

Relationship Counseling

Relationally Flat and Broken Down

In some ways our life is like a tire. It works perfectly when there is air in it and it is balanced. However, a tire that is low on air can be a problem. In your driving you may have experienced a tire problem. A tire with low air pressure will cause your car to pull to one side and handle erratically. You, as the driver, can ignore the problem and keep driving. In doing that you may eventually shred all of the tire from the rim and you end up stopped at the side of the road. Your forward momentum is halted by a missing tire that you should have stopped and repaired a long time ago. Being stranded on the side of the road we either call for help or wait until a nice person stops and give us assistance.

That illustration may also be true of our relationships. We are designed by God to function when we are filled and balanced. The problem is that often we can let certain parts of our life be less than full which causes us to behave and respond erratically. If we continue to operate our life being unbalanced and not filled correctly we will end up shredding valuable relationships. The result is often that we sit on the roadside of life until we get someone to stop and help us fix the problem.

What This Is:

This is a three part study that reviews our life and relationships from a Biblical perspective. Simply put, this is designed as a tool to get you talking about the issues in your relationship. In a way you could view this as the unexpected help along the side of the road. This is not designed to solve the problems, but help people see life from a different perspective and get them moving again by assisting them in addressing the relational difficulties that they face.

The following parts of this study focus on three key human characteristics of being physical, mental and spiritual. The more that we understand these three areas about ourselves and others the better we will be at managing the relationships in our lives. This has been developed as a marriage or pre-marriage counseling tool but it can be easily adapted to other relationships or settings. This is specifically designed to be used as a three part study in three sessions to help couples work through marriage issues or prepare couples for marriage. Each of the following lessons will contain a description of the of the general issues and an exercise that is designed to create thought and then conversation about the issue.

Relationship Counseling

PART 1

Our Physical Design of Tension and Change

In Genesis 1 we see that God created man and woman as physical people. God has designed us to live as physical people. We as physical people are taught to do things a certain way and we learn to enjoy living a certain way. We develop learned habits and we get into various routines. The problem comes when we allow someone else into our life and we find that they do not do things like us. The result is that we often respond in frustration and sometimes in anger over the differences. Their action is not what we are used to and it creates tension.

Exercise #1 External Factors of a Relationship

1. There are always things that attract us to other people. What things initially attracted you to the other person? List at least three items.
2. Use the following columns to list as many of your likes and dislikes about the other person that you can in 10 minutes. Use extra paper as necessary.

What you like about the other person	What you do not like about the other person

3. Compare and discuss your likes and dislikes. What is the same and what is different? Why do you feel so strongly about certain items on these lists?
4. Discuss how tensions are handled. Do you get instantly angry or do you hold your frustrations and let them out in other ways? Why do you respond in these ways?
5. Discuss what can be changed. Is this a simple fix for the other person? Is this dislike something you can live with? When we think about change we need to remember that we can not change others. With God's help we can change and with God's help others can change. Read and discuss Colossians 3:12-17.
6. Review these Bible verses in light of your relationship. How could these principles help?
1 John 4:19
Matthew 22:34-40

Relationship Counseling

PART 2

Our Mental Design of Value and Balance

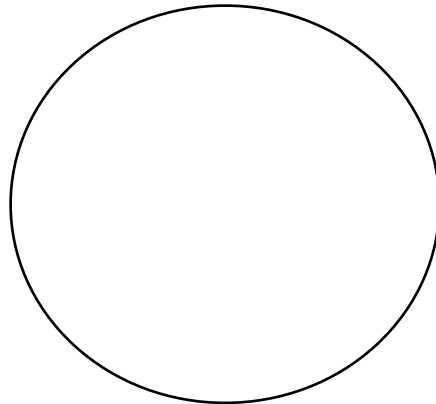
The human mind is a marvel of God's creation and still an unsolved puzzle to science. Through the mind, God has given each individual the ability to think and reason. We think deeply to solve issues in our lives and our world. As we ponder the realities of life we see the way the world functions but more importantly we understand our place in it. As we come to understand our role we gather or gain various responsibilities. These responsibilities consume our time and we only have a limited amount of time in any day or week. At times we find our value and importance from what we do. As we try to make the most out of every situation in life at times our schedule begins to run us. We end up doing what we see as important and valuable.

