging and aloneness. When these strategies become our regular response whenever we feel any type of tension, disconnection or rejection from someone in our lives, they can be called coping mechanisms. All of us have felt the pain of our heart being wounded or rejected to differing degrees. That sacred connecting place within each one of us is very delicate, very

sensitive, and the shocking truth is that as we age, our heart remains like a child. Many thinkers who have written on this subject believe that our inner heart never adapts to injury, it never grows up, or grows wise or grows calloused. It simply remains vulnerable and raw, innocent, and easily injured. It needs protection. It is the "emotional" part of us. It's the part that feels all the emotions we feel. It is the thing inside of us that believes, hopes and loves. It's the part of us that feels shame, embarrassment, and abandonment. It cannot turn these emotions off, it can only try to insulate them by building walls around the heart. The heart is that it tends to seek belonging and attachment with every other life that it comes in contact with. It automatically, innocently searches for connection, for belonging, to believe in, to hope in, and to share identity with. It's like a lonely child seeking friendship from all the other kids on the playground. Our heart is always seeking acknowledgment, acceptance, harmony and love from everyone it comes into contact with. It is no wonder it gets so wounded all the time.

COPING MECHANISMS When we experience negative feedback and interaction from parents, relatives or peers during our childhood, we learn to hide or suppress those parts of us we believe they are rejecting and we naturally begin to create an alternative self image that behaves in a way we think those around us will approve of. By the time we are adults, we ALL have a hidden inner childlike heart, who is our truest self, and we ALL have an outer hardened shell, which is the projected image we portray ourselves to be to the outside world. As mentioned in previous lessons, the outer shell, or ego, is created as a survival mechanism that is driven by the idea that we are separate and need to compete against all else to survive. We use this separated self to insulate our inner child

and protect it from trying to make full on connections to everyone around us so that our heart doesn't get crushed over and over again by uncommitted relationships. When our heart believes it has made a real connection with a trusted adult, but that adult proves in some way to be disconnected, disapproving or in the worst cases, abusive, it can be extremely traumatic and it can trigger all the emotions and fears associated with insecurity. As a result, we create any number of coping mechanisms to try to protect us from those feelings as we go forward. We will often carry those coping mechanisms subconsciously into our adult relationships. While our coping mechanisms aren't inherently evil, they can be built on a false premise of separation, making it challenging for others to connect with us on anything but a superficial level. The degree to which you allow your truest self to feel and be known is the degree to which your truest self is accessible for rejection or connection. So while we operate out of a detached psyche, our hearts will be shielded from experiencing full-on rejection, but it will come at the cost of experiencing full-on connection. Real connection occurs only when someone feels that their true self, not their ego, is genuinely understood, respected, and cared for. The quality and depth of your relationships hinges on how well your soul feels this connection with another soul. In general, the depth your partner feels you are connected to their internal world or thoughts, wants and emotions will determine how deeply they experience your union with them. **MARRIAGE IS A CURE**

In the ancient biblical story found in Genesis 1-2, the Bible offers the origin story of the six days of Creation. In Genesis 1:3-4, it speaks of the first day of creation and it says, "And God said, 'Let there be light,' and there was light. 4 God saw

that the light was good..." The book of Genesis was originally written in the Hebrew language and whenever there is translation into another language, the original meaning of different passages can get lost in translation. In this case, when it says, God saw that the light was "good," the original Hebrew word for "good" is "tov." In this context, tov means "to be functioning according to its design." It is not a dogmatic moral good, but a functional good. It is saying that God had an idea in His mind about light, so He created the sun, set it in motion and when He inspected it, He saw that the sun was functioning according to the design He had envisioned. 9 This same language is used for each consecutive day of creation. God would think up a design, create it, inspect it, and if it passed inspection He would say, "It is good" or, "It is functioning according to the idea I had in My mind." So the six days of creation continue; on the second day God creates the skies and the waters, and sees that they are "good," on the third day He creates the land and vegetation, and sees that they are "good," and so on until the sixth day when he creates man. But when God inspects man, in Genesis 2:18, He says, "It is NOT good..." Man was not functioning according to the idea God had for him, at least not yet, and as the scripture reads on, we find out the reason God found man dysfunctional. The full passage reads, "It is not good for the man to be alone." [so] "I will make a helper suitable for him." Wow! In all of the original creation, only one thing was NOT good. It was not good for man to be alone. Man was not capable of functioning according to his design if he remained alone. Aloneness is dysfunction. So God thought of a very interesting solution. In Genesis 2:21, it says that God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and when he was sleeping, God took a rib and fashioned a

woman from it. Now we know from Genesis 1:27, that both male and female were created in God's image. This suggests that God must embody both the masculine and feminine natures, and that Adam originally embodied both the masculine and feminine natures. When God fashioned Eve, it would stand to reason that He separated the feminine from the masculine to create Adam and Eve as two separate people, destined only to become functional upon successful reconnection. Could this be the chief purpose God had in mind that He designed us for? To learn connection? Could it be true that anything less is a dysfunction or a counterfeit to our real purpose? If we read on, we will see Adam and Eve's relationship is no picnic! And from this context, we see that their struggle (and ours) is likely intended, for the greater the struggle, the greater the opportunity to overcome and demonstrate love. "Love covers a multitude of sins" - 1 Peter 4:8. WE ARE INCOMPLETE WITHOUT EACH OTHER This is the Bible's very first lesson. The Bible is the story of mankind's purpose and it begins by making the point that man and woman are incomplete without each other. In other words, without submitting ourselves to the requirements of connection, we remain broken to God's design for us. Can you think of any greater way to prove you can love than through the connection you have within a marriage? From the days of Adam and Eve till today, there is no type of relationship that can do a better job at developing perfect love in us than marriage. Family is God's classroom for our perfection. I find it interesting that the Bible never tells us that Adam ever woke up from his sleep. What if all of humanity's splintered history was merely a dream? Could it be that the invention of our separated self is merely an illusion and that our aloneness is merely a lie our lives and

marriages are meant to prove wrong? 9

YOU ARE NOT ALONE -EVER I once had a dream in which I died and was ascending up to heaven when an angel stopped me and said, "Wait, you can't go in." I said, "Yes I can." And he said, "No, not right now." This puzzled me. "Not right now?" I questioned to myself. After a moment he continued, "This is the appointed time the Father, Son and Holy Spirit preach the Gospel to each other." I was confused. "What?" I said, "Why do They need to have the gospel preached?..." "SHHH" the angel shushed my question, as he leaned in trying to listen. He didn't want me to interrupt. He was trying to hear what they were saying.

