



DEVOTED

Preparing for Adult Life
& The Marriage Blessing



**PARTICIPANT
PACKET
FOR WOMEN**

Everything you need to know about the Devoted Program!

Who is this for?

This program is geared towards juniors and seniors in high school and is meant to help you form a strong foundation for your future matching, Blessing, and adult life. The content is rich, dynamic and mature and only appropriate for elder high school youth.

What is the format of this program?

Originally, this content was given in a weekend workshop format and known as the Blessing Level 1 Workshop. We have modified the structure to fit a small group style platform which allows for a weekly topical focus as well as a chance to apply it to your life on a weekly basis. Each session also includes simple homework assignments.

How long does it take?

There are 5 sessions that last about 3 hours each. During each session a 20-30 minute break is included. The sessions should happen consecutively every 1-2 weeks so that the education continues to be relevant and meaningful.

What's the end goal?

Transitioning from the world of Youth Ministry to young adulthood is a big change! We hope that this program serves as a strong foundation for your life in a gap year program, college, work, and whatever other adventures await you.

A few tips to help you get the most out of your experience in the Devoted Program:

- **Be Committed.** Participate fully and make your experience a priority. The more you personally invest, the more you will personally gain from the program.
- **Come prepared to sessions.** Take time during the week to complete your homework assignments genuinely and authentically.
- **Make it personal for you.** Much of the program is based on discussion and personal sharing. Don't be afraid to share deeply with your fellow brothers and sisters. They will love getting to know you!
- **Practice.** This content is meant to be relevant for you in your life. The best way to ensure its' relevance is by practicing the lessons you are learning each week. Take what you've gained and apply it each day!

Description of Small Group Sessions

1. **The Value of the Blessing:** A deeper look into the difference between marriage and the Blessing and the meaning of the Blessing.
2. **Love Smarts:** Evaluating our current concepts of love and relationships and how they compare to God's ideal.
3. **Purity in Mind and Body:** Developing awareness regarding the impact of the culture we have grown up in and its' unhealthy focus on distorted sexuality as well as the harmful effects of masturbation and pornography.
4. **Growing to Greatness:** An opportunity for honest self-reflection regarding character and awareness of the importance of our own internal growth in preparation for the matching and Blessing.
5. **Preparing as Family for the Matching:** Understanding how the matching process works and opening up the doors of communication between parents and youth.

**** Parents & Youth Participate in this session together*

Session 1: The Value of the Blessing

A deeper look into the difference between marriage and the Blessing and the meaning of the Blessing.

Part 1:

Warm Up Discussion

1. Why do you think people get married?
2. What do you think are benefits and drawbacks of marriage?
3. In your opinion, what is the difference between marriage and the Blessing?

Reading: The Ideal & the Not-So-Ideal

Each one of us probably has some basic understanding of why the Blessing is important and how it might relate to our own personal lives. However, each of those understandings may be different from one another. In order for our entire group to get on the same page we're going to start at the beginning. Let's take a look at Father Moon's explanation of the creation of the world from "God's Warning to the World:"

What is creation? Creation means nothing more than the Creator, God, projecting Himself into a substantial form. He made Himself incarnate symbolically in the universe, and He made himself incarnate directly in man and woman. When God takes form, this is creation. God invested Himself in the creation. God's investment of energy, idea and love is the creation.

The Bible in the book of Genesis makes creation sound simple and easy. Genesis gives us the impression that God's creation is accomplished through some magic of His words. God simply says, "Let there be a world," and presto! – the world comes into being. Then He says, "Let there be man," and poof – Adam and Eve come into being.

But now it has been revealed that it was not this easy at all. God invested all of Himself in His creation. He did not reserve even one ounce of power. Creation was His total labor, His total effort of giving all of Himself. When God put His entire heart and soul into the creation of His object, He was investing 100 percent of Himself. Only in this way could He create His second self, the visible God.

Therefore, after His creation God was no longer existing just for Himself. God began existing for His son and daughter, Adam and Eve. He exists to love, He exists to give. God is the totally unselfish existence. God can no longer exist alone.

God is the greatest of all artists. When He created His masterpiece, man and woman, He poured His heart into the process. He poured His soul into it. He poured all of His wisdom and all of His effort into it. God wished only to exist for Adam and Eve and all humankind. He saved not a single ounce of effort when He created them. Thus, humanity has become the life of God.

God set the pattern for the universe. In the ideal existence we live for others. The subject exists for the object and the object exists for the subject. God's definition of goodness is total giving, total service, and absolute unselfishness. We are to live our lives for others. You live for others and others live for you. God lives for human beings and we live for God. The husband lives for his wife and the wife lives for her husband. This is goodness. And here unity, harmony, and prosperity abound.

Check-In: What does this excerpt make you think and feel about God and His/Her process of creation?

So what was God's original plan at the time of creation? Clearly, the universe was meant to be a place of love, joy and fulfillment. God meant for each of us to have a personal and intimate relationship with our Heavenly Parent and to likewise experience that type of love in all of the relationships of our life. From our family and friends we would learn how to become well-rounded and fulfilled individuals who would carry on this type of attitude and perspective to their future marriages and families.

Now that we have a better idea of God's ideal, let's take a look at the world around us. In our current society do we see a manifestation of God's ideal or do we see something far from it? Somehow God's intention of creation turned into a world full of casual sex, high divorce rates, pregnancy, pornography, sex trafficking, and domestic violence. What happened to bring us so far from God's ideal? It all started with the Fall, and what transpired there has grown and been passed down from generation to generation.

As we read from Father Moon, God's underlying motivation and purpose of creation was the truest of love. So it makes sense that this love was created as the strongest force of the universe, even stronger than the Principles that are meant to help guide us to lead lives of oneness with God until we are able to do so on our own. God wanted His/Her children to have an authentic loving relationship with Him/Her and thus allowed love to be the most powerful force. So powerful in fact, that this same love could be used to overrule the Heavenly Principles God created the universe with. And that is exactly what happened during the Fall. Father Moon recounts this story for us in the same reading:

The source of evil is Satan. He was in the position to serve God, but instead he posed as another god and subjugated man and woman for his own benefit. He left his position as faithful servant to God and God's children, and he challenged and competed with God. His motivation was selfishness. Out of his selfishness comes the origin of evil and sin.

What happened is this: Eve fell from her position as God's first daughter, becoming the first victim of Satan and transforming herself into a creature of selfishness. Together Eve and Satan then successfully brought Adam into their selfish world. They committed sin through an illicit, unchaste love relationship. And what was the love relationship between them like?

Everything should start from God. Then it goes to Adam and Eve, and then to the Archangel. But things went in a reverse way: first the Archangel, then Eve and Adam.

Check-In: Looking at how the Fall came about, what kind of relationship do you think Adam and Eve had?

Because Adam and Eve reversed the intended order of their loving relationship, they essentially lost their connection to God's love. This disconnection from God is one of the aspects of the Fall that has been passed down since then. Without our connection to God's love, humanity has been unable to form relationships as God intended in which living for the sake of each other is easy and natural. Instead, we focus on our own needs and when those needs are not met we seek out unhealthy ways of getting love from others. We have learned to twist and corrupt true love and lost our ability to see each other from God's viewpoint. Father Moon often addresses this point and has taught us the way true love is meant to look in marriages:

It is easy for a wife to think, "I have this, so it's mine." What a woman has, she does not need for herself. The one who needs what she has is a man. What a man has, he doesn't need for himself. The one who needs what he has is a woman. God switched the ownership between husband and wife. They have convex and concave aspects; this was the only way to bring about husband-wife unity.- Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 2, Section, 3, Verse 16

Nowadays people tend to be self-centered thinking, "As long as I'm fine, everything is okay." But now is the time to discard egoism and share our love with everyone around us. The family is the place for this. A happy family is one in which the husband comes home after work, discusses with his wife everything that happened to him during the day, and plans new projects together with her. A happy family is one that strives together to discover new things. When the parents set such an example, the children want to contribute too; they will participate gladly in making such a family.- Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 2, Section, 3, Verse 20

The life of a married person is such that a man and woman who had been alone on their path to seek love abandon that path and stand as complements to each other- comforting each other when they feel lonely, sharing joy together when they feel joy and giving each other strength during difficulties. In this way, one becomes the right foot and the other becomes the left; one becomes the right hand and the other the left. Together they praise God, saying they are moving forward with God's love superimposed on the theater of their lives. - Book 5, Chapter 2, Section 2, Verse 10

Check-In: What most resonates with you about these descriptions from Father Moon regarding ideal marital and family relationships?

If we aren't able to see from God's viewpoint, how does that impact our relationships? It means we have been engaging in relationships between husband and wife, parent and child, and brother and sister without having the fullest extent of the knowledge of each individual's true value. Human beings have done the best they can, and many historical sages of history have helped us come closer to God's ideal. However, we still see a plethora of problems in our society. The breakdown of our society is quite simple in essence. Without healthy marriages, families can't be healthy. Without healthy families, children are raised with a limited perspective of the world around them. And it's in these unhealthy families that racism, greed, and violence stem from and cause the problems of our society.

The Divine Principle teaches us that had our first ancestors grown to personal spiritual maturity they would have mastered the power of love as God intended. They would have formed a strong marriage, raised good children, and laid a Heavenly foundation for the future that would be passed on. Each generation would have learned how to raise a healthy family from their ancestors and so the cycle would continue. Pornography and casual sex would have no place in a world full of people who understood real intimacy and true love. Violence and racism would be impossible because we would have naturally learned to see others from God's point of view.

As we are all aware, we aren't there quite yet. And that's why we need the Blessing. We need a way to bridge the gap between our reality and God's intention for the world. We need a way to bring all of God's children back to their Heavenly Parent.

