

THE FAITHFUL HOUSE: Affirming Life, Avoiding Risk

Core Manual Module



Catholic Relief Services
in collaboration with
Maternal Life Uganda
and
Maternal Life International

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Illustrated by Karen Ray Brower

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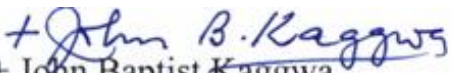
Foreword to the First Edition

The family is the basic unit of the Church and the nation. Marriage is the first institution that God made; when He instituted marriage, husband and wife becoming one flesh, He intended the family to be the source of human life and a centre of God's love. God's plan and desire is to see that all human beings are brought up in good and stable families. To neglect the family is to take away life. The neglect of family life has resulted in different problems and challenges for our communities. Many marriages are under attack in different ways and now more than ever there is a need for special attention to the family in today's society. Among those challenges and difficulties are HIV/AIDS and the great pain and suffering it brings to couples and families.

The Faithful House is a clear and compelling response to these challenges. The Faithful House underscores the importance of abstinence and faithfulness in building strong and committed marriages and healthy families. In turn, these marriages and families become foundational in creating "civilizations of love" which define authentic human progress.

The Faithful House program is intended for young people and married couples. The program emphasizes chastity and faithfulness before and during marriage as proven major ways of reducing HIV infections. In order to benefit maximally from the process of *The Faithful House*, couples need to attend the program together. In going through the program couples have a great opportunity to build their marriages for their own good, for the good of their families and thereafter to be able to reach out to other couples. This opportunity is especially important in the context of the challenges presented by HIV and so many other issues affecting families.

The training manual and approach used promises to have wide application throughout Africa, offering individuals, couples, churches and dioceses a practical and accessible means of promoting HIV risk avoidance. I therefore recommend all people to study and apply *The Faithful House* in order to bring about positive change in marriages, families, communities and nations.


+ John Baptist Kaggwa
BISHOP OF MASAKA,
Uganda, East Africa.

Acknowledgements

The Faithful House training manual has come about through the hard work and advocacy of Catholic Relief Services (CRS), Maternal Life Uganda (MLU) and Maternal Life International (MLI). As well, we would like to acknowledge the tremendous work of the CANA Marriage Ministry and the Uganda Catholic Charismatic Renewal, who for many years have been working to build and support marriages in Uganda. The manual also drew experience and expertise from different dioceses in Uganda that are involved in family and marriage apostolate and in a special way we recognize the work of the *Family Life Education Program* (FLEP) of The Uganda Catholic Secretariat.

In Uganda many dedicated couples and individuals have given of their time and expertise in developing and refining the training manual. The work would have been impossible to prepare without the contributions of Fred Mawanda, Drs. Deo and Monica Kizito, Joseph and Serah Alumansi, Augustine and Catherine Ssekibuule, Charles Birungi Akiiki, Fr. John Kennedy Lubega and Fr. Semusu Larry (Dr.). We are grateful for the many hours of secretarial work and documentation by Mary Hellen Akol. Recently the program has been incorporated into the CRS sponsored Ugandan ART program and has been favorably evaluated by the Data Mart Consulting Firm (Muhwezi, M.K).

In addition to Uganda, *The Faithful House* has also been successfully introduced into Rwanda and Ethiopia. In Rwanda, Laura Dills and Malia Mayson have been responsible for implementing the program, while in Ethiopia Mitiku Tellila, Dr. Dehab Belay, Abba Tamrat Seyoum and Dr. Degu Mariam have teamed up to bring the program to Ethiopia. We are grateful for the hard work and commitment of all of these individuals.

All of the organizations are greatly indebted to the tireless work of the Executive Director of MLI, Cort Freeman and to Karen Brower who has made an ordinary manual extraordinary through her pictures and graphics. As well, we are grateful to the excellent team from Catholic Relief Services including Matt Hanley, CRS HIV/AIDS Technical Advisor, who has given valuable commentary on the science behind “A” and “B,” Mrs. Hiwot Tsegaye who has capably and graciously managed the financial end of the project and Mrs Irene Naikaali who has coordinated the development of “Affirming Life/Avoiding Risk” in Uganda.

We are encouraged that *The Faithful House* continues to be met with enthusiasm. In March of 2008, the program will be introduced into Nigeria under the auspices of CRS Nigeria and the Catholic Secretariat of Nigeria. As in other countries, we are confident it will bring positive change to the people and communities it serves. May all who have worked so hard to develop *The Faithful House* know how much their efforts are appreciated! May *The Faithful House* be a means for thousands of African families to avoid HIV/AIDS and to build their marriages on the sure foundation of God’s love!

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1. Introduction to The Faithful House

Welcome to *The Faithful House* facilitator training manual and workshop! We are most grateful for your presence. Through teaching *The Faithful House* you are making a vital contribution to the health and well being of individuals, couples and families.

The late Holy Father John Paul II said, “As the family goes, so does society.” In saying this, he was expressing how very important it is that we build strong and intact families. Having strong and intact families is in turn dependent upon having strong and healthy marriages. In fact, marriage and family are so tied together we could say, “As marriage goes, so does society.” We know from looking around that a strong marriage can help bring health, stability and even prosperity to a family. We also know that the opposite is true; without the strength and support of a good marriage a family is more vulnerable to sickness, to poverty and to hunger.

The Faithful House is an essential first step in building a strong marriage and family. It is part of an effort of “family evangelization,” a family focused initiative for human and social development. Through the implementation of *The Faithful House*, we want to see thousands of families empowered with social, spiritual, moral, material and relational tools that will assist them in the realization of authentic human development.

Our journey to authentic human development is taking place within the context of the HIV epidemic. Historically, AIDS is the greatest plague to affect human kind since the black plague in Europe in the Middle Ages. In the southern region of Africa, AIDS has lowered the life expectancy in some countries by nearly 30 years – the largest known decline in human history. As frightening as these kind of statistics are, they also take place within “good news” coming out of Africa: AIDS can be stopped. Unlike at the beginning of the epidemic when we did not know the cause of AIDS or how to stop it, we now know that the spread of HIV can be stopped by *behavioural changes*. Specifically, if young people can be taught and supported in their *decision to be chaste* and married couples taught and supported in their *decision to be faithful*, the HIV risk can be avoided. Abstinence and fidelity are the most critical practices necessary to stop new HIV infections at both an individual and population based level.

Given our knowledge of HIV transmission, people living in a time of HIV/AIDS can make choices that allow them to avoid the HIV virus. This is the essence of building and living within a “faithful house.” These choices reflect the exercise of our God-given capacity *to know, to love and to act* in order to protect both those we love and ourselves.

In promoting abstinence from sex before marriage and faithfulness within marriage, *The Faithful House* targets:

1. Married couples that are challenged to be faithful to one another over the course of a lifetime and to become loving teachers and role models for their children.
2. Engaged couples to help them understand their sexuality and prepare them emotionally, relationally and spiritually for the sacrament of marriage.

3. Young adult or singles in order to reinforce chastity and assist them with developing the life skills and attitudes necessary for faithful and committed relationships.

We are confident that through this work, young people will remain chaste and married couples faithful. These values will allow them not only to avoid HIV infection, but also to experience a happier and more fulfilled life, honouring God's plan for themselves, for their marriages and for their families.

“As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord” (Joshua 24:15)

1.1 Using the Faithful House Core Module Manual

As we mentioned at the beginning of the workshop, you will be using the the *Faithful House Core Module Manual* as a guide in presenting the *Faithful House* program to participating couples. We want to emphasize how extremely important this manual is; it is your “best friend” in the facilitation process. If you know the material in the manual well your job will be much easier. After you have accumulated a great deal of experience, perhaps you can stray from the manual. However, for now we would emphasize, “know the manual and stick to the manual.”

Structure of the Manual

The manual begins with a forward and acknowledgement from those who have contributed to the development of the *Faithful House* program. The manual then outlines the five modules that form the *Faithful House* program. These five modules divide the program as follows:

- Module One: *The Frame of the Faithful House*
- Module Two: *The Faithful House Completed*
- Module Three: *Living in a Faithful House*
- Module Four: *Challenges within a Faithful House*
- Module Five: *The Faithful Family*

Within each module there are between 5 and 8 “sessions.” The sessions represent a specific topic within the module.

Each session within a module begins with an outline of objectives for the facilitator. After the listing of the objectives, there is a picture of the part of the house to be discussed. The presentation and discussion of that part of the house is then presented in three-steps.

- **STEP I:** Gathering Views/Ideas From The Participants

In this step the facilitator begins by showing a picture of the part of the house to be discussed. Then, guided by the “**General Questions**” in the manual, the facilitators ask the participants for their thoughts and ideas. The facilitators, at their discretion, will adapt these questions to their local context. In this way the

facilitator is gathering views and ideas from the participants about the topic at hand. As the facilitator, your task is to insure there is good input and discussion in regard to the picture and **General Questions**.

Please note that while most of the sessions begin with a picture and general questions, a few sessions begin with a role-play. The role-play is intended to help stimulate questions and discussions in regard to the particular topic and should be developed to address the **Session Objectives**.

- **STEP II:** Supplementing On Views/Ideas

In the second step, the facilitator critiques and builds upon the responses of the participants by using the material in the training manual, personal experiences and any other appropriate information. One of your jobs as a facilitator is to know this material well so that you can comfortably present it to the participants. Initially you may have to read it or prepare short notes to remind you, but with time we hope you can present it orally from memory.

- **STEP III:** Life Application

In this step, individuals and couples are to discuss the “**Specific Questions**” listed to enable participants to do home work and further reflection on information they have been given. Unlike **Step One**, where the discussion is held with the whole class, the **Specific Questions** in **Step Three** are to be reflected upon and discussed by the couples. Thus, they need to separate themselves from other couples in order to talk with some degree of privacy. As some couples may be illiterate, the teacher must read each question and be sure couples hear and understand what is being asked. Once couples have had an opportunity to discuss the **Life Application** questions, the facilitator calls the class together and summarizes the session by getting feedback from the couples about what they have learned and the new decisions/ behaviors they are to adopt.

Beginning and Ending the Modules

In addition to the three-step process with each session, the manual contains information about beginning and ending an entire module. Specifically, each module begins with an introduction involving a welcome, a prayer and several review questions. There are also specific questions for couples which offer couples an opportunity to present feedback about the **Life Application** questions.

Each module ends with an invitation for feed back from the participants as to how the module went: what was good and what could be improved. The facilitator then announces the times and venue for the next module and creates a sense of anticipation for the upcoming module.

Other Information about the Manual

Facilitator Information Boxes

In the manual there are boxes that contain specific information and reminders for the facilitator(s). Some of the boxes contain information that may be helpful in supplementing the discussion and other boxes contain information to help keep the sessions on track.

Appendices

The last section of the manual contains several appendices that further supplement and support *The Faithful House* program. Several of these appendices will be used during the course, and facilitators will use others to follow up after couples have completed *The Faithful House*.

2. Module One: The Frame of *The Faithful House*

2.1 Welcome and Introduction



Welcome to “*The Faithful House: Building Strong Marriages to Affirm Life and Avoid Risk.*” Through *The Faithful House* you will realize the blessings of a loving and lasting marriage and you will learn how to avoid the HIV virus and the scourge of AIDS. Furthermore, you will learn how to help your children receive the same blessings.

As we discuss *The Faithful House*, we will need your input and your ideas. As we go through each component of the house, we will follow a three-step process.