I instantly realized what an opportunity it would be so I also leaned in and attuned my ears to hear and I heard Jesus say to our Father, "Be blessed Father, for You are not alone." And I woke up. That was all I heard before I was awoken. My first thought when I awoke was, "That's not the Gospel!" But the more I have thought about it in the years I have lived since that dream, I have become convinced that really is the truest Gospel there is. From God's perspective and ours.

Christ connected us. We are no longer alone. On page 356 of his book, *Memories, Dreams, Reflections* by Carl Jung, he said, "Loneliness does not come from having no people around you, but from being unable to communicate the things that seem important to oneself, or from holding certain views which others find inadmissible." Deterioration in a close relationship comes when members feel alone within the relationship. This is true of both marital relationships as well as parent/child relationships.

Loneliness is rarely about having an empty house, it is more about having thoughts, wants and feelings, but no one to share them with, because you too afraid to do so. Whether it is C.S. Lewis' "The Great Divorce," or John Milton's "Paradise Lost," or Thomas Aquinas' "Summa Theologica," there have been many brilliant theologians who have suggested the deepest levels of hell would be existence in utter alone-ness. When God issues the great commandment to love others, what He is telling us to do is to rescue the world from aloneness.

Aloneness is the sickness the Gospel heals. Marriage is the ultimate expression of this Gospel. If you have each other right now, be thankful you are not alone. You can make this relationship anything you want it to be.

THE TRUE MEANING OF LIFE Life is a test of whether or not we will learn connection and God has already sent the perfect instructors to teach us how to pass this test. The instructors He sent have the names, "husband" and "wife" and "son" and "daughter" and "mother" and "father." Family is where you escape the hell of aloneness & meaninglessness. But they come at the cost of your ego, and at the cost of your self preservation. These relationships will demand you stop protecting yourself and instead do the exact opposite.

You must sacrifice your detached "self" or else you fail the most important test of your life; the test of love, the test of connection, the test of whether you will choose heaven or hell, connectedness or aloneness. To heal, you must learn to speak what matters most to your heart, and help those around you to do the same so that you are no longer alone with in your soul. Only then can you be truly known, seen and loved for who you really are. Marriage is the antithesis of the story of utter alone-ness-or hell-or ego-or drifting alone through a sea of souls and never being truly known or loved by any of them.

Your relationships can become exactly what you design them to be.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe your childhood and how much you felt "alone" on one hand or "controlled" on the other?

2. If you were to describe your heart's ability to freely connect or attach to those around you without insecurity or anxiety, how would you describe it?
3. How much do you allow your truest self to be known and accessible to those around you?
4. Do you feel your loved one's truly know you, understand you, respect you and care about you? Are there other stages in your life when you didn't?
5. If God put your loved ones in your life as instructors to teach you how to love, what lessons would you say they have taught you in the past and which ones are being tested now?

SESSION 9: THE TWO RESPONSES - REJECTION OR CONNECTION

THE WAY YOU RESPOND MATTERS Over the last decade a handful of powerful data based discoveries have been made regarding marriages. One of the most useful findings in Gottman's work is that the way partners respond to each other's attempts at connection is strongly associated with relationship quality and stability. The Gottman Institute is largely the organization responsible for these studies and they call these invitations, "bids for connection." A bid for connection is any time one partner reveals something about their heart, or true self, not their ego, giving the other partner an opportunity to join their internal world. These invitations come in all shapes and sizes, but usually include clues about the private thoughts, wants and feelings of the soul; The bids could be delivered as a personal opinion, a secret desire, a pent up emotion or anything that reveals what's going on internally. 9 On an average day, those who live together typically give each other a dozen or so invitations to understand their internal world.

If we are upset internally, we might just tell our partner plainly, "I am upset..." This would be a straight forward invitation to connect. This would be the emotionally mature way to make a bid, but when we are less mature emotionally, we might express our anger through a bad attitude and action, like shutting a door a little more aggressively than needed, or offering shorter answers when asked a question, or not saying goodnight. These bad attitudes are all still bids for connection, but they are far less effective at communicating accurately and far more triggering of our detached psyches than just using words. They are more like little hostile invitations for loved ones to dig in and discover what is hurting the hearts of those acting out.

Invitations for connection are not only about negative attitudes and actions, they could also look like a comment about how beautiful a sunset is, or showing you a funny meme, or telling you how talking to a certain acquaintance always leaves them feeling weighed down. These are all invitations to respond to their heart and deepen their sense of connection with you. The way you respond to these invitations will determine the primary trajectory of your relationships-all your relationships. Strong relational connections are only possible when your positive responses to these invitations far outweigh your negative rejections of these invitations.

Incredible relationships are built one response at a time as we treat these opportunities as sacred moments to join in our loved one's inner world. **THEIR INTERESTS ARE THE DOORWAY TO THEIR HEART** The greater the relational dependence two people have on each other, the greater significance and impact their interactions will potentially have on each other, sending strong signals of rejection or connection to each other's hearts every time they interact. If you do not learn to understand, respect and value the things their hearts hold dear, you'll likely trample all over them, causing their ego's defense mechanisms to go into protection mode and respond by placing an emotional wall between you and their heart. You will start to be seen as a threat to what their heart considers fragile and sacred, and they will keep you at a distance.

