

RESTORING INTIMACY

“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love.” **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

The first three lessons stressed the need for a husband and wife to experience intimacy in body, soul and spirit. If conflict has separated you and your spouse, this chapter examines how to restore intimacy.

Attraction and Commitment

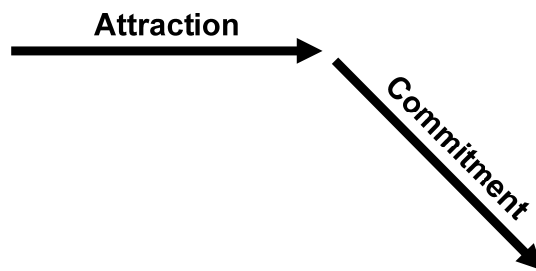
Every relationship begins with attraction. As you get to know each other, you desire to have your relationship with each other grow. You like what you see in each other. The highlight of the day is being with each other. You are careful to look your best. You want to keep up a good impression.

Attraction



You wish you could spend the rest of your life with this person. You decide to get married. You commit yourselves to one another.

“I am my beloved's, And my beloved is mine...”
Song of Solomon 6:3 (NKJ)

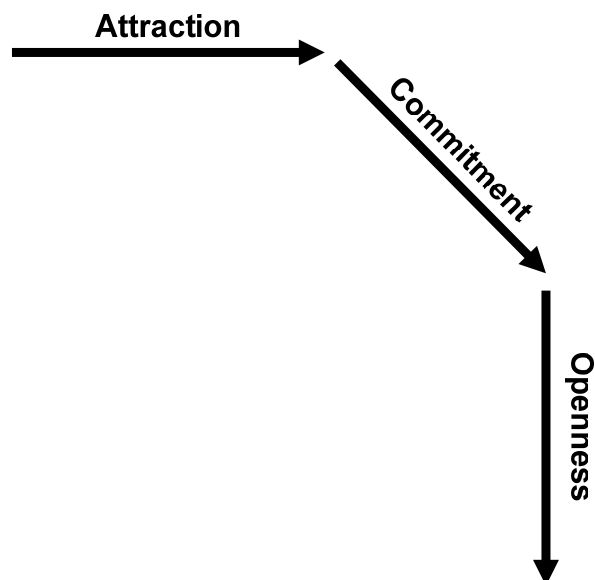


- Q1.** Describe the attraction and commitment stages you experienced with your spouse.

Openness

When a man and woman commit to marriage, their relationship begins to change. They give each other permission to be open and honest. They share their thoughts, feelings, common interests, and positive qualities with each other.

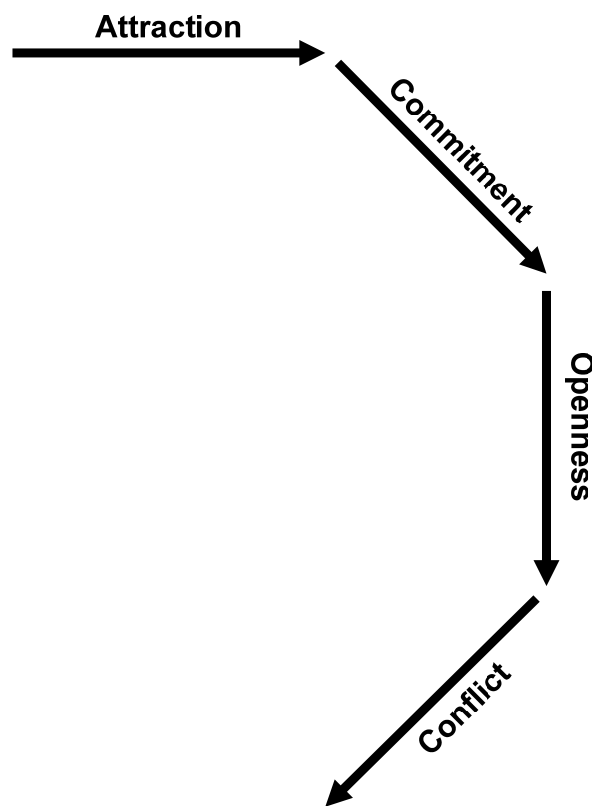
An intimate marriage requires openness.



