

OUTLINE FOR COVENANT SERIES

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SEEING OUR GOODNESS

(From the weekend talk, Encounter With Self)

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

When we know our good qualities, we will be able to like and love ourselves more. And the better we like ourselves, the more able we are to see the goodness in others and tell them of it. By being aware of our good qualities, we also know what gifts we have to offer. Tonight we are going to focus on the goodness in ourselves and how we accept compliments - how we accept the goodness that others see in us.

B. ACCEPTING OUR GOODNESS -- 1-2 min.

On the original weekend we made a list of virtues and defects. We tend to emphasize our defects more (longer list). Tonight we will work to emphasize the good qualities and how we accept them. Our virtues and defects combine to form the unique individual we are. God loves us regardless of our good and bad qualities. Remember the banner on your weekend - God Doesn't Make Junk? We are called to do the same, love ourselves regardless of our good and bad qualities.

6 min. (Each of you share a good quality of yours and how you feel about sharing it right now. Try to each share a quality that you are comfortable with sharing and one you are not comfortable with sharing. Our behavior can often point to a good quality. For example, when I am being patient with the children, I see myself as a good parent. I have proud feelings about myself and therefore I am able to love myself and be more loving.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a good quality of yours and how you feel about sharing it with us.

D. ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS FROM OTHERS -- 1-2 min.

Often it is difficult to accept compliments because of our attitudes about the person who gives the compliment and about ourselves. Sometimes, we may question the motives of the person giving the compliment because of our attitude. We may ask ourselves, "Does he/she have an ulterior motive? Is he/she trying to manipulate me?" Or we judge ourselves with questions such as, "Am I worthy of the compliment? What have I done to deserve the compliment?" or "Do I see that quality as really applying to me?" These attitudes cause us to accept or reject the compliment. A decision to accept the compliment is a decision to love ourselves and the person giving it.

D. ACCEPTING COMPLIMENTS FROM OTHERS (Cont)

6 min. (Share a compliment you recently received and how it made you feel. Make sure this compliment is about a personal quality rather than a personal appearance or talent. The ones about personal qualities are the deepest and help us to look further into ourselves. Really focus on the feelings you had about yourself when you received the compliment.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a compliment about a personal quality of yours that you received and how you felt receiving it.

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

What do I see as my best quality and how do I feel sharing it , with you?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Matthew 22:39-40

Some dialogue questions to help you prepare:

1. HDIF when I recognize and accept a good quality in myself?
2. HDIF when my spouse points out a good quality he/she sees in me?
3. Describe a time when my behavior had helped me recognize a good quality in myself.
HDMAMMF?
4. What good quality of mine do I have trouble accepting? HDIFSTWY?
5. What attitudes do I have that prevent me from accepting compliments on my personal qualities? HDMAMMF?
6. HDIF when I am able to accept a compliment about a personal quality?

KEY: HDIF -- How do I feel?
HDMAMMF -- How does my answer make me feel?
HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?

PRIVACY - A PART OF THE MODERN WORLD'S PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION -- 3 min.

On our original weekend we were told about the "world's plan" for marriage and how the attitudes about marriage which we have formed throughout our lives have conditioned us to conform to the world's plan. One of the symptoms of this conformity is privacy in our lives. Privacy is defined by Webster's as "the quality or state of being apart from company or observation: seclusion." Sometimes, of course, privacy is beneficial and even necessary to our spiritual and psychological well-being. Indeed, solitude can nurture growth. But privacy, as opposite of openness, can also hinder and detract from our relationship with our spouse. It is this latter privacy, the habitual privacy which prevents us from growing in relationship with others, which we are concerned for in this presentation. In the first part of the presentation, we will share about our individual privacies and how they affect our relationship as a couple with others. In the second part we will look at how our relationship with our spouse is affected when we go beyond our individual privacies and are open, and how this in turn affects our relationship as a couple with others.

