

Session One: **Knowing, Loving and Living**

Scripture:

1Cor 13:1-13

Phil 1: 9-11

Genesis 2:18-25

Questions:

- How well do you know yourself?
- How well do you know your (prospective) partner?
- Do you know that your partner has habits, desires, odours, etc., which may be obnoxious?
- Do you know that these often surface only after it's "too late"?
- What was the family sub-culture that you came from like? What will the new family sub-culture you are about to establish look like?

Introduction:

*There is enough material and grounds to cover in this whole area that would warrant at least two sessions. I will introduce the couple to some concepts and they will have to follow through, if they so desire, with a video series by John Trent and Gary Smalley: **Loving Lasting Relationships**. This is an eight-part series, covering the whole area of personality/temperament. Trent and Smalley focus on the subject in a way that help families blend strengths and differences to form a cohesive and effective team. Each section of the video lasts for approximately thirty minutes. There is a workbook that goes along with it. For couples who are intensely interested in the subject, I will recommend that they read the book by Smalley and Trent: **Two Sides of Love**.*

This is suitable material for a seminar for couples as a group. Parts of this may be skipped depending on the interest levels and the capabilities of the couple(s).

In this "manual," the material will be presented as one session but in the actual presentation, it will be extended over two sessions. Later on in the program, two sessions may be merged to still have a total of Seven Sessions.

Part I: Knowing Each Other and Before and While Living Together

Part II: Knowing and Loving Yourself and Each Other

Objective:

The purpose of this session is for the counsellor and the couple to get to know each other better. The couple will fill out some forms and questionnaires. The program of the next seven weeks will be outlined. We will agree on time commitment and to complete all assignments before each session (contracting). Sessions will not be re-scheduled except through prior mutual agreement and in the case of emergencies. Each session will last for approximately 90 minutes. If various couples are involved in counselling, the first session may be held in the evening and completed as a group. Whenever there are multiple couples, I will strive to form a group for the various sessions.

In this session, we will look at:

1. Knowing each other
2. Appreciating Personality and Gender Differences (The Two Sides of Love)
3. Fill out and discuss "The Family Cultures Model"

Part I: Knowing Each Other Before and While Living Together (Knowing is a Process)

(Source: Wangerin)

- A marriage begins with a spoken contract, a vow, a covenant.
- Marriage is not the initiation of the relationship, but a radical revision of an existing relationship (p. 20). This revision is hard work. It is work that, on many occasions, will precipitate crises and conflicts.

Wangerin divides this work into three parts:

1. Idealization/Realization
 - Good work here will lead to acceptance; poor work will lead to alienation
2. Mutualization
 - Good work here will lead to adjustment; poor work will lead to disengagement
3. Gender Differences
 - Good work here will lead to celebration; poor work will lead to disappointment, discontentment, even discouragement.

Idealization:

- Love often has the tendency of editing the facts to feel good
- Love is not blind, but it squints a little
- During courtship, couples often compulsively mimic/pretend perfection
- Idealization is more than natural. It is necessary

Realization:

Three rooms in the marital-house where idealization changes to realization:

1. Kitchen
2. Bathroom
3. Bedroom

In the **kitchen** the real and more spontaneous habits show up. The basic communal habits are revealed. Meals and methods signify the beast or the bird within.

In the **bathroom**, the true physical and personal habits are revealed.

In the **bedroom** intimacy appears; the way one partner refers to another at the most personal level, body to body, spirit to spirit. All of these are involved in the process of growing together, but realization must move to accommodation and acceptance.

Accommodation:

This is the recognition, acceptance and the celebration of differences. Differences at first can be distressing, but a couple needs to recognize and accept them as necessities, because diversity, mutuality and synergy (Ecc 4:9-12) are essential for have a healthy and happy marriage. They need to recognize each other strengths and skills as well as the stressors (weaknesses) that each one brings to the marital home.

Perfection in marriage is a myth. If one of the spouses were perfect, they would abhor the imperfection in the other, but since neither of them is perfect, they both need to accommodate and accept each other. (Cf. the Reciprocal Commands or “one another commands” in Scriptures).