However, as a result of being open and spending more time together, unpleasant qualities in each individual are exposed, such as selfishness and controlling behavior. This kind of openness may produce feelings of disappointment, disillusionment, and even shock.

Conflict

Openness can lead to conflict. Conflict is normal and to be expected in marriage. But if not handled properly, conflict can destroy a marriage. To simply avoid conflict isn't the answer. You will never achieve intimacy. Intimacy is the result of learning how to work through the conflict.



Q2. Describe a time when openness turned into conflict in your marriage.

Marriage exposes the self-centered part of you. The part of you that wants to be in control, is judgmental, and wishes to be served and praised.

Self-centeredness within a marriage can cause you to feel unappreciated, unimportant, misunderstood, falsely accused, or out of control. You get hurt. When you get hurt, you often want to hurt back.

Q3. Can you relate to any of those feelings? Which ones?

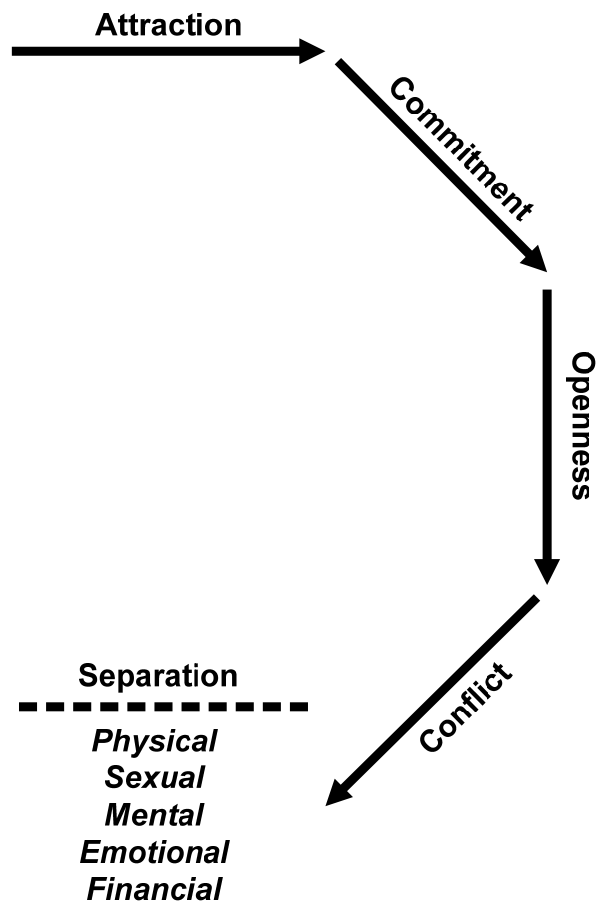
*“For wherever there is jealousy and selfish ambition,
there you will find disorder and every kind of evil.”*

James 3:16 (NLT)

Q4. How do you deal with conflict in your marriage? Give an example.

Separation

Unresolved conflict leads to separation. This separation can be physical, sexual, mental, emotional, and/or financial. Separation spoils intimacy and oneness in the marriage.



"What is causing the quarrels and fights among you? Isn't it the whole army of evil desires at war within you?"
James 4:1 (NLT)

You may be physically separated from your spouse. For example, you may not be living in the same house, sleeping in the same room, touching each other, or engaging in sexual relations.

- Q5.** Are you experiencing physical or sexual separation from your spouse? Explain.

There may be mental or emotional separation in your marriage. The divided partners begin to confide in others outside of the marriage or withhold their thoughts and feelings from each other.

- Q6.** Do you keep your plans secret and not consult your spouse? Explain.
- Q7.** Do you share your true feelings? Or have you built emotional walls to protect yourself? Explain.

Sometimes spouses separate their money from each other and take on the attitude of “What’s mine is mine, and what’s yours is yours.”

- Q8.** Do you have money or spend money that your spouse doesn’t know about?

The steps leading to conflict are inevitable in marriage. Yet conflict does not need to end in separation.