Discussion:

1. What messages do you see in the mainstream media regarding sex and love?
2. How do you see self-centered love playing a role in the prevalence of divorce, teenage pregnancies, porn, and sex-trafficking?
3. Why do you think we need the Blessing?

Take a Break!

PART 2: The Power of the Blessing

Warm Up Brainstorm:

What do you think these mean?

- Lineage:
- The Blessing:
- Blessed Child:

Reading: The Blessing; Our New Tradition

Now that we recognize that, as a result of the Fall, our current reality is far from God's intention, the next logical question to ask is, "what do we do about it?" The simple answer is that God needs to find a way to teach people how they are truly meant to live: free from selfishness. In order to accomplish that, God needed to start with one group of people whom he could begin the process of restoration and whom could eventually share this new way of life with the rest of humanity.

In providential history, for instance, God worked with the Israelites by giving them the 10 commandments, hoping that these instructions would allow them to create a new way of life; a new tradition. But this new tradition was difficult to adhere to because it was drastically different from the way those around them were living. Other people were not focused on thinking of God before all other idols, not stealing, and staying faithful to their spouse. But God asked the Israelites to follow the 10 commandments so that they could pave the way for all of humanity to live with their Heavenly Parent. Additionally, in the beginning of that new tradition, the Israelites were told not to marry people of other traditions.

The Lord your God will bring you into the land you are taking for your own. He will drive away many nations in front of you, the Hittites, the Girgashites, the Amorites, the Canaanites, the Perizzites, the Hivites, and the Jebusites, seven nations bigger and stronger than you. When the Lord your God gives them to you and you win the battles against them, you must destroy all of them. Make no agreement with them and show no favor to them. Do not take any of them in marriage. Do not give your daughters to their sons. And do not take their daughters for your sons. For they will turn your sons away from following Me to serve other gods. Then the anger of the Lord will burn against you. And He will be quick to destroy you.- Deuteronomy 7:1-4

A similar teaching can be found among the formation stages of the Christian faith as well:

Do not be joined together with those who do not belong to Christ. How can that which is good get along with that which is bad? How can light be in the same place with darkness? How can Christ get along with the devil? How can one who has put his trust in Christ get along with one who has not put his trust in Christ? - 2 Corinthians 6:14-15

This was not because God wanted the Israelites or Christians to be exclusive. Instead, God was trying to provide a safeguard around this new important tradition and build an entire culture surrounding this new way of life. The end goal of separating from the rest of the world was to form a strong heavenly culture first so that they could then help teach those around them this new way of life. God needed to start what we call a new lineage. Marriage is a key element in creating this new lineage separate from the results of the Fall which ultimately re-establishes our lost connection with God, our Heavenly Parent.

It seems that marriage has always been an important part of creating a new culture which is separate from the ways of the fallen world. The same is true of our own faith tradition. God needed True Parents to also start a new lineage as a means of shifting the ways of the world. That's where the Holy Marriage Blessing comes in. What is this sacred "lineage" our church seems so focused on? Are we referring to our actual physical DNA that we receive from our parents and ancestors? Not necessarily. We are also referring to our spiritual lineage. Our spiritual lineage represents our connection to God and/or Satan. And the reason the Blessing is so sacred is that it cuts off our connection to the Fall and allows Blessed couples to give birth to children who are born with a direct lineal connection to God (not sin). These children are what we call "Blessed Children." They are born with no inherited original sin from the Fall of Adam and Eve. Through the Blessing, True Parents created the first opportunity in history for people to be born without this inherited connection to the Fall. God is hoping that these Blessed Children will continue to marry other Blessed Children so that the creation of this spiritual lineage and new culture can come to full fruition.

Another way to understand why the Blessing is so significant is to see that the Blessing is the opposite of what happened in the Garden of Eden. The Fall began with an immature relationship between a man and a woman without including God. To restore that, we need to create a culture that does the exact opposite of that. That's why in our faith tradition we stress the importance of purity before marriage and working with your parents in the matching process as representations of God. Fulfilling these conditions as an individual is a crucial foundation for the Blessing, but because Adam and Eve fell as a couple, it's the couple that needs to restore the Fall. And that couple needs to inherit this Blessing from their parents the way Adam and Eve were meant to receive the Blessing from God. That is the role that True Parents play in the Blessing. They are the representatives of God and offer God's Blessing on His/Her behalf. Father Moon explains this point in the "Blessing and Ideal Family, Part 1" book:

The marriage ceremony is the ceremony to inherit God's love that says that just as parents live with God's love, you should also live in this way. The parents have received God's love and they in turn hand it down to you.

The reversal process happens through a series of special, sacred ceremonies. The purpose of all religious ceremonies and rituals is to mark important points of transformation in our lives: like when a Christian takes communion for example. Eating bread and drinking wine is a symbolic gesture that has deep significance. It is meant to represent a point of transition where a person can be transformed spiritually from one state to another. In a similar way, the Holy Wine Ceremony allows us to separate ourselves from our connection to the Fall and reconnect us with our Heavenly Parent. A very special wine is used during this ceremony that represents the blood lineage. Following the Holy Wine Ceremony is the Blessing ceremony in which a couple can stand in the position of Adam and Eve before they fell and receive the Blessing directly from God, just as it was meant to be. For couples who are new to our tradition and not born as Blessed Children there is a third step which includes the Chastening Ceremony, 40 day separation period, and the 3 Day Ceremony to complete the process of becoming a Blessed Couple. These steps are not necessary for Blessed Children because their parents already laid this foundation for them.

Does that mean Blessed Children are better than any other children? Of course not. But it does mean that Blessed Children have been given a spiritual edge, so to speak; a leg up in their spiritual path. That's why it's so important for Blessed Children to understand the significance of their spiritual heritage and to inherit the new ways of life passed down from True Parents to their families. Mother Moon emphasizes this point in her speech, "Let Hope Become a Lighthouse":

I am saying your root is different. Original root! Original root! Your roots are different. If you live life practicing True Parents' teachings, what will happen to the environment around you? It will become cleaner, and that clean environment will spread wider, and in the end all clans will become one, all tribes will become one and the whole world will become one.

After six thousand years, you are the first to be born without any connection to Satan. Therefore, you have to be different from others. Don't be influenced by the secular world. You must become clear water that purifies the world. In order to do that, you have to know your original root. In order to follow that path you must study hard, make great effort and develop expertise so you can create the culture of heart.

I want you to help me. Please, develop your talents and expertise. Protect your purity. Grow up healthy and beautiful. Become the beautiful fruit of our Unification culture. If you do these things, I will feel so happy to have come and spoken to you. Heavenly Parent has been suffering for six thousand years, wandering around after having lost His and Her children; I am carrying that inside me. I want you to comfort me. Will you do that?
[Yes]

Check-In: What have we inherited from True Parents? How can that positively impact the world and form a spiritual lineage for our future families?

You may ask yourself then, if I'm a Blessed Child why do I still need the Blessing? When a Blessed Child receives the Blessing it means they are beginning their marriage as God intended: with His/Her Blessing. Ideally, couples should reach a perfection level of heart before getting Blessed. However, we still live in a world corrupted by the Fall that makes it incredibly difficult to achieve that. Each of us carries our own spiritual baggage that we've either inherited from others or have accumulated over our lifetime. Each of us also grew up in an imperfect environment and may still be processing our own emotional challenges and negative influences from the world around us. All of that is a normal part of the process of removing the effects of the Fall through the Blessing ceremony. Father Moon teaches it's actually going to take several generations to create an environment where children can successfully grow to maturity, the way that Adam and Eve were meant to in the Garden of Eden.

Ultimately, when the heavenly kingdom becomes a living reality, then these textbooks will no longer be needed on the earth. Families that have digested their content will educate all their relatives, so that their entire clan and seven generations of ancestors will all come to embody their teachings. There will be whole nations of such clans, composed of families in whom God delights. This will be the heavenly kingdom, where peace will reign for tens of thousands of years, where God and all creation will be liberated, and where everyone will shout, Eok mansei! It will be God's homeland and hometown, and it will be our homeland and hometown, where everyone is manifestly bound together in one blood, one lineage. No one can deny the importance of lineage. That is why everybody must receive the Blessing. From now on, you must understand how valuable the Blessing is. These textbooks represent your parents. - Pyeong Hwa Gyeong, Book 10, Chapter 17 "Owner of Peace, Owner of Lineage"

We may not accomplish this maturity in our own physical lifetime, but our goal can be to go further than our parents did towards the ideal. The idea is that through inheriting our spiritual lineage from our parents, each generation gets closer to living free from selfishness and with true love.

As we've already discussed, the Blessing is a significantly powerful ceremony, one that has the ability to change our spiritual lineage. But is partaking in the Blessing enough to let us become perfect human beings? Of course not. The growth that happens after the Blessing is just as important as preparing for and partaking in the ceremony. By partaking in the Blessing ceremony we are essentially agreeing to a holy covenant with God that says I pledge to live this way and raise my family this way. The Blessing vow itself focuses on this point:

As families who must realize the Heavenly Parent's ideal of creation, do you promise to become eternal couples who will inherit the tradition established by the True Parents of Heaven, Earth and Humankind and to perfect ideal families who will strive to realize Cheon Il Guk?

This commitment to living a life centered on God and coupled with joining the spiritual lineage of True Parents is what makes the Blessing different from any other marriage. It's what makes the Blessing monumental, life-changing, and powerful.

Personal Reflection & Prayer:

1. What is something that resonated with you from today's session?

2. What do you think makes the Blessing different from marriage?

3. What kind of life would you see yourself living following the Blessing?

Session 1 Homework

Have a Conversation with Your Parents

Talk to your parents about the following questions and jot down some notes from their answers. We will share about these conversations in the next session. We encourage you to keep an open mind to the answers to these questions and listen to them with a fresh perspective. There is always something new to be learned.