B. PRIVACY AS A HINDERANCE -- 2 min.

There are many privacies in our daily lives which hinder our couple relationship. These are areas of our life from which we exclude our spouse, sometimes unconsciously, and can make us married singles for at least those parts of our lives. Examples of such privacies are:

- *Private possessions---my kitchen, my checkbook, my children, my car
- *Private rights----not to be disturbed at work, making certain decisions alone
- *Private times---watching a favorite TV show, hobbies, going to bed alone to read

In attempting to identify the private areas of our lives which might be hindering our couple relationship, we can consider the times when we are apart from our spouse and judge ourselves guilty for being away. Our spouse's loneliness. at these times has apparently somehow been conveyed to us.

6 min. (Share several examples of individual privacies and then share how it affects your relationship. How do you feel about these private areas and the effect on your relationship?)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share what private areas you have that affect your couple relationship.

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D. STEPPING OUT OF OUR OWN PRIVACIES -- 2 min.

Just as our privacies can adversely affect our relationships, so also when we are open and step out of our privacies, it can positively affect our relationship. For example: giving of our time to others; openness in listening; generosity with our possessions; willingness to share our feelings. All these examples of openness can benefit our relationships with our spouse and with others.

6 min. (Share several examples of openness for overcoming your privacies and how it affects your relationship. How do you feel about doing this? How do you feel about the effect it has had on your relationship?)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a time when your openness affected your relationship in a positive way.

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

When has your openness drawn me out of my privacy and how does that make me feel?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Phil. 2: 1-4

Some dialogue questions to help you prepare:

1. What things do I consider mine? HDIFAT?
2. How have I kept you in focus today? HDIFAT?
3. HDIF knowing that I must change myself, not you, to allow our relationship to grow?
4. How can I be more sensitive to you? HDIF sharing this with you?
5. What privacies of mine keep me from being truly open to you? HDIF sharing this with you?
6. HDIF knowing that we will always have to work for real closeness in our relationship?

KEY: HDIFAT -- How do I feel about that?
HDIF -- How do I feel

C BE of ME

LISTENING

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

Listening is more than hearing with your ears. It is an emotional involvement with your spouse. It is a decision to put yourself aside for your spouse. Only when we attempt to hear each word and notice each expression can we deeply understand in our heart one another's feelings. When we are able to accept these feelings without judgments, we come to know just how precious our love for each other has become. In the first part of this presentation we will focus on the attitudes and judgments that hinder listening.

B. ATTITUDES THAT HINDER LISTENING -- 3-4 min.

An attitude is a belief or a point of view about a situation, the people in the situation, or myself in the situation. Attitudes are preconceived ideas and may make honest sharing difficult. Attitudes are not necessarily facts, but may arise out of misconceptions. Attitudes of superiority hinder our ability to really listen to one another. Some of these attitudes:

- *Attitudes of indifference---"nothing you can say can touch me because you aren't that important."

- *Attitude of inferiority --"my need to be heard is more important than your need to be listened to. I am the final decision maker regarding my goodness, so nothing you will say will matter."

Some of the fears that you can consider which might underlie your attitude of superiority are:

- *Fear of change---"If I really listen to you, I might see the need to change."

- *Fear of criticism---"If I really listen to you, I'm going to hear you tell me something that is not good about me."

- *Fear of being used---"All you want from me is a sounding board."

- *You might consider other fears---disapproval, ridicule, rejection.

6 min. (Share what attitudes and possibly what fears prevent you from truly listening to your spouse and how does that make you feel.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a specific time when an attitude or attitudes kept you from really listening to your spouse.

D. SUCCESS IN LISTENING TO OTHERS -- 1 min.

In this part we will focus in on the successes we have had in truly listening to our spouse, When we truly listen, we are not afraid because what we seek is understanding, not victory. Listening calls for a response in love. When I am really listening, I acknowledge and respect my spouse's otherness---the uniqueness that makes him/her special.

6 min (Share a time when you were able to set aside your own attitudes and truly listen to your spouse. Share how you felt when this happened.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a time when you were able to put aside yourself and listen to your spouse.

F. SPECIAL READING (Just prior to 10 & 10)

With your ear, may you hear each word as something precious.
With your mind, may you humbly search to understand.
With your eye, may you notice the non-verbal message.
With your heart, may you listen with real love.
And may your hearing, understanding, loving be lasting,
As enduring as a precious stone.

G. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

When recently did I see you as really listening to me? How does that make me feel?

H. SCRIPTURE READING -- Matthew 13:16

Some dialogue questions to help in preparations:

1. HDIF when I listen to you?
2. HDIF when I want to be listened to?
3. In what areas have I not been able to listen to you? HDTMMF?
4. What attitudes in myself do I see that prevent me from listening to you and HDTMMF?

KEY: HDIF -- How do I feel
HDTMMF -- How does that make me feel?

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OPENNESS TO RECEIVING

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

We all have our own ideas about what openness is---reaching out to others in our various communities. But, are we really being honest with ourselves? It is easier to give than to receive. Our encounter relationship is based on reaching out to others. Problems may arise when we ourselves need to receive from others. It is difficult for most of us to stretch out our hand and be helped. Our communities are there to give support when we need help with our relationship. Our community of love is there for us. We need to reach out and accept from others. We need to let others be for us.

B. RECEIVING FROM MY SPOUSE -- 2-3 min.

The most basic community is us, (give your names here). If we are honest, we recognize that there are areas in our lives where we need our spouse's help. Underneath these attitudes are fears and judgments. In order to ask for and accept our spouse's help, it is important to remember that:

- *First I need to know what my needs are.
- *Sometimes I don't receive because I don't ask.
- *Just asking is not enough. I must be open to receive what I have asked for.

These are some of the attitudes that prevent openness:

- *He/she should know my needs without having to be told.
- *I told him/her before---nothing happened.
- *I don't need help---I can handle it myself.

6 min (Each choose one attitude that operates in your relationship and illustrate it with a personal example. Share at least one attitude from each spouse. Take this attitude you've shared and amplify the underlying feeling. Example: If my attitude was "I told him/her before and nothing happened," I will think I am unimportant. I feel disappointed, lonely, or sad.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

What fears have kept you from asking your spouse for help. By help we mean comfort, support, understanding, etc.

D. RECEIVING FROM OTHERS -- 2-3 min.

Just as we need to receive from our spouse, there are times when we as a couple need to receive from our community. The struggle is to change our attitudes and to accept the help we need. Now we will look at the attitudes that keep us from receiving from our community. Being open to receiving as a couple is often difficult. These are some of the attitudes that get in our way:

D. RECEIVING FROM OTHERS (Cont.)

- *People look up to us---we have an image to uphold.
- *We can't share our downs---people won't accept them.
- *People will see us as less than they expected.
- *Attitude of not asking unless we are in a position to return the favor someday.
- *Attitude of lack of trust in community.
- *Attitude of imposing or burdening others with our problems.

6 min (Choose one or more of the above attitudes and share a personal example from your own experience. Share your feelings which underlie these attitudes.)

E. SHARING QUESTION --15 min.

What fears do I have that have kept me from asking our community for help, or love, or comfort?

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 ----25 min.

How do I feel thinking about asking for and accepting help from you?

G SCRIPTURE READING -- Luke 11:23

Some dialogue questions for help in preparation:

1. Where do I need help from you? HDIFSTWY?
2. Have I asked you for help? HDTMMF?
3. Am I really willing to accept help from you? HDIFSTWY?
4. Have we ever asked the community to help us? HDIFSTWY?
5. Am I really willing to accept help from others? HDTMMF?

KEY: HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?
HDTMMF --How does that make me feel?

C BE of ME

FORGIVENESS & RECONCILIATION
A KEY TO STAYING IN RELATIONSHIP

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

In tonight's presentation, we are going to look at the subject of forgiveness. Forgiveness is my decision to heal a relationship. Forgiveness does not mean that I agree with, condone, or support your actions, but rather that I decide to love you as you are. Forgiveness cannot be assumed....it must be spoken. Feelings of embarrassment and shame indicate a need to ask forgiveness. Feelings of resentment, bitterness and anger indicate a need to be forgiving. Forgiveness is the sacrament of reconciliation when it is administered by a priest. In the first part of tonight's presentation we are going to examine forgiveness of self and in the second part, the forgiveness of others.

