



CCN TRAINING SERIES
MARRIAGE SEMINAR NOVEMBER 8, 2002

**“Marriage and Ministry:
Surviving and Thriving as a Kingdom Couple”**

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Does the relationship between ministry and marriage create a unique set of hazards?

A. Some say no. Most marriages have the same tensions.

- After all... “Working long hours from time to time is normal, necessary and even a healthy part of life. There are times a man just has to do it.”
What Husbands Wish Their Wives Knew About Men
Bob Morley

B. Others say yes. Ministering couples have unique tensions because of the relationship of their lives to their ministry.

C. We say *yes!* Ministry marriages do have a unique set of privileges and stresses. We do experience life lived between the tension of a unique set of roles...on one hand living our lives for others and on the other trying to protect and preserve our own lives, family and sanity.

Five Common Hazards Facing Ministry Marriages

1. Unspoken Disillusionment

_____ Ministry Lifestyle Vs _____ Ministry Lifestyle

2. The Drain of Maintaining a Ministry_____

Self-Protection Vs _____

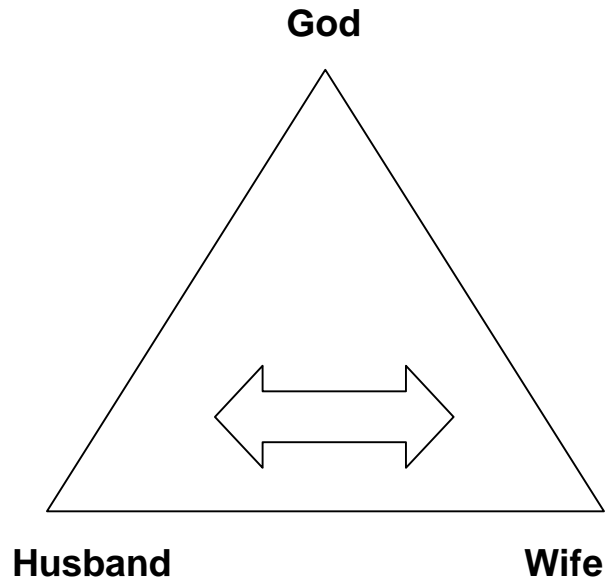
3. Stunted _____ Growth

Motivated to _____ Spouse Vs Motivated to Nurture Spouse

4. One Partner’s _____ Dominates

_____ Vs Honor

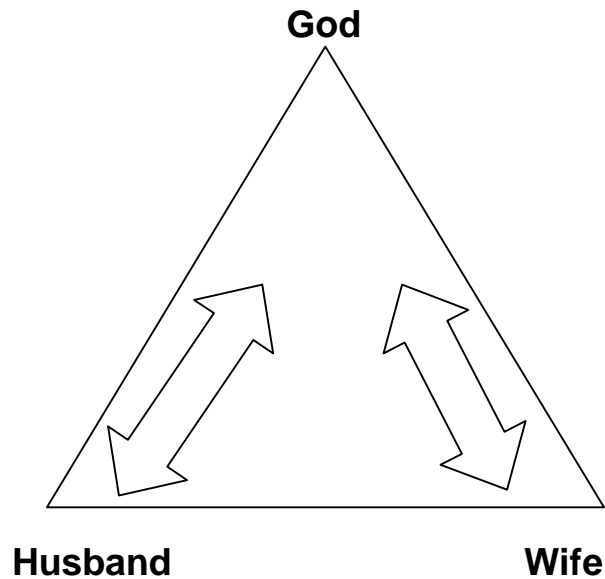
Model ①
Adjusted Environment
“Romantic”



Types of Prescriptives for:
Model ①

- improving communication skills
- setting boundaries
- anger management
- learning to articulate feelings
- resolving codependency issues
- establishing date nights
- addressing intimacy avoidance
- overcoming sexual dysfunctions