Each spouse needs to focus on their own faults and to change themselves, not turn the other partner into a “project”. True and effective change originates from within. The worst possible reason to “take a person to the altar is to alter them”. Accommodation does not mean that one requires the other spouse to bend and bow to their expectations, but that each adjusts to the other person’s being and not only expectations. (Cf. Being “suitable helpers”).

Mutualization:

This refers to the harmonization of the patterns of values, priorities, opinions, tastes and schedules of the couple. Mutualization, like realization, mostly occurs after the wedding.

Two fallacies of mutualization:

1. Most people think they know themselves, when in fact they don’t.
2. Many people suspend life’s patterns for a while, particularly during courtship - this is usually playing at oneness and harmony

Marriage usually awakens the couple from the slumber (a dream) of these fallacies to the reality of what really is (a nightmare). This is a necessary step in the couple coming to know and to nourish true harmony in their marriage.

Knowing Oneness:

Oneness means many things to different people

- a) To some it means to be exactly alike – sameness and uniformity
- b) To others it means one partner controls and dominates and the other is silent and submissive
- c) To others it means that they have a fifty-fifty marriage proposition

None of the above will suffice. The couple needs to start thinking in terms of a fourth alternative, i.e., there are three entities in the marriage, the two partners and the relationship. Both of them need to serve the relationship, which in turn will benefit both. They need to start thinking in terms of the mystery. They are two individuals, who are whole, unique and free creatures of God, yet one (cf. p. 46).

Nourish Oneness:

This is the true work of mutuality. It is the realization of the common purpose because both are committed, not to oneself or to the other, but to the relationship. In this context, both partners use their wisdom, abilities, talents and experiences to build the relationship, which mutually benefits both.

Gender Differences:

There are cultural classifications of the characteristics of men and women. These classifications are not rules, but they reflect reality. The tendencies of male and female are radically different from each other. During courtship many of these differences are hidden or masked. After the marriage these differences rear their heads as rude surprises. These differences must be acknowledged, understood and managed. (For further details on this, read John Gray's *Men are From Mars, Women are from Venus* (Harper Collins Publishers))

The male is referred to the "*instrumental character*." He is usually pragmatic, focuses his values on future goals. He likes the words "progress" and "useful". He values are utilitarian.

The female is referred to as the "*expressive character*". She is usually more artistic and focuses on feelings and activities of the present. She is "in touch with one's feelings." She does not understand the necessity for progress, production or utility. She values relationships. She may not know the word "useful," but she loves the word "you." She has a "feeling heart", as opposed to her male counterpart, who has a "calculating mind". She grows flowers for beauty; he grows vegetables efficiently. She reads for the story; he studies to gain employment.

Undoubtedly, this is an oversimplification of the differences between two complex beings: male and female. It is stereotyping. However, both characters are necessary for a blessed relationship/marriage. They are complementary not conflicting or opposite genders. They both need to bring all they have and are to the third entity (the relationship). They both need to learn *about* and *from* each other. There is necessity for affirmation and appreciation, not criticism, humiliation and condemnation. The male was created for the female and the female for the male. Without the other, they are both incomplete. With each other, they can be what they were created to be – bigger and better, brighter and more beautiful.

Conclusion:

It takes a special kind of love to know, to live with and to love another person. This is particularly true of a person with whom you are just getting to know and with whom you will spend the rest of your life. This love has to be discerning, distinguishing and discriminating (Phil 1:9-11). As Christians, we have home-court advantage when it comes to marriage. We know the Originator. We have His Instruction Manual and we have His love and resources at our disposal. He is more willing to give and help than we are to ask. *“Ask and you will receive. Seek and you will find. Knock and it shall open up to you”*. Cf. Lu 11:9-10.

By ourselves, we are not ourselves. We only know each other and ourselves in the context of relationships. Solitary confinement is extreme punishment for man. *“It is not good for man to be alone.”* Cf. Gen 2:18.

God created male and female, for Himself and for each other. Relationships are not about being consumers but being donors and recipients. Love is a commitment, not a commodity for consumption. We need both, the wisdom of love and the labour of love to build strong marriages and homes.

We have to know, love and live with each other truly, to have a truly happy home.