1. The first step consists of “Gathering Views.” In this step we will show you a picture of what we are about to discuss. We will then ask you a few questions to gather your thoughts on the picture and what it represents.
2. The second step consists of “Supplementing Views.” In this step the facilitators add other ideas to the ones you have presented. In this way, we hope to complete our understanding of the picture.
3. The third step consists of “Life Application.” In this step, the facilitators ask you as couples to reflect upon and discuss with each other one or more Specific Questions about the topic at hand. After the reflection, the facilitator will summarize that topic and move on to the next.

Our hope is that the three-step process of “Gathering Views,” “Supplementing Views,” and “Life Application” will allow for a meaningful and thorough discussion of *The Faithful House*. By the end of the three-step process, couples should have a good understanding of the topic and how it applies to their lives and to their marriages.

NOTE: In order to gain as much as possible from this program, the facilitators should help the participants develop group norms and guidelines such as:

1. Commitment to attend all sessions.
2. Put mobile phones off or in silent mode.
3. Respect of each other's opinion.
4. Appointment of a timekeeper to enable the program to stay on track.

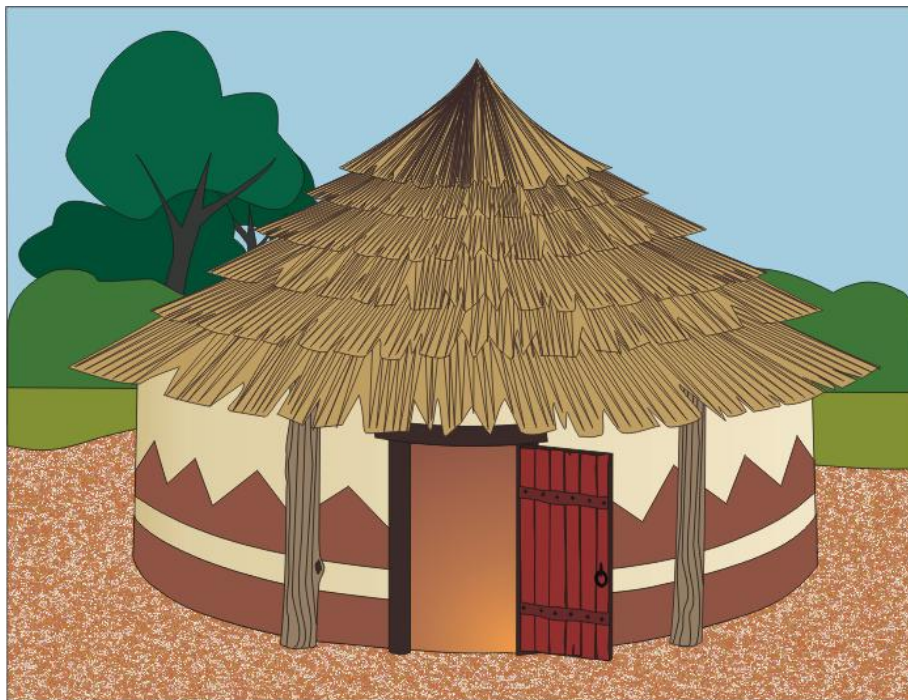
If the facilitators feel it appropriate, they can suggest that the husband introduces the wife and vice versa. Depending on the context, the facilitators can ask couples where they are from and what they hope to learn from the program (expectations).

2.2 Why A Faithful House?

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify the importance of a house.
- List different parts of a house.
- Distinguish between a physical house and a marriage house.



One of the first things you will need to do as a married couple is to build a house. This house may be made of bricks, stone, cement or mud. The roof may be made of tiles,

iron sheets or grass thatch. As you build this house, you will want to make it special. With time, we hope the house will become a home with children and fond memories of your shared life together.

While we often think and plan in great detail about the physical house we will live in, we may neglect something far more important – the kind of marriage house we will build. In building a marriage house, we have to prepare and plan and work together just as we have to prepare, plan and work together to build a physical house. As we build our marriage house, we have to consider very important questions:

1. What is the importance of a physical house?
2. What are the different features of a marriage house?

NOTE: *The parts of the house like foundation, pillars, walls, windows and roof should come up in the answers. If they don't, the facilitators should probe further, for example, by asking what the different components of a house are.*

Just as it is important that we construct our physical houses well, it is important that we construct our marriage houses well. A well-constructed marriage house will enable our marriages to be strong and our families to flourish.

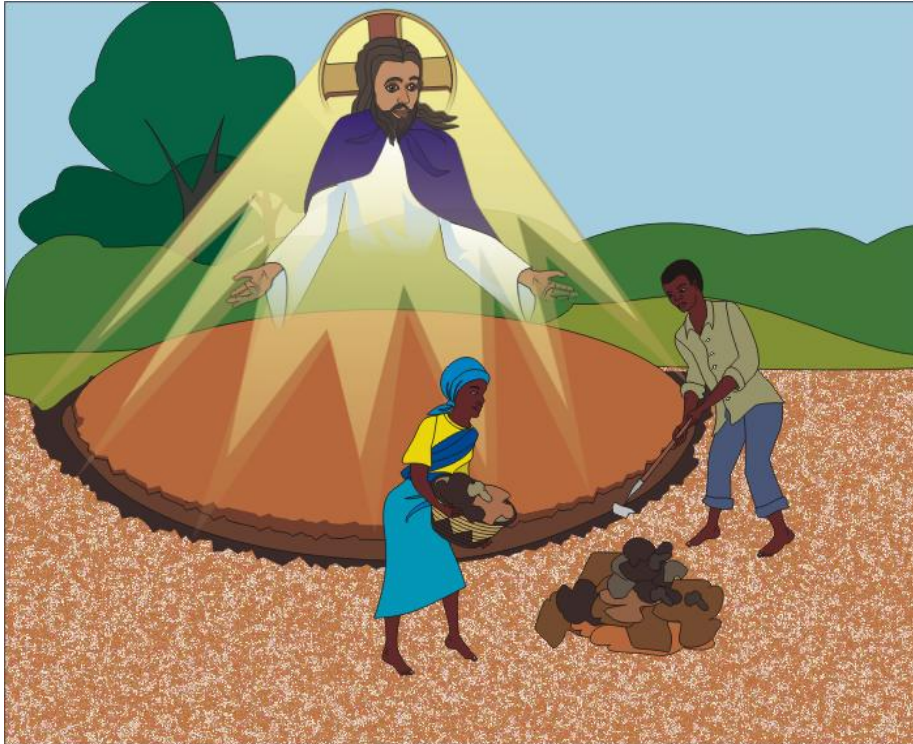
With this comparison of a physical house to a marriage house in mind, we will examine each component of the house and how it is to be constructed in accordance with God's plan.

2.3 The Foundation of *The Faithful House*

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Describe the foundation for a strong and healthy marriage.
- Identify God as the foundation of marriage.
- Realize that in society many marriages may be built on the “wrong foundation.”



STEP I: Gathering Views on the Foundation

NOTE: The facilitators choose and give the most appropriate questions to the participants for group discussion followed by presentations.

General Questions

1. When you want to build a good house, what would you consider important to have and why?
2. Looking at the situation in our society today, what is the foundation of most marriages?

3. What are the different types of marriages in society today and what is the foundation of each?
4. What problems would you see if a couple did not build their house on a foundation of God?
5. What are the roles of a husband and wife as co-builders of *The Faithful House*?

NOTE: Depending upon the responses to the General Questions, facilitators may want to bring out further ideas by asking these questions.

1. What are the benefits and risks of trial marriages (i.e. co-habitation, “come we stay”)?
2. Give a comparison between Church marriages and trial marriages.

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the Foundation

The strongest and most basic part of a house is its **foundation**. If the foundation of the house is strong it can support the remainder of the house, resisting the wind, the rain and forces of nature. If the foundation of the house is strong, the rest of the house can be constructed properly: its pillars straight, its walls thick and its roof even. Yet if the foundation of the house is weak, eventually it will sag and crumble. A house without a strong foundation will not be safe to live in.

The foundation of *The Faithful House* is God and His great love. It is God who ordained the **Sacrament Of Marriage**, sealing the unity of husband and wife with his own divine seal; “*God blessed them*” (Genesis 1:28a). The sacramental nature of marriage means that we must build our houses as God intended and not how man and woman alone might intend it (Psalm 127:1).

With a sacramental understanding of marriage, we realize that a husband and wife are to be “**co-builders**” of the house, working with God from the very beginning to build a house strong and worthy of God’s love. With a sacramental foundation, we realize that our married lives are not just physical lives, but spiritual lives and community lives as well. The house built on God and the sacrament of marriage is “a house built on strong rock, not a house built on the shifting sands of human doubt and temptation” (Matthew 7:24-25). **More supplemental points are available in Appendix I, Section on Love and Use.**

STEP III: Life Application on the Foundation

Specific Questions

1. What is our marriage like today in relation to God?
2. What steps will we take as a couple to make God the foundation of our marriage?

NOTE: The facilitators thank the participants for their responses and insights. Prepare them for the next session and remind them to keep in mind the following:

- *The image of the foundation of The Faithful House is God.*
- *Marriage is a sacrament and husband and wife are co-builders of the marriage house.*
- *Even if your relationship is not presently built on the foundation of God, God always awaits with his love and mercy to help you build The Faithful House.*

2.4 The Four Pillars of *The Faithful House*

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify the spiritual pillars of *The Faithful House*.
- Recognise the importance of the pillars in *The Faithful House*.
- Examine their own marriages to see what pillars need to be strengthened.



NOTE: The facilitators lead the participants through an exercise of identifying the four pillars. General Questions that could be used are:

1. After the foundation, what is the next step of building *The Faithful House*?

Once the participants mention pillars then the facilitator proceeds to mention the functions of pillars in the physical house as in the picture above.

2. What are these pillars in *The Faithful House*?

The facilitators evaluate the participants' answers and lead them to identify the four pillars noted below.

Rising from the foundation of the house are four strong pillars. These pillars give the house strength and allow its walls to be laid and its roof connected. If these pillars are well placed, the house will be strong and long lasting. Yet without these pillars, the house will collapse.

The four pillars of *The Faithful House* are:

1. True love
2. Faithfulness
3. Respect for human life and dignity
4. Communication with God and with one another

With these four pillars grounded in God, *The Faithful House* takes shape as a house that will be sturdy, strong and lasting. Yet without these pillars, the house will collapse. As the picture indicates, the husband and wife are co-builders and they have to work together in order to build *The Faithful House*. We will now look at these pillars one by one.

2.4.1 Pillar One: True Love



STEP I: Gathering Views on True Love

General Questions

1. How do people understand love in our society today?
2. What is true love and how is it different from “false love”?
3. What are the practical ways of expressing love to each other?
4. What are the obstacles that hinder couples from experiencing true love?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on True Love

Pillar one of the house is **true love**. True love is the kind of love that Christ gave to us; it is complete, total and self-giving. It is the kind of love that Jesus shared with us in these words: “*Love one another as I have loved you*” (John 15:12-13). This view of love runs throughout the Bible. For example, consider what St. Paul said of love: “*Love is always patient and kind; it is never jealous; love is never boastful or conceited; it is never rude or selfish; it does not take offence, and is not resentful. Love takes no pleasure in other people’s sins but delights in the truth; it is always ready to excuse, to trust, to hope and to endure whatever comes*” (1 Corinthians 13: 4-7).

