

# **NEW HOPE CHRISTIAN FELLOWSHIP**

**6240 VERNER AVE.  
SACRAMENTO, CA 95841  
916-348-6997**

## **AGONIA<sup>©</sup> STUDENT'S MANUAL**

**DOUGLAS AND SITA SHEARER • AUTHORS AND FOUNDERS**

# **REDISCOVERING ONE ANOTHER**

“REDISCOVERING ONE ANOTHER” IS THE SIXTH OF EIGHT SEPARATE MANUALS WHICH TOGETHER CONSTITUTE THE ENTIRE COURSE

**JULY 16, 1999 EDITION**

**DO NOT REPRINT OR COPY**

*Special Note:* This manual is meant only for students enrolled in properly certified Agonias. The changes it presses cannot be effected by single individuals or by counselors attempting one-on-one therapy. A small group setting is essential - overseen by instructors who have been properly trained. This manual is meant to build the church of our Savior Jesus Christ and bring peace and joy into the homes of the saints for whom he died.

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**REDISCOVERY<sup>©</sup>**  
**CHAPTER 1**  
**BREAKING BACK INTO EACH OTHER'S LIFE**  
**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

Week \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.

	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
	Two Chapters from the Gospels	15 Minutes of Prayer	Prayer Journal	Squabble Rule Violations	Response to Correction	Agonia Contacts	Fruit of the Spirit	Does Not Blame Spouse	Shares Joy with Spouse	Rebuffed Overtures
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted____ Total Positives____ Ratio_____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# TONIGHT'S CLASS

## BREAKING BACK INTO EACH OTHER'S LIFE

Once again, let's review two important procedures: (1) how to discuss an obnoxious character trait and (2) how to process a disagreement. There are four rules governing the discussion of a character trait and seven rules governing disagreements. It's vital that you understand and rigorously apply these rules. You will be richly blessed.

### The Four Rules Governing the Discussion of Character Traits

1. If there are any unresolved offenses between the two of you, you cannot discuss the character traits that have occasioned those offenses. You must first resolve the offenses; and only then can you discuss the underlying character traits.
2. You must ask your spouse's permission to discuss a specific character trait.
3. You cannot pursue it as an offense - simply a point of discussion.
4. Your spouse *always* reserves the right to break off the discussion at any point without giving any reason whatsoever. And you must *graciously* back off.

### The Seven Rules Governing Disagreements

1. Learn to *distinguish* between disagreements and offenses.
2. Most disagreements *do not need to be resolved*.
3. Learn to discuss your disagreements with *no thought of resolving them*.
4. Learn that you don't need your spouse to agree with you - that your own emotional and spiritual equanimity is *not dependent upon it*.
5. Learn to acknowledge that your spouse is *entitled* to his/her own opinions - that those opinions - and indeed the very process of formulating them - are vital to his/her own sense of self-identity.
6. Learn to *enjoy - actually enjoy - discussing* your disagreements.
7. Learn to use your disagreements *to validate each other*.

## IDENTIFYING YOUR SPHERES OF INTEREST

1. Identify at least four hobbies or interests that are close to your heart - that you enjoy doing - *really* enjoy doing. If there are more than four, that's OK; write them down. Try not to go beyond six items though. If you can't think of four, that's fine; but, whatever you do, don't "manufacture" any just for the sake of listing them. Write down only what you genuinely enjoy; e.g., skiing, camping, hunting, attending baseball games or the opera, dancing, gardening, window shopping at the mall, etc. Your list may include items that you haven't done in quite a while - perhaps you've "*given them up*." Write them down anyway. Just make sure that you *really* enjoy them.

- |          |          |
|----------|----------|
| 1. _____ | 2. _____ |
| 3. _____ | 4. _____ |
| 5. _____ | 6. _____ |

2. Have your spouse select two items from the list you've compiled. Only two! These two will then constitute her "*point of entry*" into your life. (That's why the four - or six - items you've listed above must truly *identify you*.)

1. \_\_\_\_\_ 2. \_\_\_\_\_

## EXPLANATION

Some individuals find it difficult to actually list any *personal* interests. That reveals two important facts about them: (1) They don't possess much of a concrete *sense of self*. They don't really "*know who they are*." Consequently, (2) any relationship they establish - including, of course, marriage - is not likely to be very well rounded and healthy. Remember, a well rounded, healthy marriage *presumes two individuals both of whom possess a well defined sense of self*.