Part II: Knowing and Loving Yourself and Each Other

(Source: John Trent and Gary Smalley (*The Two Sides of Love*, Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1990)

Temperament/Personality Trait Instrument

There are dozens of Temperament/Personality instruments in use. They range from sophisticated and technical to simple and practical. Many of them are extensive. Sometimes have as many as 300 questions. Users are often bogged down by the burden of answering these questions.

Gary Smalley and John Trent in their book, *The Two Sides of Love* (Colorado Springs: Focus on the Family, 1990) gave a practical and fun-filled way to discover one's temperament, without the encumbrances of hundreds of questions. Their intention was to develop a simple instrument that can be used with family, including children, friends and even co-workers. This instrument may find many practical applications in homes, churches, schools and workplaces.

The authors focus specifically on family. This is one of the main reasons I choose to use it in marriage and premarital counselling. I am certified to use another instrument which was developed for education and business purposes. Personality types are the same, regardless of one's nomenclature. One can be sophisticated or simple. I prefer simplicity, since we are not dealing with an exact science and our interest is to detect trends, not discover methodologies and develop formulas.

Trent and Smalley have as a basic presupposition that love has two sides: a soft side and a hard side. Most of us, they postulate, tend to dwell in the extremes, when we should be striving for a balance. They claim that this balance is achievable and that they have used the strategy they outlined in the book, extensively in their practices as Marriage and Family Counsellors to help their clients achieve it.

Before we strive for balance, we need to know *who we are* and *where we are*. Trent and Smalley developed a scale to help us accomplish this (cf. **A Hardside/Softside Evaluation**). They say, "It is essential that we learn to balance love's hard and soft sides every day, if we want to communicate to others the deepest more meaningful type of love" (p.6).

The biggest battles for many of us are not climbing the corporate ladder. Earning more money or fame, but trying to win the hearts of our loved ones at home. Trent and Smalley say that we need to take a lesson from nature. A rose has beauty and tenderness, but to protect it from being destroyed by the creatures, it also needs the harshness of the thorns to survive. Thorns do not detract from beauty and tenderness but protect, preserve and enhance it (ibid.).

Love needs to be a rosebush, instead of a thornbush. The hardside is incomplete without the softside. The hard side is the “protective love”. The soft side is the “unconditional love”. True love must be both unconditional and protective. The soft side empathises and listens instead of lectures. It reaches out with a touch or a hug. It has the characteristics of compassion, sensitivity, patience and understanding. The hard side of love is consistent, disciplines, protects, challenges and corrects. Without the soft, the hard side becomes calloused, demanding, insensitive and uncaring. Without the hard, the soft side becomes emotional, unstable and indulgent.

The two sides of love are manifested in Him whose very nature is love. He is the Sovereign Lord, as well as the Tender Shepherd. In Him, we see the hard side that is consistent, purposeful, protective and mighty with judgement and the soft side that is compassionate, tender, forgiving and merciful (p.8). He can be hard on sin (problems) yet soft on people. This is the balance we need to strive for. Those who are hard on problems can also be hard on people. Those who are soft on people can also be soft on problems. We need to emulate our Saviour and Heavenly Father and be soft on people and hard on problems.

Trent and Smalley use four animals to describe the four basic types of temperaments: **Lions, Otters, Golden Retrievers** and **Beavers**. These personality types tell us whether we are naturally soft or naturally hard in relationships. Lions and Beavers reflect the hard side, while Otters and Golden Retrievers reflect the soft side.

Practical Benefits and Ideas:

- There is no intrinsically good or bad type of temperament/personality. They each have their advantages and disadvantages, assets and liabilities.
- Look at the exercise as a window into your own life and the lives of others. Let it shed light on the subject. It is not meant to be weapon to attack each other, but a tool to help understand yourself and others and to assist in building stronger relationships.
- Scores should be crossed checked with loved ones or friends, to learn how others view us and to inject a bit of objectivity to the process.
- With this information we can minimise unhealthy relationships and be able to identify balance points.
- Before we can know and understand others, we first need to know understand ourselves.
- If we are serious about relationships, we need to allow the exercise to reflect the reality of our present state of being.
- To begin a trip, we first need to know where we are, where we want to go and how to get there. Use this exercise to establish base-lines, as well as to motivate you.