The Biblical view of love is much different from many of our cultural understandings of love. Many think that “love is sex and sex is love.” Others think that love is simply about our feelings. At times you “feel like loving” and other times you “don’t feel like loving.” To this confusion, it’s important to note that true love is much greater than sex

and true love is more than just a feeling. To better understand true love, we can contrast true love with “false love.”

NOTE: Facilitators can use the following table to help participants distinguish the characteristics of true love from false love.

TRUE LOVE	FALSE LOVE
Founded in God	Founded in Self
Directed to God and others	Directed to Self
Respects the other	Uses the other
Attraction with commitment	Attraction without commitment
Responsible	No Responsibility
Unconditional	Conditional
Self control	Poor/No self control
Waits/ Temperate	Hurries/ No temperance
Based in the Whole Person	Based in Lust or Infatuation
Faithful	Cheats
Mutual sexual satisfaction	Self sexual gratification

True love that forms the pillar of marriage is a deep, abiding commitment between a husband and wife in which there is sincere, total, self-giving love of one spouse for the other! True love seeks the other’s good; it is selfless and welcomes happiness and endures suffering.

NOTE: Facilitators may supplement the discussion on true love by using these Scriptural quotes: 1John 4:7-16: John 13:34.

STEP III: Life Applications on True Love

Specific Questions

1. What are the practical ways of expressing true love to my partner?
2. As we examine our marriage, what are the ways in which true love is being expressed?
3. How do I wish my partner to express true love to me?
4. As we examine our marriage, where do we feel true love may be lacking and where has false love taken over?

NOTE: The facilitator thanks the participants for their responses and insights and recaps how important this first pillar of true love is: Christ has given Himself completely

and unselfishly to each of us. Husbands and wives as co-builders with God are meant to give themselves completely and unselfishly to each other as Christ did. To symbolize the pillar of true love, we have emblazed a Crucifix. The Cross reminds us to always “love one another as Christ has loved us.”

2.4.2 Pillar Two: Faithfulness



STEP I: Gathering Views on Faithfulness

General Questions

1. What are the factors that lead to unfaithfulness in marriage?
2. How does society react to unfaithfulness in marriage?
3. What factors, if cultivated, would enhance faithfulness in marriage?
4. Why is it important for married couples to remain faithful to each other?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Faithfulness

Faithfulness of a husband to his wife and vice versa reflects trust, openness and honesty in a marriage and this mirrors the faithfulness of God to His people. To be faithful in marriage is to share your bodies only with each other. Having sex outside of marriage breaks the bond of faithfulness. This break in the marriage bond not only leads to the collapse of *The Faithful House*, but also opens our houses to HIV/ AIDS.

To be faithful is to realize that God made us different from animals, e.g.: a male goat can have sex with many female goats; a cock may mate with many hens. But God's

will for humans is to have one wife and one husband in a life-long married relationship: “So God created human beings making them to be like himself. He created them male and female, blessed them” (Matthew 19:4-6; Genesis 1:27-28). This faithful relationship is what allows us to build a strong and healthy marriage to affirm life and avoid risks.

As we work to be faithful, we have to be aware that there are many influences, actions and attitudes that can break our faithfulness. For example, friends who are engaged in sexual relationships outside of marriage, or sexually explicit images on television or the Internet may influence a person to be unfaithful. In the African context, infertility (barrenness) or the desire for a male child may lead to unfaithfulness if a spouse tries to fulfill these goals outside of the marriage. Finally, a person who has been unfaithful in the past may be tempted to return to old ways.

Despite these influences and temptations, we must know how much God desires our faithfulness. He wants nothing more than for us to be faithful to Him and to our spouses. If we have been unfaithful, God’s love still persists and still beckons to us: “Come back to me and come back to your spouse, be forgiven and be healed. In healing may you remain faithful and true, all the days of your life.” cf. Joel 2:12 and 13).

NOTE: Facilitators may supplement the discussion on faithfulness by referencing Proverbs 5:1-5 and Malachi 2:14-16. N.B.: The desired point to be drawn by the facilitator is the warning against unfaithfulness/ adultery.

STEP III: Life Application on Faithfulness

Specific Questions

1. What would I do if my partner were unfaithful in marriage?
2. What can I do to be a faithful partner?

2.4.3 Pillar Three: Respect for Human Life and Dignity



STEP I: Gathering views on Human Life and Dignity

General Questions:

1. How do couples show respect for one another?
2. What are the consequences of disrespect in a marriage?
3. How does a person, especially a husband or wife feel when his or her dignity has been violated?

STEP II: Supplementing views on Human Life and Dignity

Pillar Three of The Faithful House is the respect we hold for the life and dignity of our spouses and for human life. This life and dignity comes from God, who created human beings in His own image and likeness (Genesis 1:27). What does respect mean? It means first of all that a husband or wife is a person and not a thing. In your house you may have many things: cooking pots, tables, chairs, pictures, maybe even a television. Outside of your house you may have many things: cows, goats, plants and vegetables. Yet both inside and outside, all of these objects are things – they can be bought or sold; they can be thrown away when they are no longer of use. Your spouse is different; he or she is a person, possessing an infinite value and dignity. You cannot treat a person the same way you treat a thing. A person is not to be abused or disposed of when they are no longer felt to be useful. Persons have an infinite spiritual value that should never be compromised.

To see your husband or wife as a person is to see him or her as “the lovely one” and recognize in him/her a brilliance that shines like the sun. Your spouse is to be beloved, worthy of your deepest love and deepest respect.

Without this respect, we see serious problems in our society. What do you think of a husband who comes home drunk, wakes up his wife, and forces her to have sex with him? Is he treating her as a person or a thing? What do you think about a husband or wife who begins having sex with another person outside of the marriage? What do you think about domestic abuse or violence in which a husband or wife physically, psychologically and verbally assaults his or her spouse? In a time of HIV/AIDS, to respect your spouse as a beloved human person is to realize you would never risk infecting them by your decisions and your behavior. *If you truly respect the life and dignity of your spouse then you would never risk causing him/her disease or harm.*

If dignity is being lost or violated in our marriages we must seek to regain it by truly seeing and treating our spouses as the “beloved one.” Once we compromise the dignity of our spouses by harsh and hurtful words and actions, our marriages rapidly begin to disintegrate. Husbands, please respect the dignity of your wives. Wives, please respect the dignity of your husbands.

STEP III: Life Application on Human Life and Dignity

Specific Questions:

1. Read Genesis 1:27. Having known that my spouse is made in the image of God, would this change my view about him / her? *Why?*
2. How can we, on a daily basis, show respect for each other’s dignity?
3. As you examine your marriage and your family, how can you better create an environment where there is respect for the dignity of everyone in the household?

NOTE: *The facilitator thanks the participants for their comments and insights. In the Third Pillar, a husband and wife realize how important it is that they respect each other “all the days of their lives.” Through respect, they learn to value one another as beautiful and worthy persons and not as things or objects. Through respect, they avoid anything that would harm or “disrespect” the other: backbiting, heavy drinking, sex outside of marriage or abuse. To symbolize this respect, we have emblazed on the third pillar an image of the sun to remind couples to always see one another as persons “shining like the sun.”*

2.4.4 Pillar Four: Communication



Step I: Gathering Views On Communication

General Questions

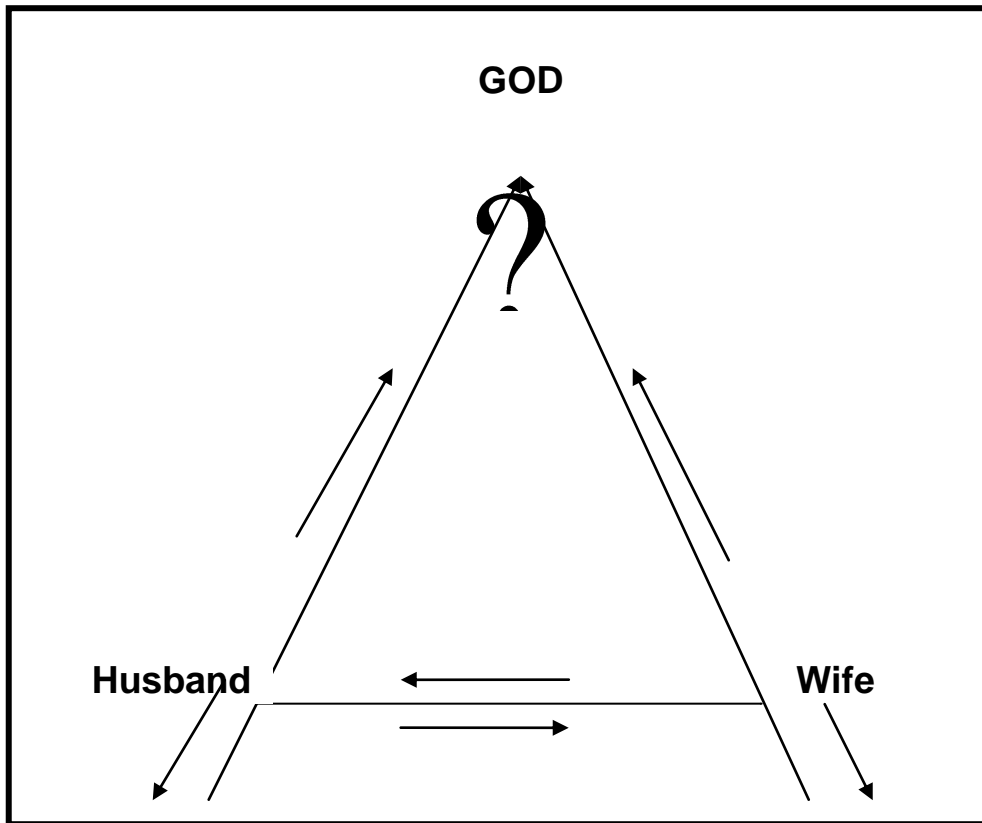
1. What are the qualities and benefits of good communication in marriage?
2. What are the consequences of lack of communication?
3. As a couple, what areas do we find difficult to share?

Step II: Supplementing Views On Communication

The fourth pillar, *communication* is very important. Communication is both verbal and non-verbal and involves two levels: vertical and horizontal.

1. Vertical: The vertical dimension is our communication with God. It is important to maintain this relationship through personal prayer, through receiving the sacraments of Penance and Eucharist, through praying together as a couple and through mutual forgiveness.
2. Horizontal: The horizontal dimension is communication between husband and wife in the course of their day-to-day lives. This horizontal communication involves empathy, attentive listening, compassion, sharing compliments, openness, transparency and simply spending time with each other.

The vertical and horizontal dimensions of communication cannot be separated. One complements the other as the following diagram illustrates.



N.B.: *The more the couple draws towards God, the better the communication and growth in other aspects of life. If they move in the opposite direction (away from God), they also widen the gap between themselves*

If a couple does not pray and cultivate their relationship with God, the gap between them widens. Conversely, if a couple prays and cultivates their relationship with God, they grow closer to each other. In this way, a couple that prays together strengthens their *Faithful House* (Mathew 18:19 & 20). In turn, the prayer life of the couple forms the basis of family prayer, giving life to the saying, “The family that prays together stays together.” (Father Peter Peyton, CSC.)

As well as containing a vertical and a horizontal dimension, communication is an “art” that involves a two way process of prudent giving and receiving.