Some persons will try to *justify* their lack of personal interests - explaining that they enjoy "serving others" or that their children absorb their attention and make it impossible to set aside any time for themselves. But what's actually happening is that they're being *swallowed up* into other peoples' lives. They're living their lives vicariously. We're not talking about selfishness here; we're talking about *self-awareness*. "Who am I?"

God is certainly not selfish. The Cross proves that; but he knows who he is - and he's not at all reticent about declaring it.

Isa. 40:25                      To whom then will ye liken me, or shall I be equal?  
saith the Holy One.

How can you invite someone into your life if you don't "*have a life of your own*" to share? If you're not aware of your own *unique* identity? If you can't define yourself existentially - if you can't say, "*This is who I am and this is what I like*"? Knowing what I like doesn't necessarily mean that I insist on always getting my way. It simply means that *I know what I like*. That's all. It certainly doesn't mean that I'm selfish. You can't form any kind of a meaningful relationship - let alone marriage - if your sense of self has become so repressed and atrophied that you have nothing to share with others.

Get off by yourself and ask God to help you either *cultivate* a sense of self or *recover* a sense of self. Because that's what you'll be able to share with your spouse. That will give your spouse a *point of entry* into your life. What did you enjoy doing before you got married? What have you dreamed about doing? What have you always wanted to do, but have never tried?

What a person likes doing is a window to his soul. It gives us a glimpse of who he is. That's why you're being asked to list your *personal* interests and hobbies. Take this assignment seriously. Pray about it.

### ***A BAD STRATEGY***

Quite frequently I'll listen to couples explain a strategy to me that they're convinced is worthwhile and effective. It goes something like this: "

*My wife and I have decided to lay aside our own personal interests  
- interests that absorbed our attention before we got married - and  
cultivate new ones together as a couple.*

That sounds good; but it isn't. I don't mean to suggest that developing new interests is bad - not at all. What's bad is asking yourselves to set aside any personal interests you brought to the marriage - because, in

so doing, you're inadvertently impoverishing yourselves; you're ceasing to be the persons you have always been; you're laying aside who you were when you first began dating and courting one another.

## ***THE BETTER STRATEGY***

The far better strategy is to know what your wife or husband likes doing - realize that it helps define who he or she is - and, instead of asking him or her to give it up, cultivate the same interest and use it as a "*meeting ground*." Make your spouse's personal interests a *point of entry* into his or her life. And, yes, you can cultivate the same interest. *You simply make yourself do it.* Again, that's faith. You may not start off liking it, but so what! Over time, you'll be surprised at how keen your interest becomes.

In the First Agonia, there was a husband who enjoyed stock car racing and a wife who enjoyed Jewish folk dancing. The wife cultivated a lively interest in stock car racing - and learned the difference between an "Indy" car and a "Formula One;" and her husband took up Jewish folk dancing. Another husband learned to like "flea-markets" - poking around in boxes and crates - rummaging through piles of discarded junk. Another learned to enjoy window shopping at the mall. And still another learned to like gardening.

I want to stress the importance of *actually learning to like* what your spouse enjoys.

1. Husbands, pay attention here: if your wife enjoys the ballet, you can't simply drag yourself along - gritting your teeth and reigning in your disgust. You've got to go *much* further.  
Learn to *like* ballet;  
learn its structure and form;  
learn what a pirouette is, a pas de deux, and a pas de chat;  
learn the difference between French Ballet and Russian Ballet.  
Remember: *you're meeting her on **her** ground - you're honoring her as a distinct individual - you're affirming her self-identity - you're telling her that she matters - and that you don't want to make her over into your own image.*

### *Directions for Husbands:*

Select two of your wife's interests; then schedule two dates for *each* interest - and make plans together that revolve around them - a total of four dates. Each date must consist of at least one *full* day together.

2. And, wives, if your husband enjoys professional football...  
learn what an off tackle slant is and a "Green Bay sweep;"  
learn to distinguish between a tight end and a wide receiver;  
learn to appreciate the fluid beauty of a Jerry Rice and the drama of a "*two-minute drill*."

### *Directions for Wives:*

Select two of your husband's interests; then schedule two dates for *each* interest - and make plans together that revolve around them - a total of four dates. Each date must consist of at least one *full* day together.

That's a total of eight dates during the course of a single year - four for the wife and four for the husband. Jot your dates down on the form provided on page 14.