- We all have strengths, which when pushed out of shape become weaknesses. We can gain insight from dealing with our weaknesses. If we will overcome our weaknesses, we first need to know our strengths.
- The results of the exercise can be a helpful tool in resolving family conflict. Temperament dictates styles of communication, leadership and decision making. They determine how we live, love labour and lead.
- Many of us react strongly to labels or stereotyping. The purpose of the instrument is not to do this, but to detect trends. Each of us is a blend of the four basic personality types. These and other factors make up an innumerable amount of combinations. Using this exercise does not negate our uniqueness and differences. It can present an opportunity for us to acknowledge, appreciate, enhance and celebrate differences.
- We can blend our natural strengths with those of others to form effective teams (synergy).
- Our strengths are what make us invaluable in our relationships.
- Note words and phrases that describe consistent character traits, not occasional manifestations or what you wish to be. You can do the exercise to make yourself look better than you really are (caution). This is counter-productive and helps no one, least of all, you.
- Use separate sheets for each “significant other” in your life.
- Remember that people shift their actions and attitudes between home and work. It may be necessary to use a separate sheet for home and work.

A Hardside/Softside Evaluation

How do you tend to act in your relationship with/at: _____?

- | | | | | | | | | |
|--|---|---|---|---|---|---|---|--------------------------------|
| 1. Take the lead | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Follow |
| 2. Forceful | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Non-demanding |
| 3. Energetic | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Reserved |
| 4. Strive to accomplish personal goals | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Let others set your goals |
| 5. Be self-controlled | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Lack discipline |
| 6. Make quick decisions | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Hesitate in making decisions |
| 7. Want to hear facts | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Want to share feelings |
| 8. Be a motivator | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Follow |
| 9. Be highly competitive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Be non-competitive |
| 10. Be possessive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Share |
| 11. Be assertive | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Be shy |
| 12. Express anger to others | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Hold anger inside |
| 13. Resist correction | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Be very teachable |
| 14. Share your opinions openly | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Hide your true feelings |
| 15. Function well under pressure | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Function poorly under pressure |
| 16. Lecture when the person is hurting | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Listen and comfort |
| 17. Hold grudges | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Forgive easily |
| 18. Set rigid standards | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Set flexible standards |
| 19. Be hard on him/her as a person | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Be soft on him/her |
| 20. Be hard on his/her problems | 1 | 2 | 3 | 4 | 5 | 6 | 7 | Be soft on his/her problems |

Scoring the instrument:

Total all of the numbers circled = _____

Mark your total score with an X on the line below.

Compare how you score yourself with how others score you. Discuss differences.

Hardside

Intensity Index

Softside

20 40 60 80 100 120 140

Personality Strengths Overview

In each box, check each word or phrase that describes a consistent character trait of yours. Total the number checked and multiply by 2.

LION	BEAVER
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take charge <input type="checkbox"/> Determined <input type="checkbox"/> Assertive <input type="checkbox"/> Firm <input type="checkbox"/> Enterprising <input type="checkbox"/> Competitive <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys challenge </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Bold <input type="checkbox"/> Purposeful <input type="checkbox"/> Decision maker <input type="checkbox"/> Leader <input type="checkbox"/> Goal driver <input type="checkbox"/> Self-reliant <input type="checkbox"/> Adventurous </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Deliberate <input type="checkbox"/> Controlled <input type="checkbox"/> Reserved <input type="checkbox"/> Predictable <input type="checkbox"/> Practical <input type="checkbox"/> Orderly <input type="checkbox"/> Factual </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Discerning <input type="checkbox"/> Detailed <input type="checkbox"/> Analytical <input type="checkbox"/> Inquisitive <input type="checkbox"/> Precise <input type="checkbox"/> Persistent <input type="checkbox"/> Scheduled </div> </div>
<p>“Let’s do it now!”</p> <p>Double the number checked _____</p>	<p>“How was it done in the past?”</p> <p>Double the number checked _____</p>
OTTER	GOLDEN RETRIEVERS
<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Take risks <input type="checkbox"/> Visionary <input type="checkbox"/> Motivator <input type="checkbox"/> Energetic <input type="checkbox"/> Very verbal <input type="checkbox"/> Promoter <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids details </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Fun-loving <input type="checkbox"/> Likes variety <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys change <input type="checkbox"/> Creative <input type="checkbox"/> Group oriented <input type="checkbox"/> Mixes easily <input type="checkbox"/> Optimistic </div> </div>	<div style="display: flex; justify-content: space-between;"> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Loyal <input type="checkbox"/> Non-demanding <input type="checkbox"/> Even keel <input type="checkbox"/> Avoids conflict <input type="checkbox"/> Enjoys routine <input type="checkbox"/> Dislikes change <input type="checkbox"/> Deep relationships </div> <div style="width: 45%;"> <input type="checkbox"/> Adaptable <input type="checkbox"/> Sympathetic <input type="checkbox"/> Thoughtful <input type="checkbox"/> Nurturing <input type="checkbox"/> Patient <input type="checkbox"/> Tolerant <input type="checkbox"/> Good listener </div> </div>
<p>“Trust me! It’ll work out!”</p> <p>Doubled the number checked _____</p>	<p>“Let’s keep things the way they are.”</p> <p>Doubled the number checked _____</p>