You might be tempted to argue or disregard some of the things your spouse's heart considers sacred, thinking them childish or irrational, and they might be! Just like a child, their heart won't care if it is childish or irrational, their heart only knows how to feel the feelings it feels. It can't help feeling however it feels, and if you want to have a truly incredible relationship, you must learn how to recognize, understand, and find beauty in the things your loved one's heart wants, thinks, feels and finds sacred. **EVERY INTERACTION IS AN OPPORTUNITY TO CONNECT** It's as if you have an emotional bank account and every time your loved one sends your heart a signal of connection, it's a deposit into the wealth of your union, and every time your loved one sends your heart a signal of rejection, it is a withdrawal from 9 the wealth of your union.

The quality of your familial relationships and marriage experience will be determined by how strongly your heart feels known, cared for and connected to your loved one's hearts. Every interaction you have with your loved ones will send signals of connection or rejection to their heart and this will determine the overall trajectory of your relationship with them. If they feel unheard, uncared for, or outright rejected, their heart will begin telling them they are on their own in that area and they will be far less motivated to share that interest with us in the future. To become a better demonstration of love in their lives, we must begin to take advantage of these opportunities to demonstrate our care, diving into their world and joining them enthusiastically, showing interest in their opinions, wants and feelings.

When we are seen as a safe place to test opinions, achieve desires and experience emotions, you have won their heart, which is the prize of life. To improve our relationships and make our loved ones feel loved by us, we must start by treating every interaction, no matter how seemingly insignificant, as a deposit into their hearts. Every interaction will either sow connection or rejection. It doesn't mean you have to automatically agree with everything they say.

It just means you begin to foster genuine respect for their internal world and their emotional state. How well you know, respect and connect to their heart is the number one indicator of the trajectory and quality of your relationship. The greatness of your relationship will not be based on how many trips you take or how big of a house you can buy, it will be based on the quality of your everyday interactions with your partner; how you greet each other when one of you comes home, how you go to bed together, how you wake up together, how you prepare and eat meals together, how you manage a house together, and so on... The signals you send as you do these everyday things together are the greatest indicator of the quality of your marriage and life.

This is perhaps the greatest secret to unlocking incredible relationships in your life.

THREE WAYS TO RESPOND TO THEIR HEART There are three primary ways to respond to a bid for connection; turn toward it, turn away from it, or turn against it. Here is an example below: The Bid: I come home from work and walk in the door and when I see my wife I say, "Wow, what a day, I am so exhausted..." - That right there is a bid for connection. It is inviting a connection to what I am experiencing in my inner world. Turning toward: She offers an affirming response, like, "oh no, did something bad happen?"

Let me come give you a hug..." Turning away: She responds by completely ignoring me. This would make me feel totally rejected and disconnected, like I don't belong or have value in her eyes. 9 Turning against: She responds by saying something like, "You're tired? Why are you tired? You slept in."

You shouldn't be tired. You just sit around doing nothing all day. I'm the one that should be saying I'm tired, I had to stay home with the kids and..." This would be a rejection of my bid for connection but at least she is replacing it with a sloppy attempt for her own bid for connection. This too would make me feel rejected or disconnected, unless I found the love within myself to forget my feelings for a second and respond with care, and say something like, "Oh no!"

I am sorry. Did you have a tough day with the kids? Can I do anything to help you now?" As you can see from this example, the way we respond to bids for connection can create a domino effect into deeper detachment or a domino effect into deeper love. Failing to respond positively to these opportunities feeds ego, aloneness and insecurity.

Taking advantage of these opportunities feeds love, unity and the sense of connection. As you begin to implement this knowledge into your own relationship by recognizing and responding affirmingly to your partner's bids instead of taking offense, or responding negatively, your relationship will see immediate improvement. Building healthy communication habits around this understanding will set you on the course of perpetual improvement in your marriage. The Gottman research found that the way a couple communicates, understands and responds to bids for heart connection is essential for fostering a deep and meaningful long term relationship.

When a couple can do this well, it is called having high emotional intelligence. High emotional intelligence is the primary indicator of successful and fulfilling marriages. At the Gottman Institute's "Love Lab," researchers observed couples in a quasi-natural setting designed to simulate everyday life. They recorded thousands of interactions and categorized them into different types of bids and responses.

The data showed a striking difference between successful and unsuccessful relationships: Turning Toward: Couples in stable, happy relationships turned toward each other's bids for connection approximately 86% of the time. Turning Away: Couples who later divorced or reported being unhappy turned toward each other's bids only 33% of the time. The practical point of these observations is not a rigid 3:1 rule for bids. It is that stable, satisfied couples tend to respond positively to each other's bids for connection much more often than distressed couples do. (See John Gottman's discussion of bids and turning toward in *The Seven Principles for Making Marriage Work*.) 9

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. Describe how you feel after interactions with your loved ones. What percentage would you say they leave you feeling more connected or more rejected in general?
2. How intentional are you with your interactions with others? Have you established any standards of interaction with each other?
3. If we asked your loved ones if they feel more connected or more rejected after interacting with you, what do you think they would say and why?
4. What is one recurring interaction you have with your spouse or child that leaves you feeling totally rejected?
5. After understanding this lesson, do you see any bad interaction habits that you have been using that you would like to change?

SESSION 10: THE TWO LANGUAGES SUPERFICIAL OR INTIMATE INTIMACY IS A FORM OF COMMUNICATION We define intimacy as a form of communication. The level of intimacy you share with a loved one can be measured by the level of honesty you share with them-the greater the honesty, the greater the intimacy. It is not just any type of honesty, but a specific type of honesty that creates intimacy. It's ego-free honesty, or honesty that defies the fear of rejection. It can be measured by the extent to which two people open up to each other in complete vulnerability, shedding the fear of rejection to share things a detached psyche would otherwise be terrified to expose. Detached psyches are terrified of intimacy. Intimacy is as foreign to a separated soul as presence is. Intimacy has the opposite desire of separation-while a separated soul seeks to wall the heart off from vulnerabilities, intimacy exposes the heart and puts it on display in a fearless bid for genuine connection. Intimacy is experienced whenever one's desire to truly be loved and be known overrules their instincts for self protection and survival, thus instigating ego-free honesty.