- Why did you want to get matched and Blessed?

- Why do you want me to get matched and Blessed?

- How have your views of marriage and relationships changed since getting Blessed?

- What might have you done differently to better prepare yourself for the Blessing?

Session 2: Love Smarts

Evaluating our current concepts of love and relationships and how they compare to God's ideal.

Part 1: What is True Love?

Warm Up Discussion

1. What do we know about True Love; what does true love look like?
2. What does our society teach about love?
3. What are some good examples and not so good examples of how to work through conflict in relationships?

Reading:

Love is obviously an important topic in today's society. We see its' prevalence in what we watch and listen to, and yet we still have a terribly poor track record when it comes to successful relationships. Why is it that we've ended in up in this predicament? The truth is that, although our society is largely obsessed with finding love, most people don't know what the real thing is. Instead, we do the best we can with what we know, but what we know is the incomplete and corrupted version of love.

So let's set the record straight and spend a little time talking about true love. When we say "true love," we mean the real thing God intended for us to experience at the time of creation. The quality of love that comes from our Heavenly Parent is meant to be infused in all of our relationships whether they be friends, family, or romantic relationships. Father Moon has spent countless hours speaking on the topic of true love and how it differs from what we see in the world today. A common theme through his messages is that true love is all about giving. There's a tendency in our society to evaluate relationships of love based on how much we benefit or receive from that relationship. But Father Moon teaches us that true love is actually the opposite:

The place where God dwells is filled with love. It is a place where the more you give, the more you want to give, and the more you receive, the more you want to return millions of times more than you receive. - Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 1, Section 1, Verse 5

True love is love that exists for the sake of others. True love wants the beloved to go higher than oneself. The nature of love is to want one's beloved spouse and children to be greater than oneself. - Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 20

When you lift up your partner and live for your partner more than for anyone else; when you feel you want to exist because of your partner, that is love. - Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 6

This means that true love is where we put someone else's happiness ahead of our own or at least on a par with our own such as thinking, "I worry about you as much as I do about myself (if not more)." Our parents are a good example of this aspect of true love. Parental love is designed to be unconditional because they ultimately sacrifice their time, energy, sleep, and money for our sake. True love, like parental love, doesn't keep track of how much it gives, it keeps giving and forgetting what it has given. Just as Father Moon teaches:

When parents love their children, they don't say, "We bought you shoes and clothes a few days ago, and invested our sweat and blood for you, and it cost this much," and record it in a ledger. When parents love their children, they want to treat them even better than the princes and princesses in any palace in the world. With hearts wanting to give more, they say, "I did all I could, but this is all I can give you. I'm sorry." Parents always want to give their children something better... That is where our tradition of love beings.- Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 23

Check-In: How have you experienced this aspect of true love in your own life?

Father Moon also teaches us that true love is unique, which means we don't "love" everyone in our lives in the same way. True love thinks from the perspective of the other person and finds out what they need. Each of us receives love most effectively in a different way. The beauty of true love is that we are empowered to love each other in those unique ways. Perhaps your Mom packs a different type of sandwich for you and your brothers lunch because she knows which sandwiches you like best. Perhaps you know that the best way to cheer up one friend is to spend quality time with her, while another friend needs words of encouragement. All of these are examples of true love because they are uniquely given. True love doesn't allow for cookie-cutter relationships.

While it makes sense that true love focuses on giving to others in the ways people receive love best, it's not easy! That's why it's important to know that true love is a work in progress. We are not born automatically living for the sake of others and so we have to learn about true love. It takes time to master. That's why when we look at the world, we see very little "true love" and a lot of distorted love. We haven't learned to put the needs of others before our own; we haven't learned to see from others' perspectives. We see it all the time in our friends' romantic relationships which oftentimes end with a broken heart. Instead of understanding what real true love is, our society has come to believe many questionable ideas regarding love, sex and marriage.

Today we're going to go over three of those questionable ideas regarding these topics and see what we think of them:

1. If I find the right person, we will naturally love each other forever
2. Dating experiences will prepare me better for marriage
3. I can find someone by myself, I don't need my parents

If I find the right person, we will naturally love each other forever. When we think about movies and TV shows we see this idea everywhere. In movies, when the right person comes into the room the romantic soundtrack begins, their eyes meet, and they automatically feel “you’re the one I’ve been waiting for all my life!” While that idea may seem a bit over the top, our society has us believing that if we meet the right person, we will easily fall in love because love is natural and shouldn’t take too much work.

How does that kind of thinking impact our own matching processes? Let’s talk about Sam and Mi-Sook. Sam and Mi-Sook are in the matching process and Mi-Sook has some mixed feelings about how it’s going.

It’s been four months already since Sam and I were introduced and we have more disagreements than I expected. And I still don’t feel, well, I don’t expect fireworks, but still, in the movies people look at each other and they know. If he’s the right person, we should have naturally fallen in love by now.

It’s easy to feel disappointed in relationships when we are comparing them to what we’ve been taught on the big screen. This disappointment is part of the reason we have such a low success rate of long term relationships and marriages. We feel our relationships aren’t “right” because things aren’t going perfectly smooth. That’s because we still haven’t learned what true love is and instead aim for the distorted love we’ve been taught by our surroundings. What other ideas regarding love have we been taught by our society and the media-driven culture?

1. *Falling in love means I’ve found the right person.* If we fall in love with someone, it must be because they’re the right person. Otherwise we wouldn’t have fallen in love.
2. *Having difficulties means that it’s the wrong person.* If a relationship is hard, and there’s misunderstanding, fighting and difficulties, the relationship was not meant to be.
3. *Love is either there or it isn’t.* You either love somebody or you don’t. You can’t make it happen. So if I don’t love somebody quickly, this person isn’t the right person for me.

Check-In:

1. Which of these ideas do you see in thinking of society, your friends, or yourself?

2. How do these ideas make sense or why might they be questionable?

In the English language, we use the word “love” a lot. Even though we may be using the same word, the meaning can actually be very different depending on the context. For instance, if you say “I love pizza” the word “love” is describing an automatic feeling you don’t have control over. But if you say “love your enemies” you are describing an actual choice that guides how you treat people in your life. Same word, but two very different meanings. One is an automatic feeling, while the other is a decision.

Let’s look at a two more examples:

- Decision: “Even though my brother is being really annoying, I still love him.”
- Feeling: “I think I’m falling in love with her!”

Feelings are natural. While you may not be able to control the fact that you love pizza or have feelings for someone, that’s just half of the story. It’s equally true that you have the power to control your feelings of love as well. Have you ever decided to love or care for someone that you didn’t actually like very much? Perhaps like the example above, you chose to overcome your frustrations towards a family member and instead love them. You decided to love that person even though it was difficult.

You may not be able to control feelings, but you can control decisions. They are two very different things, but both play a part in love. Feeling in love is a big part of being in relationships, but deciding to love even when it’s difficult is just as important (if not *more* important). Lasting relationships require deciding to love even when you don’t feel like it.

Check-In: Share with the group about a time you decided love or take care of someone even when you didn’t feel like it.

Part of the misunderstanding of love in our society stems from the difference between infatuation and true love. We’ve been taught to believe that infatuation is love, but they are in fact very different. Father Moon has also referenced these differences between what he calls “false love” and “true love”:

What is the difference between false love and genuine love? Once false love begins, it diminishes and becomes weaker. Once genuine love begins it increases. True love keeps increasing until it embraces the world. This heart that is infinitely embracing, this heart that holds everything, says, “ I will embrace more. I will embrace more!” It is only true love that activates the original heart like this. Only true love does this. - Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 1, Section 2m Verse 17

Let's look a little more closely at some of the reasons infatuation and true love differ:

1. How We Think About Them: When we are infatuated with someone we think, "this person makes me feel good, and they make me look good!" But when we are in a true relationship of love we look at the other person and see their admirable qualities and feel "I'm growing because I'm hanging out with this person."
2. Impact of Time & Separation: When we have a crush on someone and spend time away from them, those feelings generally fade. That's because they were feelings of infatuation. But when you are in true love, time away from one another strengthens the bond between each other.
3. Development of Feelings: Feelings of infatuation come on quickly and strongly, but they also fade just as quickly. Feelings of love build slowly over time with a natural, organic process.
4. Relationships with Others: Have you ever had a friend who was in a relationship and stopped wanting to hang out with their other friends? Relationships based on infatuation tend to be very exclusive, while healthier relationships include other people and desire to share their good fortune with others.
5. Perspective: Feelings of infatuation lead us to think that the person we have feelings for have no faults; we become blinded by love. But relationships of true love allow us to see our partner in a realistic light. We see that they have faults, but we also see that they have strengths.
6. Conflicts: When in relationships based on infatuation conflicts tend to get worse over time. Conflicts in relationships based on true love, however, tend to diminish over time. Solutions are found, and that process of working through difficulty actually helps to bring you and your partner closer together.

Infatuation can be a good thing. God created us so that we would have the kind of insanity needed to invest in building a genuine relationship with a person of the opposite sex without getting too discouraged by challenges. If we really were in our right minds, we'd all be too scared to take the risk, so we need a little insanity to push us to be vulnerable. That's why God gave it to us. The key is to commit ourselves to loving the right person, rather than just being infatuated with them.

Check-In: Have you ever experienced or seen these differences of infatuation and true love?

The idea of attraction also plays a large role in our misunderstanding of love. Much of our culture encourages us to follow our initial feelings of attraction and trust them to lead us towards love. Attraction is a feeling. As we learned before, we may not be able to control our feelings, however, we can make choices about what we do with those feelings. It's important to be discerning when it comes to following those feelings and make sure we utilize the choice aspect of love when it comes to letting people into our hearts.