Model ②
Adjusted Hearts/
Adjusted Perspectives

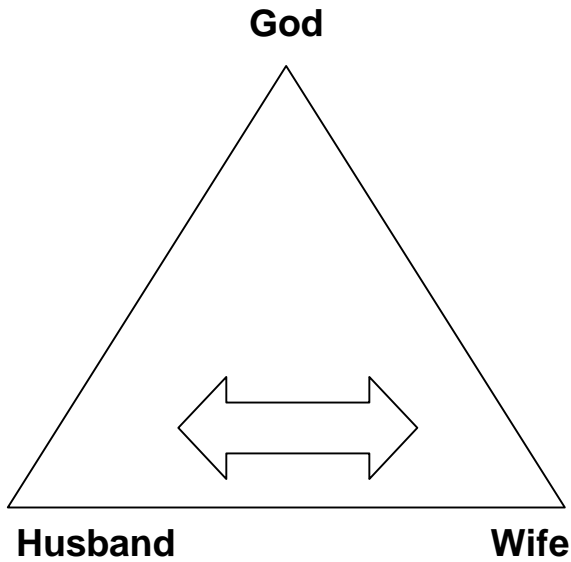


Types of Prescriptives for:
Model ②

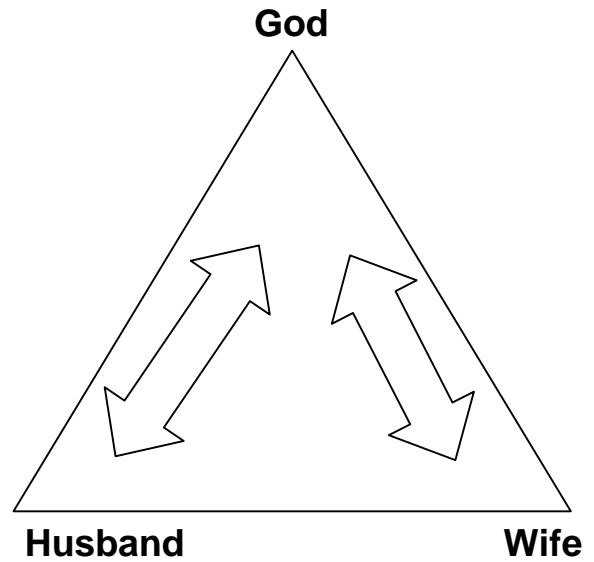
- receiving God's love
- obedience to God's design—becoming a life-giver , not a life-sucker
- seeing your mate through God's eyes
- viewing your spouse as your God-given ministry
- integrating God into your everyday
- honoring God's sexual design for your marriage
- knowing God more intimately through prayer, scripture, etc.

Definition:
“Spiritual Intimacy is the satisfying connectedness that occurs when a husband and wife learn to access God and experience Him together on the deepest levels.”
Made to Be Loved
Steve and Valerie Bell

Model ❶:
Adjusted Environment



Model ❷:
Adjusted Hearts / Adjusted Perspectives



Spiritual Intimacy with God fuels behavioral change in marriage.



Spiritual Intimacy Exercise – Listening to the Voice that says, “You Were Made to Be Loved”

A. Realize your resources and your spouse’s resources are limited.

“Desires to which we cling closely can easily prevent us from being what we ought to and can be...Almost all the people I find in my present surroundings (a Nazi prison camp) cling to their own desires, and have no interest in others; they no longer listen, and they’re incapable of loving their neighbour. We can have abundant life, even though many wishes remain unfulfilled.”

Dietrich Bonhoeffer,
Letters and Papers from Prison
As quoted in *Made To Be Loved*

B. Ouch! Idols!

“You are so sure of the way to God that you could point it out to a blind man. You think of yourselves as beacon lights, directing men who are lost in darkness to God. You think that you can guide the simples and teach even children the affairs of God, for you really know his laws, which are full of knowledge and truth.

Yes, you teach others, then why don’t you teach yourselves? You tell others not to steal—do you steal? You say it is wrong to commit adultery—do you do it? You say, “don’t pray to idols,” and then make money your god instead.

You are so proud of knowing God’s laws, but you dishonor him by breaking them.”

Romans 2:17-23 TLB

The Defining Difference Between Life-Giving and Life-Sucking

A. Life-sucking described:

By life-sucking we mean someone who regularly drains a relationship of energy and joy because of his/her attitudes and relational style.

Steve and Valerie Bell

Ways Ministering Couples Become Life-Suckers

1. Consider your _____ higher than your spouse's.
2. Become the _____ link.
3. Develop the "Life is so _____ I need a _____" mindset.
4. Practice _____ .

B. What other type of behavior exemplifies life-sucking?

A projection with 95% accuracy...

*By identifying the trajectory toward marital dissolution, my research team has been able to predict with remarkable accuracy which marriages are likely to endure happily and which are more apt to run aground... There are four disastrous ways of interacting that sabotage your attempts to communicate with your partner. In order of least to most dangerous, they are **criticism, defensiveness, contempt, and stonewalling**. As these behaviors become more and more entrenched, husband and wife focus increasingly on the escalating sense of negativity and tension in their marriage.*

Why Marriages Fail

John Gottman

C. Life-giving described:

“By saint I mean life-giver, someone who is able to bear to others something of the Holy Spirit, whom the creeds describe as the Lord and Giver of Life. Sometimes, by the grace of God, I have it in me to be Christ to other people. And so, of course, have we all—the life-giving, life-saving, and healing power to be saints...it is when that power is alive in me and through me that I come closest to being truly home.”

***The Longing for Home, Frederick Buechner
As quoted in Made to Be Loved***

Spiritual Intimacy Exercise – Becoming a Life-Giver



A. Turning the Corner

Lately I've been noticing my tendency to project my own fear and anxiety onto my family. Instead of encouraging them, I intensify their pain. How can I subtract myself enough to be an encourager instead of a worrier?

For a son starting college and full of anxiety about his major and life direction,

Instead of, “Are you sure you want to major in philosophy? I mean, what are you going to do with it?” a life-giving word might be, “You are not lost but in process. God will direct you one step at a time. You have a bright future whatever your major.”