9 DETACHMENT PREVENTS TRUE INTIMACY A detached ego acts as a self-made emotional armor you have created to protect your heart from the feeling of rejection or separation. This ego views connection itself as a threat, because deep emotional pain can only come from those you're genuinely connected to. Egos can act as a heart's attempt to mask vulnerabilities, projecting a fake persona, so that others react to it, instead of to the real heart, so that once they reject you, they reject the fake you, so it doesn't hurt as much. For this reason, it's hard to have real connections with people with detached egos on anything more than a superficial level. The degree to which you allow your truest self to feel and be known is the degree

to which your truest self is accessible for rejection or connection. So while we operate out of detachment, our hearts will be shielded from experiencing full-on rejection, but it will come at the cost of experiencing full-on connection. Real connection occurs only when someone feels that their true self, not their ego, is genuinely understood, respected, and cared for. The only way to really grow the quality and depth of your relationships is by going past superficialities to genuine, ego-free connection. In general, the depth your loved ones feel you are connected to their real internal world or thoughts, wants and emotions will determine how deeply they experience your love for them. As healthy relationships develop, the fear of rejection is slowly replaced by a sense of connection and trust. As this happens it is natural for intimacy to grow. Again, intimacy is honesty about the vulnerabilities of the heart. Intimacy can be seen in the meaningful gestures and thoughtful banter that accompany a deep and loving knowledge of your partner's thoughts, wants and feelings. It can be seen in the willingness to confess sin to each other, to share internal struggles, to communicate embarrassing needs, desires and fantasies, and to be honest about how things really make you feel. These are all indicators of the level of intimacy you share with your partner. The depth to which you share these things with others determines the depth of your genuine connection and union with them. The more intimacy you have with your parents, spouse, kids and friends determines the genuine depth of your relationships and life. At the same time, it also determines how deeply you can be hurt should betrayal or rejection occur. Intimacy is the spice of life. It makes everything taste better. The more intimacy you have, the more real your interactions and experiences will feel. The

less intimacy you share the more superficial all your interactions and experiences will feel. When you lack genuine intimacy, interactions will feel empty. Enjoyment, affection, communication and all the other attributes that accompany relationships will all lack feeling, potency and meaning when you lack intimacy. The magnitude to which you allow true intimacy is the magnitude that meaningfulness will fill your interactions. Hugs will mean that much more, kisses will mean that much more, apologies will mean that much more and praise will mean that much more. Everything has more meaning when you are truly known and therefore truly loved.

9 INTIMACY CAN ONLY GO AS DEEP AS HONESTY

Many couples are not growing in intimacy because they have reached a plateau in their willingness or ability to be honest with themselves and with their partner. It might be surprising to some to hear the mention of self-honesty. Being honest with yourself is the first step in being honest with others. Before you know yourself you have no ability to share that intimate knowledge with others. Knowing self is often neglected-especially today. To really know oneself, it takes time sitting without distraction in self reflection, and most people today have forfeited quiet times of contemplation altogether for the hustle and bustle of screens and entertainment. The first step to increasing real intimacy with others is knowing oneself. Only then can you invite someone else to know you too. As we seek to replace superficiality with intimacy, we must do so carefully. If you or your partner are still not fully cleansed of a detached psyche, honesty will be extremely threatening and can cause destructive reactions. To a detached identity, total honesty stirs extreme insecurity. In fact, the level of honesty you have in a relationship tends to indirectly reveal the level of detachment

still active in that relationship. If we are truly seeking spiritual growth and personal wholeness, we will want to work toward 100% transparent honesty for all of our close relationships. If you are married and you and your spouse agree to pursue 100% intimacy and honesty, I recommend you pace yourself, gauging readiness. Know yourself first, then time what you reveal, ensuring you both can process vulnerability with grace. "Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ." - Ephesians 4:15 (NIV) Because honesty can be so threatening, it might be helpful for loved ones to establish a few agreements around honesty. This would include assurances that any attempt made by either person to reveal vulnerable truths will be seen as an attempt toward correcting superficiality and dysfunction, rather than as a threat. When a loved one finally confesses something they have been afraid to tell us, whether it is because they are ashamed, embarrassed, or because they know it would hurt us, it is easy for detached egos to feel threatened, triggering self-defense mechanisms, which usually involve fight or flight. To transition our relational culture from superficial to intimate and from fear to love, we must recognize that how we respond in these moments will determine the level of intimacy that will be accepted going forward. When a loved one bravely shares a painful truth, we must resist punishing it and instead praise it as love's courage, breaking cycles of fear and fostering a culture of trust. By punishing honesty we set firm limits on intimacy. Honesty is always a primary objective of Love, because only when we are honest, can we truly find healing and grace. "If we confess our sins, he is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." - 1 John 1:9 (ESV) To truly know a

loved one, they must let you past their walls, a barrier that continues to remain in many of our closest 9 relationships. Connection thrives when both surrender pretense, sharing their raw, unfiltered selves. Intimacy isn't a one-time act but a lifelong dance of honesty, where each vulnerable moment -confessing a fear, owning a mistake, or revealing a hidden longing-builds a relationship rich with meaning. By choosing intimacy over superficiality, you fulfill your divine design, creating a union where love's truth reigns, making every shared glance, touch, and word a testament to your oneness.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. On a scale of 1-10, rate the level of your genuine transparency and honesty in your closest relationship (10 being highest)
2. On a scale of 1-10, rate the degree to which you feel your true self (thoughts, wants and feelings) is known by your closest loved ones.
3. Does your partner know what you fear and stress over most? Please explain.
4. Does your partner know what turns you on, what turns you off, what fantasies you have, and what fears of intimacy you have? Please explain.
5. How do you and your closest loved one react to honesty when it hurts? Would you rather have total honesty with pain or some superficiality with less pain? **SESSION 11 THE TWO TWO RELATIONSHIPS - INSECURE OR COVENANTED INSECURE ENVIRONMENTS CREATE INSECURE PEOPLE** If we go back far enough, most, if not all of our ancestors at some point lived in the wild as tribal hunters and gatherers. In that setting, survival was often brutal. The fight to stay alive was real, everything was either predator or prey and in order to survive they had to treat every interaction as a potential threat to their lives. Every rustle in the brush, every unique aroma, every insect, every body of water and every new territory carried the possibility of death. These circumstances would place a demand on our nervous systems to become coiled and ready to defend at any moment. Today, we can carry this same mentality into our relationships but we do it on an emotional level. Defensive and dramatic overreactions to criticisms, conflict, or problems even within the safest of our relationships reveal just how ingrained these instincts have become. Your detached identity is simply triggering your defense mechanisms by fooling you into believing you are still in a fight for survival and your loved ones are the threat when most of the time, nothing could be further from the truth. **9** Just as each of us has made a physical environment or home for ourselves with beds and furniture and decorations, we also make an emotional home for ourselves using our internal dialogues and our closest relationships. When we don't feel safe or secure in our emotional environment, a detached ego fills our mind with speculations and accusations and we begin treating every interaction like a threat to our hearts just as our ancestors would have treated every interaction they had in the wild as a potential threat to their bodies. When this happens within the environment of our household, our instincts will trigger, making us hyper defensive, hypersensitive and ready to defend ourselves at any moment against anything that can be interpreted as a threat. Anything that could be perceived as neglect, criticism, or carelessness will be magnified,