When we *decide* to love there's a personal accountability involved in that process that actually encourages the feelings of love to develop. When someone decides to love you and makes the effort to show you that, you naturally begin to feel love and gratitude for them. Isn't that so? That's because certain attitudes and attributes invite loving feelings. That's actually how love is established, even in arranged marriages. We decide to love and we gradually feel "in love" because loving actions create the feeling of love. That means that when you do the laundry for your wife or cook your husband's favorite meal when he's had a tough day, your loving relationship is strengthened. A lasting love requires so much more than just feelings, such as:

- Meeting emotional needs. Science has discovered that if people can meet each other's emotional needs, they become irresistibly in love with each other. If you can meet someone's needs, if you listen to them, they have no choice but to really feel loved. When spouses make the effort to meet each other's emotional needs, the feeling of love is created.
- Familiarity and shared history. Having shared ideals, mutual respect, teamwork, shared fun, and solving a problem together, all contribute to developing loving feelings. That's why when you work on a project together with someone, you feel closer to them than others. It could be anything from being on a sports team, drama club together, or overcoming challenging situations with someone; doing things together creates the feelings of love.
- Commitment. The feeling of love comes and goes, but if you're committed to one another, you hang in there until the feeling of love sets in or returns. In fact, a study was done with a group of very unhappy couples who were contemplating divorce. When they were questioned five years later, they found that 65% of those who had remained together were now quite happy. Their commitment kept them together while they worked things out.

Check-In: Which of these points resonates with you most when you think about creating lasting relationships?

So far we've covered the questionable idea that if I find the right person, I will automatically fall in love with them. But it seems as though that logic is missing a great deal. Love is a feeling, a wonderful one at that. But it is also something that we can engineer and create through our investment and our choices. Even our attraction for someone can develop when we put the effort into creating a healthy relationship. If we have moments where our feelings fade for another person, it's ultimately our choice to work to build them back up again or to give up on the relationship, even though our society promotes the idea that when our feelings fade our relationship should fade as well. This is why it's so important to have a holistic view of love, one that can empower us to have long lasting relationships of fulfillment and joy.

Take a break!

PART 2:

Warm Up Brainstorm:

What are the “The Not-So-Good Parts” of dating?

Reading: The Truth about True Love

So far we’ve talked about one questionable idea about love, sex, and marriage: the idea that if I find the right person, I will naturally fall in love. Through our exploration we learned that love is both a feeling and a decision, which means this idea is not entirely accurate. We will be looking at two more questionable ideas during this half of the session. The first one being, dating experiences will prepare me better for marriage. Let’s take a look at Frank and Merlita. They are considering entering into the matching process, but Merlita is unsure and confused.

My parents introduced Frank to me and we are considering entering into the matching process. He seems like a good person. But I keep wondering about all the other guys out there. Maybe if I could date different guys, I’d learn more about men and about myself. I’d know more about what kind of guy I like. Dating would better prepare me for marriage.

Have you ever wondered about the same thing? It’s hard to think differently because the current message from our culture tells us to wait until our late 20s to settle down and get married. In the meantime we are encouraged to get out there and have many experiences with the opposite sex so we know what to expect when we get married. The thought process is that through dating many different people, we will be better prepared for finding “the one” to settle down with. But is that true?

There are many reasons our faith tradition does not support dating before marriage, and that’s because dating, in and of itself, has a few troubling issues:

- Cheapens the Romantic Experience: One of the problems in having many experiences with the opposite sex is that over time the romantic experience loses its inherent value. Comparisons can be made between partners and expectations can be built based on past experience. Because you aren’t sharing your first experiences with your spouse, the value of those experiences becomes less meaningful.
- Heartbreak at the Conclusion: If we do not have the intention of working towards the Blessing and marriage when we begin a relationship, it’s very likely the relationship will end at some point. When we break up we are left with heartache and emotional scars from those relationships. Romantic relationships are complicated and emotionally intense, but if we keep putting ourselves in such vulnerable positions we may develop a kind of guardedness to protect us from future heartache. It’s ultimately not very helpful to relate to many people in such a complicated and intense way if that relationship is meant to be temporary.
- Pressure to Become Physically Involved: When we get emotionally involved in romantic relationships, it’s natural to feel the need to become physically involved with a partner. However, while dating many different partners the line of our physical purity becomes blurred, and the value of that purity lessens

over time. It's very challenging to maintain physical purity when we are getting emotionally involved with someone, but it's even more challenging if the other person is not committed to purity (which is sometimes the case).

On that note, it's important to bring up the topic of sex. It's certainly a challenging topic to talk about while we are preparing ourselves for the marriage Blessing, but it shouldn't be. God designed sex for you and your spouse and there should be no shame in that idea. Sex is an important part of any marriage, but is especially important for a newly married couple. It's meant to be the glue that bonds a young couple together during the early stages of their relationship while they get to know each other. The first few years of marriage are full of ups and downs, and your physical relationship is meant to be a powerful tool in your relationship arsenal to get you through the emotionally challenging times.

If we don't wait to have sex until marriage, it means we are sharing this powerful bonding experience either with other people or outside the context of your committed marriage. You need the bonding power of sex to be as strong as possible when you get married to get you through the tough moments and infuse your relationship with passion and joy. If you've already used up this adhesive with other people, it won't be as powerful. That's one of the advantages of experiencing your first love in your marriage. The fun and depth of the sexual relationship compensates for the tensions that come up as you get to know each other. This is why it is so valuable to wait to have your first sexual experience with your spouse. When you come to your marriage as a virgin, the newness and excitement of the sexual aspect of your relationship can help offset some of the normal challenges that arise in the beginning stage of marriage. In other words even if you discover that your spouse does something that would normally really annoy you- like leave the toilet seat up or eat with their mouth open, you are so powerfully attracted to him/her and intoxicated by our love for one another, that it doesn't bother you that much.

Check-In: Which of these points resonates most with you and why?

Let's explore the next questionable idea about love, sex, and marriage which is I can find someone by myself, I don't need my parents. In our current society it's not very common for young people to seek out the advice of their parents when it comes to deciding who they would like to start dating. In fact, these relationships are often kept hidden until things become very "serious." That thought process impacts our own perception of the matching process and many of us may have question marks about including our parents in the process as a result. For example, Ramon feels this way when he thinks about the matching process:

I want to find someone myself and do it the normal way. I'll know what I want when I see her. If my parents approve, great, but I don't really need their input.

It's normal to have question marks when it comes to your matching process especially because your relationship with your parents is most likely still growing. But there are significant reasons why we include our

parents in the matching process. First and foremost, the matching process is meant to be one of personal preparation and careful planning, honest communication and intentionality. A successful matching process is not determined by luck magic or just prayer. It's determined by the unity between you and your parents, you and your matching advisor, you and your Heavenly Parent. Your own internal and external preparation and effort, your clarity of faith, your understanding of who you are and the kind of life you want to live play a huge role in the matching process. But it can be a confusing process to navigate and that's why we have our parents (or matching advisors if parents are not in the picture). In this scenario, your parents ultimately represent God. And it's through your unity with them that you are able to have a successful matching process.

One of the advantages of our matching process is that it allows us to focus on our own personal preparation instead of being the person responsible for finding and choosing the right candidate. Our parents are meant to take a great deal of pressure off of us in that department which allows us to be free from dating and sexual pressure. Our process allows us to start relationships on the foundation of working towards marriage and the Blessing through the involvement of our parents. If we really think about it, so many people in our society are getting frustrated with the dating scene because they aren't able to find lasting relationships. That's why many are turning to a third party such as e-harmony and match.com to help them find possible candidates. Luckily for us, our "third party" is someone who knows us extremely well and truly has our best interests at heart.



Good matches have both a horizontal and vertical aspect to them. On the vertical side, good matches have a unity of purpose and commitment and on the horizontal side they have friendship and passion. These four dimensions contribute to a strong, long-lasting, and healthy marriage. But how do we make sure all of those components are considered during the process? That's where our parents or matching advisors come in!

Marriages that begin with romantic attraction tend to focus on the horizontal, which is what the majority of marriages in our country are based on. They have friendship, shared interests, passion, and sexual attraction. It's not a bad thing, in fact, it's part of what marriages need to have. But it's not enough. When people are primarily connected on the horizontal level, they don't always recognize the vertical differences between them. When difficulties arise or children come into the picture, these couples often discover that they have very different values and that can create a real crack in the foundation of their relationship.

On the other hand, arranged marriages usually begin with the vertical aspects: having a good character, the ability to commit and follow through, as well as shared faith, values, and goals. The vertical aspects of the relationship are actually more important because they are unchanging, whereas, just as we learned previously, the horizontal aspects are a mixture of both feelings and decisions that can change over time. The idea of arranged marriages is that it's assumed that you can build the horizontal aspects over time, and you can! It's much easier to build the horizontal connection based on the vertical one, than it is to do the opposite. That's why getting parents involved makes sense. It's very difficult to find both sides of a good match by yourself and is otherwise easy to get blinded by the horizontal aspects. Your parents are able to look at the other person with a more objective viewpoint and support you in finding both vertical and horizontal aspects in the other person.

Ultimately, you are still the one making the choice or decision of who to marry; the difference is how you find partners to consider. Once in the matching process, you can, and you should, be involved in the screening process of any candidate. And you should absolutely discuss your views on marriage, potential partners and preferences with your parents or matching advisors. This is your future marriage we are talking about, and having parents involved in your matching process is meant to help you build a foundation for a truly successful marriage.

Check-In: How could getting my parents (or matching advisor) involved in finding someone for me be helpful in the long run?