1. **Giving:** Giving refers to our willingness to share with our spouses the little and big things that are part of our day-to-day life together. Through this giving you are sharing the deepest part of yourself and not “withholding” information or concerns.
2. **Receiving:** Receiving refers to your willingness and ability to listen. This is often where communication breaks down as one spouse says, “He or she will not listen to me.” To love your spouse is to listen to him or her! This listening should be done respectfully and prudently.

Both in giving and in receiving, couples must have **honesty** at the heart of their communication. Thus a husband and wife must be truthful to each other, not lying about things or hiding things from one another. In turn, honesty in marriage will lead to honesty in family life so that children learn to be honest with their parents and others with whom they associate.

Communication is an ongoing challenge. There are many areas in life that couples do not easily share: money, health, sex, time, death/will, children, relatives and their relationships with God. This could be because of different personalities, fear of rejection, lack of trust and lack of independence. Thus, we have to work hard to build this fourth pillar of communication, recognizing how decisive it is for the well being of *The Faithful House*.

NOTE: Facilitators may supplement the discussion on communication by presenting Scriptural passages from Genesis 2:25 (**Openness and transparency**) and Ephesians 4:25 (**Speaking the truth in love**).

STEP III: Life Application on Communication

Specific Questions

1. What areas of my life do I find difficult to freely share with my spouse, and what am I going to do about it?
2. When my spouse is communicating with me, am I a good listener? What can I do to improve my listening abilities?
3. Are there areas where I have not been honest with my spouse? How can I change that in order to be completely honest in the future?

NOTE: The facilitators thank the participants for their responses and insights. The fourth pillar of communication is very important. Many marriages in our society are breaking down because of poor communication. If we have been failing in our communication in marriage, we must look to the Cross to rebuild it. We see that in the Cross, there are both a vertical and a horizontal dimension, representing our communication with God and our communication with our spouse. Just as in the Cross itself, the vertical and horizontal dimensions of communication cannot be separated. Finally as we look to the Cross emblazed on pillar four, let us know that to love our spouses is to listen to them with the same great love and sensitivity with which Jesus listened to each of His followers.

2.5 A Hand to Remember:



As we close this first module, we want to share with you a way to remember what you have discussed today. When we build a house, we use our hands. Our hands dig the foundation, steady the pillars while they are being set and handle the tools needed for building. Interestingly, in many cultures, when a couple becomes married, the prospective husband asks his prospective wife, for “her hand in marriage.”

If we look at our hands, we see our thumb and four fingers. The thumb can reach and touch each of the fingers in order to grasp and hold on to things. The fingers cannot necessarily do the same; for example, you cannot take your first finger (the pointer finger) and reach your little finger.

The thumb represents God and our foundation in his love. The four pillars are represented by the four fingers. Each of your four fingers can be reached by God and his love, and between the finger and the thumb something can be held. In and through God, we can grasp true, love; in and through God, we can be faithful; in and through God, we can have respect for each other and in and through God we can better communicate with each other.

Think of your hand as holding with God the possibility of true love, faithfulness, respect and communication in your marriage. Think of your hand as being holy and being joined with the hand of your spouse. No matter what has happened in the past, think of building a new house together: one that will last forever!

NOTE: The facilitator gives out the Evaluation Forms (see Appendix V). He or she asks participants to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space, and privacy to talk to one another. The plan of the next meeting date, place and time is announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to further discuss the questions they were given during the sessions. The participants should be put in a mood of anticipation for the next session.

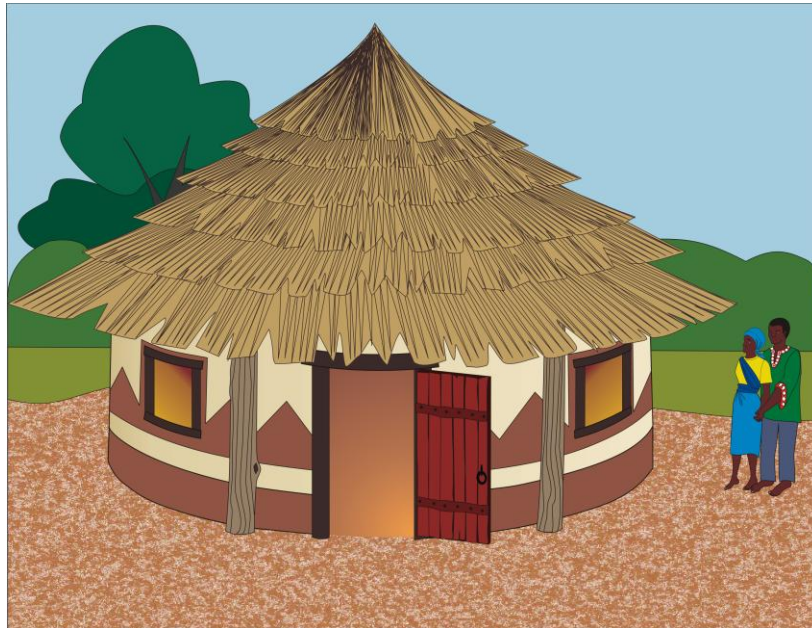
3. Module Two: The Faithful House Completed

NOTE: The facilitator begins with a welcome, prayer and recap of Module One. Participants are asked to briefly comment on the main themes of Module One:

- *Who is primarily responsible for the construction and maintenance of The Faithful House?*
- *Why are the words “love and responsibility” so important?*
- *What is the foundation of The Faithful House?*
- *What are the four pillars of The Faithful House?*
- *How will you easily remember the frame of The Faithful House?*
- *Were you able to spend time talking about the questions we left you with?*
- *What part of your Faithful House needed the most work?*
- *Is there anything that you are doing differently in your relationship with each other after having learned about the frame of The Faithful House?*

The facilitator then notes that in Module Two, they are going to add to the frame of The Faithful House so that by the end of the module, their houses will be complete.

3.1 Husband and Wife As Co-Builders



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

1. Identify who is primarily responsible for the well being of their marriages and families.

2. Understand that they are working with God as “co-builders” of the Faithful House.
3. Commit to “love and responsibility” in regard to the well being of their marriages and families.

STEP I: Gathering Views on Co-Building the House

General Questions:

1. If a couple decides to build a house, who is ultimately responsible for its construction?
2. Once a house is completed, who is responsible for keeping the house clean and well maintained?
3. Who is most responsible for the health and well being of a marriage and family?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Co-Building the House

In the first module we mentioned the role of the husband and wife as “co-builders” of the faithful house. As we begin the second module, we would like to further reinforce how important it is that husband and wife work with each other in “co-building the house.”

It is no secret that marriages and families face difficult times in Africa. Threats to the family come in many forms: poverty, disease (including AIDS), violence and limited economic and educational opportunities. Many cultural trends are working against the family, emphasizing material gains and secular ideals and forsaking traditional African values.

It doesn't have to be that way. Our Christian faith and African heritage speak to the value of marriage and family. In our Christian and cultural formation we can create societies that elevate the human person. We can, before it is too late, create “cultures of life” and “civilizations of love.”

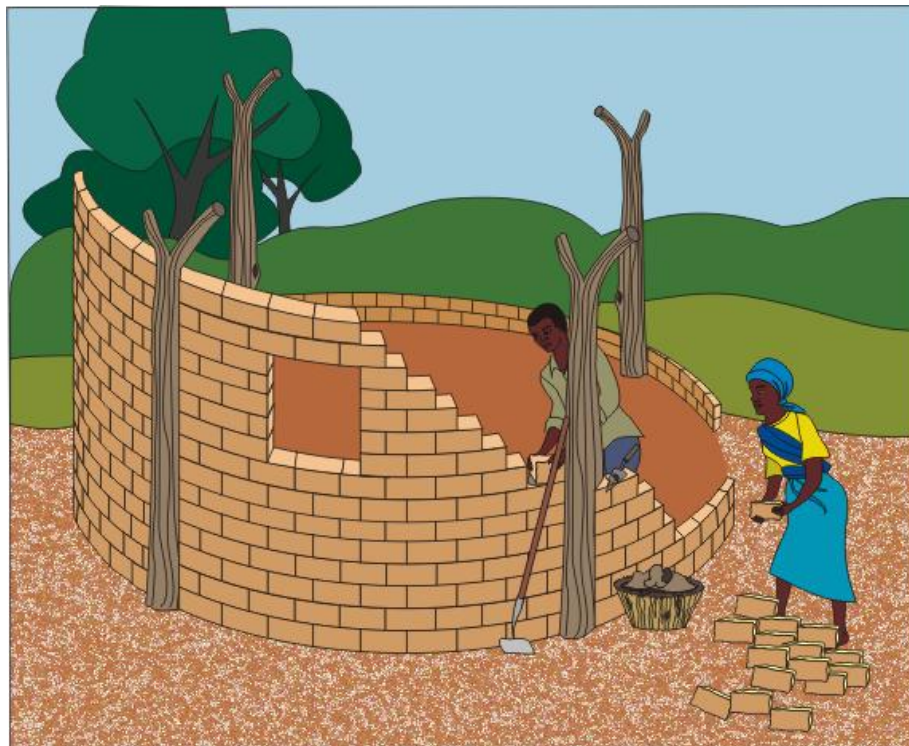
The first step in forming a strong and healthy family is to realize that *the responsibility for the health and well being of our marriages and families rests with the husband and wife.* It is not the government, the state, the Church, the tribe or some outside force that will determine the vitality of our marriages and families. Rather, it is the married couple! How we as couples understand and practice “love and responsibility” will determine more than anything else our own fates and the fates of our children. No one else can “co-build” the house for us! We as husband and wife are the co-builders who must practice “love and responsibility.”

In and through God's grace, a couple must commit themselves to assuming responsibility for building and strengthening their marriage and family life. This is their vocation, their life duty, their calling. All other things – work, friends, leisure – are secondary to their commitment to each other and to their family. As we go forward with building the house, keep these two words LOVE and RESPONSIBILITY close to your heart. They are to be a continual reminder of your commitment to the well being of your marriage and family. (The facilitator may ask the participants to repeat aloud or to each other the words, "love and responsibility" several times.)

Specific Questions:

1. Have we understood how important it is that we as a couple accept responsibility for co-building our faithful house?
2. Are there times when we have blamed others for failures in our marriage or family life?
3. What must we do differently to practice "love and responsibility" in the building of our house?

3.2 The Walls of The Faithful House



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Identify the current societal values for marriage.
- Decide to choose Christian values for their families.

NOTE: *The facilitators should ask the participants to imagine what the next stage of the building is and lead them to mention the walls of the house and their function.*

STEP I: Gathering Views on Walls of The Faithful House

General Questions:

1. What priorities should a couple have in order to build a strong wall?
2. What values do you think God wants us to build into the walls of *The Faithful House*?

STEP II: Supplementing Views On Walls of The Faithful House

Having built the foundation and the four pillars, we now want to complete the frame of the house by adding the walls. The walls represent the values you hold as a married couple. Your values “enclose” the house, keeping inside what is most important and keeping outside what is harmful or destructive. A value is a belief or a principle that you treasure and hold dear. Your values reflect your priorities and guide your decisions and your behaviour. If you value something, you will give it time, energy and purpose.

For our purposes now, we want you to take a moment and reflect upon the three most important values you have as a married couple and as family.

