

Tools to Untangle Families

Lesson Plan

Lesson Purpose: To gain tools for analyzing the interactions of families in trouble

Overview: Families sometimes contact pastors to help with their problem person. However, unhealthy systems within a family are often a cause of the problem. This lesson provides tools to identify harmful ways of relating, the first step in bringing families back to health.

Opening:

- Give each class member an index card. Ask them to describe on the card the ideal family. (Give prompts if needed—how family members would interact with each other, activities of the family, the tone of the family).
- Collect the cards.
- Read the cards aloud, having class members guess who wrote each card.

Scripture Reading: The ideal place to learn how to be in the church is in the family. This scripture sets the tone for the church, which is also the healthy tone for the family. (Ephesians 4:14-16)

Then we will no longer be infants, tossed back and forth by the waves, and blown here and there by every wind of teaching and by the cunning and craftiness of people in their deceitful scheming. ¹⁵ Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ. ¹⁶ From him the whole body, joined and held together by every supporting ligament, grows and builds itself up in love, as each part does its work.

Mini Lecture: *Tools to Untangle Families*—Distribute the note taking sheet and show the mini lecture.

Exercises:

Exercise 1: Family Health Continuum

- Draw a Closeness/Separateness Continuum.
- Consider the following scriptures.

So in Christ, we, though many, form one body, and each member belongs to all the others. Romans 12:5

God sets the lonely in families. Psalm 68:6

For each one should carry their own load. Galatians 6:5

- On the continuum, mark the spot that describes your family of origin.
- Discuss with the class how your family lived or didn't live according to the principles in these scriptures.

Exercise 2: Family Boundaries

- Review the types of family boundaries on the note taking sheet.
- Most of us are tempted to construct either an impermeable boundary or a permeable one. The impermeable boundary helps us to keep separate from the world but keeps us from going effectively into the world. The permeable boundary makes it easier to conform to the world. Which boundary is more apt to be your personal temptation?
- Discuss with the class steps you can take to move toward or maintain a healthy boundary.

Exercise 3: Family Subsystems

- Review the graphs showing what can occur in family subsystems. Think of a family you would like to help. Write a short description of what could be going wrong within that family's subsystems.
- Discuss with the class what interventions you could make to help this family.

Exercise 4: Support, Control, and Influence

- Review the support/control/influence graphs on the note taking sheet.
- With a partner, complete the following tasks:
 - Identify a family in the Bible and identify the quadrant (*high support/high control OR high support/low control OR low support/low control OR low support/high control*) that best describes that family. What are your evidences?
 - Discuss your church community. What is the parental culture of your church community in terms of control? What is the parental culture of your church community in terms of support? What is the parental culture of your community in terms of releasing parental control and influence?
- Report to the class and discuss.

Closing:

- Silently review Luke 4:18-19.
- Mark words or phrases that are significant for you.
- As a group pray about families in your churches and communities. As you pray, incorporate words, phrases, and ideas from this passage.