Meet your spouse on the ground of his or her choosing - and, once there, you'll rediscover one another - you'll rekindle the joy of simply "*hanging out*" with each other.

## ***ROMANCE***

Two times each year you and your spouse must make plans to get away together for at least a *full weekend* (Friday through Sunday evening). The getaway must **not** revolve around "a project." It must consist *only* of "hanging out" with one another - and simply enjoying one another's companionship. *Absolutely no children are permitted.* Romance is the *sole* motif. Jot your times down on the form provided on page 14.

## ***FAMILY***

Finally, at least twice each year, you must make plans together to get away as a whole family - with the children. The "getaway" should revolve around your children, their friends, or other relatives. Romance is secondary; if it occurs, great! It's an added bonus. But that's not the purpose of the get-a-way. Jot your dates down on the form provided on page 14.

## ***ADDITIONAL FORM***

On page 15, there's a special form designed to enable you to monitor one another. It's far too easy to schedule vacations and times away together and then not follow through. And it's easy to justify it. Other matters crop up that, at the time, seem more important. *That can't be permitted. You're giving your word.* You must be held accountable - and you must be prepared to hold your agonias-mates accountable as well. You're turning over a new page in your life together as husband and wife. You're changing your priorities. You're not going to allow other items to slip between you and your spouse any longer. All that is going to stop! But you will need to be monitored - and this form provides for that.

The forms are on the next two pages. You should begin looking them over this evening and make a start toward filling them out. You can complete them during the course of next week - in preparation for the class.

# BREAKING BACK INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIFE

1. SPHERES OF INTEREST
2. ROMANCE
3. FAMILY

Description

When Begins

Length of Time

<b>Spheres of Interest</b>	<b>My Interests</b>	Interest #1		When	How long
				When	How long
		Interest #2		When	How long
				When	How long
	<b>Spouse's Interests</b>	Interest #1		When	How long
				When	How long
		Interest #2		When	How long
				When	How long
	<b>Romance</b>		Weekend #1	When	How long
			Weekend #2	When	How long
	<b>Family</b>		Vacation #1	When	How long
			Vacation #2	When	How long

### **Spheres of Interest**

1. Your spouse must select two of your interests. He/She must then commit himself/herself to joining you in those interests - and cultivating an enthusiasm for them that matches yours. Select two dates for *each* interest - and make plans together that revolve around them - a total of four dates. Each date must consist of at least one *full* day together.
2. You must select two of your spouse's interests. You must then commit yourself to joining him/her in those interests - and cultivating an enthusiasm for them that matches his/hers. Select two dates for *each* interest - and make plans together that revolve around them - a total of four dates. Each date must consist of at least one *full* day together.
3. *Children and relatives are not permitted.*

### **Romance**

Two times each year you and your spouse must make plans to get away together for at least a full weekend (Friday through Sunday evening). The getaway must *not* revolve around "a project." It must consist *only* of "hanging out" with one another - and simply enjoying one another's companionship. *Absolutely no children are permitted.* Romance is the *sole* motif.

### **Family**

At least twice each year, you must make plans together to get away as a whole family - with the children. The "getaway" should revolve around your children, their friends, or other relatives.

# BREAKING INTO ONE ANOTHER'S LIFE

## SCHEDULE FOR ALL THE AGONIA

		Spheres of Interest		Romantic Get-a-way		Family Vacation	
		Describe (one or two words) the Interests that Spouse Selects	When Scheduled	Describe Romantic Weekend	When Scheduled	Describe Family Vacation	When Scheduled
Name of Couple	Husband	1.		1.		1.	
		2.					
	Wife	1.		2.		2.	
		2.					
Name of Couple	Husband	1.		1.		1.	
		2.					
	Wife	1.		2.		2.	
		2.					
Name of Couple	Husband	1.		1.		1.	
		2.					
	Wife	1.		2.		2.	
		2.					
Name of Couple	Husband	1.		1.		1.	
		2.					
	Wife	1.		2.		2.	
		2.					
Name of Couple	Husband	1.		1.		1.	
		2.					
	Wife	1.		2.		2.	
		2.					



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## CHAPTER 2

### REVIEW

# WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #2	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #3	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #4	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #5	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #6	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #7	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

Week \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.