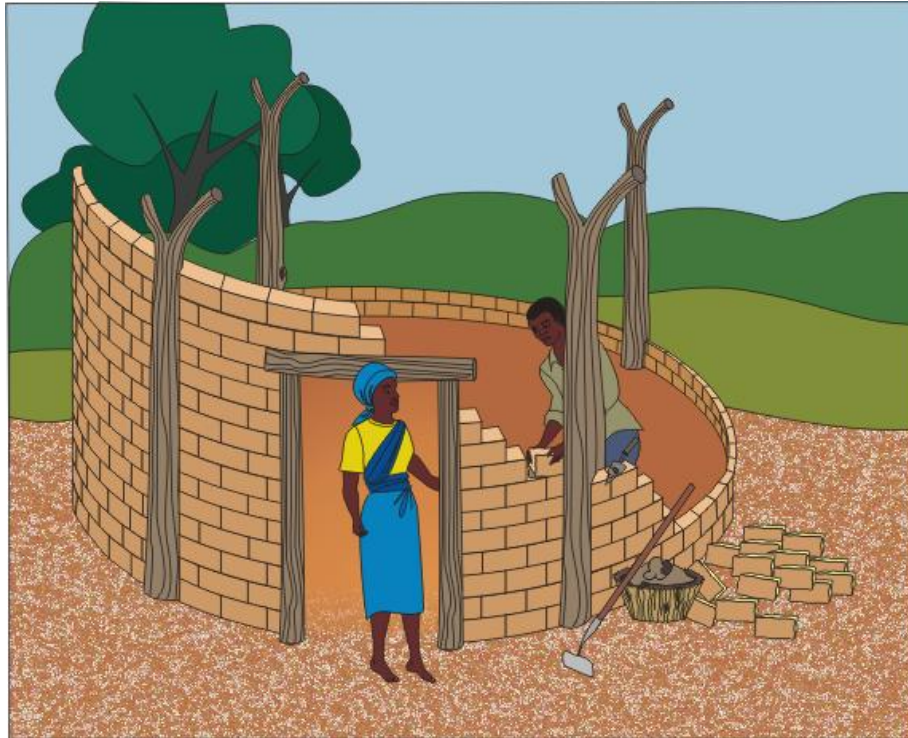
STEP III: Life Application on Walls of The Faithful House

Specific Questions:

1. What are the three most important values we want to build into the walls of our “faithful house?”
2. How are we “building” these values into our marriage and family life?
3. What must we do differently to insure these values are built into our lives?

NOTE: *The facilitators can ask the participants if any of them would like to share with the group the values they have identified. After a brief discussion, the facilitator concludes, “It is important for a married couple and a family to name their values and to live by them. These values are to reflect the priorities of our Christian lives and Christian marriages. Taught and lived well, the values of our houses will be passed on to our children, who in turn will build houses that are pleasing to the Lord. “And I will give them one heart and one way, so that they may go on in the worship of me forever, for their good and the good of their children after them” (Jeremiah 32:39).*

3.3 The Door that Opens



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Tell the significance of the door that opens to positive influences and closes to negative influences in *The Faithful House*.
- To define authority, responsibility and accountability as it relates to the door of *The Faithful House*.
- Understand how authority, responsibility and accountability is realized and exercised in Christian marriage.

STEP I: Gathering Views on the Open Door

NOTE: Instead of beginning directly with questions, this session begins with a role play of two contrasting examples of authority, responsibility and accountability. In the first example, the man holds all of the power and authority and berates his wife for her incompetence. In the second example, a couple respects each other and makes decisions together. The facilitators then ask the general questions.

(Give the question about husbands to females and the question about wives to males)

General Questions:

1. What couple do you think will have the most successful marriage? Why?
2. What couple represents a biblical view of marriage?
3. What are the roles and responsibilities of the husband and of the wife in a home?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the Open Door

In a house, the door allows people to enter and to leave. Through the door of your marriage house, both positive and negative influences may enter. As a couple makes decisions about opening and closing the door, they must come to agree about three key areas in their marriage: authority, responsibility and accountability (1 Timothy 5:8).

1. **Authority:** Is it the husband or the wife (or both) who has authority to open and close the door?
2. **Responsibility:** Who is responsible for insuring that what enters *The Faithful House* is consistent with the values of the couple and family?
3. **Accountability:** How are husband and wife to honour the authority and responsibility they invest in each other?

The issues of authority, responsibility and accountability are very difficult ones in our society. In traditional African society, women were often not given any authority; it was only the man who could decide to open or close the door. Yet, with Jesus, things have changed. We are to be new men and new women in the light of the Gospel. "*In Christ Jesus, there is no more man or woman*" (Galatians 3:28). Indeed, if the love of Christ has become the center of a couple's marriage, both husband and wife share together in authority, responsibility and accountability. While Scripture tells us that the husband is the head of the house, it does so while saying that he is to "*care for his wife as he would for his own body.*" In telling wives "*to be subject to your husbands as to the Lord,*" the submission has a context: both of them are subjecting to each other out of reverence to Christ. The submission of a wife to her husband is only true and only possible because he is offering himself to her and they are both offering themselves to Christ (Ephesians 5:21-6).

In exercising authority, the couple has to exercise mutual reverence for one another and make decisions together with oneness of purpose. Both of them must open the door and hide nothing from the other. Each couple will learn how this is realized in their day-to-day lives. It may be that they agree that the wife is to have responsibility for the early education of their children. It may be that they agree the husband is to be responsible for the production of cash crops. It may be that they decide together how any extra money is to be spent. Yet in all decisions, there is a new dynamic at work – the love of Christ that penetrates the heart of who the husband is for the wife and who the wife is for the husband. In the dynamic of Christ's love, couples learn how to reach consensus, to share roles and responsibilities and to be accountable to each other. This accountability extends to all areas of their lives including time usage, money and friends.

STEP III: Life Application on the Open Door

Specific Questions:

1. What influences should we say “YES” and “NO” to in our “faithful houses?”
2. What are my roles and responsibilities to my partner and what do I expect from him/ her?
3. Does our authority and responsibility reflect what the Gospel intends for a married couple? How?
4. How do I account for money, time and friends?

NOTE: *The facilitators thank the participants for their responses. In this session, we have discussed how important it is for couples to understand and exercise authority, responsibility and accountability in a truly Christian way. As they do so, they can make wise and loving decisions as to what to let in and what to keep out of their Faithful Houses.*

3.4 The Roof of Consciousness



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should be able:

1. To understand the importance of a roof to both our physical and marriage houses.
2. To understand human consciousness as a deep, loving awareness of God and others.
3. To understand human consciousness and its importance in preventing HIV/AIDS.

STEP I: Gathering Views on the Roof of Consciousness

NOTE: *The facilitator begins with these two questions:*

1. As you look at the house with its foundation, four pillars, walls, and door, what is missing?
2. Without a roof, what will happen to the house?

With these questions the facilitator should lead the participants to an understanding that without a roof, the house is incomplete. In the same way, a person who does not use their mind is "incomplete". The fullest use of our minds is found in our capacity for "consciousness," a concept we will discuss in detail

General Questions:

1. How are human beings different from animals?
2. What factors can influence our human consciousness and subsequently our behaviour?
3. As you look around, do you think most people are acting out of consciousness when it comes to their sexual behaviour?

NOTE: *Some of the answers to question two will include: witchcraft, money, condoms, alcohol and media. The facilitator discusses how these affect our consciousness.*

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the Roof of Consciousness

The house is missing a roof! Without a roof, those living inside are unprotected. The protection offered by the "roof" is especially important in a time of HIV/AIDS. If the HIV virus enters our houses, it will bring death and despair and the houses will never be the same.

The “roof” that will complete and protect *The Faithful House* is our *human consciousness*. This consciousness is a gift to us from God. It is the roof that will shelter us from harm, including the harm that can come to us from the HIV virus.

Consciousness is our deep loving awareness of God, of others and of things around us. When we were baptized, we “put on the mind of Jesus Christ.” The mind of Jesus has at its core this deep loving awareness. Unlike animals that act out of instinct, we as humans can act out of our consciousness. As Christians, we are to act out of the consciousness of Christ. Thus, in the fullness of our humanity, redeemed by the “mind of Jesus,” we can make decisions based upon our deep loving awareness of God and of others, and not just upon our instincts, our lust or our desires.

There is a second component to consciousness: our human capacity “*to know, to love and to act.*” If we compare the human person to an animal, we can say that humans are creatures of consciousness while animals are creatures of instinct. If a dog is hungry, it will go and eat. If a female dog is in heat it will mate with a male dog. The actions of animals are pre-programmed and directed to their needs. Humans need not act out of instinct. They can act out of consciousness. They can use their free wills and their minds to ponder and make decisions that are not simply instinctual. They can use their consciousness to protect themselves and their families in this time of HIV/AIDS.

NOTE: The facilitator should ask everyone to say, “Human consciousness is our capacity to know, to love and to act.”

If we look carefully at the HIV/AIDS crisis, we realize that it is a crisis of consciousness. Many people are acting out of instinct or ignorance or need instead of out of a deep loving awareness of God and others. Without this deep loving awareness, people will continue to act in ways that put them at risk and the HIV/AIDS crisis will continue.

In a time of HIV/AIDS, to act in deep loving awareness of God and others is to be completely faithful to your spouse. If you stray outside of this consciousness and sleep with someone else, you may turn your “faithful house” into a house of death. Your consciousness, in which you are completely faithful to your spouse and he or she is completely faithful to you, reflects the deep loving awareness of God and others that protects you from HIV/AIDS.

“As for Mary, she treasured these things and carried them in her heart.”

Luke 2:19

How will we remember to act out of our consciousness, our deep loving awareness of God and others?” Perhaps we can learn from these few words from the Gospel of Luke. Mary carried with her memories of Jesus; they were always with her and they shaped her “knowing, acting and loving.” Can we do the same?

Think about having to carry something, be it firewood on your head or pails of water in your hand. As you carry something, you are aware of it – you feel its weight and presence.

We are each to “carry our consciousness.” We are to be aware that inside of our hearts we always have this capacity to know, to act and to love. Unlike a load of firewood or a pail of water, we never want to “set down” our consciousness in the face of temptation or want.

As you “carry your consciousness” on life’s journey, you will make good decisions. Like Mary, you will be acting out of the memory and the treasure of Jesus, and his consciousness will become your own.



STEP III: Life Application on the Roof of Consciousness

Specific Questions:

1. What factors have helped to form your consciousness?
2. Can you think of a time when you wished you had acted more out of consciousness?
3. How will you better “carry your consciousness” in order to strengthen your marriage?

NOTE: *The facilitators thank the participants for their responses. In this session we learned how important our consciousness is in protecting our “faithful houses”. By knowing, loving and acting in faithfulness to each other, we can always keep the HIV virus out of our “faithful houses.” Let us always “carry our consciousness” in our hearts and let it shape our decisions and our actions.*

3.5 HIV Awareness

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

- Understand the modes of HIV transmission
- Understand how the HIV virus can be avoided.



NOTE: *The facilitator should understand that this is a session intended to raise consciousness about HIV transmission and prevention. Depending upon time and the level of knowledge of the group, the discussion can be supplemented by providing accurate information on local and global HIV statistics, modes of HIV transmission and the impact of HIV on families and society. The session should also help dispel misinformation about HIV transmission.*

STEP I: Gathering Views on HIV Awareness

General Questions:

1. What can happen to a couple, to their family and community if one or both of them becomes infected by the HIV virus?
2. What are the ways in which the husband or wife could become HIV infected? What is the most common way?
3. What are the misconceptions about HIV in your community or society?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on HIV Awareness

To act in consciousness, in deep loving awareness of God and of others, we also need to be aware of the HIV virus: how it is passed and how its passage is prevented. HIV is a virus that is primarily transmitted through sexual relations between a man and a woman. When body fluids such as blood, semen and vaginal fluids contain the HIV virus, the virus can then enter through openings in the skin of the penis and vagina. Once the virus gains entry, it begins to multiply and spread throughout a person's body. With time, the virus destroys infection-fighting cells (white blood cells) in the person's body and the person becomes vulnerable to serious infections.

