

## TIME OUT FOR LOVE

by

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1993*

**Theme:** The marriage bond is strengthened as couples recognize their personal worth and endeavor to build the worth of each other.

**Objective:** To provide a period of marriage enrichment during which each participant learns about the importance of a healthy self-concept and discovers ways of encouraging his or her spouse.

**How to Use This Resource:** The ideas which follow may be used to create a marriage enrichment event of approximately two hours in length. Concepts offered here are suitable for presentation to non-Adventist couples or spouses.

**Program Ideas:** Couples arrive before the session in time to care for last-minute registration items and pick up or make name tags (if desired). Warm, sociable surroundings are important in the meeting room. Comfortable chairs arranged in a circular format, flowers, candles and other suitable decorations will contribute to a friendly, inviting setting. Soft music, played as couples are gathering, is relaxing and helps set the tone for the program. The leaders welcome the couples and introduce them or in some way facilitate their meeting one another.

### **Welcome, Introduction, and Prayer**

An introduction to the weekend event should be given, sharing with the couples the goals for the Time Out for Love program. The leader couple can simply share with the group that growth as a couple takes time. Often we are so busy we have little opportunity to simply focus on our love together. This evening (or afternoon) will be an opportunity to learn about an important aspect of marriage—the need each spouse has for affirmation. A lengthy presentation is not necessary, but a few well-chosen comments which communicate a joyful anticipation of time spent together in the presence of other caring couples are appropriate. After these comments, you may wish to share as a leader couple in praying for God's Spirit to be present and to bless the program.

### **Get-Acquainted Exercise: "Relationship Diary"**

Distribute copies of [Handout #1 Pages from Our Relationship Diary](#) to husbands and wives. Each spouse makes notes independently and then reminisces with the other. When couples have had opportunity to talk together, invite them to share one or more memories with the whole group.

The leader couple can help get such sharing started by doing so first. The results are enhanced if both husband and wife participate in the sharing. Of course, sharing is voluntary. It should occur spontaneously, back and forth in the group, rather than "going around the circle," thus avoiding

any awkwardness or feelings of pressure to participate because "it's your turn."

This sharing from personal memories is a significant step in the development of "community" within the group. It should not be rushed. Through this experience, couples get better acquainted by entering into a little of one another's history. Consequently they are more at ease with one another and the setting for experiences leading to marital growth is prepared.

A second benefit of this exercise is that it prepares the way for the presentation on self-worth and affirmation. Couples have an opportunity to reflect upon a time in their marriage when, generally speaking, spouses affirmed each other readily and thought in glowing terms about each other.

### **Presentation Module—"Self-worth"; Exercise: "How It Is to Be Me"**

A healthy self-concept is fundamental to healthy, well-adjusted marriage and family relationships. Our self-concept is an intricate interweaving of what we believe God thinks of us, what we think about ourselves, and what we think other people think about us. Although the tendency to low self-concept is everywhere present because of our fallen human natures, improvement can be made and behavior patterns which spring from a low self-concept can give way to reflect an increased sense of worth.

Along with the awareness of one's own value and specialness comes a perception of the equal value of one's spouse. This is essential to marital growth.

Incorporating the ideas found in the Leadership Resources section of this mini-seminar and other materials that may be available, prepare your own presentation module (20-30 minutes).

The exercise [Handout #2 How It Is to Be Me](#) provides each spouse with an opportunity to reflect on his or her personal worth and to communicate with the marriage partner about this vital aspect. Give time for individual reflection.

### **Closing**

Express appreciation to all for their presence. Encourage each couple to pursue the communication they have begun with each other on this vital topic. Close with prayer.

## **LEADERSHIP RESOURCES**

### **How Our Self-Concept Affects Us**

The innermost thoughts and convictions determine the life (Prov. 23:7). People who have a healthy sense of personal worth are happier, better able to cope with life's problems and better able to relate to others. They tend to be more independent, popular, assertive and creative than those who do not. This applies to children as well.

"There is one need so fundamental and so essential that if it is met, everything else will almost certainly harmonize in a general sense of well-being. When this need is properly nourished, the whole human organism will be healthy and the person will be happy. This need is a true and deep love of self, a genuine and joyful self-acceptance, an authentic self-esteem, which result in an interior sense of celebration: It's good to be me. . . . I am very happy to be me!"— John Powell, *The Secret of Staying in Love*, p. 13.

Low self-concept is revealed through behavior and ways of coping. Depending upon their temperaments, people who don't feel good about themselves exhibit behaviors such as clowning, withdrawing, escaping, conforming, fighting, unhealthy extremes in compensation. Extreme low self-worth can lead to depression, disease, even death.