	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
	Two Chapters from the Gospels	15 Minutes of Prayer	Prayer Journal	Squabble Rule Violations	Response to Correction	Agonia Contacts	Fruit of the Spirit	Does Not Blame Spouse	Shares Joy with Spouse	Rebuffed Overtures
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted____ Total Positives____ Ratio_____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

## IT'S TIME FOR "THE PERIODIC PLACATERS REPORT"

Take some time this evening to monitor the progress the placaters are making in overcoming their fear of "facing off" with their respective spouses. Go back to the last time they were scored - and compare that score with the score for this evening. Press the placaters hard!

### THE PERIODIC PLACATERS REPORT



Placaters are usually cast in the role of "victim" - and, in a very real sense, that's an accurate depiction - because they're so easily "pushed around" and "controlled." They "walk on egg shells" to preserve the peace. They won't confront! But the peace they purchase produces a profound bitterness - and dooms any possibility of intimacy. What we want to do is help the placaters - usually the wife, but sometimes the husband - to start holding their ground and "engaging" their spouses. And, toward that end, we'll be periodically monitoring the progress they're making in overcoming their fears. There will be three grades that are assigned: (1) the placaters will give themselves a grade; (2) their respective spouses will give them a grade; and, finally, the Agonia, as a whole, will grade their progress. The grades will be letter grades: A, B, C, D, and F. ***This will be a group effort. Let's work hard at it!***

Names of the Placaters	Placater's Grade	Spouse's Grade	Agonia's Grade
 _____			
 _____			
 _____			
 _____			
 _____			
 _____			
 _____			



A spouse who bullies and intimidates - usually the husband, but sometimes the wife - won't be backed off until his spouse starts to hold her ground and face off with him. When that begins, the whole weight of the Agonia can swing in behind her and provide support. ***But she is the key.*** She must begin standing her ground. Until that happens, the Agonia is paralyzed - and its resources can't be brought to bear. We aren't grading the progress he's making - because he's not the key here. ***She is.*** He'll begin to change when she starts to "engage."

# TONIGHT'S CLASS

Simply follow-up on last week's assignment. Read your forms out loud to one another. It's important that you've filled them all out - and that the purpose of the lesson is well understood. You must commit yourself to staying true to your word - and to helping your Agonia-mates stay true to their word as well.

From time to time your instructors will be following up on the commitments you've scheduled on each of the forms.

## ***HOMEWORK:***

Please read *Chapter 2 - Differences in Sensitivities and Moral Scruples.*"



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## CHAPTER 3

### DIFFERENCES IN SENSITIVITIES AND MORAL SCRUPLES

## WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #2	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #3	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #4	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #5	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #6	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>
Day #7	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>	<hr/> <hr/> <hr/>

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

Week \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.

	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
	Two Chapters from the Gospels	15 Minutes of Prayer	Prayer Journal	Squabble Rule Violations	Response to Correction	Agonia Contacts	Fruit of the Spirit	Does Not Blame Spouse	Shares Joy with Spouse	Rebuffed Overtures
Day #1				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #2				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #3				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted____ Total Positives____ Ratio_____

**INSTRUCTIONS:** (1) The "Three Disciplines," columns 1-3: one "no" for any day for any of the disciplines results in a "no" for the entire week. (2) "Squabble Rules," column 4: keep daily track of (a) how many times you violate the rules and (b) how many times your spouse violates the rules; at the end of the week, eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (3) "Response to Correction," column 5: keep daily track of how often you notice that either you or your spouse does not respond positively to correction and rebuke. The criteria consists of (a) non-defensiveness and (b) attentiveness. Grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and low and average the remaining scores. (4) "Agonia Contacts," column 6: (a) phone call to an agonia-mate over ten minutes = 1 pt.; (b) personal, face-to-face contact over a half an hour = 3 pts.; (c) Having an agonia couple over for dinner = 5 pts; (d) participate in a meeting of the full Agonia other than the class itself = 5 pts. (5) "Spirituality Indices," columns 7-9: grade yourself on a scale of 1-10 - with "10" an A+, "1" an abysmal failure, and "5" middling. Eliminate the high and the low for the week and average of the remaining scores. (6) "Overtures," column 10: keep daily track of how often you reach out to your spouse; and also keep track of how often, if at all, your overtures are rebuffed. At the end of the week, list the total overtures you undertook; and compute a ratio of positive responses to the total.