It can take up to ten years from when a person is first infected with the HIV virus until they develop AIDS related symptoms. During this time, such people may appear and act perfectly healthy and may be completely unaware that they are harbouring the virus. If they are having sex, they are potentially passing the HIV virus to all with whom they have sex.

The passage of the HIV virus has nothing to do with mosquitoes, witchcraft, foreign plots or unclean water or eating utensils. Rather, the passage of HIV has everything to do with behaviours. Sexual behaviours of premarital sex, sex outside of marriage and casual sex put people into the very situations in which the HIV virus can be passed. Conversely, behaviours such as abstinence before marriage, chastity, monogamy and faithfulness put people in a situation in which the HIV virus can be avoided. Thus, a couple that builds and enters a *"faithful house,"* in which the husband only has sex with his wife and the wife only has sex with the husband avoids HIV infection.

These HIV risk avoiding behaviours are summarized by the English letters "A" and "B." "A" stands for *"Abstinence before marriage"* and "B" stands for *"Be faithful"* in marriage. "A" and "B" are the most critical factors in stopping the HIV epidemic.

STEP III: Life Application on HIV Awareness

Specific Questions:

1. What did you learn about the HIV virus and its transmission that you didn't know before?
2. What will be your strategy? How will you use your consciousness to keep *the HIV virus* out of your house?

NOTE: *In this session we have discussed how important it is that we understand the reality of the HIV virus and how it can enter our houses. We should be empowered by knowing that our consciousness, our deep loving awareness of God and others, can influence our behaviours. In turn, our behaviours of abstinence before marriage and faithfulness in marriage allow us to completely avoid the HIV virus. Let us be conscious and let us be faithful all the days of our lives!*

3.6 HIV Testing: Using Our Consciousness

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should understand:

1. The importance of HIV testing.
2. Why they as a couple should be tested.
3. Where HIV testing is available.

STEP I: Gathering Views on HIV Testing

General Questions:

1. Why is it important for couples to have pre- and intra-marital HIV counselling and testing?
2. What fears or concerns do people have about being tested?



STEP II: Supplementing Views on HIV Testing

As part of HIV awareness, it is extremely important that you receive HIV testing. We realize that many people are frightened at the thought of an HIV test. They may fear the worst and believe they will be found to be HIV-positive. To these fears, we must always respond, “knowing is better than not knowing your HIV status.” If one knows his/her HIV status or that of his/her spouse, he/she is empowered to make better decisions.

1. If someone is found to be HIV-positive, they can learn to take care of themselves in order to maintain their health. It may be possible for them to access antiretroviral medications to prevent opportunistic infections.

2. If one partner is HIV-positive, the couple should make a decision about whether or not they will get married.
3. If someone is already married and one partner is HIV-positive, the couple should decide about whether or not they will continue to show their love to each other through sexual intimacy.
4. If one member of a couple is HIV-positive, the couple should make decisions about caring for the children they have and whether or not they want to have more children.
5. If both members of a couple are HIV-negative, they have clear reason to always be faithful to each other. By being completely faithful to each other, they may never contract *the HIV virus*.

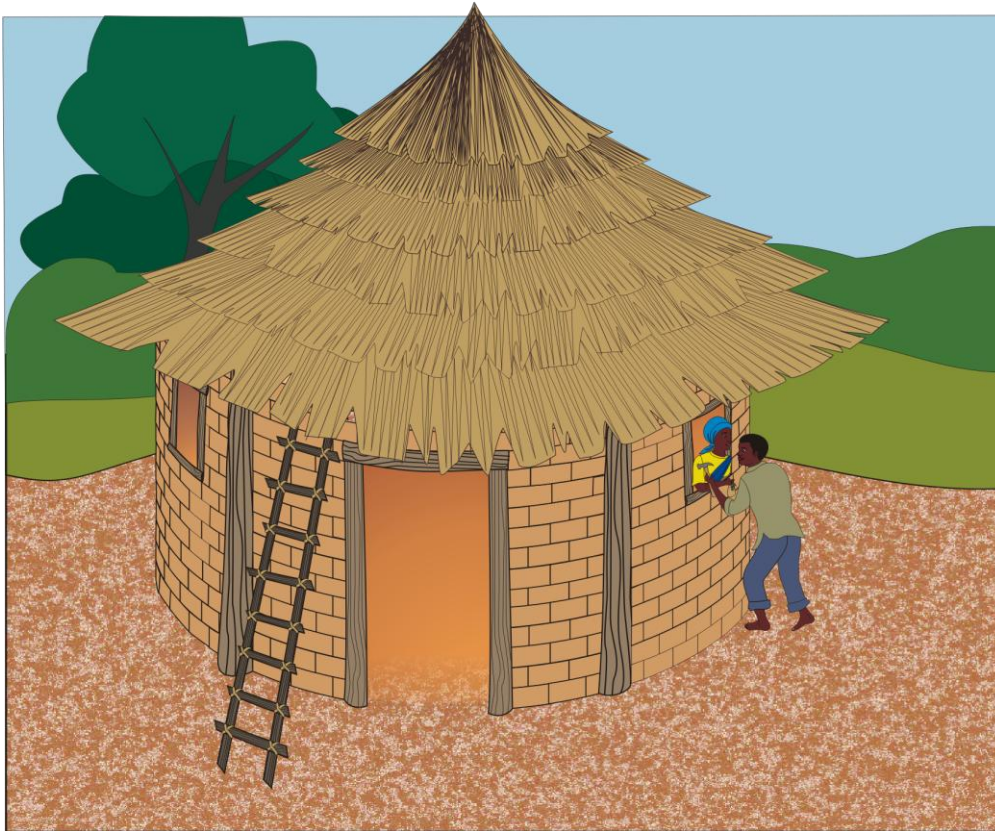
STEP III: Life Application on HIV Testing

Specific Questions:

1. Have we, as individuals or as couples, been HIV tested?
2. Are we willing to go forward with an HIV test? Why or why not?

NOTE: *The facilitator gives out specific information about where HIV testing can be done and encourages participants to have an HIV test as soon as possible.*

3.7 Windows of Light and Forgiveness



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

1. Recognize the windows of The Faithful House as the window of light and forgiveness.
2. Experience the importance of forgiveness and reconciliation in their marriages.

STEP I: Gathering Views on the Windows

NOTE: The facilitator leads the participants in considering these two questions:

1. *What is the role of a window in a house?*
2. *If there is no window in a house, what is the house like?*

General Questions:

1. What hinders couples from exercising forgiveness?
2. What common conflicts do couples face? Demonstrate in a role-play.
3. What do you think restores “light” in a troubled marriage?

NOTE: The facilitator leads the couple to identify the importance of forgiveness in marriage.

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the Windows

Our house is missing only one thing – windows. The windows of the house open it to the light and sun. Without windows, the house would be dark and cold and no one would want to live in it. These *windows of light* let in the fresh air of forgiveness and reconciliation. When these windows are put in place, the soft warm light of the sun enters and removes the darkness that has gathered in our hearts and homes.

As we consider these windows, we realize that each and every one of us sins and “falls short of the glory of God” (Romans 3:23). Thus, each person must be willing to take to heart the words of the Lord’s Prayer, “*Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us*” (Mathew 6:12). As we look to the light and grace of the window of forgiveness, we should know that Jesus practiced, taught and commanded forgiveness many times in the New Testament. Jesus has shown us that only in forgiving others and in accepting forgiveness can the light in our houses be restored (cf. Mathew 6:14-15).

In addition to the light coming from the window of forgiveness, we must look to the light that enters through reconciliation. In the sacrament of Reconciliation, God can forgive any sin that we have committed, including the sexual sins of adultery and fornication. Through the sacrament of Reconciliation, God “tosses our sins behind His back” and we are forgiven. As we receive the grace of this sacrament we, like the woman who was caught in the act of adultery, are asked by Jesus to “*Go and sin no more*” (John 8:11). In honoring God’s gift of forgiveness and reconciliation, spouses should also forgive and reconcile with one other. Once reconciled they should not reject or nag each another, but instead work to be “a new creation in Christ Jesus.”

In a time of HIV/AIDS, the power of the sacrament of Reconciliation cannot be underestimated. Through this sacrament, even those who are HIV-infected and feel great shame because of the disease are welcomed into the life of Christ and the Church.

STEP III: Life Application on the Windows

NOTE: This is an appropriate time for facilitators to encourage couples to open windows of light and let in the fresh air of forgiveness and reconciliation by preparing themselves for the sacrament of Reconciliation. The same steps necessary to prepare for the sacrament of Reconciliation can be used in examining one's interior life and conflicts in marriage. The facilitator should carefully and thoughtfully lay out the following steps:

1. Step One: I look deep into my own heart to see where I have sinned and where I have contributed to conflicts in my marriage. This step involves looking at myself and not blaming God or my spouse or others.
2. Step Two: I pray to God for sincerity of desire, that God may take my desire for forgiveness and healing to open my eyes completely to my sins and failings.
3. Step Three: I ask with all of my heart for forgiveness from God and from those I have harmed, especially my spouse.
4. Step Four: I pray to God for the strength and love to forgive those who have wronged me, especially my spouse. (On a practical level we need to reconcile with our spouses in order to restore our relationships and live in harmony.)
5. Step **Five:** Having sincerely examined my conscience, I confess my sins to a priest and sincerely amend my life to "sin no more" (cf. Luke 15:11-18).

Specific Questions:

1. For what actions would I like to be forgiven by my spouse?
2. For what actions would I like to forgive my spouse?
3. Ask God to bring to mind anybody you are finding hard to forgive, e.g. yourself, spouse, neighbour, relatives, in-laws, institutions, organisations, etc. and decide by God's grace to forgive them.

NOTE: The facilitator thanks the participants for their responses. Through our discussions, we realize how important it is to have windows of forgiveness and reconciliation in our houses. It is a guarantee in marriage that there will be problems and difficulties – small ones and big ones. Only the light and grace shining through the windows of forgiveness and reconciliation can allow our houses to be redeemed. Let us always keep these windows open!

The facilitator then concludes by giving out the Evaluation forms (see Appendix V). He or she asks participants to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space, and privacy to talk to one another. The plan of the next meeting date, place and time is announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to further discuss the questions they were given during the sessions. The participants should be put in a mood of anticipation for the next session.

4. Module Three: Living within a Faithful House

NOTE: *The facilitator begins with a welcome, prayer and recap of Module Two. He or she briefly reviews The Faithful House components, beginning with a foundation in God and ending with the windows of light and forgiveness. The facilitator can then allow couples to share their experiences using the following questions:*

1. What do we mean by the husband and wife being “co-builders” of the house?
2. Did anyone discuss in more detail the values for their marriage and family?
3. Did anyone discuss the “door” of your Faithful House and what it should be closed and opened to?
4. Did anyone re-examine and discuss authority and responsibility in relation to the door of your house?
5. Did anyone think more about what consciousness is and how important consciousness is in a time of AIDS?
6. Did any couples talk about the need to open a window of forgiveness and reconciliation in their marriages?
7. Has anyone decided to get an HIV test? How did you make that decision?