Sometimes the word "arranged marriage" can be intimidating to consider, because the truth is, your marriage isn't just "arranged" without your involvement. You are meant to be very involved in the process. But are quite a few benefits of arranged marriages you may not be aware of. Research actually shows that love in arranged marriages tends to surpass the feeling of love in romantic ones after ten years. That means love in arranged marriages tends to build over time, whereas love in romantic marriages tends to fade over time. For instance, in romantic marriages love begins at a boiling and tends to cool off over time. Arranged marriages, however, generally have a more lasting, full-bodied love. In fact, couples in arranged marriages report being more in love after ten years. Another major advantage of arranged marriage is that both families are involved from the beginning. Marriage is about the joining of two families and that process can often be a rather difficult one. Arranged marriages allow for better in-law relations from the beginning because both families are involved in the process. That means more love and support for you and your new spouse and one less thing to argue about down the road.

It is important to know that conflict is a normal part of all relationships, so don't be alarmed if there is a little conflict and tension. It makes sense that as couples get to know each other and learn to live together

peacefully, some conflict may arise. The key to a healthy long-lasting marriage is how you handle that conflict. Do you approach it with a level-head? Do you blow up at each other? Or do you escape into TV, computers, or work so you can avoid trying to grow deeper together. What could you do instead? What do smart couples with long-lasting relationships do in the face of conflict? Here are some points to consider:

- Practice Acceptance: Successful couples decide that even though they don't understand each other yet, they're going to stop trying to change each other and try to accept each other. They decide to work on changing themselves instead, and practice sacrificing and making effort to create true love.
- Decide to Love: Successful couples make a recommitment to love as a decision when the feeling of love fades during conflict. Through that decision they are able to make an authentic, deep connection, and, as a result, the romance becomes reality-based.
- Learn How to Love: Science confirms that people can learn how to love. It takes intentional investment and effort, but it's always worth it! That means that healthy couples recognize that their capacity to love and knowledge of love is still growing. When approaching conflict with this type of humility, compromise and peace come much more quickly.
- Accept and Give True Love Before Marriage: If we work on developing our capacity to love before marriage with our family members and friends and we are able to approach marriage with wisdom and intuition. Through our true love habit, we realize we can decide who we want to develop love with, and that empowers us to decide to build real, lasting love in our marriages.

This is what Love Smarts is all about. This is the understanding of love that we need so that we can take responsibilities for ourselves and this important aspect of our future.

Check In: Which of these healthy habits do you think is important for a happy and long-lasting marriage?

Personal Reflection & Prayer:

1. What is something that resonated with you from today's session?
2. What aspects of dating do you think make it difficult to have a long-lasting relationship?
3. What aspects of our matching process do you think help build a foundation for a long-lasting relationship?

Session 2 Homework

Reading: The 7 Habits of Highly Defective Dating, By Joshua Harris

Recognizing Dating's Negative Tendencies

This chapter explains how dating is like a swerving grocery cart -- a set of values and attitudes that want to go in a direction different from the one God has mapped out for us. It looks at how self-control by itself isn't enough to solve our problems and why we should instead replace this defective "cart" called dating. To help understand the problems inherent in dating, we examine seven problems.

1. Dating leads to intimacy but not necessarily commitment.
2. Dating tends to skip the "friendship" stage of a relationship.
3. Dating often mistakes a physical relationship for love.
4. Dating often isolates a couple from other vital relationships.
5. Dating, in many cases, distracts young adults from their primary responsibility of preparing for the future.
6. Dating can cause discontentment with God's gift of singleness.
7. Dating creates an artificial environment for evaluating another person's character.

We can't solve dating's problems merely by "dating right." Instead of following the way of the world, what we really need is a new attitude. Chapter 2 points out the problems (seven to be exact) that plague many dating relationships. But this isn't a finger-wagging session about what's wrong. We're not just saying no to the defective, but yes to the effective.

Look at "The Seven Habits of Defective Dating" from that perspective, and you'll see what I mean. Turn each problem inside out and you will realize that by rejecting the defective, you're welcoming God's best for your life.

Look at what you are saying yes to:

1. I reject defective dating that leads to intimacy without commitment, and I embrace the beauty of total intimacy and total commitment in marriage.
2. I reject defective dating that tends to skip the "friendship" stage of a relationship, and I choose to build my future marriage on the solid foundation of friendship with my spouse.
3. I reject defective dating that mistakes a physical relationship for love, and I choose purity and the clarity that comes in relationships undistracted by premarital physical involvement.
4. I reject defective dating that isolates me from other vital relationships, and I'm saying yes to the joy, wisdom, and perspective that comes from investing in family and other friends.
5. I reject defective dating that distracts me from my primary responsibility of preparation, and I choose to inspire God and serve my future spouse by using this time in my life to prepare for the future.
6. I reject defective dating that creates an artificial environment or evaluating another person's character, and I choose to get to know my future spouse in a setting that lets us both see who we really are and what our true character is.

We don't "kiss dating goodbye" because we're afraid of relationships but because we want something better -- a lifestyle of purposeful singleness that allows us to make the most of today and prepare for tomorrow.

Reflection

Adapted from "I Kissed Dating Goodbye Study Guide"

1. Which of the "Six Habits" could you most relate to? Why?
2. Why is the message that we should "save sex for marriage" important but maybe not all we need to do?
3. How can dating distract us from the real beauty of this time period in our lives?
4. What steps or changes can you make in your life to keep you safe and allow you to grow as much as possible during your teenage and young adults years before marriage?

Session 3: Purity in Mind & Body

Developing awareness regarding the impact of the culture we have grown up in and its' unhealthy focus on distorted sexuality as well as the harmful effects of masturbation and pornography.

Part 1:

Warm Up Brainstorm

1. What kind of relationship do you want to have with your future spouse?
2. What qualities do you think make up a real "man" or "woman" as God intended?
(Focus on your own gender only)

Reading: Respect the Power of Sex

Please read through this portion of today's session silently and write notes as you are prompted. We will have a chance to discuss the content together after everyone has had a chance to read it on their own.

Look back at the brainstorm list you made today regarding what kind of relationship you want to have with your future spouse. Although some of our answers may be different from one another, there were probably a few that we could all agree on such as love, happiness, trust, and respect. God wants each of us to have these types of experiences in our marriages, however, so many relationships fall short of these ideals. In our last two sessions we covered some of the reasons that make happy marriages difficult such as selfishness we've inherited from the Fall and our warped understanding of love and relationships. Today we will continue that conversation in a much more specific fashion. We will be bringing up challenging topics such as self-image, pornography, and masturbation. These topics may be uncomfortable to talk about, but we need to address the elephants-in-the-room so we can put our best foot forward in our future marriages. After all, the life we are living now doesn't magically disappear once we get married. Our current habits and state of mind will transfer into our marriages. We invite you to approach this adult-level content with a mature state of mind so you can best prepare for your future.

Sex is a hot topic in our society, but, as we've talked about in previous sessions, the current conversation is rather twisted. Living a life of sexual integrity or purity can be challenging in the world we live in because the society around us has desensitized our minds, hearts, bodies, and souls. Most of the time we don't even notice how toxic and "pornified" the culture has become, but if we start looking we'll notice that so much of what we watch, listen to, and engage with is covered with sexually explicit content. Even though we're not searching it out, we can't help but be exposed to pornographic images and videos. It's become so normalized and many in our generation get their information regarding sexuality and love from unhealthy sources such as porn, movies, and other media. But deep down we recognize the way the media currently portrays love and sexuality is *not real*.

So what is real sex? What is the purpose of sexuality? God created the sexual organs, so of course He/She wants us to enjoy our sexuality within a healthy marriage Blessed by God. It's an important part of your future marriage for many reasons. A sexual relationship within a healthy marriage makes a strong, unbreakable attachment and bond to your spouse. Sharing sexual experiences with your spouse (only) makes it something that only you and your spouse know about. It reinforces your exclusivity as a couple. A healthy sex life in your marriage should provide joy and freedom in your marriage. And of course, sex is the way in which we procreate. It's what allows us to raise children who reflect your future couples' oneness and love.

Take a few minutes to write some notes here from what you've read so far:

- In what ways do you see pornography becoming normalized in our society?
- What differences do you see between God's purpose for sex and the way our culture emphasizes sexual relationships?

Why is it so important for us to save sex for our one and only future spouse? The purpose of purity is to safeguard your sexual joy in the future. You are not being asked to keep your purity because God and your parents want you to suffer, or because sex is bad. It's not just to make God and your parents happy, or even for your future spouse's happiness. It is for you; so that you can enjoy the gift of sexuality in the fullest sense, with your one and only love.

Having your first sexual experience be with your spouse links them to great pleasure in your brain. It trains your brain to be aroused by only them and to love only them. This is why it is important to protect your most important sexual organ-- your brain. How you train your brain now will determine your sexual happiness in marriage later. The goal is to teach your brain to desire only your mate. Living with sexual integrity sets up one pathway of arousal in the brain so you can have maximum sexual fulfillment in your marriage. Sexual relationships and love should be the result of good investments. The more you invest into your partner, the greater the return on your love and sexual relationship. If we carelessly invest love and sexuality into a variety of people and situations we are ultimately left with a bad investment and no long-term gains for our marriage.

You can't cheat sexual integrity: purity involves both your mind and your body. If we don't have control over these, then we aren't really able to give them to our future spouse. Purity is sexual simplicity; our mind and heart are completely free to learn lovemaking with your spouse. Through the foundation of total purity, our spouse and our marriage receives our full, undivided responses. We are free of preconceived ideas from past relationships and/or pornographic images. Purity, (rather than the "just say no" of abstinence) is more about filling your life with positive images and actions that include respectful boundaries and choosing to have sex only within marriage. It means being vigilant about your thoughts and keeping them focused on self-strengthening activities that support your happiness and the happiness of your future.

Take a few minutes to write some notes here from the last few paragraphs:

- Why is it important to save sex for your one and only future spouse?