Personal Strengths Survey Chart

	LION	OTTER	RETRIEVER	BEAVER
30	<i>L</i>	<i>O</i>	<i>G</i>	<i>B</i>

15

0
SCORES				

(Trent and Smalley gave the following brief descriptions of the four types of personalities (cf. pp.34-35). They devoted entire chapters, later in the book, for dealing with each type. Couples who wish to explore the topic further should read and discuss the appropriate chapters).

Lions:

Lions are take-charge leaders. They are usually the bosses at work, or at least they think they are! They are decisive bottom-line folks, who are doers, not watchers or listeners. They love to solve problems. Unfortunately, however, if they don't learn to use both sides of love, their natural hardside bent can cause problems with others.

Beavers:

Beavers have a strong need to do things "right" and "by the book." In fact, they are the kind of people who read instruction manuals! They like maps, charts and organization. They are great at providing quality control for a home or office. They are the efficiency experts.

Because rules, consistency and high standards are so important to beavers, they often communicate the hardside of love like lions. Beavers have deep feelings for those they love. Learning to balance the two sided of love, usually involves adding the ability to communicate that softness and warmth in a way that is felt and clearly understood by others.

Otters:

Otters are excitable, fun-seeking, cheerleader types, who love to *yak, yak*. They are great at motivating others and need to be in an environment where they get to talk and have a vote on major decisions.

Otters' outgoing nature makes them great networkers. They usually know people, who know people, who know people. Their only problem is, they don't usually know everyone's name! They are very soft and encouraging with others (unless under pressure, when they tend to use their verbal skills to attack). Because of their strong desire to be liked, Otters can often fail to be hard on problems, thus causing further problems.

Golden Retrievers:

These people are just like their "type" in nature. If you could pick one word to describe them, it would be "loyalty". They're so loyal, in fact, they can absorb extreme emotional pain and punishment in relationships and still remain committed. They are great listeners, empathisers and warm encouragers - all strong softside skills. They tend to be such "pleasers" that they can have great difficulty adding the hardside of love when it is truly needed.

Ten Ways to Increase Softside Love (pp. 101-132):

1. Deal with emotional “freeze points” in the past.
- Emotional freeze points reflect either a single event or a season of events that lock a person into giving only one side of love
2. Recognize that certain personality bent can set up barriers to softside love.
3. Learn to give others a “softside sandwich.”
- Cf. A time of hardness, surrounded with a times of softness
4. Understand what softness means to the other person.
5. Learn the secret of making hard decisions the soft way.
6. Recognize the destructive power of non-verbal hardness.
7. Become personally involved in helping others.
8. Allow tough times to mold you into soft people.
9. Keep your heart spiritually soft.
10. Make it your goal to be soft with those you love.