After the review of Module Two, the facilitator then introduces Module Three: “Now that we have built The Faithful House, we want to discuss how we are to live within it.”

4.1 The Marriage Bed



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session the participants should be able to:

1. Tell the significance of the marriage bed in The Faithful House.
2. Recognize the sacredness of sex in marriage.
3. Tell the importance of a couple being open and willing to share their sexual lives and concerns with each other.

Step I: Gathering Views on the Marriage Bed:

General Questions:

- What does the marriage bed symbolize?
- What are the purposes of the marriage bed in the life of a couple?
- What are the factors that can minimize or hinder fulfilment in the sexual union and bring disappointment and frustration?
- Is it easy for couples to talk about their desires and the problems with their marriage bed? Why or why not?
- How are men and women different in their attitudes, responses and behaviours in regard to sex?

Step II: Supplementing Views on the Marriage Bed:

The marriage bed is where you will sleep together and make love with each other. While we may be comfortable talking about building our houses, we may not be as comfortable talking with each other about our marriage beds and sexual lives. Yet, especially in a time of AIDS, we must be willing to do so.

If you have constructed your house well, the marriage bed will be a special place for you. However, if you have not constructed your house well – if it lacks a foundation in God, if it lacks pillars of love or respect or if there is not a deep loving awareness of God and each other – then your marriage bed will be troubled.

The marriage bed holds a special place in your house. In fact, it is so special we say it is placed on “holy ground.” It is placed on holy ground because when a couple makes love with each other, their union – their becoming one flesh – is holy. What do we mean by this?

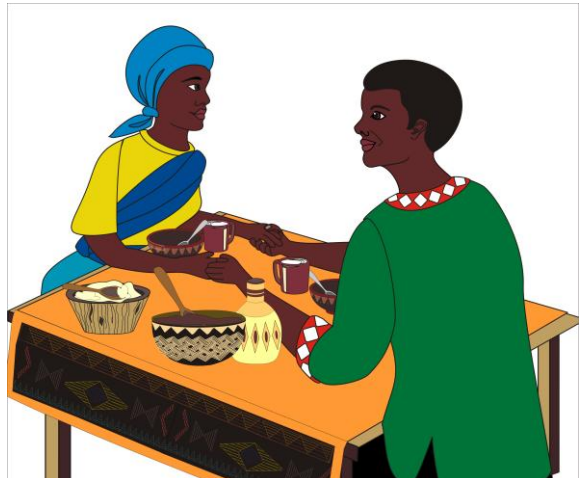
1. Sexual union is holy because a couple opens their bodies to create a child with God. They become co-creators with God.
2. Sexual union is holy because a husband and wife affirm with their bodies the goodness of their spouses. They renew a deep loving awareness of God and of each other.
3. Sexual union is holy because it is part of God’s divine and sacramental plan for a husband and wife.

The holiness of sexual union should make us pause. Many in our culture think of sex in casual, “exterior” terms, as if they could have sex with different people without any problems. This attitude betrays the marriage bed and undervalues the “interior” dimension of sex that is to be holy and to be shared only between husband and wife “*until death do you part.*”

A couple who enters the marriage bed with respect for each other’s dignity and with an understanding of the goodness of their bodies and the sacramental nature of marriage should be open to discussing their sexual lives. They should not hide what may be troubling them. For example, a wife may find that she is too tired for sex because she gets little help or support from her husband in caring for the children. She should discuss this with him. Perhaps a woman or man may find that she or he is not sexually satisfied. The man may say he cannot keep an erection or a woman may say she cannot have an orgasm (a climax). Other problem areas include poor communication, high expectations from the spouse or comparisons to previous partners. While it may be difficult to talk about these things, a couple – knowing that their bodies are good and their union together is good – should discuss such issues if they arise.

4.2 The Marriage Banquet

The practical dimension of making love can be further appreciated through an understanding of the “marriage banquet,” in which making love is compared to a banquet and involves the same steps of invitation, preparation, feasting and gratitude. If a couple can understand these steps, their sexual lives can be more satisfying. At the outset, we must note that often men and women view the banquet differently. Men are looking immediately at the food and the



feasting while women are much more sensitive to the preparation of the meal and insuring there is a proper invitation and expression of thanks!

Invitation:

A couple must learn to communicate about inviting one another to the marriage banquet. How will either the husband or wife learn to convey in a loving way that they would like to make love? What factors make the invitation desirable and what factors make the invitation undesirable? For example, at a given time, there may be fatigue or fear of pregnancy. A woman may be having her menses and not be comfortable with intercourse. Or there may be concern about the door being open or the presence of children. All of this must be considered as the husband invites the wife or the wife invites the husband. The invitation should be mutual. Both husband and wife should learn to communicate their intentions in kind, affectionate and sensitive ways.

Preparation:

A couple must learn to prepare for the banquet in a manner pleasing for both spouses.

1. Preparation involves bodily cleanliness; you need to clean up thoroughly, brush your mouth and teeth, wash nose, ear lobes, breasts, genital areas, vagina/penis, cut nails, shave unwanted hair or whiskers.
2. Preparation involves preparing your soul; look at what conflicts need to be resolved and if a window of forgiveness must be opened; ask for God's grace to be pleasing and satisfying to one another.
3. Preparation involves the right time and place. Be in a clean environment. Create a space where you can walk together or sit together or even bathe together. Talk about your partner's needs and desires. Let there be emotional intimacy before genital intimacy.

NOTE: The facilitator can supplement the presentation by turning to the Old Testament Song of Songs, 5:10-16, 7:1-9. If there is a couple, the first part (Song of Songs, 5:10-16) is read by the wife and the last part by the husband.

Feasting:

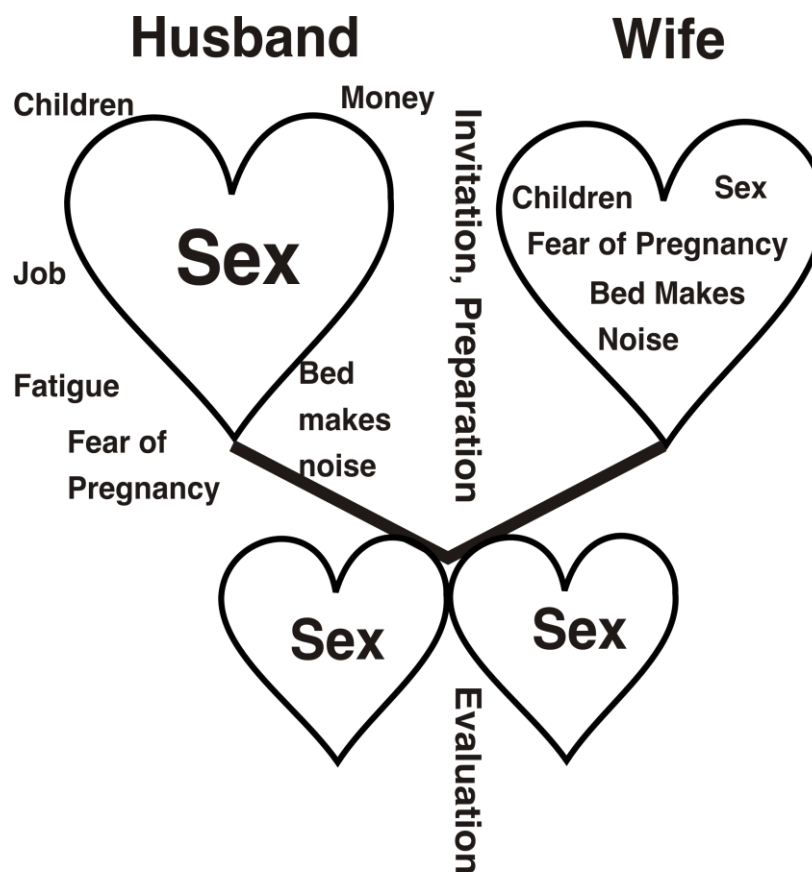
The act of sexual intercourse should be done with deep awareness of each other. The couple should be attentive to signs of excitement and arousal. They should focus not just on pleasing themselves, but also on pleasing the other. They should be attentive to the signs of orgasm. Most of the time, the husband will reach the climax before his wife. Then, he must do his best to ensure she is also satisfied. As at a banquet, one should observe good manners; one should not simply gorge one's self and forget about how others are faring. With time and with deep awareness of God and the body of your spouse, you will learn from each other what is pleasing and satisfying.

Gratitude and Evaluation:

The sexual act and climaxing do not represent the end of the banquet. Can you imagine if at a banquet everyone ran out of the room as they finishing eating, not

stopping to thank the hosts? Rather, there should be time for gratitude in which a husband and wife thank each other for this special time together and for having shared with one another the deepest part of themselves. The couple can clean each other if needed, and discuss in a kind and sensitive way any problems with the sexual act. Finally, with deep loving awareness of God and each other, they should offer a prayer of thanksgiving.

NOTE: The illustration below shows how differently men and women often feel before the sexual act.



Step III: Life Application on the Marriage Bed

Specific Questions:

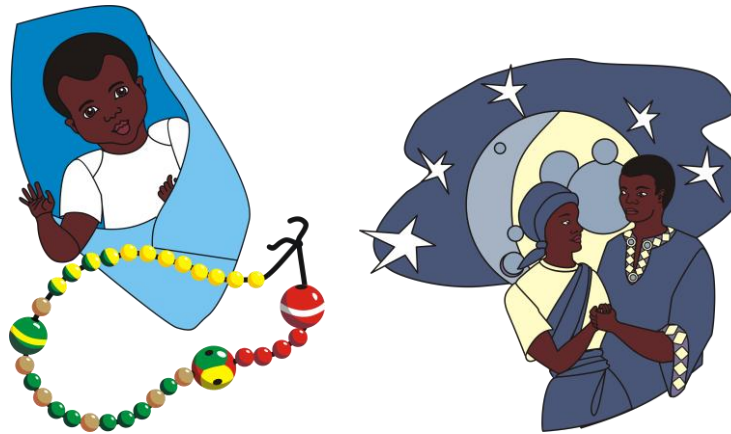
1. Is anything lacking in our marriage bed? What can we do about it?
2. How can we make our sexual lives as a couple better? What should we do differently in regard to:
 - Inviting one another
 - Preparing ourselves
 - Feasting

- Gratitude

3. What turns you on/off sexually? Have you communicated to your spouse the parts that arouse you sexually? If no, why?

NOTE: We realize that talking about the marriage bed and our sexual lives is not easy. Yet sex is a gift from God to us and is very much a part of who we are as human persons. Our challenge is to see sex as God intended it: as beautiful, as sacramental, as an image of His life-giving union. As we go forward, we ask God to help us see our sexual lives in a new light. We ask God to redeem what is broken in our marriage beds, so that it may be pleasing to Him.

4.3 Marriage: Life, Love or Both?



Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should:

1. Identify the two fundamental purposes of marriage.
2. Respect the cultural, family and religious influences on the purpose of marriage.
3. Move from an “either/or” understanding of marriage to an “and/both” understanding of marriage.

STEP I: Gathering Views On The Purpose Of Marriage

General Questions:

1. Why should a man and woman get married?
2. What is the purpose of marriage in traditional culture?
3. What is the purpose of Christian marriage?
4. If a couple cannot have children, is their marriage still valid?