# TONIGHT'S LESSON

## DIFFERENCES IN SENSITIVITIES AND MORAL SCRUPLES

This chapter is a copy of Chapter 7 of the Forgiveness Chapter. It's an examination of Romans 14. But it needs to be reread at this important juncture. When we first studied Romans 14, our whole point was somewhat different: we wanted distinguish between a genuine offense and a mere disagreement. What we're after now is not the same - and that's why we're revisiting Romans 14.

The whole point of this entire section is for you, as husband and wife, *to affirm one another - to confront your differences and learn not only to live with them, but actually appreciate them.*

In the last chapter, you learned how to make your different *interests* - which help to define your respective identities - *points of entry* into each other's lives. You were told not to ignore or obliterate those differences, but, instead, to make them a "*meeting ground*" which becomes not only a "*fellowship site*," but a means of **validating** one another. Now, we're going to be taking up another kind of difference: *differences which touch upon sensitivities and moral scruples*. This lesson is merely a review: we examined it several months ago in relationship to processing offenses. It's important, however, to revisit it once more. Unless it's thoroughly grasped and put into practice, genuine intimacy won't be achieved.

### ROMANS CHAPTER FOURTEEN

Romans 14:1 admonishes us to learn how to *live with disagreements* - even with disagreements that touch upon moral convictions; that we shouldn't always insist upon their resolution. The lesson it teaches is crucial - especially for a generation that finds any kind of disagreement not only unpleasant, but far too often intolerable.

Rom. 14:1            Him that is weak in the faith receive ye, but not to doubtful disputations.

The phrase "*weak in the faith*" is not meant to identify believers whose faith in God is slackening. That's not its meaning here. Paul is not pointing out believers who stand in jeopardy of falling into apostasy. The phrase is meant only to identify believers whose faith is not sufficiently robust that it permits them to enjoy the full liberty that God's grace affords them. There's no doubt here in the Apostle's mind that they're wrong - which is why he uses the phrase "*weak in the faith*." The liberty God's grace allows *should* permit all Christians to ignore the ceremonial observances that the Mosaic order imposes - which is what's at the core of the disagreements Paul enumerates in Romans Fourteen.

The word "receive" is "proslambano" ("προσλαμβάνω") - and it means

1. to take to one's self;
2. to take as one's companion;
3. to take or receive into one's home, with the collateral thought of kindness;
4. to grant someone access to one's heart;
5. to take into friendship.

Examples of its use are found in several other passages of scripture - including...

Acts 28:2            And the natives showed us extraordinary kindness; for because of the rain that had set in and because of the cold, they kindled a fire and **received** us all.

Rom. 15:7            Wherefore, **accept** one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God.

Philem. 1:17        If then you regard me a partner, **accept** him as you would me.

The word "receive" here in Romans 14:1 is in the present tense, the middle voice, and the imperative mood. The present tense implies on-going activity; the middle voice indicates that the subject is acting upon himself; and the imperative mood puts the word in the form of a command. Often, when the present tense (though more often the imperfect tense), the middle voice, and the imperative mood are all combined, what's being urged is "a frame of mind" - "a disposition." What Paul's asking us to do, in other words, is cultivate an *attitude* - an attitude that carries over into every day life - an attitude that then governs our every day behavior. It's not a single instance that he's focusing on; it's a habit that he wants us to adopt. Paul is telling us to reach out to those who are "*weak in the faith*" - embrace them - include them in our fellowship - make them *feel at home* with us.

The phrase "*but not to doubtful disputations*" qualifies the word "receive." The meaning here is that we're not to invite those who disagree with us into our company for the purpose of engaging them in conversations which center on our disagreements. The term "*doubtful disputation*" is not a good translation. The NASB provides a better translation:

Romans 14:1        Now accept the one who is weak in faith, *but not for the purpose of passing judgment on his opinions.*

The actual sense of the Greek, however, is even more pointed: "*not for the purpose of passing judgment on his scruples.*"

If we find ourselves in the company of someone whose moral scruples we know are unnecessarily stunted, it's often hard to resist the temptation to pound away at his errors. He refuses to buy a Christmas tree - saying that it offends his sensitivities; he prefers to worship on Saturday, not Sunday - saying that Saturday is the Sabbath and that, therefore, Saturday is when we should worship; he won't drink wine - convinced that the word "wine" used in the Gospels is really grape juice and that Jesus would never allow actual wine to cross his lips. We know he's wrong; we know his exegesis of the Scriptures is inaccurate and deficient; but we're told here to "*let it pass.*" We're being instructed here to "*live with our disagreements.*"