B. FORGIVE YOURSELF -- 1 min.

Forgiving myself is the essence of accepting myself. It is not that I approve of everything that I am or I do, but rather that I accept myself with my strengths and my weaknesses. When I can forgive myself and accept myself, I actually free myself to be me. I give myself permission to be who I am.

6 min (Share a time when you found it difficult to forgive yourself and the reason for it. Emphasize the feelings you had during your struggle.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

When did you have a hard time forgiving yourself and why do you think this happened?

D. FORGIVING OTHERS -- 1 min.

Forgiveness is a key for staying in relationship. When we forgive someone, we release that person and ourselves from our own grudge. When true forgiveness takes place, peace is established in the relationship. The goal of forgiveness is to put us back in relationship with one another. Don't ask for forgiveness for feelings. Ask forgiveness for the behavior that flows out of the feelings. Forgiveness is a gift of love. It cannot be earned.

6 min (Share a time when the healing power of forgiveness allowed a loving relationship to be re-established and how that made you feel.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Have you been able to make the decision to forgive and heal a relationship?

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 --25 min.

My decision to forgive you is an act of love for you. How does that make me feel?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Matthew 18:21-22

Some dialogue questions to help in preparation:

1. When am I afraid to ask forgiveness? HDIFSTWY?
2. When do I accept forgiveness from others? HDTMMF?
3. Do I accept God's forgiveness? HDIFAT?

KEY: HDIFAT -- How do I feel about that?
HDTMMF -- How does that make me feel?
HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?

UNITY - MARRIAGE IN GOD'S PLAN

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

It was brought to our attention on our original weekend that God's plan for marriage is complete unity, not merely sharing a home, money, food and fun. We could share worldly things and still remain strangers. But, in sharing ourselves, we approach unity. Tonight we are going to look at the part of the day when you don't dialogue, and see how it is affected by your dialoging relationship. That is, we are going to look at striving for unity in and out of dialogue time. And, we will emphasize the closeness that comes from striving to be one.

B. UNITY IN DIALOGUE -- 2 min.

We know the goal of dialogue is unity. We want to actually take on the other's feeling so we can become one. In striving to be one we experience beautiful feelings of closeness. Marriage Encounter Weekends are special times of closeness. But, do we make similar efforts to reach out in daily dialogue? When we're not in the atmosphere of a Weekend, we hopefully take the risk to become vulnerable and try to overcome our doubts and fears. And, hopefully we strive for unity of feeling on a daily basis just as hard as we struggled on our Weekend. Unity of feeling in dialogue takes a lot of effort and occurs infrequently, but we can grow so close when we try.

As we dialogue on a daily basis, we build our openness. We grow in our ability to share deep feelings with one another. In striving for unity, a climate of trust is established and also feelings of closeness. (If you have no feeling of closeness, you may want to evaluate how and why you dialogue.)

6 min (Share a recent - last 2 months - feeling of closeness from your dialogue and how you feel about that closeness now.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share with us your cycles of romance, disillusionment and joy as you strive for unity in your daily dialogue.

D. UNITY OUTSIDE OF DIALOGUE TIME -- 1 min.

Dialogue is a way of life and the closeness we attain in our 20 minutes a day does not end there. Our openness to feelings in dialogue should create an atmosphere of sensitivity in other areas of our relationship. We grow in understanding not only feelings but attitude, values and goals.

4 min. (Share a recent example from your day-to-day relationship, other than dialogue time, when you were open and sensitive to your spouse and how you feel about that. Example: your spouse came home and the non-verbal said something was wrong---you felt concern.)

D. UNITY OUTSIDE OF DIALOGUE TIME (Cont.)

If we are achieving a oneness and closeness in our dialogue, then we should see the effects. The closeness in dialogue should carry through to the closeness outside of dialogue time. Reaching for unity opens us to ourselves, to our spouse, to others and to God. Dialogue can offer us the hope and the possibility to grow, overcome troubles and change to become the best that the Lord wants us to be. If we are striving for unity, to live out God's plan for this world, through dialogue and other means, then our life will change for the better.