Exercise #2 Cognitive Factors of a Relationship

The circle below represents your whole life on any given day or week. Inside the big circle, draw a circle for each of the five main life responsibilities listed below that proportionally show how much time these take in your life each week. Label each circle with its corresponding number. Perhaps some may overlap like family and recreation.

Main Life Responsibilities

1. Job
2. Community
3. Family
4. Church
5. Recreation



1. Discuss if the circles within the larger circle accurately represent your life. What does this say about your priorities?
2. We all need a balance in our lives. For example we can't work all the time because it will destroy family and church relationships plus any time for personal rest that is found in recreation. Share the drawing and discuss the issue of being balanced. Are you balanced with your time and your responsibilities?
3. None of us live perfectly balanced lives. We need balance and seek to create balance. What thinking causes you to place an extra emphasis on certain responsibilities? Discuss why you give more time and attention to certain areas of your life. What is the mental thinking process that drives this practice? Is it the need to be valued or important?
4. What needs to change in your thinking so correct values are seen in your actions? What needs to change in order for your priorities to become more balanced?
5. Read and discuss Ephesians 5:15-17. This is not a verse about time management but about thinking God's way and placing value on the opportunities and responsibility given by God. Our value as people is found in God's love for us as seen in John 3:16. In our twisted sinful thinking deep within our mind we think that by doing more we can gain value.

Relationship Counseling

PART 3

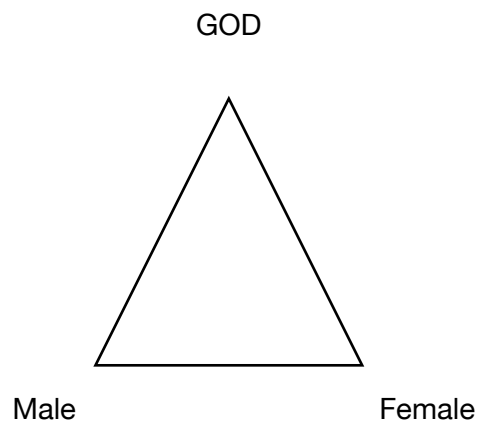
Our Spiritual Design of Commitment and Trust

Every relationship is built on and founded by commitment, trust and communication. Communication can not happen without the first two. A lack of communication breeds a lack of trust. A lack of trust breeds a lack of commitment. Finally, a lack of commitment marks the end of the relationship. Our relationship to and with God works in the same way. A relationship with God begins with commitment of faith in God. This commitment shows that I trust God. When we trust in God this will lead to an increased communication with God through prayer.

God has designed us as spiritual people. In Genesis 1:26-27 we see that God has made humankind, male and female, in His image. This idea of image is not a reference to our physical form but a reference to our mental and spiritual capabilities for relationships and service. The image of God in our lives has been covered and dirtied by sin which is often seen in the brokenness of our closest relationships. Spiritually we need to be renewed and cleaned.

Exercise #3 Spiritual Factors of a Relationship

Examine the triangle chart below. This is a visual chart of your life and your relationship to God. We are designed by God to reflect His image, but we can't do that if our life is covered with the dirt of sin. We must come to the point of recognizing our sin in contrast to God's holiness (Romans 3:23) and believing that salvation is not accomplished through any work of our own but by the grace of God through faith in Jesus alone (Ephesians 2:8-9). Look again at the triangle. The closer we are to God the more we can closely reflect Him and the closer we will be with each other. For more on salvation go to jethrotools.org and view the [Signal Light blog](#).



1. As you look at this chart where would you place your relationship with God? Why?
2. Discuss how a commitment to God can develop a strong spiritual relationship and a personal relationship. How can you build a spiritual relationship together that will draw your personal relationship closer?
3. We all need others in our life to help us grow spiritually and walk with us through life. How does church life affect your personal and home life? What other Godly people do you have around you to encourage, support and challenge you spiritually?
4. Discuss how God can be the center of your life and relationship. God wants to be the one that directs and controls our life to clearly reflect His image to others. As a husband and wife we reflect God's image most clearly when together we are closest to Him.