The errors Paul has in mind here do not touch the core of the Christian faith; they do not, therefore, jeopardize anyone's standing in God's sight - and should not, correlatively, jeopardize anyone's standing within the church community. It's not that we're being told never to attempt correction; however, Paul *is* telling us here not to press our attempts too strenuously; it's not necessary; don't do it. It needlessly disrupts the harmony of the church; it upsets the "koinonia" into which we've all been called. What an important truth - and how much it needs to be honored - not only within our respective church communities, but within our respective marriages as well! *Some disagreements don't need to be resolved; so, we need to let them alone.*

Let's move on now to verse 2.

Romans 14:2        For one believeth that he may eat all things: another, who is weak, eateth herbs.

Romans 14:3        Let not him that eateth despise him that eateth not; and let not him which eateth not judge him that eateth: for God hath received him.

There's no need for us to know exactly why the "weak" insisted on a diet composed only of herbs<sup>1</sup>; but, whatever the reason, it's clear that it sprang from their moral convictions. Why? Because verse 3 tells us that the "weak" tended to *censor* anyone who didn't share their scruples - who, instead, went right on ahead and ate meat. That's the meaning of the word "judge." Once again, Paul's use of the word "weak" makes it clear that they're wrong - that their convictions are far too narrowly drawn. On the other hand, the "strong" tended to *ridicule* the "weak" - which is the sense of the Greek word translated "despise." The strong, then, suffered from the same blight afflicting the weak. Yes, their moral convictions were more aligned with God's truth; nevertheless, their drift toward strife and factionalism was just as pronounced. What we have then are two groups: The first *censoring* the second; and the second *ridiculing* the first. That's a very common conundrum isn't it - whether in marriages, in churches, among colleagues, or among friends? And what's the answer? Verse 3 gives it: Paul first turns to the "strong" and admonishes them to stop ridiculing the "weak;" then he turns to the "weak" and admonishes them to stop censoring the "strong." But, unlike his admonition to the "strong," Paul explains *why* to the "weak;" and that's because the "weak" stand in need of an explanation: *their moral convictions are at issue*. Their consciences are grieved. That's not true of the "strong." His explanation is simple and straightforward: *God has wholly embraced the very persons they're condemning*. And if God has cast his mantle of love and acceptance over them, who are they to withstand it? It's the same truth that Paul underscores in Romans 8:34.

Romans 8:34      Who is he that condemneth? It is Christ that died,  
yea rather, that is risen again, who is even at the  
right hand of God, who also maketh intercession for  
us.

Are they holier than God? Does their concern for righteousness exceed God's? That's the point Paul is making - and it carries over to the next verse.

Romans 14:4      Who art thou that judgest another man's servant? to  
his own master he standeth or falleth. Yea, he shall  
be holden up: for God is able to make him stand.

Verse 4 begins with a rhetorical question - and its gist is very simple: *the persons you're presuming to judge aren't your servants*; therefore, you lack the right to judge them. That's the meaning of the phrase *"...to his own master he standeth or falleth."* But there's more: God is not only judge, he's *savior* - and that's the point of the next sentence: *"Yea, he shall be holden up: for God is able to make him stand."* It's not simply that God is our *judge* - ready to pounce on us with his judgment; he's also our *savior*. What God is telling the "weak," then, is very simple:

1. Stop calling "unclean" and "contaminated" the very persons I've invited into my household.
2. Stop presuming to judge - because you lack the right. *I alone will judge my servants.*
3. I'm not only their judge, I'm their *savior*; and, as such, I'll enable them to "stand."

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## FOOTNOTES

1. Some scholars believe that the issue was rooted in idolatry - that in Corinth meat for sale in the public market was in all likelihood first dedicated to pagan deities - which some believers insisted contaminated it and thereby made it unfit to eat. But there's no evidence in the passage that lends direct support to this suggestion. In 1 Corinthians 8 and 10, there's no question that idolatry is what's at issue - because Paul explicitly tells us so. And if that's the case in 1 Corinthians, why isn't it the case here in Romans 14? It's hard to be dogmatic here.

Let's move on to the next verse.

Romans 14:5      One man esteemeth one day above another: another esteemeth every day alike. Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.