Pornography is a growing issue for many young men and women who are striving towards the Blessing. It's the kind of topic that stays hidden and underground, but it's time for us to bring this topic to the surface so that we can enter into our future marriages fully and completely without anything holding us back. While many in our society may see no problem with pornography, most of us can tell that there is something inherently wrong with it. And that's because sexual activities apart from intercourse in marriage (such as pornography) carry several risks for our future marriage, such as imprinting the brain with experiences and images that will lead to comparisons with our spouse later on, a development of selfish sexual habits and unhelpful preferences that can interfere with marital sex in the future and emphasizing a focus on the body and performance versus the whole relationship. Your future marriage is ultimately bigger than just you and your future spouse. It is an entity in and of itself. Within our marriages we can either be feeding that entity or starving it. And pornography suffocates marriages, it's like a cancer to creating intimacy and openness in our future marriages.

Internet pornography can be especially seductive to young people from conservative religious families because it can look like a harmless way to indulge in curiosity about sex while seeming to still preserve purity. Watching porn in secret, masturbating, dating and even simply acting differently within school and church communities can almost lead to a schizophrenic feeling that many young Unifications have experienced. It can feel like you are a good person in most situations. But there is another side of you who is immersed in the current confused culture. Through this side of you, you begin to create shadows of who you really are. You may feel like you are being pulled in different directions while you try to fit in at school and maintain your integrity. Sometimes you may be faced with the decision of compromising your standards to fit in, or following your conscience and risk losing your status at school and maybe even some friends.

Take a few minutes to write some notes here from the last few paragraphs:

- What are some of the problems pornography can create in marriages?

At the beginning of this session, we brainstormed what a “real woman” from God’s perspective would look like. While we may know deep down what a true woman is meant to be, it’s challenging to work towards that because we can get easily influenced by the culture around us. We can find ourselves putting our energy in the wrong places, trying to become more like the media’s version of a real woman rather than God’s version. It’s not easy and can be very confusing. But it’s important to be aware of this challenge so that we can ask ourselves, which version of a woman are you working to become like? The media’s version or Gods?

How can we get to the place where we feel like we are truly on the path towards becoming God’s version of a woman? It starts with looking deep inside of ourselves and taking apart the aspects of ourselves that are holding us back. For instance, can you think you were the last time you remember feeling totally confident about yourself? Beautiful? Comfortable in your own skin? Most girls feel at their most powerful around 11 or 12, and then they start to lose their confidence and power. By that age puberty is setting in, and we begin to value ourselves in comparison to others. It’s unfortunately something we will all face at one point or another, and the important question to answer is what coping methods do we use to fill our emotional needs? We could turn to a friend or our parents for comfort, pray or journal. All of those are healthy ways to deal with these feelings of inadequacy. But it’s possible we may be turning to unhealthy methods of dealing with our emotional needs such as reaching out to young men for attention, looking at pornography, masturbation, self-loathing or putting down others to make ourselves feel better.

You are not alone. Each of us knows what it’s like to feel lonely, sad or depressed, or unattractive. And that’s why we need a support system to reach out to in these moments so we can be reminded that our value is rooted much more deeply than our physical appearance and how others see us. A healthy support systems includes your parents, a mentor and friends who will help you stay accountable to your goals and remind you of where your true value as a daughter of God. It could also include a professional counselor who can help you to see the bigger picture and how different areas in your life might be connected. Now is the time to build healthy habits to deal when we aren’t feeling very good about ourselves so that we can carry those habits into our future marriages. Our future husband is not there to fix our problems for us. Yes he can support us, love us and encourage us. But it’s ultimately our responsibility to truly learn to see our value from God’s perspective. That way we can rid ourselves of the unhealthy habits we use to make ourselves feel better and instead live confidently, joyfully, and whole-heartedly as a young woman.

Take a few minutes to write some notes here from the final paragraphs of this section:

- What are the challenges we face as young women in our society?
- What can we do to combat those challenges and instead live confidently and joyfully?

PART 2:

Personal Reflection Worksheet

1. Take a step back and consider where your value really comes from?

How does God see you?

2. Is there anything in your life that is negatively impacting your sense of value and preparation for your future marriage?

Perhaps something you are watching, listening to, or people/situations you are engaging with?

3. How do you currently cope with negative feelings regarding your self-worth?

Is it healthy or unhealthy? What needs to change?

4. Every woman needs a healthy support group, who could be a part of yours?

- Good friends who support your healthy choices:

- A mentor who you can look up to in this area of your life:

- Professional Counseling, Your Parents & Church Community:

(If you would like to seek out more support in the area of sexual integrity, check out www.highnoon.org

)

Group Discussion

1. What is something about yourself that makes you feel confident and proud?
2. Is there anything in your life that is negatively impacting your sense of value and preparation for your future marriage?
3. How do you currently cope with negative feelings regarding your self-worth?
4. Who is part of your current support group, or who would you like to ask to be part of your support group?

Homework #1:

Starting with a Clean Slate:

Four Important Points for Getting on Track with God's Plan

By: Joshua Harris, taken from "I Kissed Dating Goodbye"

Building something well sometimes means first tearing it down. Recently my dad and my younger brother Joel attended a birthday party for Stephen, one of Joel's best friends. During the gift giving, a father who was a professional home builder, handed Stephen a small box. "Inside that box is the tool I use most," he said. Stephen opened it and found a nail puller.

"My nail puller, simple as it might seem," the father explained, "is one of the most important tools I have." This father told the story of how once, while in the middle of building a wall, he discovered that it was crooked. Instead of halting the construction and undoing a little work to fix the wall, he decided to proceed, hoping that the problem would go away as he continued to build. However, the problem only worsened. Eventually, at a great loss of materials and time, he had to tear down the nearly completed wall and totally rebuild it.

"Stephen," the father said gravely, "times will come in life when you'll realize you've made a mistake. At that moment, you have two choices: You can swallow your pride and 'pull a few mails,' or you can foolishly continue on your course, hoping the problem will go away. Most of the time the problem will only get worse. I'm giving you this tool to remind you of this principle: When you realize you've made a mistake, the best thing you can do is tear it down and start over."

The lesson of the nail puller is an important one. He learned the hard way that when you realize you've made a mistake, it's better to "pull a few nails" and start over than to continue on the wrong course. Whatever your circumstances, the following steps are important for starting and maintaining a lifestyle of godliness in relationships.

1. Start with a clean slate: This means turning away from unhealthy attitudes and behaviors in our relationships. This might mean refocusing relationships that are headed off course or ending those that we know are wrong.
2. Make your parents your teammates: We need to humbly involve our parents and other individuals who can keep us accountable, provide encouragement, and give us correction and counsel.
3. Establish protective boundaries: These are guidelines we develop with people on our "team" who can help us stay on course consistently and confidently.
4. Check who's whispering in your ear: This means making sure that the things that influence us -- our music, books, TV, and friends -- are all encouraging and supporting our standards and beliefs. Actively following these steps will help us put our convictions into action.

Reflection Questions:

1. Are there people or other influences that tempt you to compromise or be discontent? What do you need to tune out or turn off?
2. What are the benefits of having your parents (or a mentor) as your teammates?
3. What boundaries do you need to set to help you avoid temptations?

Homework #2:

Just Friends in a Just-Do-It World

By: Joshua Harris, adapted from "I Kissed Dating Goodbye"

Keys for keeping your relationships with the opposite sex out of the "romantic zone":

Being "just friends" with the opposite sex can be difficult and confusing. In this chapter we learned that we must recognize the limitations of the guy-girl friendships. While these friendships can be good, there are boundaries. Here are three steps that can help us maintain healthy friendships with the opposite sex:

1. We need to understand the difference between friendship and intimacy. Friendship is about something other than two people in the relationship-- intimacy is about each other.
2. When spending time with members of the opposite sex, we need to be inclusive, not exclusive. This means including others instead of isolating ourselves with just one person. Inclusion must stem from a sincere desire to involve as many people as possible in fellowship and service.
3. Seek opportunities to serve, not to be entertained. In service, we find true friendship and can know our friends in a deeper way than ever before.

Girl-guy friendships can be a blessing when they avoid the "romantic zone" and focus on including and serving others. But we also need to make sure our friendships aren't only with members of the opposite sex. Let's not forget the importance of strong friendships with members of the same sex.

I've made the mistake of neglecting same-sex friendships many times in my life. Without meaning it, I'd stop investing in my relationships with other guys. In group settings, I'd navigate towards the girls. It was fun -- girls were more interesting and besides, they were "just friends." But it wasn't right. I was neglecting my brothers and being lazy by doing what was easy and enjoyable for me.

Maybe you're a girl who's done the same thing. You find it more enjoyable to be with guys and find little need for close girlfriends. One woman told me why she thought some females find friendships with males easier. "When your friends are guys, they give you attention that girls don't offer," she said. "And because girls know how other girls think (how we can manipulate and play games), "sometimes easier to be friends with guys -- you can get away with not being as real."

Although this isn't always the case, and many guy-girl friendships are "real," she makes an important point. A lack of same-sex relationships should be written off as merely a personality preference. There is a chance we're being lazy or selfish by avoiding relationships that would cause us to grow in character.

Session 4: Growing to Greatness

An opportunity for honest self-reflection regarding character and awareness of the importance of our own internal growth in preparation for the matching and Blessing.

Part 1:

Warm Up Activity

Write a list of what you are looking for in your future spouse?

Reading: Preparing Now for the Future

Let's suppose you were looking for a future partner online and you used something like this in the search engine: "single male, early twenties, unhappy, dull, unsociable and self-absorbed... in search of single female, early twenties, interesting, warm, spiritual, and outgoing, with a passion for life, gorgeous." Would that work out well? Of course not. Because an important part of preparing for the Blessing is focusing on our own personal growth. Before I can find the right person. I need to become the right person. Instead of looking towards the Blessing as a solution to all of our problems, we need to take responsibilities for ourselves first and foremost.