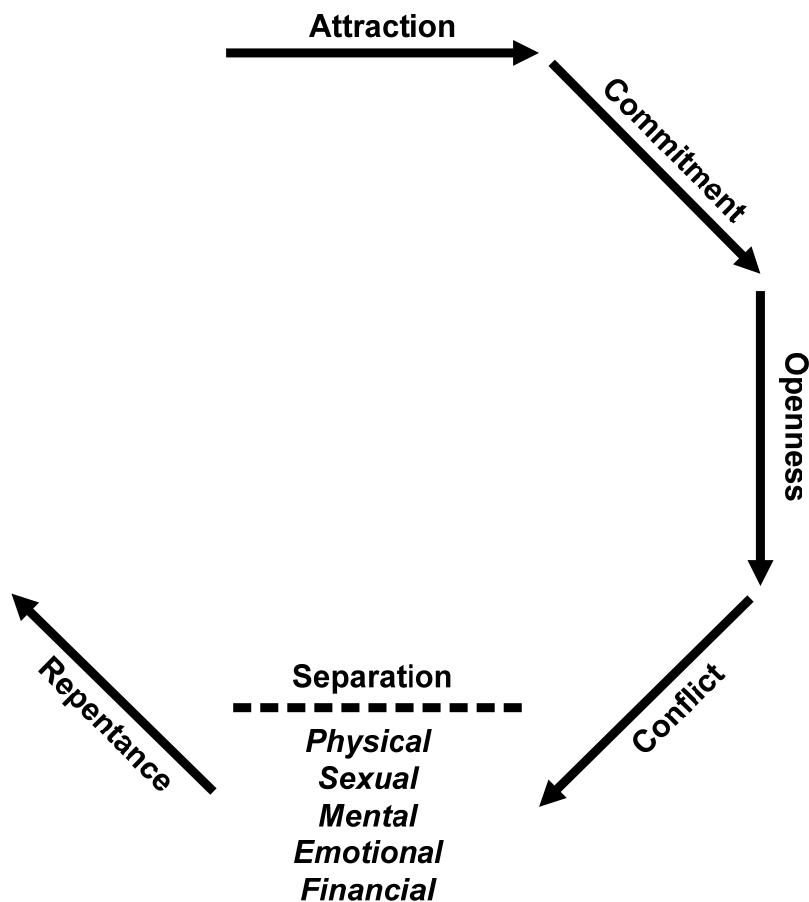
Conflict is actually a crucial part of growth and can result in increased intimacy. It is quite natural for conflict to lead to separation.

God uses the pain of separation to remind us to turn away from our selfish and controlling behavior. However, God desires that despite our differences we remain “one” (intimate).

Repentance

God wants us to move past separation. The upward journey to restore intimacy begins with *repentance*.

*“For God can use sorrow in our lives to help us turn away from sin and seek salvation. We will never regret that kind of sorrow. But sorrow without **repentance** is the kind that results in death.” 2 Corinthians 7:10 (NLT)*



Repentance begins with admitting to God that you were wrong in the way you acted or reacted toward your spouse.

- Q9.** Are you willing to take personal responsibility for your actions rather than focusing on your spouse's wrong? Explain.

By using the failures of you and your spouse, God can cause growth in your marriage. God used your spouse to reveal your selfishness problem. Now you can acknowledge and repent of it. Repentance includes a change of attitude and action.

“I thought about my ways, and turned my feet to Your testimonies.” Psalm 119:59 (NKJ)

Q10. If you are experiencing any kind of separation in your marriage because of conflict, what part did you have in the conflict and separation?

Q11. Are you willing to turn from any wrong attitudes or actions the Lord may be showing you? When?