amplified and reacted to with prejudice. DEFENSIVE POSTURES ASSUME CONFLICT This happens in some marriages today. Countless couples find themselves in this exact situation, especially when it comes to discussing the necessary topics that would enable them to have an incredible marriage. Instead of being able to safely and quickly resolve simple conflicts or address needs or wants within their marriage, partners are triggered at every turn and every interaction seems to only fuel offense. This makes attempts at progress exhausting and counterproductive. When this happens, it is because there is a larger issue flowing underneath the surface. The subsurface issue is likely that one or both of you are consciously or subconsciously insecure in your relationship and your hostility is really a cry for help, or a cry for security. When we perceive ourselves in this type of predatory environment, we read every interaction as a conflict, even when others have no ill will or negative sentiment. In essence we create the very conflict we assume they wanted to have when they never wanted to have conflict at all. All of separation's fears and insecurities are like self fulfilling prophecies, they instigate the very same scenarios they fear most. The truth is, we will manifest whatever reality we believe in. If we believe in the detached identity's reality, that's what our life will manifest, but if we believe in Love's reality, that is what our life will manifest. Insecurity puts us in a defensive posture and hostile mindset instead of a receptive posture and welcoming mindset. Insecurity is the source of the vast majority of marital conflicts, and is the most relationally destructive force there is. Insecurity in a relationship comes from fear that the relationship will ultimately fail and your heart will be betrayed. This fear can either be rooted in a lack of trust in your partner's faithfulness, or it can be rooted in the idea that you are unworthy of faithfulness, or both. INSECURITY PROPELS THE VERY THING IT IS INSECURE ABOUT When we are insecure in our marriage, we allow insecurity to sow doubt, speculation and accusation, preventing our hearts from fully trusting or committing to our partner. By doing so, we portray an independent, defensive posture, affirming autonomy and self reliance rather than connection and oneness. Thus, the very act of self-preservation is often the very cause which propels the inevitable rejection. Like a self-fulfilling prophecy, the thing insecurity worries about is the very thing insecurity tends to create. Many studies have been done on this subject and they all seem to show that couples who don't fully surrender their hearts to their partner are far more likely to eventually divorce. On the other hand, by embracing the vulnerability of total commitment, we can experience the full depth and richness of our relationship. It's a trade-off: we must give up our fears and instead give ourselves fully to our partner. While it can be scary to let go of our protection mechanisms, the reward is a relationship that's more authentic, more intimate, and more fulfilling than we ever thought possible. Between your current state and your best relationships possible are a series of conversations that require the highest levels of vulnerability and transparency. These conversations will be nearly impossible to have without insecurities being addressed. For this reason, effort must be made into creating a safe environment for honest and vulnerable communication. If you cannot overcome your insecurities, you will have a very hard time responding to criticisms or offenses your partner might share, no matter how constructive they might try to make it. Your partner will likely avoid helping you become the best version of yourself if you are just going to react negatively out of insecurity anytime they try to address something you can do to improve your connection with them. Insecurity is a source of just about every major type of relational problem there is. A RELATIONSHIP DESIGNED TO REMOVE INSECURITY There is a type of relationship that was designed specifically to eliminate all insecurity. This type of relationship has a certain set of ingredients and requirements that distinguish it from all other types of relationship. This type of relationship is called a "covenant" and it is the only type of relationship God will ever enter into. Every word in the Bible is a covenant word. The Bible itself is divided into two parts called "testaments." Testaments are one of the three requirements of a covenant. If you don't understand the concept of covenant, you are likely stunting your ability to accurately interpret scripture. You might have heard of this term "covenant" before, but many people don't really know what a covenant is and why it is so powerful. There are a lot of ways you can relate to another person. Because insecurity is such a driving force of destruction in relationships, we like to rate relationships based on the security they provide. The better the security, the stronger the

relationship. We have categorized relationships and the security they provide into four levels, we call them the four C's of relationship. These four C's help us illustrate the spectrum between secure/attached relationships and insecure/detached relationships. **CARNAL RELATIONSHIP:** A carnal relationship offers zero percent security. It is 100% based on what you can take without regard to the person you're taking from. Rapists, thieves and other predators offer this type of relationship. They offer 0% security, 0% love and 0% care for the other person. **9 CONSUMER RELATIONSHIP:** One step up from a carnal relationship is a consumer relationship. This is like the relationship you have with your local grocery store. In this type of relationship you are willing to give to the degree that you're receiving in return. In other words you might be willing to pay a dollar for an apple if that's a good price but your loyalty is likely based on the value that you are receiving in return, so if a new store opens down the street that offers 50 cent apples you will likely abandon the first relationship for the second one with better prices. Obviously if you have a marriage relationship like this it is doomed to fail. **CONTRACTUAL RELATIONSHIP:** The third level of relationship would be considered a contractual relationship. A contractual relationship can offer quite a bit of security but contracts are based on "the letter of the law" and therefore it will always be subject to legalistic scrutiny. Contractual relationships tend to make conditions for dissolution from the outset of the relationship which sets a tone of legalistic insecurity throughout. This is what Paul was referring to in 2 Corinthians 3:6, when he wrote, "Who also made us adequate as servants of a new covenant, not of the letter, but of the Spirit; for the letter kills, but the Spirit gives life. (NASB)"