Father Moon says "You should concentrate on perfecting yourself first. Then you can begin to think of attaining an ideal partner." Our goal should be to become the person we want our mate to be, like taking the list we made today and starting from there. The strength of our marriages is not that we have a rule that says we should stay with somebody forever, it's that we prepare ourselves first to become the best people we can be for our future spouse.

The list of future spouse qualities we made today ended up pointing out some areas of growth that we ourselves still need to work on. And that's because each of us is still working on our personal growth. The Divine Principle explains that everything needs time to grow to maturity, including us! Thinking ahead towards the Blessing, there's no better time to start focusing on our personal growth than right here and right now. Becoming a mature human being means becoming someone who has an internal level of excellence. We get to that point of internal excellence by taking responsibility for our own growth and putting the work in towards becoming the people we want to be. Before we get to that, it's a good idea to challenge some of the notions we may have regarding the Blessing.

Myth	The goal is to get	My spouse will help me fix my	Being married will make me
-------------	--------------------	-------------------------------	----------------------------

	Blessed, then I'm good to go!	issues and problems.	happy.
Reality	The Blessing is just the beginning of a lifelong growth process.	We are responsible for filling our emptiness, solving our problems, and being our own source of strength.	Being will only make you married. Your happiness has to start within YOU.

Check-In: Which of these myth versus reality statements strikes you most?

Before we enter into a relationship, it's important to figure out who we are as individuals. Part of that process is becoming as healthy and mature as possible so that we can be a blessing for our mate instead of a burden. A good marriage is built on mutual personal maturity in which each individual takes responsibility for themselves. But personal maturity is not an easy thing to accomplish, in fact Father Moon counsels us that personal maturity can be one of the most difficult things in the universe to accomplish. His own personal motto at our age, "Before I would conquer the universe, let me first master myself", serves as a reminder of this important responsibility.

The idea of "mastering myself" is essentially the concept of bringing our minds and bodies together, or to unite our words and our actions. It means becoming a person who does what he/she says, knows what is right and acts on that instinct. It refers to a level of consistency, reliability and integrity within us. It means that we are able to push aside the demands of the body or other things we would rather do so that we can become individuals whom others trust.

When our mind and body are not working well together, difficulties can arise. Father Moon instructs us on this point:

We each have both a mind and a body. When the mind and body are united, we do not feel distress. But when the mind and body are disunited, when they are not balanced horizontally, we feel inner torment. The problem arises when either the mind or the body is too overpowering, creating an imbalance. When the mind and body are balanced in horizontal alignment, however, we do not feel anxiety.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 13

Originally the mind and body were meant to be inseparable, in total oneness. The human mind was supposed to be God's mind and the human body was supposed to hold it as a container.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 33

Developing mind and body unity can be a challenging task and actually requires two important steps. The first is to strengthen your mind, which as Father Moon says is supposed to be God's mind. We can do this through receiving God's truth and love to strengthen our original mind, and then to pair that with actions that follow the inclinations of our good mind.

When it comes to receiving God's love and truth, we usually begin the conversation with prayer and Hoon Dok Hae. And that's because they are true and tested ways to connect with our Heavenly Parent. If we don't have regular conversations with God, how can we have a relationship with God (or receive His/Her love for that matter!)? Hoon Dok Hae is similar in that studying God's Word allows us to understand our Heavenly Parent and align our own thinking with the way He/She originally designed the world to function. Prayer and God's Word stimulate and strengthen our original mind and hearts by surrounding ourselves with God's love and wisdom. Both of these practices require personal investment, because our intentions are what allow the positive results of prayer and Hoon Dok Hae to come through.

While prayer and Hoon Dok Hae are our traditional paths for receiving God's love and truth, there are many other ways of building a relationship of give and take with our Heavenly Parent. Taking time for reflection and meditation is also a great method to create a meaningful connection with God. Many of us are living busy lives at a fast pace, and it can be hard to feel connected with our Heavenly Parent. Reflection and meditation allow us to quiet our minds so we can make that heartistic connection in peace. This is the space where we can communicate our thoughts and feelings to our Heavenly Parent, and likewise listen to God's thoughts and feelings. Without taking the time to quiet our minds, we would never be able to hear our Heavenly Parent or feel His/Her love. Father Moon has also talked about this point on many occasions:

You should set aside some time to experience the joy of being with your original mind. It may seem to others as if you are all alone, but in fact you are becoming a friend to this mind. Sit down in a tranquil place and meditate. Enter a state of deep prayer. Then you will enter a world deep within, a world that no one else can know. You need to have such experiences.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 4, Chapter 1, Section 2, Verse 23

Check-In: What helps you to feel God's love and understand His/Her perspective?

God also works through the people in our lives to share His/Her truth and love. Many of us have had experiences where elder figures have given their wisdom, guidance, or inspirational perspective to us. That's because vertical relationships are another great way to relate with our Heavenly Parent. A "vertical relationship" really means relating with someone who is ahead of you in your spiritual life. This could be a leader in your community (whether that be a school or at church), an aunt or uncle figure, an older brother or sister figure or your parents. God actually designed the parent and child relationship as the place in which we would truly understand God's love for us. Father Moon has taught on this subject on numerous occasions:

We receive our parents' love from the time we are in the womb. The love and all the attention of our parents focus on us from the moment our mother becomes pregnant with us through the essence of love. Why is that? It is because we are the fruit of love. So we are born in love and connected to life through love.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 2, Section 4, Verse 5

While that may be the ideal, we know that we are still working to build our own ideal families. The key, however, is to keep investing so that our relationships with our parents can continue to grow. It's so important for us to have these vertical relationships so that we can have a consistent source of God's love and perspective in our life. Although your relationship with your parents may, at times, be challenging, a good relationship with them is actually one of the most direct sources of God's Love.

Here are some ideas that may be useful for you in developing a good relationship with your parents:

1. *If it's hard to talk with your parents:* write them letters, expressing what's in your heart-- your challenges, hopes and needs.
2. *If you have a hard time seeing your parents in a positive light:* make lists of things you admire and appreciate about them.
3. *If you don't know where to even start, try one of these:*
 - a. Make extra effort to serve them-- even in little ways
 - b. Go out to eat just with them
 - c. Pray or study God's word together
 - d. Find a hobby or interest that you and your mom or dad could share and do it together.

Check-In:

1. Which of these ideas do you think might work for you?

2. What other tips can you share from your own experiences in building a relationship with your parents?

And of course when it comes to vertical relationships full of wisdom, we can't forget about True Parents. After all, who has more wisdom to share about God's love and truth than the two people He/She hand-picked to lead the providence of restoration? It's natural to feel like it's difficult to develop a relationship with True Parents because we aren't able to talk with them personally. But one Blessing we have is the incredible amount of resources at our disposal that allow us to study their life and internal guidance. All we have to do is look to their teachings and the legacy they've left behind to understand them more. We also can always ask our

parents or community elders to share about their experiences with True Parents to help us feel more personally connected with them.

When we have a foundation of a strong and nourished original mind, we are empowered to work on the substance side of mind and body unity in which we make sure our actions are matching the inclinations of our good mind. Everyday we are faced with situations that challenge our mind and body unity; some we may not even be aware of. But through the foundation of our original mind, we have the ability to discern right from wrong and re-train ourselves to living a life of integrity.

Here are some areas to consider when practicing mind and body unity and becoming a person of integrity:

1. **Be Intentional & Aware:** Do you recognize the pulls of your body versus your mind? By developing this awareness we can choose which desires to follow.
Example: Noticing someone sitting alone but not wanting to go outside of your comfort zone.
2. **Think Long Term:** Are we able to see the long term consequences of our choices? It may be an easy to make a decision initially, but it's important to consider how this may impact others and our own habits down the road.
Example: If I watch this or do this how will it impact me down the road?
3. **What will I do if...:** It can also be helpful to prepare ourselves for different situations that may come up so that we be strong enough to follow through on the type of integrity-filled life we want to be living.
Example: What would I do if I was at a party and things started to get out of hand (so much so that I started feeling uncomfortable)?
4. **Stay True to You:** Sometimes it takes a lot of effort to do what we know is right because our peers may feel or act differently. Having integrity means staying true to your core beliefs even if no one stands with you.
Example: If your friends are making fun of someone but you don't think it's a very nice thing to do.
5. **Speak Up:** As we develop the strength of our mind, we may start to notice things about our friends or the situations we surround ourselves with. If something feels off or we are worried about someone, speak up and talk to someone about it. Let your body follow the inclinations of your good mind.
Example: You know your friends are engaging in something that isn't good for them.

Remember, mind and body unity and integrity are all about making sure the actions of your body match the pulls of your good mind!

Check-In: Which of these areas do you think you need to work on and why do you need to work on it?

Take a break!

Part 2:

Warm Up Worksheet:

1. Fill out the Friendship Questionnaire at the end of this session.
2. What did you learn about yourself in terms of being a good friend?

Reading: God's Blueprint for Love

In the process of becoming people of integrity, we are often looking for ways to receive love. But, as we've talked about in previous sessions, true love focuses on giving rather than receiving. God actually set up a powerful blueprint in our lives to help us naturally grow in our capacity to love. We call this blueprint the four realms of heart, and we are meant to grow naturally from realm to realm within our families. It is why we call the family the school of love, because so much of our internal and emotional development occurs within the family unit, or in relationship with the people we love most.

Let's briefly review the four realms so we can take a step back and see the bigger picture of God's design:

1. *Children's Realm*: This is where we actually learn our intrinsic value, meaning we learn that we are both loved and lovable. This basic understanding is essential for us to develop as fully mature human beings.
2. *Brother & Sister Realm*: We learn in this stage that there are other people in the world that have feelings and needs and that we are not the center of the universe.
3. *Marital Realm*: Through marriage we practice putting the needs of our spouse before our own. We also learn to build love and unity in our marriage based on true love.
4. *Parental Realm*: As parents, we've come full circle and are able to understand God's heart for us- His/Her total unconditional love. It's through becoming parents we develop the willingness and the ability to sacrifice anything for our own children.