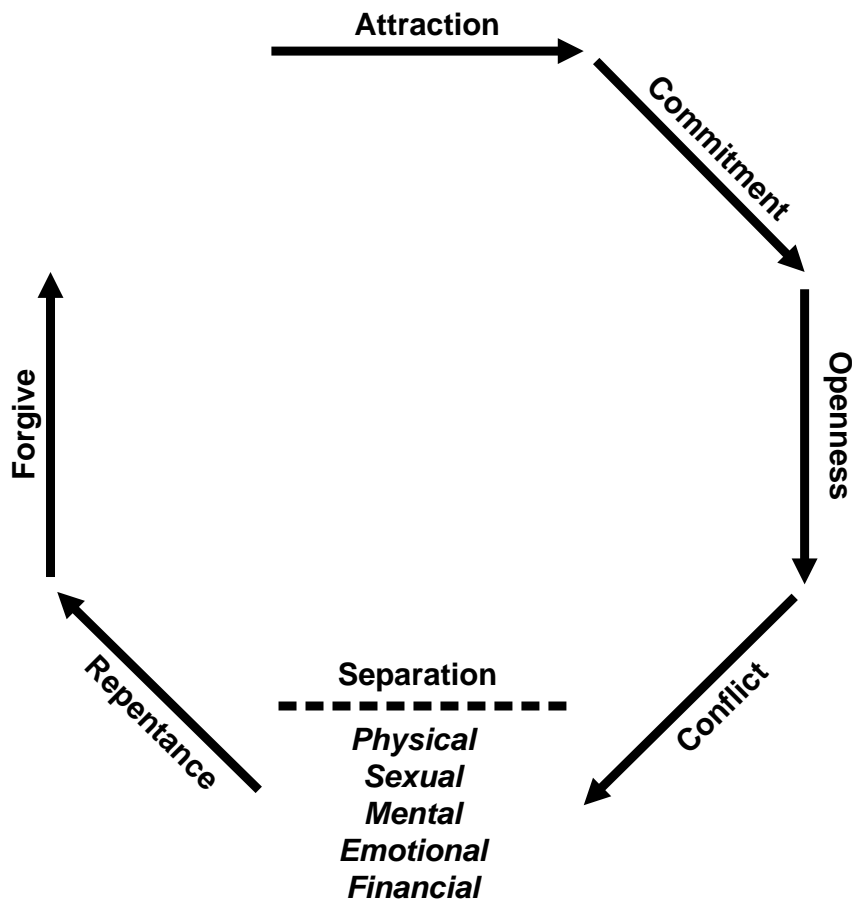
“If we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness. If we say that we have not sinned, we make Him a liar...”
1 John 1:9–10 (NKJ)

Forgive

The next step to restoring intimacy is to forgive. Forgiving your spouse is a powerful means of undoing bitterness and replacing it with love.

“And forgive us our sins, just as we forgive those who have sinned against us...” Luke 11:4 (NLT)

There are *two* parts to forgiveness. The first part is forgiving your spouse for the hurt he or she has caused you. This part is between you and God.



*"You must make allowance for each other's faults and forgive the person who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must **forgive** others."*
Colossians 3:13 (NLT)

Forgiveness is **not** simply trying to forget. It is not just letting time pass after an offense happens. It is not disregarding the wrong another person has done against you or even pretending that an offense did not matter.

Giving Forgiveness

- Forgive your spouse for his or her actions.
- Forgive your spouse for the hurt you felt because of his or her actions.
- Forgive your spouse for all the negative ramifications of his or her actions.

True forgiveness is choosing to accept the blood of Jesus as the full payment for what your offender did. Choosing to forgive is an act of your will; forgiveness is not based on your feelings.