COVENANT RELATIONSHIP: C oovenant is a permanent commitment forever, no matter what. It is the most secure form of relationship there is. In the Hebrew Bible, covenants are sometimes described with the idiom "to cut a covenant," and covenant-making could involve sacrifice. The Hebrew word for covenant itself, berit, does not simply mean "to cut." I use the imagery of cutting and sacrifice here to describe the surrender of independence for the sake of covenant union. It is not merely an agreement between two parties, it is a union between two parties.

THE THREE INGREDIENTS OF SECURE ATTACHMENT As human civilization matured and expanded through the early centuries, the most intelligent of the ancient societies sought to discover and develop the idea of an unbreakable relational bond. There are many reasons why establishing an unbreakable relational bond would be extremely valuable. Trust is the primary reason. If you need to make an allegiance for the sake of survival, for love, for investment, for business, or for battle, you want to know you can rely on your allies.

Many ancient cultures had an interest in figuring out how to create a type of relationship that offered the utmost security. Several of these ancient cultures discovered three ingredients that, when combined, can make a relationship unbreakable. A covenant relationship is formed when two people are united together through a ceremony in which these three essential ingredients are exchanged. As long as these three ingredients are intact, the relationship was considered unbreakable.

If one of these ingredients is removed, the covenant is incomplete and it will lack in its ultimate binding power. Today, these same three ingredients continue to offer the same ultimate binding power for those who desire the utmost relational security. Since the beginning of our recorded history, these three ingredients have been used to establish unbreakable covenant unions that offer permanent, unquestionable allegiances between families, tribes and nations. The bond these covenants create are so permanent, they have been used not only to unite rival families, but also to bind nations and end wars.

They even have the power to last far beyond the lives of the ones who originally cut the 9 covenant. To conclude this lesson, you will learn what these three ingredients are, how to initiate them, and how to use them in your everyday life in order to maintain and strengthen the bond of your marriage. T he t hr ee i ng re di en ts t ha t a r e a l w a y s e s t a b l i s h e d a t a ceremony to initiate the beginning of a covenant are; a testimony or vow, a sacrifice, and a seal. In order

for a covenant to be established and recognized and seen as legitimate, it must begin with the exchange of these three things before witnesses.

Our weddings are the places we initiate the marriage covenant. In YOUR wedding you likely exchanged vows, while standing at an altar where you offered the death of your independence to be sacrificed for the sake of your new union. You then likely exchanged rings as a public sign and later had sex as the personal seal of your marriage covenant. You probably didn't really think about it at the time, but the exchange of these three things can be traced all the way back to Adam and Eve in the garden.

These three ingredients are exchanged before witnesses to initiate a covenant, but they also act as three disciplines that will completely destroy insecurity and safeguard your union if they are practiced on a consistent basis throughout your union. In fact, the more you practice them, the more secure your union will feel. **VOWS:** Vows are to be viewed as promises kept unto death. You make your vows at a wedding ceremony but the way you demonstrate the power of the principal behind vows, is to keep your word to your partner always, no matter what.

If you cannot keep your word for some unforeseen reason, submit your mistake to them and acknowledge it. If you are a person of your word always, it is hard for your partner to maintain insecurity. **SACRIFICES:** When you got married, you offered your independence as a sacrifice upon the altar. The way you demonstrate this sacrifice is by taking up your cross daily by putting your partner's desires before your own every opportunity you get.

When you do this consistently, there is little room for the lies of insecurity to find a place to land. There is just too much evidence of the testimony of your union for any suspicions to take root. **SEALS:** When you exchange rings or other seals as the sign of your marriage union, they are meant to be worn from that day forward as a way to publicly acknowledge and honor the exclusive position your covenant partner has in your life. The way you demonstrate this daily is by always finding ways to publicly honor your spouse.

However, throughout time, all marriages are only considered consummated once the couple engages in sexual intercourse. While rings are considered the public sign of marriage covenant, Sex is considered the personal sign of your marriage covenant. To honor your covenant, show physical affection and sexual desire for your partner as often as possible. These three disciplines, or four if you count the two seals separately, are your marriage's primary antidotes for insecurity.

If you will employ these disciplines and work at making them consistent, you will safeguard your marriage against insecurity. Conversely, the longer one or more of these disciplines is absent, the more opportunity you give insecurity to rise. "...whatever a man sows, this he will also reap." - Galatians 6:7 (NASB) Since we are stuck together forever, we will definitely reap whatever relationship we sow seeds for. Next year's marriage will always be the fruit of this year's investments.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. On a scale of 1-10, rate the level of insecurity in your relational (home) environment.
2. How often are your marital interactions being reacted to as a conflict when there was no conflict intended by the initiator?
3. Is your insecurity rooted more in a lack of trust in your partner's faithfulness, or more in the idea that you are unworthy of faithfulness, or both.
4. On a scale of 1-10, how much doubt, speculation and accusation would you say prevents your hearts from fully trusting or committing to each other?