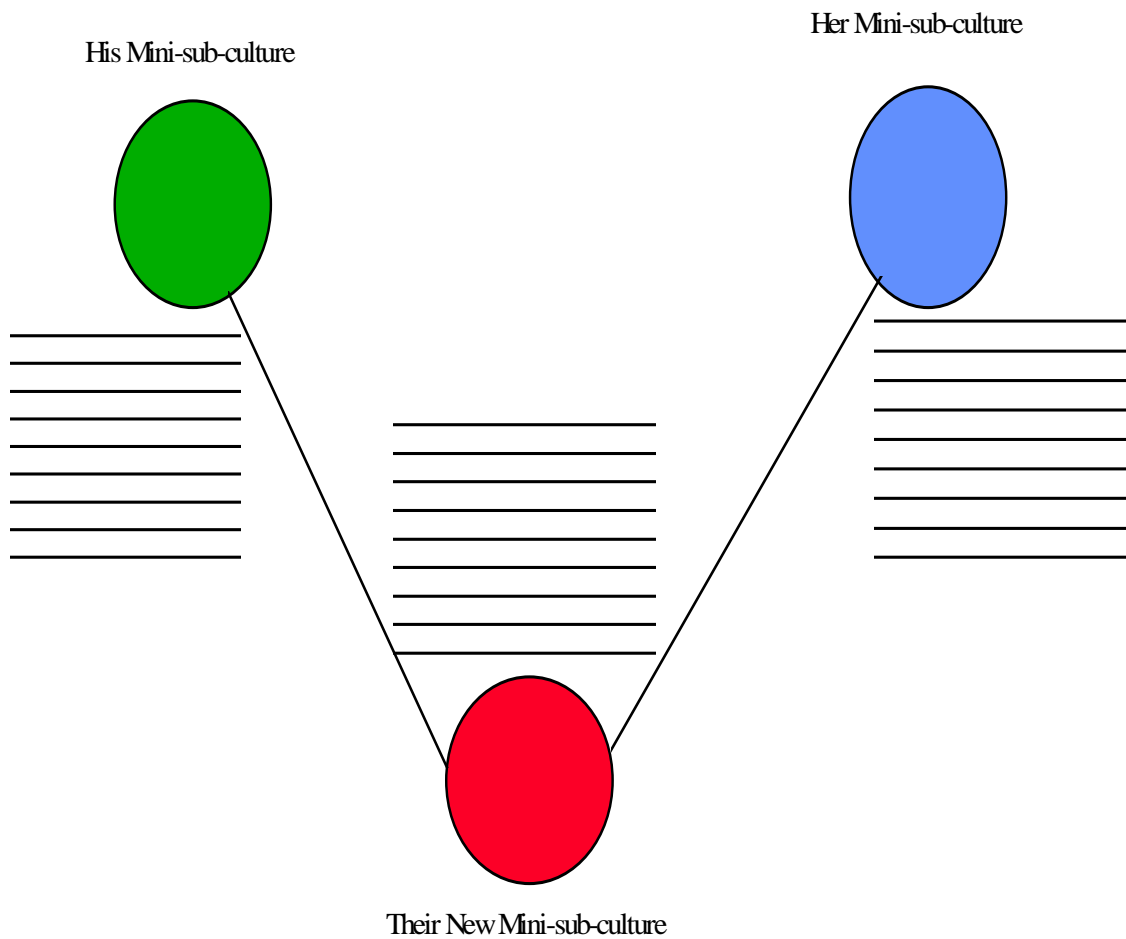
Ten Ways to Increase Hardside Love in a Healthy Way (pp. 133-160):

1. Spot emotional “freeze points” from the past.
2. Allow a short time span to build a season of closeness.
3. Learn to say “no”.
4. Confront what is at the heart of procrastination.
5. Avoid the trap of relying on instant change.
6. Become accountable to love.
7. Build relational bridges to carry hardside words.
8. Break hardside love into incremental steps.
9. Build spiritual confidence.
10. Set a lifetime goal of giving hardside love when it’s needed (Care enough to confront. Love must, at times, be tough)

Assignments:

- Complete the Forms and Questionnaires
- Discuss the above exercises with your Partner
- View Trent and Smalley Video, “Loving Lasting Relationships”
- Complete the Family Culture Trees
- Complete Hardside/Softside Evaluation
- Complete Personality Strength Profile

Family Sub-cultures



- What was it like in the families you came from?
- What will you like and strive for your new family to be?

Spend some time together during the next week filling out and discussing the above diagram.

(Source: Howard A. Eyrich: ***Three to Get Ready***, Grand Rapids: Baker Book House, p. 155)