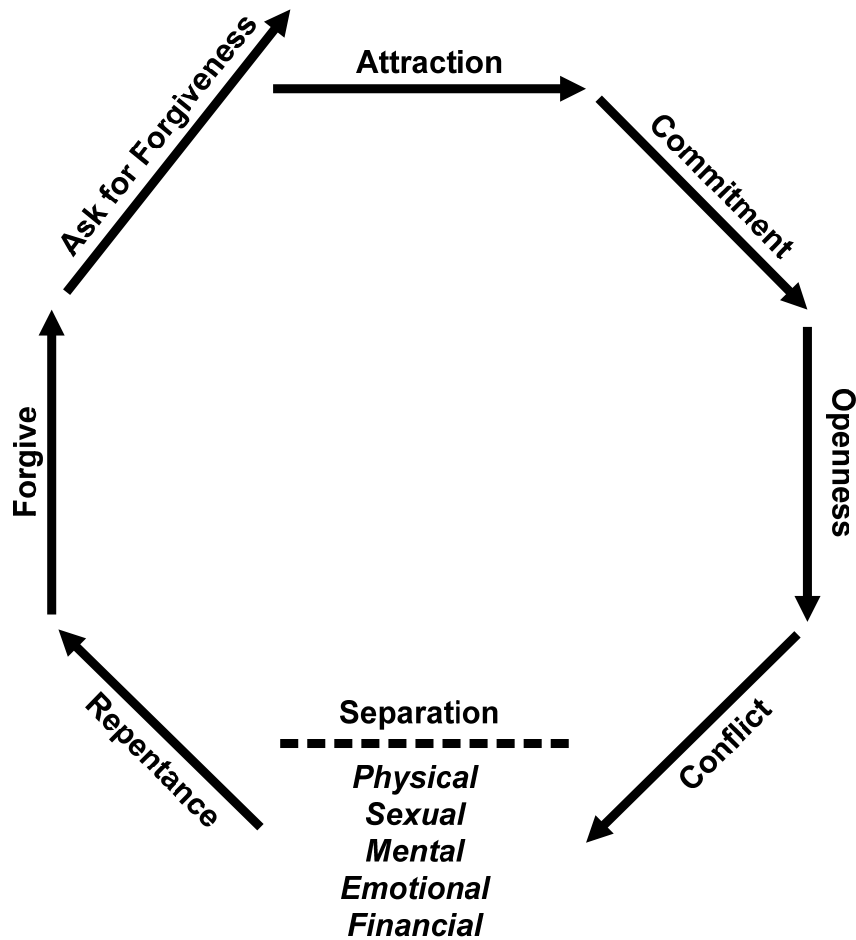
“...Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you.”
Ephesians 4:32 (NLT)

Q12. Are you willing to pray and forgive your spouse?

Ask for Forgiveness

The first part of forgiveness is to forgive your spouse. The second part of forgiveness is asking your spouse to forgive you. To be reconciled, you must ask for forgiveness for what you have done wrong.

*“So if you are standing before the altar in the temple, offering a sacrifice to God, and you suddenly remember that someone has something against you, leave your sacrifice there beside the altar. Go and be **reconciled** to that person. Then come and offer your sacrifice to God.”*
Matthew 5:23–24 (NLT)



Part of being *reconciled* to your spouse, is seeking forgiveness when you have wronged him or her. Even if your spouse's wrong seems bigger, you need to take responsibility for your unkind words and actions.

Seeking forgiveness is:

- seeing how you have hurt your spouse by your *words* or *actions*. Your spouse has been offended by what you did not by what you were thinking. Your sinful *thoughts* about your spouse are between you and God. Repent of those to Him.
- going to your spouse. Be sure you have completed the process of forgiving your spouse before you ask for forgiveness.

- saying, “**I was wrong** for what I did (state your offense). Would you please forgive me?”
- doing everything that you can to make restitution. For example: It might mean being willing to rebuild trust and show yourself as reliable.
- responding quickly.

“Do your part to live in peace with everyone, as much as possible.” **Romans 12:18** (NLT)

Ask the Holy Spirit to reveal to you anything for which you might need to ask your spouse to forgive you.

Q13. What are some things for which you need to ask forgiveness from your spouse?

Humbling yourself and asking for forgiveness after you have already forgiven your spouse, is the last step to restoring intimacy.