## The World's Criteria for Determining Human Value

We face today a virtual epidemic of low self-worth which can lead not only to misbehavior, but disease, depression, even death. Such epidemic proportions may be a result of the growing distance between what people sense themselves to be and what the world expects them to be. After all, secular society has its own very definite method of assessing personal worth. The world has its way of looking at people and deciding whether or not they are really valuable. What does the world look for in people?

The first thing that secular society notices is *beauty*. Countless millions are spent each year on beauty aids, cosmetics, hairstyling, facials and fashion-following by women and men, and teenagers. Major cosmetic companies and toy manufacturers are now pushing complete lines of cosmetics for the elementary-age set. It is generally true that beautiful, handsome people have a head start in just about every area of life.

The world has a second criterion. *Intelligence*.

Let's suppose, though, that you weren't born beautiful or handsome and you aren't so bright. If you were born with a silver spoon in your mouth, that is, into a family which has money, the world will still beat a path to your door. *Wealth* becomes the third way whereby society estimates the worth of a person. Next in line after beauty, intelligence and wealth comes *accomplishment*.

Through sheer effort and grit, the highly motivated, perhaps physically talented individual can earn the approval of society and come to be valued. The fascination with sports, the incredibly high sums we are willing to pay to the athlete who can take a lot of physical abuse, who has the skill to make the three-point basketball shot or hit the home run is evidence of this.

To some degree all of us are caught up in this value system of the world. Unconsciously we apply these criteria to our spouses and too often assign a particular value to our spouse depending on how he or she measures up.

**Popular psychology's plans for developing a good self-concept.** Numerous schemes, plans, self-improvement programs are now available, but by themselves they are hollow and leave us vulnerable and ultimately unsatisfied.

"Start by writing a list of things you do well or are good at. No matter how low you feel, you can come up with good things that you like about yourself. No one is going to see this list except you, so now is your chance to admit that you've always thought you have expressive eyes, or a sonorous speaking voice, or a nicely shaped forehead. Or maybe you disco splendidly but never have the chance. . . . I don't even care if you record the fact that you wear down your shoes evenly. If you really put your mind to it, you can do it. . . ."

"The best way to attain happiness is to decide what you want. Plan how to get it. Work like hell. And then savor your reward to the fullest."—Juliene Berk, *The Down Comforter: How to Beat Depression and Pull Yourself Out of the Blues* quoted in *Woman's Day*, March 11, 1980.

## A Spiritual Problem Needing a Spiritual Solution

*God's criteria for determining human worth.* Two great truths about us as human beings speak to this matter of personal worth.

• *Creation* (Jer. 1:5; Isa. 43:1, 7). We are precious, loved and special in His eyes, even in our deplorable condition. Sinful, yes, but of great value still; not because of anything we have of ourselves, but by virtue of who our Creator is.

- *Redemption* (Isa. 43; Matt. 3:17; 1 Peter 1:18, 19). God's act in redemption conveys the worth He attaches to every soul.

### **God's Plan for People-building**

*Antidotes for low self-worth.* To enable us to be healed and encouraged from the malady of low self-worth God has provided:

- The truths of the gospel of creation and redemption.
- The Holy Spirit to minister to us and be our Comforter.
- His rules for living which bring a sense of well-being.
- Each other—in the family and in the church—to share the gospel truth with each other and help one another experience on the human level the love and acceptance we can know with God.

*A spiritually sound sense of self-worth is life-changing.*

- No longer need we struggle to be valuable.
- We can have a new appreciation of ourselves.
- We can see others as Christ sees them.

Jesus gives an example of how to build worth in others (Matt. 12:20). "Bruised reeds" were strengthened to once again stand tall in His presence. Even when the fire of life was all but snuffed out, Jesus bent low and blew gently, nurturing any spark that was left.

"The Lord would have us ever to urge the worth of the human soul upon those who do not understand its value."—Ellen G. White, *Evangelism*, p. 461.

Jesus ever sought to press the truth of their worth home upon human hearts. Close examination of His encounters with many different kinds of individuals show that He did this by:

- Instilling hope.
- Giving practical help.
- Showing confidence and trust.
- Offering forgiveness and another chance.
- Being a friend.
- Accepting unconditionally.
- Focusing on strengths.
- Expressing love.
- Receiving graciously another's gestures of kindness.
- Separating the deed from the doer.
- Giving eye contact.
- Sparing embarrassment.

Brought into the circle of the family, lived out by couples in marriage and by parents in relationship to their children, this mind and manner of Jesus will do much to soften the harsh tones and sweeten the relationship we share together.

### **References**

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Powell, John. *The Secret of Staying in Love*, Niles, Illinois: Argus Communications, 1974.

White, Ellen G. *Evangelism*, Hagerstown, Maryland: Review and Herald Publishing Association, 1946.