For the purposes of today's session, we are going to focus on the first two realms since none of us are married yet. Let's dive a little deeper into the children's realm of heart to understand what types of growth are necessary to master during this stage of life.

There is an ever increasing amount of research in psychology regarding the development of young children and their relationships with their parents. One of the most astounding studies about parental bonding and the brain comes children who spent time in Romanian orphanages during the 1980s and 1990s. In 1989, the repressive Romanian government was overthrown and it was discovered that more than 100,000 children were in government-run institutions with no families to take care of them. As it became evident that many of these children had stunted growth and a range of mental and emotional problems, researchers began to study the causes of such results.

What they found was that there were so few caretakers in these orphanages that there were often several babies and toddlers in the same crib. The lack of personnel meant these children weren't being held, and weren't having their basic needs being taken care of (such as clean diapers). When these children were crying, no one held them or showed them care, love and kindness. As a result, most of these children were non-verbal and couldn't keep eye contact. They essentially had no sense of personal value and self-worth.

While this research is absolutely heartbreaking to think about, it does give us some perspective on the significance and value of the first realm of heart. In most cases we consider the children's realm the simplest phase of growth. But it happens to be the crucial foundation upon which we grow through the other realms. It's through our relationship with our parents we learn that we are loved, just as Father Moon teaches:

People are born in love and grow up by receiving love. Each of us is the fruit of our parents' love. We are the visible, real fruit of our mother and father's love.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter 2, Section 2, Verse 17

If we didn't have that foundation of love, we wouldn't know our own sense of value as a son or daughter or be able to connect with other human beings in a meaningful way. God designed our cycle of life to start with this type of unconditional love so that we could grow through the other realms based on the foundation of knowing our own inherent value as a child.

Check-In: In what ways have your parents helped you grow through the first realm of heart?

Looking back on the friendship questionnaire, you may have been caught off guard a bit by some of your answers. That's a normal reaction to the realization that we still have a bit of work to do on ourselves. It can be difficult to see ourselves clearly and objectively from our own point of view. Ultimately, we all have ways to go in terms of maturing in our relationship skills. It's always a good idea to take a look at ourselves and see what areas we can improve in while growing in this stage.

In the second realm of heart, our growth has to do with our peer relationships. In the children's realm of heart, we focus on receiving our parents love and being the center of attention. In the second realm however, our world begins to expand to our siblings and people outside of our family. Father Moon says,

So the love of siblings is connected with the love of the world. A family in which many brothers and sisters grow up is like the model needed to create the ideal, the kingdom of heaven, the kingdom of God on earth and in heaven.

Cheon Seong Gyeong, Book 3, Chapter, 2, Section, 5, Verse 4

As we begin to make friends through school, clubs, and church and we also start to learn the process of being a good team member in school projects, sports, clubs, or even just playing together. Through these experiences we start to notice people and situations outside of ourselves and thus widen our perspective. As our perspective grows, so too does our capacity for loving others.

While we are learning to be aware of the needs of others, the harder part of expanding our capacity to love is to act on that observation. Have you ever noticed someone sitting by themselves at school or youth group, but not done anything about it? We all get stuck here sometimes. Our conscience is telling us that we should walk over to them and start a conversation, but more often than not we stay within our comfort zone of friends we already know. This is the type of situation we are faced with during the second realm of heart in which we have to reconcile our original mind and our not-so-original-mind that tells us to put our own needs ahead of others. It's certainly not easy, but this is where the real stuff of growth happens.

When we take a moment to analyze our growing capacity for love, it's important that we ask ourselves a few hard questions:

1. Are we learning to love different kinds of people? Or do we just stay in our comfort zone and only hang out with people we feel comfortable with?
2. Do we take responsibility for our own situation? Do we tend to blame others when things don't go well or do we try to change our own attitudes instead?
3. Are we glass half-full or half-empty kind of people? Are we the kind of people who add something helpful or positive to a situation or do we generally just notice the problems and complain about them?

Check-In: Which of the "hard questions" strikes you as an important one to consider when growing our ability to love others?

We can also use this perspective by supporting each other in maintaining our purity. We all know that men and women function very differently and it can be hard to understand our different needs as well as the different challenges each gender faces in maintaining sexual integrity. Of course each person is unique and different, however, there are a few helpful ground rules to consider when we think about how to support each other in keeping our purity. In general, it's a good idea to support each other by making sure we don't spend alone time with one person of the opposite sex or develop exclusive friendships.

If you are a young man what are some things you can do to support your sisters? Generally speaking, young women tend to function on an emotional level. Relationships based on deep conversation, bonding, and sharing tend to be very fulfilling and attractive to young women. That means that to support your fellow sisters, you should try not to draw your sisters to you in times of emotional trouble or challenge. Let them know you care about them, but help them find an older sister that they can talk to so that they don't develop feelings of attraction or infatuation towards you.

If you are a young woman, it's important to know that our brothers are very visual young men. They can't help but notice the way you look and be attracted to you (that's how God designed them!). So what can we do about that? We can try to be aware of how we are dressing so we don't provide an unnecessary challenge for them as they try to maintain their sexual integrity. This does not mean we shouldn't be proud of how we look and are dressing, it just means we should be aware of the decisions we are making and how they impact our brothers.

Remember, the point here is not to have strict rules and regulations that limit you in relating with your brothers and sisters. Rather, the point is that developing our capacity for love includes thinking about the needs and challenges of others and being able to make those a priority in deciding how you relate with the people in your life.

The different areas we covered today are all interconnected, meaning you need all of them to truly grow to greatness. It's through receiving God's love and truth that we are able to have the foundation for growing our capacity to love others. And we won't be able to grow our ability to love others if we aren't also working on our mind and body unity. They all go hand in hand, and together they are a recipe for a fully mature young man or woman who is ready to be an equal partner in a fulfilling marriage.

Personal Reflection & Prayer:

1. What do you feel you need to work on in the following areas:
 - a. Strengthening your Original Mind (Receiving God's Love & Truth)

 - b. Bringing your mind and body together (Making sure your actions match your good mind)

 - c. Growing your capacity for love (Thinking of others instead of just from your perspective)

2. How do you feel growth in each of these areas will help prepare you to be a better future spouse?
 - a. Strengthening your Original Mind (Receiving God's Love & Truth)

 - b. Bringing your mind and body together (Making sure your actions match your good mind)

 - c. Growing your capacity for love (Thinking of others instead of just from your perspective)

***Remember that at least one parent should be present for our next session!

Am I A Good Friend? Worksheet

Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott

My Friends Would Say...

- Y N I always keep my promises.
- Y N I always stick up for them.
- Y N I give them grace when they let me down.
- Y N I am just as likely to genuinely celebrate my friends' successes as I am to comfort them in their disappointments.
- Y N I am there when they need me.
- Y N I am ready and willing to lend them a hand.
- Y N I never gossip about them or talk behind their back.
- Y N I give them the benefit of the doubt.
- Y N I hear them out even when I disagree.
- Y N I stand by them through thick and ten.

Taken from "Relationship Workbook" by Drs Les and Leslie Parrott

Session 4 Homework #1

Really Relating to God

Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott

This exercise is designed to help you figure out how you relate to God, and how you wish you related to God—and what you can do to move in that direction.

In a single sentence, summarise your faith journey and how it has brought you to your present relationship with God. Then jot down a few words that describe your present relationship with God:

Now, take a moment to consider how you might represent your present relationship with God by drawing a simple picture of it. Be as creative as you like.

Once you have completed your pictorial representation of this relationship, consider what you would like to change to make it more like the relationship you long for. What would those changes involve?

What can you do in practical terms to make that kind of relationship with God a reality?

Session 4 Homework #2

Worksheet for Preparing Intentionally for the Matching

Scoring: 3- Doing really well, 2- Not bad, 1- Definitely needs work

My Vision, Values and Life Purpose

1. ____ I have a vision of what I want from my life
2. ____ I am clear about my values and am trying to live by them
3. ____ I feel like I am growing
4. ____ I am exploring my faith and feeding my spirit
5. ____ I have elders or mentors I trust and I go to them with my questions

My Emotions and Communication

1. ____ I try not to gossip or talk about others
2. ____ I deal positively with misunderstanding /disagreements when they occur
3. ____ I don't get defensive and take personally the things others say about me
4. ____ I regularly practice careful listening, and give validation and appreciation
5. ____ I am careful about what I promise and keep my word
6. ____ I am able to communicate my feelings

My Physical Body and Environment

1. ____ I take care of my body and my physical health regularly
2. ____ I have hobbies or activities that are good for me that I can do by myself or with others
3. ____ I know what I want for a career and I am taking steps to achieve that
4. ____ I spend my social time with happy, healthy people
5. ____ I have a close circle of friends and we gather regularly
6. ____ I am a member of two or more communities (club, hobby, spiritual, professional)

My Family and Community Relationships

1. ____ I contribute to my community
2. ____ I have elders or parents that I trust to go to with questions or in times of need
3. ____ I have positive relationships with my parents, siblings, co-workers
4. ____ I take good care of the people I have chosen to love
5. ____ I am aware of how I come across and affect others

Session 5: Preparing as a Family for the Matching

Understanding how the matching process works and opening up the doors of communication between parents and youth.

Part 1: Warm Up Game

Who Knows You Best?

Part 2: Overview of Matching Process

Notes from the Slideshow:

Part 3: Testimony Panel

Notes from the Panel:

Part 4: Separate Questions & Answer Session

Notes from the Q & A:

Take a break!