“Be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other’s faults because of your love.” **Ephesians 4:2** (NLT)

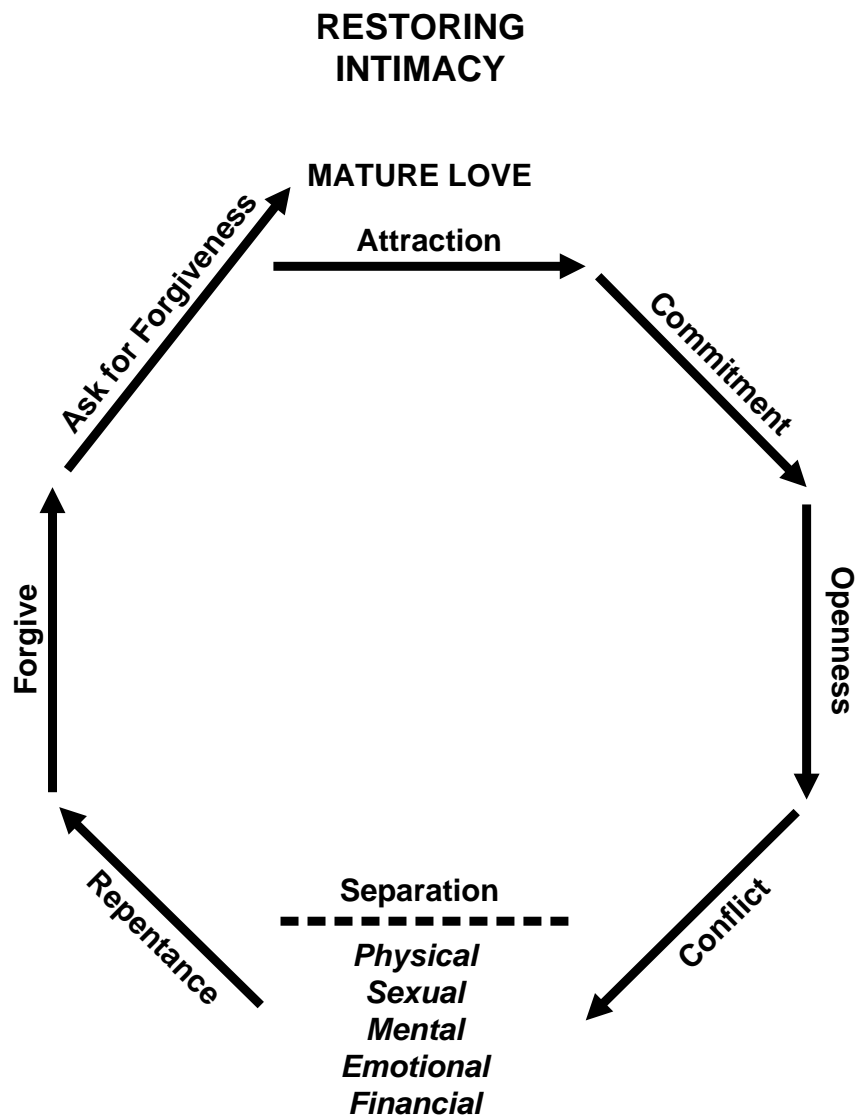
Mature Love

Mature love focuses on accepting rather than being accepted. It focuses on Christ’s acceptance for personal worth. It emphasizes giving rather than getting. It is a love that knows it has a selfishness problem and is quick to repent, forgive, and ask for forgiveness.

Marital intimacy is rooted in mature love that seeks to treat your spouse better than you have been treated. Mature love creates more attraction, which leads to a greater commitment, openness and so on through this process again.

Jesus prayed this prayer for His future disciples, you and your spouse.

"I am praying not only for these disciples but also for all who will ever believe in me because of their testimony. My prayer for all of them is that they will be one, just as you and I are one, Father – that just as you are in me and I am in you, so they will be in us, and the world will believe you sent me." **John 17:20–21** (NLT)



God desires that you and your spouse be as one and that you experience intimacy in spirit, soul, and body. When you are intimate in all three, it is a blessing to others around you.

Conclusion

Pray now to move from separation to restored intimacy.

Ask God to change you.

Start choosing to be different in your behavior toward your spouse.

Your flesh tries to divide your marriage. The “real you” desires unity and doesn’t want to stay in the place of separation.

Your flesh is easily offended and wants to punish your spouse. The “real you” wants to forgive and doesn’t want to hold onto hurts and offenses.

You are not your flesh. The “real you” loves your spouse!

Restoring Intimacy

Diagram

Notes