For a son doubting his appeal with women,

Instead of, “You know you should pay more attention to my advice. I know how women think,” a healing word might be, “You know when you are your charming self hardly anyone can say no to you. When I have to deal with your smile, your sense of humor and your affectionate warmth, well, even your old mother wants to swim oceans and climb mountains for you. A younger woman doesn't stand a chance!”

For a husband who works too hard and plays too little...

Instead of, “Will you stop that type A behavior! You're making us all crazy!” a life-giver might say, “Take a deep breath, grab a big book and relax your spirit at home tonight. You don't have to do anything.”

Valerie Bell, excerpt from Made to Be Loved

B. Changes can be made!

C. Giving Life...A little practice helps.

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Case #1

You have been looking forward to a special extended family reunion, but guess what...you've just discovered it's the same weekend as an important church function that you must attend.

- Life-sucker response:

- Life-giver response:

Case #2

You had hoped for a really nice vacation this year but there was no raise, there are no extra funds, and now it looks like there will be no money available to finance a trip.

- Life-sucker response:

- Life-giver response:

Case #3

You've had a hard day at work but when you come home the story is even worse. The washing machine broke. The baby's teething. The teacher sent home a note complaining about your third grader's behavior. The homemaker wants out NOW! "You take the kids tonight, I've got to get a break!"

- As a first-class life-sucker you say...

- As a first-class life-giver you say...

DEVOTIONAL GOD, THE ULTIMATE LOVER

God's love is always previous—previous to our sin, previous to our selfishness, previous to our mistakes. God deals with each of us by beginning with His love. God will not be content to limit His involvement to a mere “tweaking” of what’s malfunctioning in our marriage. Even though God has a vested interest in healthy marriages—He commands us to live Christianly toward each other—His primary purpose is that we as individuals understand the depths of His love.

THE PRIMARY DISEASE

No matter how far off course a marriage relationship may wander, as basic as lack of communication or sexual struggles or coping with the painful spillovers of living with a workaholic (or an alcoholic)—even if the situation is as awful and serious as involving adultery or physical abuse—God requires that we deal with the primary disease: our sinful choice to be separated from Himself and His love. If our greatest hope is that God might heal our marriage problems by beginning His work in our spouse (who we’re often convinced is 100 percent of the problem!), we can’t expect God to buy into that. He probably won’t. For whether we are victim or abuser in the relationship, the adulterer or the betrayed one, selfishly oriented or the giving spouse, our primary disease is the same. Each of us, individually, must acknowledge our own sinfulness and alienation from God.

God knows what we need. Even more than we need a better marriage, even more than we need a changed spouse, we need to experience God’s unconditional love.

David understood this. “Remember, O Lord, your great mercy and love, for they are from of old. Remember not the sins of my youth and my rebellious ways; according to your love remember me, for you are good, O Lord” (Psalm 25:6-7).

THE FIRST STEP TOWARD INTIMACY

Letting God love you is the first step towards building spiritual intimacy in your marriage. Opening up to God is the primary way of accessing Him into your life and your marriage. Receiving this blessing is the first, foundational step toward eventually achieving spiritual intimacy with your spouse.

God’s Unique Love

God’s love is different than any you have ever experienced. God’s love is not human, conditional love. As Bible commentator Leon Morris wrote, it’s “a love for the utterly unworthy, a love that proceeds from God who is love. It is a love lavished on others without a thought of whether they are worthy or not. It proceeds from the nature of the lover, rather than from the merit of the beloved.”

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God is never repulsed by us. Despite character flaws, regardless of what we have ever said or done, God loves us. When no one could possibly love us—when we have blown it with all our human relationships—God *still* loves us. It is His character, not ours, that determines His great unmerited love. Our lives can never be “good enough,” our level of spirituality never eager enough, nor our theological tenets ever pure enough to earn His love. Until we understand that He loves us just as we are, we’ve missed the point of Christianity entirely. Through the Cross, God shows His love and has made forgiveness available.

Excerpt from *Made to Be Loved* (Moody Press)
Steve and Valerie Bell

- Read the following Scriptures and ponder the common theme:

Psalm 6:4

Psalm 119:41-42

Psalm 36:7

Psalm 66:20

I John 4:16-19

- What does God’s positive voice say about you? Who are you?
God says:

Matthew 5:14

John 1:12

John 15: 1,5

John 15:15

2 Corinthians 5:18-19

1 Corinthians 1:2; Ephesians 1:1; Philippians 1:1

Colossians 3:12; 1 Thessalonians 1:4

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Resources

MADE TO BE LOVED: Enjoying Spiritual Intimacy with God and Your Spouse

By Steve and Valerie Bell (Moody Press)

A WELL TENDED SOUL

By Valerie Bell (Zondervan)

FAITH-SHAPED KIDS: Helping Your Child Grow Spiritually

By Steve and Valerie Bell (Moody Press)

GETTING OUT OF YOUR KIDS' FACES AND INTO THEIR HEARTS

By Valerie Bell (Zondervan)

To order these books go to www.willowcreek.com or call 800-570-9812

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