4 min. (Share, in yourselves or in another relationship, 2 or 3 ways in which you are opening up and, therefore, reaching a deeper unity in your marriage For example, ability to overcome fear and how you feel about that; God is more a part of your life and how you feel about that; more open in your sexual relationship and how you feel about that.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

In what ways has striving for unity affected your relationship or your life?

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

In what ways do I see the closeness in our dialogue affecting the closeness in our relationship and how do I feel sharing this with you?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Ecclesiastics 4:9-12

Some dialogue questions to help in preparation:

1. Why do we dialogue? HDTMMF?
2. Do we strive for unity in our dialogue? HDTMMF?
3. In what ways am I open to you in dialogue? HDTMMF?
4. What attitudes prevent me from giving myself more totally to you in dialogue? HDIFSTWY?
5. Am I as understanding of you in our daily relationship as I am in dialogue? HDIFSTWY?
6. How have we grown in closeness since dialoging? HDTMMF?

KEY: HDTMMF -- How does that make me feel?
HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?

CONFIDENCE IN OUR DIALOGUE

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1 - 2 min.

The confidence we are going to talk about tonight is the confidence in ourselves and the confidence in our dialogue technique---our own special uniqueness. On our Weekend we learned a technique for dialogue. But as time has passed in trying to follow this, we may have become wedded to the WEDS outline. We tend to lose sight of the fact that the important decision is to share ourselves in a deeper way. In the first part of tonight's presentation, we are going to explore different ways of making our dialogue a unique and positive experience. In the second part we want to share how dialogue has made our relationship more alive.

B. CONFIDENCE IN OUR DIALOGUE TECHNIQUE -- 2-3 min.

The fact that we care enough about our relationship to try to deepen it through dialogue is what is important. Once we have made that commitment, there is no one right way to dialogue---only what is unique to our relationship. We want to focus in on how the WEDS formula can be adapted to fit our own individual dialogue. We can be flexible about when, where and how we write and dialogue. Variations in technique include:

- *Time--be open and flexible to time. It could be after lunch on Saturday, early in the morning or after dinner. Just be sure to set a specific time for your dialogue for the next day.
- *Place--it could be a hammock, the car, the front porch, the bathtub, a closet--anywhere that is free of distractions for you to write and dialogue.
- *Technique--you might first pray, begin your loveletter with a TNT (the nicest thing about your spouse that day), spend some time reflecting on the dialogue question before writing.
- *After reading the letters and dialoging on the feeling you and your spouse have chosen, there may be a need to make love, hold one another, cry together, forgive and/or be forgiven.

6 min (Share your attitudes and feelings concerning the techniques you use in your dialogue from one or two of the above areas. Maybe try something new for you and share your feelings and attitudes about the changes.)

C. SHARING QUESTION --15 min.

What is your attitude about the way you dialogue and what changes would you like to try?

D. SUCCESS IN DIALOGUE -- 1-2 min.

Whatever techniques we use to add variety, spice or to achieve that extra meaning, we must continue to try to be committed to the concept of daily dialogue. Through this commitment and the actual dialogue, our relationship grows. Our confidence in dialogue and the deepening of our relationship come from sharing our struggles as well as our joys. So we ask you now to join us as we share such a growth experience from one of our loveletters.

6 min (Each spouse is to set the scene as well as read a meaningful loveletter... one from which there was a strengthening of your relationship. Share how you felt after the dialogue.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a time when your dialogue has caused you to strengthen your relationship.

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

What value do I place on our daily dialogue and how do I feel sharing this with you?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Hebrews 4:14-16

Some dialogue questions to help you prepare:

1. What do I like most about our dialogue? HDIFSTWY?
2. What do I like least about our dialogue? HDIFSTWY?
3. What are my attitudes about trying new techniques in our dialogue? HDTMMF?
4. What attitudes of mine help our dialogue? HDTMMF?
5. What attitudes of mine hinder our dialogue? HDTMMF?
6. How do I feel as I consider sharing one of my actual loveletters with our group?

KEY: HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?
HDTMMF -- How does that make me feel?

THE GIFT OF DAILY DIALOGUE

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1-2 min.