The nature of the disagreement now changes - from dietary regulations to Sabbath observances and holy days; but its essence is the same - with (1) the "*weak in faith*" still clinging to the Mosaic order - and insisting on its continuing significance and (2) the "*strong in faith*" still convinced that the Mosaic order has been consummated in Christ - and, therefore, fully superseded. What we have here, then, is no different from verse 3:

1. the "weak" do not yet fully grasp the liberty that Christ has imparted to them - and, consequently, they censor the "strong" for enjoying it; and, by inference,
2. the "strong," though more aligned with biblical truth, ridicule the "weak" - and are unable to keep themselves from the same spirit of dissension and animosity.

The problem is exactly the same; *but Paul's admonition is different.* Here Paul simply says "*Let every man be fully persuaded in his own mind.*" And we do well to pay close attention here. ***Paul is underscoring the crucial importance of personal identity.*** In verse 1, Paul told us to stop making our differences of opinion the topic of our conversations; that, more specifically, we shouldn't invite the "weak" into our fellowship for the purpose of berating them. Why? *Because it disrupts the harmony that God wants to characterize the church.* If our disagreements don't touch upon an essential of the faith, we shouldn't permit any dissension to arise because of them. Let them alone. But here in verse 5, Paul carries his argument one step further. Our opinions help to define our respective *personal identities*; and it's not simply the opinions themselves that are determinative - the substantive nature of those opinions - but ***how*** they're derived. The whole process of formulating an opinion - the very process itself - helps to produce a ***concrete sense of self.***

*This is my opinion!  
I've framed it!  
I've turned the whole matter over in my mind, and this is my conclusion!*

Paul is saying that we need to respect that process - ***and the best way to go about it is to leave untouched the opinions which are its result.*** Notice again how Paul composes his admonition:

Romans 14:5      ...Let every man be fully persuaded in his ***own*** mind.

*Personal consciousness* is critical - in its own right. That's what Paul is declaring.

Let me try to be as succinct as I can:

*Whenever we try to needlessly "force" an agreement, we inadvertently undermine the very basis of community - whether that "community" is a church or a marriage. Why? Because "community" presupposes individuals who have managed to acquire a concrete sense of self - and the process that helps to produce that sense is the very process that leads to the formulation of personal opinions - with one person's opinion quite often at odds with another person's opinion.*

A husband who's forever picking away at his wife's opinions - even when they've assumed the form of moral convictions opposed to his - is undermining his relationship with her. And the awful irony is that he's apt to think that he's strengthening the relationship; he's apt to think that disagreements are disrupting and their elimination is helpful. The same holds true of a wife who's forever disputing her husband's opinions.

Likewise, a pastor who insists on total agreement within his congregation is making the same tragic mistake.

Again, it's not that we can't occasionally challenge one another's opinions; it's that we shouldn't press our challenges to the point that we're led into the mistake of needlessly *forcing* an agreement. Again, we're not talking here about any of the *fundamentals of the faith*.

## ***HOMEWORK***

Each of you, as couples, should list the *three* most nagging, most nettlesome disagreements plaguing your marriage. The kinds of disagreements you list should, of course, conform to the kinds raised in Romans 14 - *differences of opinion - especially differences that revolve around moral convictions*. You need to discuss those disagreements *in light of what you've learned about disagreements*. You should use the form provided on the following pages. Come prepared this next week to tell how you did. The whole Agonia will assess what you have to say. You must remember that your discussions during the course of the week should be conducted *in the Spirit* - meaning that however troubling any discussion becomes - however irksome it might prove to be, there's no excuse for losing your joy, for failing to be kind and gentle, for losing your patience, for becoming strident and angry, etc.

# DISAGREEMENTS

Give some thought to the differences of opinion you and your spouse find most troubling - especially differences that revolve around moral scruples. List the three most nagging disagreements below - and describe each one. Include in your description how frequently it arises and how intense it usually becomes. How does it affect your every day life? Do you feel that you're close to resolving it? Or is likely to remain a disagreement - and you'll simply have to live with it? How do you "feel" about not being able to resolve it?