5. On a scale of 1-10, please rate the following pillars of covenantal security: a. Your and your partner's integrity at keeping your word b. Your and your partner's daily sacrifice to each other c. Your and your partner's public honor of each other (versus public dishonor) d. Your and your partner's private affection for each other

SESSION 12 THE TWO CONFLICTS - DESTRUCTIVE OR CONSTRUCTIVE YOU CANNOT GROW WITHOUT CONFLICT

Muscles don't actually grow during a workout, they grow after the workout, when the body repairs all the tears in fiber that occurred during the heavy lift. If the body repairs itself in a healthy way, the muscles will become stronger as a result of the tears, making your muscles bigger and more capable of lifting even heavier weights in the future. But if the body fails to repair itself in a healthy way, you will never get stronger, and be no more capable of lifting in the future. Like muscles, relationships also cannot grow without ruptures and it is not the rupture itself that causes growth, but the effectiveness of the repair that increases strength. If you can develop healthy rupture and repair habits, conflicts will only serve to strengthen your union, not weaken it. "Consider it all joy, my brothers and sisters, when you encounter various trials, knowing that the testing of your faith produces endurance. And let endurance have its perfect result, so that you may be perfect and complete, lacking in nothing." - James 1:2-4 (NASB) It is no mystery that unhealed emotional trauma during childhood can lead to emotional dysfunction during adulthood. But where does emotional trauma come from? It comes when there is a rupture that is never repaired. Just like physical injury, if the emotional injury isn't repaired, the injury can remain unhealed, and even be open to further infection. No child can avoid these injuries but what we can do is learn how to repair them quickly. This is what healthy discipline looks like with children; an initial correction, which hurts them emotionally (they may cry or get angry), followed by comfort and reassurance, "I am still here, you are connected. You are not alone or separate, I still love you, you are secure." This is repairing the rupture through the

reassurance of an unbroken connection. If we never learn how to repair our relational rupture in a healthy way when we are young, we can carry dysfunctional attachment into our adult relationships. This same concept of healthy rupture and repair, remains one of the greatest predictors of happy and healthy relationships, even for adults. The strongest marriages are not ones that avoid conflict but that have endured conflict and found healthy repair. The lesson is clear; instead of trying to avoid rupture, accept it as part of your relational growth -and get really good at repairing it. ITS NOT IF WE FIGHT, BUT HOW WE FIGHT THAT DETERMINES IT ALL Conflict comes in many shapes and sizes. Whether it is the feeling of subtle disconnect due to non communicated offense or a full on screaming match with accusations and insults, conflict exists in every relationship. It is not IF we fight that determines our marital success, but HOW we fight, and more specifically, how we repair that will determine our marital success. Every relationship has to deal with conflict but what a lot of couples don't know is that hidden within each conflict there is an opportunity to deepen your connection and strengthen your bond. One of the first steps to using conflicts as opportunities is to identify the true source of the conflict. The source is not always as obvious as it may seem, but once you distinguish a few key observations as a couple, identifying the sources of your true disconnect can become much easier. Another discovery made by John Gottman in his data collection was that 69% of the conflicts married couples had when they began their therapy were still there 10, 20 and 30 years later. In other words therapy didn't actually change most of their problems. 69% of marital problems were perpetual regardless of therapy. Some studies even suggested that the couples who

went to therapy ended up worse than ones who didn't do anything at all. When they confirmed this reality, it caused a major shift in thinking about how to help couples treat their conflicts. Before this time, the consensus in the marriage therapy community was that relationships would improve if couples spent enough time discussing their problems. After this discovery, the consensus changed and now most are agreed that instead of trying to solve every conflict, we should seek to understand our differences so that we can determine which things can and should be changed, versus which ones will need to be accepted and managed. **WHAT YOU DON'T WORK OUT, YOU'LL ACT OUT** In a relationship, what we don't work out, we'll act out-or more accurately, whatever you don't work out with words, you will act out with attitudes or actions. Emotional maturity is being able to communicate your feelings with words. This is the first thing you should understand when trying to master emotional communication. When your heart gets offended by your partner, if you don't find words to express your heart, or even if you do find words, but you feel they are not being heard, your heart will always search for ways to communicate until it feels heard. This emotional communication usually comes in the form of attitudes and actions. In other words, if your heart finds itself in an environment that is not welcoming or patient enough for verbal communication, it will use attitudes and actions instead of words to communicate how it feels. These attitudes and actions are our heart's way of forcing communication even when words are not found to express itself. Learning to accurately decipher your family member's non-verbal cues-like their tone or body language- can help you quickly understand what they might be feeling even when they can't seem to find words to express it. Your heart

NEEDs to feel genuinely known and cared for by those close to you. Just as babies often cry and scream until their caregivers figure out what they need, when we don't find the energy, courage or words to convey our feelings directly, we will likely express how we are feeling indirectly with attitudes or actions. These attitudes and actions are like primal cries for connection, or desperate attempts to communicate the needs of our inner world. When your heart feels rejected, even in some small way, it often naturally feels the need to reaffirm the connection that is being threatened. When you do not find words to communicate your heart's need, your heart will act out with attitudes and actions, act as a cry for attention and reconnection. This cry for attention is often a sloppy, imperfect and often illogical attempt from your subconscious mind to communicate that you need to reconnect. Ironically, when partners have not yet leveled-up their emotional intelligence, they will often react to these attitudes and actions with contempt rather than connection. A spastic and bizarre cycle of unspoken communication using mere attitudes and actions will play out until there is an explosion and the couple finally uses words to express the details of their hearts. Their hearts will finally get what they originally wanted and they will feel connected again even though it was far more painful than it needed to be. If you don't learn to find words to quickly and truthfully communicate the issues of your heart the easy way, your heart will force you to do it the more painful way, which takes longer and can be far more destructive. There are two sides to this of course, which is that if one partner has emotional intelligence and is trying to communicate 9 truthfully how they are feeling, the listener must be secure enough in their attachment to the communicator, not to react from a

detached ego's separated and insecure mind, which is bent on self protection and fault-deflection, instead of from the connected, Christ conscious mind, which sees things calmly from an attached viewpoint.

DON'T LET THE SUN GO DOWN ON YOUR ANGER "Be angry, but do not sin, and don't let the sun go down on your anger." - Ephesians 4:26 In this passage, Paul emphasizes the crucial need to confront and resolve close relational ruptures in our heart before the day ends. Maturity in love involves actively addressing ruptures within our relationships rather than ignoring them. One of the opposites of love is indifference. When we allow conflicts to linger unresolved, we risk letting them fester into harmful behaviors or attitudes.