"Matrimonial Spirituality" is a term that probably threw us when we first heard it. Few of us consider ourselves "spiritual" in the traditional sense of the term. Then we found out that spirituality means a commitment to grow and deepen our couple relationship in marriage. Thus, whatever unites us and brings us closer together is a part of our spirituality. Tonight's presentation will help us take a look at how we live our marriage on a daily basis. What are our attitudes toward dialogue in our relationship? Is dialogue an important part of our lives? Do we consider dialogue fun or a burden?

B. AWARENESS OF OUR ROADBLOCK TO UNITY

When we find ourselves resorting to cop-outs, it is obviously a cover-up of our need to grow.

3 min. (Share some of your cop-outs and underlying feelings. Share how you feel when you are not dialoging. Perhaps some of the underlying reasons for using cop-outs are:

- *Judging yourself inadequate
- *Fear of rejection
- *Judgements as to the quality of your dialogue
- *Fear of being asked to change

3 min. Some of the reasons may surface as:

- *Laziness--I'm too tired !!!
- *Preoccupied with house, work, outside job
- *Schedule with children doesn't leave time
- *I can't find the time to write
- *It's OK---we can dialogue without writing

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

What are some of my underlying reasons for copping-out of our daily dialogue?

D. OVERCOMING THE ROADBLOCKS -- 6 min.

We are talking about the total gift of ourselves to one another and what that means. The single most important value in our lives is our relationship to one another--everything else takes second place.

(Share a time when encouragement from others helped you in your dialogue. How did you feel? Share when you have overcome your roadblock, striven for unity---and how you felt.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Will you share with us one of your struggles to get past a roadblock in your dialogue?

F. REFLECTIVE READING -- (Just before 10 & 10)

"I sought my God, my God I could not see. I sought my fellow man, and he eluded me. I sought my spouse, and found all three."

G. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

How am I dissatisfied with my commitment to you? How do I feel sharing this with you?

H. SCRIPTURE READING -- John 1 :1 5-18

Some suggested dialogue questions to help you prepare:

1. What typical or usual attitude towards dialogue helps or drains our relationship? HDTMMF?
2. What have I been preoccupied with lately that has prevented dialogue? HDTMMF?
3. What attitudes toward dialogue do I need to change? HDTMMF?
4. HDIF when others encourage us to dialogue?
5. HDIF when we approach unity of feeling through dialogue?

KEY: HDTMMF -- How does that make me feel?
HDIF -- How do I feel

LEISURE

A. INTRODUCTION -- 2 min.

God has given us many gifts to build our relationship as husband and wife---dialogue, sex, prayer, and spiritual relationships. They should not be taken for granted. They are decisions to love that call for action (remember that love is an action verb). Another gift which God has given us is the gift of play or leisure time. This is all the ways we can laugh with each other and enjoy each other. Too often, we take this area of recreation for granted, or we table our free time until the weekend. Perhaps even until our next vacation. Sometimes we simply over-program our spare time and it becomes as demanding as our daily work. The word recreation means to re-create. Perhaps to begin again, to meet again. In fact, the Marriage Encounter Weekend is a time for recreation. It removes all worldly distractions so we have more freedom to laugh, to cry, and play with one another. This presentation looks at how we value our free time and enjoy one another.

B. LEISURE TIME ATTITUDES -- 2 min.

Leisure time is often menacing to people. Frequently we become frustrated because we are not having as much fun as we think we should, or not getting as much work done as we should. Some examples of attitudes about leisure time are:

- *Summer is for play, winter is for work.
- *No time for leisure now, success is more important.
- *Leisure planning and preparation is more work for me.
- *Week is for work, weekends are for leisure.

6 min (Share a time when an attitude affected your leisure time and how you felt about it. Try to share both a positive and a negative attitude.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share an attitude you have about your leisure time.

D. LEISURE TIME AND OUR RELATIONSHIP -- 1-2 min.

In this section we will look at how our attitudes toward leisure time effect our marriage relationship. When summer comes, most of us have high hopes for several happy and fulfilling months. Using our married singles attitudes, we tend to spend leisure time apart---golf, fishing, sun-bathing, tennis, etc. As couples, we should strive to unify our relationship by including each other in our leisure time.