## DISAGREEMENT #1

Provide a name for this disagreement \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the nature of this disagreement - *including how it affects your every-day life* \_\_\_\_\_

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How frequently does it arise? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 - 10, how intense does this disagreement usually become when it arises? \_\_\_\_\_

Has this disagreement reached an impasse - or are you close to resolving it - and if not, why not, in your opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you feel that you can live with this disagreement - simply let it go? If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Discuss this disagreement between yourselves - husband and wife - in light of what you've learned about disagreements - and then describe the results below. \_\_\_\_\_

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Finally, if this disagreement can't be resolved, are you prepared to use it as a means of honoring and validating your spouse \_\_\_\_\_

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# DISAGREEMENT #2

Provide a name for this disagreement \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the nature of this disagreement - *including how it affects your every-day life* \_\_\_\_\_

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How frequently does it arise? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 - 10, how intense does this disagreement usually become when it arises? \_\_\_\_\_

Has this disagreement reached an impasse - or are you close to resolving it - and if not, why not, in your opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you feel that you can live with this disagreement - simply let it go? If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Discuss this disagreement between yourselves - husband and wife - in light of what you've learned about disagreements - and then describe the results below. \_\_\_\_\_

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Finally, if this disagreement can't be resolved, are you prepared to use it as a means of honoring and validating your spouse \_\_\_\_\_

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# DISAGREEMENT #3

Provide a name for this disagreement \_\_\_\_\_

Briefly describe the nature of this disagreement - *including how it affects your every-day life* \_\_\_\_\_

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How frequently does it arise? \_\_\_\_\_

On a scale of 1 - 10, how intense does this disagreement usually become when it arises? \_\_\_\_\_

Has this disagreement reached an impasse - or are you close to resolving it - and if not, why not, in your opinion? \_\_\_\_\_

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Do you feel that you can live with this disagreement - simply let it go? If not, why not? \_\_\_\_\_

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Discuss this disagreement between yourselves - husband and wife - in light of what you've learned about disagreements - and then describe the results below. \_\_\_\_\_

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Finally, if this disagreement can't be resolved, are you prepared to use it as a means of honoring and validating your spouse \_\_\_\_\_

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***Once again, have them save these forms for future use. We'll be revisiting them when we examine the issue of authority. Insert them in your binder and don't lose them.***



**REDISCOVERY<sup>®</sup>**  
**CHAPTER 4**  
**REDISCOVERING ONE ANOTHER**  
**WEEKLY PRAYER JOURNAL**

WEEK OF \_\_\_\_\_

	Prayer Items	When Answered How Answered
Day #1	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #2	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #3	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #4	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #5	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #6	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____
Day #7	_____ _____ _____	_____ _____ _____

# DAILY MONITORING FORM

*Week* \_\_\_\_\_

Instructions for scoring have been provided by your instructors. However, a brief description is given below.

	Column #1	Column #2	Column #3	Column #4	Column #5	Column #6	Column #7	Column #8	Column #9	Column #10
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Day #4				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #5				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #6				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
Day #7				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Overtures Attempted Positive Responses
<b>Average for Week</b> Eliminate the high and low				Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse		Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	Your's Your Spouse	
<b>Totals</b>	<b>Yes or No</b>					<b>Total</b>				Total Attempted____ Total Positives____ Ratio_____

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# TONIGHT'S LESSON

## TALKING OVER YOUR DISAGREEMENTS

### ***FOLLOW UP ON LAST WEEK'S HOMEWORK ASSIGNMENT***

Tonight's lesson should follow up on the homework assignment you were given last week. Each of you, as a couple, must discuss before the whole Agonia the disagreements you have listed on your respective forms. How well were you able to revisit those disagreements in light of what you've learned about them?

1. A mere disagreement should never be considered an offense, in and of itself. How often did you fall into that trap during your discussions last week - reacting to any of the disagreements you've listed with the same moral indignation that should be reserved only for actual offenses.
2. Did the disagreements you've listed conform generally to the kind of disagreements Paul examines in Romans 14 - especially differences of moral scruples<sup>1</sup>.
3. Are you beginning to grasp how important it is to back away from needlessly *forcing* agreements? Are you learning that forcing an agreement does not serve to strengthen a relationship, but only to undermine it.
4. Are you able to use your disagreements to honor and validate one another.

### ***HOMEWORK***

1. Please bring copies of your "*Breaking Into One Another's Spheres*" forms - and be prepared to give a report on how well you're done in terms of holding to your commitments.
2. Please read *Chapter 1 of the Sexual Intimacy Manual - "Sexual Purity and Idolatry."*

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## FOOTNOTES

1. It's important to bear in mind that Paul's whole discussion of "disagreements" does not include disagreements that touch upon any of the fundamental tenets of the faith. It's important, therefore, to be able to correctly identify those tenets.