Therefore, it is essential to seek reconciliation and understanding to maintain the health of our connections. One way to gauge your emotional intelligence and psychological stability is by measuring the time it takes you to "return to normal" after getting offended. Some people are able to immediately use words to describe the specific feeling their heart is producing in response to the offense they have experienced. Other people may remain angry or offended, acting out their protest in attitudes or actions for many days, weeks or even years!

This is because they have never had sufficient training toward developing their emotional intelligence and psychological stability. This training usually comes in the form of push back from parents, siblings, childhood friends and social settings. When kids are raised without healthy examples of conflict resolution or rupture and repair, especially from their family, they can end up as adults who lack emotional and psychological stability and the training must come through their marriage or other adult relationships. There is no shame in this so long as you are willing to humble yourself, admit your upbringing never helped you process emotion in a healthy way, and work together toward maturity in this area.

If you are a partner who has developed bad attitudes or actions to express your hurt feelings, you might pout, ignore, curse, threaten, stomp, slam a door, sigh deeply, neglect common courtesy, drink, eat, smoke or perhaps even masturbate. Whatever the case, it might take you quite some time to undo these habits. You can start replacing those bad communication habits now, and in the meantime, you can help each other transition into verbal communication by gently identifying the attitudes and actions each partner has used in the past to communicate when their heart gets offended or hurt. As you go forward, you will both likely begin to recognize these attitudes and actions as they start, this time finding words to express your feelings instead of using attitudes and actions.

Several effective methods for conflict resolution have been discovered and confirmed for some time now. The ones showing the greatest results all seem to share "listening to understand" as a primary rule of turning conflicts into blessings. They each have slightly different ways of arriving at that understanding, so we have decided to create a hybrid method for you in this lesson.

DON'T DEBATE-INVESTIGATE Fighting to understand instead of to win involves a different communication style. Instead of approaching conflicts as a debate, we need to approach them as an investigation. These two communication approaches carry a tremendous difference. In a debate, you have predetermined that you are correct and your goal is to win the argument.

Debates inherently instigate a war of egos. When couples engage in a debate, they typically adopt a winner-takes-all mentality, with one separated ego "winning" the argument and the other one "losing." The tone is often confrontational and defensive, with each detached identity focused on proving their point and disproving the

other's. This approach can lead to a lack of active listening, as individuals become more concerned with persuading the other to see things from their perspective rather than understanding each other's viewpoints. In contrast, investigations seek to ask questions, listen and understand others' perspectives before jumping to any conclusions.

The investigation is not about one person finding who's at fault. Its two people, approaching the problem together, objectively trying to understand the string of events that caused the offense to happen in the first place. This approach diminishes ego, fostering a sense of teamwork and cooperation as couples work together to find mutually beneficial solutions. An investigative style of communication is characterized by a focus on curiosity and understanding rather than "winning," and is marked by empathy and compassion.

To shift conflict styles, we must put a high value on understanding their perspective, asking questions to better understand their point of view and which emotion the offense made them "feel." Then, instead of getting offended, we are just simply honest about how the conflict makes us "feel." Then, we try to agree with and validate each other's feelings. "I can understand how you would feel that way." Finally, we apologize for whatever role we played in the offense and commit to trying to do better in the future. By adopting the investigative approach, you can cultivate healthier communication habits that strengthen your bond and help you navigate conflicts more effectively. This style of communication can REVERSE the curse of conflict! Instead of having conflict lead to a deeper sense of division and disconnection, when you use conflict to better understand your partner, it will be used to build a better sense of trust, respect and deeper connection.

THE OPPORTUNITY CONFLICT PROVIDES Hidden within each conflict is an opportunity to deepen your connection and strengthen your bond. Your job is to figure out what that opportunity is, and take advantage of it. Listening is key! Using the most proven conflict resolution processes known, we have developed a hybrid conflict resolution outline below:

1. **SEEK UNDERSTANDING:** Instead of focusing on who is to blame, or correcting inaccurate recollections, focus on investigating and asking questions until you understand what happened to offend your partner.
2. **UNCOVER THE EMOTION TRIGGERED:** Ask what specific emotions they felt as a result of the offense.
3. **VALIDATE THEIR EMOTIONS:** As soon as you understand exactly what you did and the emotion it caused them to feel, you can usually end the conflict as quickly as you'd like, unless your ego gets involved. To remove the conflict from your partner's heart, all they need is to hear you validate their feelings and show that you understand their perspective. "It makes total sense why the thing I did made you feel abandoned! I am so sorry for making you feel that way. I would never want to do anything to make you feel abandoned! I will try never to do that again." - Most conflicts will end right there. After this, you can do a few more things to turn this conflict into a blessing. You can use the opportunity to reaffirm your vows -reminding them that it is your life goal to make them feel increasingly more loved and cherished each year of your life. You might also invite them to help you strategize a plan to prevent this problem from happening in the future. Or you can conclude by praying together and laying together-perhaps the funnest ending! It's not what you fight over, but the way you fight that matters. By engineering your fight style, you can convert just about every conflict from a destructive force to a constructive force in your union. It might take some time to transition into a new fighting method, but the process begins with two simple steps. First, see yourselves as a unit, fighting together against the conflict, never against each other. Second, treat each conflict as an opportunity to upgrade your relationship.

APPLICATION QUESTIONS:

1. How would you describe the way your own parents or caretakers raised you and disciplined you? Was there healthy repair of the ruptures that occurred? What impact does your upbringing have on the way you relate now?

2. How would you describe the "fighting style" or method of conflict you have practiced within your closest relationships up to now?
3. What is the attitude you use most often use when you get offended at your various loved ones and you fail to find the words to communicate with them.
4. Can you identify any ongoing conflicts that you have had since the beginning of your closest relationships? How about conflicts that have been resolved or where one or both of you has changed? 9 148 . Would you say the frequency and magnitude of your conflicts getting worse or better over time? Why? We hope you have benefited from the Wholeness Method. May God grant you love! Sincerely, Jacob & Kimberly Reeve Go to www.thewholenessmethod.com to participate in our online course and community! "© 2025 Jacob Reeve, All Rights Reserved"