D. LEISURE TIME AND OUR RELATIONSHIP (Cont.)

6 min (Share a time when you enjoyed some leisure time together and how you felt. This does not necessarily have to be a vacation time. Maybe it was a special meal, yard work, a picnic, etc. Be sure to share how you felt being a couple. Or, you could share a time when you grew as a couple by spending leisure time together and how you felt. Be sure to share your feelings in either of the above sharings.)

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Share a time when you enjoyed your leisure time together and how this affected your relationship.

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 ---25 min.

How do I feel about making the decision to spend more of our leisure time together.

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Ecclesiastics 3:12-13

Some dialogue questions to help you prepare:

1. What fun things do I most enjoy doing? HDIFSTWY?
2. Does my leisure time include you? HDIFSTWY?
3. HDIF when we spend our leisure time together?
4. How often do we laugh with each other, or take a walk, or fly a kite together? HDIFAT?

KEY: HDIFSTWY -- How do I feel sharing this with you?
HDIF -- How do I feel
HDIFAT -- How do I feel about that?

SIGNS OF LOVE

A. INTRODUCTION -- 1 min.

The Church and Christ have a stake in our marriage. The Church is the people ...US..... and we are called to be a sign of Christ to the world, a sacramental; people, We are to be the mirror of God's love for us. When we united ourselves in marriage, we also united ourselves to God and His people. Christ instituted the sacraments as signs of His love in the world for all His people, Our relationship to one another is our sacrament. Our sacrament involves other people. In tonight's presentation we will discuss the graces we receive from our sacrament in the first part. In the second part we will focus on the grace of forgiveness.

B.. GRACES FROM OUR SACRAMENT -- 1-2 min.

Our sacrament is something that is living and meant to happen every day. The way we act out our sacrament each day is the same way it happened the first time (our wedding day). We decided to say "yes." Our sacrament is lived out in our daily relationship each time we say "yes." Grace is God's presence within us which we receive as a gift. If God's love is within us, there are certain effects or results of His presence which enables us to give each other signs of love. Grace is a gift and it makes something possible. Graces are moments of strength we need to: be faithful; forgive; be patient; give comfort; be holy. The grace is there, but we must be aware of it and call upon it. We are given many graces for the challenges of our married life.

6 min (Share how you felt when you first became aware of these graces. How have these graces, or moments of strength, fit into your relationship? Relate a time when and how you have used these graces and how you felt at the time. Husband and wife relate separate instances.)

C. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

How has God's grace recently strengthened your relationship to each other, to your children, or to others?

D. FORGIVENESS AND HEALING -- 2-3 min.

Forgiveness is a decision. It must be a free gift of love. Forgiveness doesn't mean that I agree with you but that I will not hold anything against you. Actions require forgiveness. However, certain attitudes and feelings indicate a need for forgiveness. Usually my attitudes and feelings will be acted out in some way. Feelings of embarrassment or shame indicate that I often need to forgive myself or ask forgiveness from others. When I feel anger, resentment, or bitterness, I need to forgive others. We must remember that we need to ask for forgiveness not only for the deep hurts, but the little things too. Healing means different things to each of us, and we respond to being healed in different ways. With the grace of forgiveness, the grace of healing allows us to go out of ourselves and to heal each other. It also allows us to be healed by others.

6 min (Share a time when you were hurt and what went through your mind. What made you decide to heal or be healed and how did you feel?)

C BE of ME

E. SHARING QUESTION -- 15 min.

Will you share with us a time when you experienced some type of healing?

F. DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR 10 & 10 -- 25 min.

How do I feel when you completely forgive me?

G. SCRIPTURE READING -- Matthew 6:14-15 and Luke 23:34

Some dialogue questions for help in preparation:

1. WAMFA us being called to be a visible sign of the church?
2. WAMF when I experience the forgiveness of God in our relationship?
3. WAMFA the fact that God has a stake in our marriage?
4. HDIF knowing we have been commissioned by God to be an active force in His Kingdom?

KEY:
WAMFA -- What are my feelings about
WAMF -- What are my feelings
HDIF -- How do I feel