STEP II: Supplementing Views On The Purpose Of Marriage

As a man and woman prepare to enter into marriage, they must consider the fundamental purposes of marriage. Are they coming together to build a house for children, for companionship, for continuation of their clan or family life or for economic

reasons? What about having sex? Is it just for children, or is it just for pleasure and intimacy?

There may be many different answers to these questions! In many traditional African cultures, the primary purpose of marriage and sex is to beget children so that the clan or family will continue. That is why it has been said that a “man is a father before he is a husband and a woman a mother before she is a wife.”

In the West, the opposite is happening in many places. Men and women co-habitate or get married primarily for companionship including sexual intimacy, and children are often secondary, with many couples choosing not to have any children or only 1 or 2 children.

What is correct? Should marriage and sex in marriage primarily be for “life-giving” through the begetting of children or should marriage and sex primarily be for “love-making?”

The Christian answer is that marriage and sex within marriage is for both; it is for life giving and lovemaking. In fact, as you will discuss, a couple that truly loves and truly is open to life is an image of God’s being, for God is at once a “love maker” and a “life giver.” Even if no children come, a couple that truly loves and is open to life images God’s own being.

It well may be that there are other valid reasons for marriage, including economic security and insuring that the life of the community, both living and dead, continues in the life of the couple and their children.

Our challenge is to see the beauty of the two primary purposes of marriage – life giving and love making – not as separate things, but as a unity. Thus, the purpose of marriage is not “either/or” children or companionship, but rather “and/both”; it is for both purposes and for others as well.

STEP III: Life Application

Specific Questions:

1. As a couple, how do we see our marriage? Is it primarily for children, for companionship or both?
2. What does our family think about the purpose of our marriage?
3. What does the community think about the purpose of our marriage?
4. What other purposes does our marriage have?
5. What part of our marriage may have “lost” its purpose and needs to be improved?

In conclusion, the facilitator notes that the problem of infertility is raised in this session. The facilitator should add: “Many couples bear the pain and suffering of infertility. A marriage without children is just as valid as a marriage blessed by children. In a future session we will talk more about the challenges of a Faithful House in which a couple experiences infertility.”

4.4 Two Paths from the House



Session Objectives:

- To understand the “sexual urge” that is natural to men and women
- To understand the differences between the male and female sexual urge
- To realize the importance of controlling our sexual urges

Step I: Gathering Views on The Two Paths

General Questions:

1. Where do the two paths from the Faithful House leading?
2. In general, is a man or woman more likely take the path to unfaithfulness?
3. Who is more honorable: the husband and wife going to the Church or the man and woman being unfaithful?
4. What word or words describe the power that allows a man or woman to control their sexual drive and stay faithful?

Step II: Supplementing Views on The Two Paths

God gave man and woman a strong sexual urge. This sexual urge is part of God’s plan that allows human beings to participate with God in the act of creation. The sexual urge is good as indicated in Genesis: “Male and female He created them

and saw that it was good.” Yet, the sexual urge must be brought under control. It must be directed to love and life and not directed to promiscuity, unfaithfulness, and the extremes of rape and abuse.

Men generally have a stronger sexual drive than women. They are more easily aroused by visual stimulation. In many cultures, the sexual promiscuity of men is accepted and tolerated. Yet, this tolerance must be challenged. In a time of AIDS, men who cannot control their sexual drive and have multiple sexual partners are most responsible for fueling the AIDS epidemic.

From a Christian perspective, we must realize a new ethic is at work: an ethic based in Jesus’s words: “for this reason a man shall leave his mother and father and the two shall become as one flesh.” The one flesh union of husband and wife is to be mutual and life-long. In Jesus, it is possible that men and women control their sexual urges. As John Paul II said,

“Of what man are we speaking? Of man dominated by lust or of man redeemed by Jesus?”

Let us acknowledge the truth and goodness of our sexual desire. Yet, let us also acknowledge that in Christ our sexual desire is capable of being under the control of our higher powers. We, the disciples of Jesus, are capable of controlling our sexual urge so that it is directed to life, love and faithfulness!

Specific Questions:

1. Can we talk about our sexual urges and we experience these urges as a man or a woman?
2. What can we as a couple do to insure that we “walk the right path” from our Faithful House?

4.5 Chastity and Sexual Self Control

Session Objectives:

By the end of the session, participants should be able to:

1. Discuss cultural understandings of sexuality and sexual self-control
2. Define what chastity is.
3. Explain why chastity is so important for human development.
4. Describe what chastity means for a priest or religious, a married couple or a young person who is not married.

STEP I: Gathering Views on Sexual Self-Control



NOTE: The facilitator begins by referring back to the last session, asking the participants what word or words describe the ability of human beings to control their sexual urge. These words can be either English words or words or phrases from the local language. The facilitator discusses these words and then proceeds to the General Questions.

General Questions:

1. Is it a cultural value for men to control their sexual drives?
2. How are men taught to control their sexual drives?

3. How are women expected to control their sexual drives?
4. As Christians, who is our model for our values and behaviors?
5. What does Christianity have to say about the control of our sexual drives?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Chastity

It has been said that there is a tremendous need to “Africanize Christianity and to Christianize Africa.” In other words, Christianity as it was given to Africa must learn from the experience, traditions and values of Africa and, at the same time, Africa is to be enriched by its experience of Christ and Christian discipleship.

We can see the value of this exchange in this complex and challenging issue of sexuality. There are words, phrases, rituals and customs from Africa that speak to the importance of sexual self-control. In Christianity as well, there are words, phrases and traditions that speak to the importance of sexual self-control. Both Africa and Christianity recognize that society and culture must understand the true meaning and purpose of sexuality.

Let us be enriched by both the African and Christian perspectives on sexual self-control. The word in the New Testament that expresses the capacity for men and women to control their sexual desires is “chastity.” Chastity is a virtue, a noble way of being, a habit of doing good.

“For this is the will of God, your sanctification: that you abstain from unchastity; that each one of you know how to control his own body in holiness and honor, not in the passion of lust like heathens who do not know God.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5.)

Chastity, “*controlling our bodies in holiness and honor,*” is a measure of human excellence. This excellence is to be part of our Christian discipleship; we are to “exceed” the ways of the world through our relationship with Jesus Christ.

In this excellence:

- A chaste young person directs the energy of his or her sexuality to loving others without being sexually intimate.
- A chaste priest or religious sister directs his or her sexual energy to the service of God and the Church. Their sexuality is to be ‘consecrated’ (not negated) so that it can serve many people in and through their sacramental relationship to Jesus Christ.
- A married couple is to be chaste in their faithfulness to each other.

Practicing chastity is a difficult and life-long task. It is not easy! Yet the alternative, to be “unchaste,” inevitably leads to trouble – from broken marriage, to diseases like AIDS.

Note: The facilitator follows up with two further questions, “What tensions are there between my sexual desires, cultural values and expectations and Christian values? How does a person and a how does a couple deal with these tensions?”

Step III: Life Application on Chastity

Specific Questions:

1. How do we practice chastity in our marriage?
2. How do we model chastity to our children?
3. How do we teach our children about chastity?
4. What cultural practices or values can help teach and support chastity?

NOTE: Here is a principle for life: Chastity equals happiness. Through chastity, we take the passion of our sexual energy and direct it to the good of others. Chastity is a way of excellence, a habit and a virtue in which we “walk the right path,” directing our sexual urge to true love, to excellence, to sexual self-control.

NOTE: The facilitator gives out the Evaluation Forms (see Appendix V). He or she asks participants to set aside at least one hour when they will have time, space, and privacy to talk to one another. The plan of the next meeting date, place and time is announced. During this time, the participants are encouraged to further discuss the questions they were given during the sessions. The participants should be put in a mood of anticipation for the next session.

5. Module 4: Challenges within the Faithful House

NOTE: The facilitator begins with a welcome and a prayer. He or she briefly reviews the information from Module Three by asking the couples the following questions:

1. Did you find it easier to talk about sex after our last session?
2. What do we mean by the marriage bed? Did anyone discuss it further?
3. What are the four steps of the marriage banquet?
4. What do you think the purposes of marriage are?
5. Why is it important to have sexual self-control?
6. What are cultural values and practices that help with sexual self-control?
7. What do we mean by the idea of chastity?

After the review of Module Three, the facilitator then introduces Module Four as noted below.

Living together as a married couple and as a family is not easy. There are many challenges, stresses and problems that arise, even in the most well built houses. In this module we will discuss these challenges and provide some guidance as to how to respond to them.

We want to begin by sharing with you a story. In 1975 in the country of Viet Nam, there a Catholic Bishop named Nguyen Van Thuan found himself in a very different house. He was thrown into a prison cell by the Communist government. For nine years, he was in solitary confinement. Yet he persisted in his faith and finally was released.

Bishop Van Thuan eventually became a Cardinal and he had this to say about how he endured all of his suffering: "Look to the Cross for every problem that assails you."

As Christians, this is exactly what we must do in the face of our challenges and problems; we too must look to the Cross for every problem that assails us. We must look to a deeper consciousness, to a deeper reality, in order to find a way to meet the challenges within our marriage and family life.



NOTE: The facilitator can ask the group for an example of someone they know or have heard about who had lived out this principle; who was able to face and accept a very difficult problem by "looking to the Cross."

5.1 Broken Houses

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Understand factors that may lead to the breakdown of our *Faithful Houses*.
- Understand how breakdown of our *Faithful Houses* increases our risk of HIV infection.



STEP I: Gathering Views on Broken Houses

NOTE: The facilitator should lead the participants to an understanding that without a roof, the house is incomplete. In the same way, a person who does not use his or her mind is “incomplete”. The fullest use of our minds is found in our capacity for “consciousness,” a concept we will discuss in detail. If they are available, the facilitator shows posters demonstrating domestic troubles: alcohol, spouse abuse, unfaithfulness, etc to generate a discussion on broken houses. The facilitator should bring out common causes that lead to the breakdown of marriages and families: alcohol, extramarital affairs, adverse relationships with relatives and in-laws, husbands working away from home, etc.

General Questions

1. What factors can lead to the breakdown of our houses?
2. What are the consequences to our houses?
3. Which house is more likely to become infected with HIV – a broken house or a house with all of its components well made?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Broken Houses

As much as possible, we would want our *Faithful Houses* to be perfect houses. Yet because of the reality of sin, all of our houses are broken to some degree. Our challenge is to identify where such breaks occur and ask ourselves how we can repair them.

Some of the causes of breakage in our *Faithful Houses* may be excessive alcohol use, relatives, house helpers, friends, in laws, bad company, poverty and poor stewardship.

The excessive use of alcohol is a very big threat to our *Faithful Houses* because it makes it more likely that the man or woman may sleep with others outside of the marriage, increasing the chances for HIV infection.

STEP III: Life Application on Broken Houses

Specific Question

1. What is the difference between this house and *The Faithful House* you have built?
2. What things are threatening to break our *Faithful Houses*? What are we going to do about it?

NOTE: *The facilitator thanks the participants for their responses and insights. We must be merciful with all those who have broken houses. We must carefully examine our own houses – for no house is perfect. Finally, we must return – and help others return – to the foundation of The Faithful House in God’ love, a love that will never leave us.*

5.2 An Empty House



Session Objectives:

- To understand the situation of infertile couples in Africa.
- To understand how difficult infertility is for couples: emotionally, relationally and spiritually.
- To better understand how to respond to infertility in a way that is life-giving.

STEP I: Gathering Views on Empty Houses

NOTE: The facilitators can begin this session with a role play of an empty house in which a couple has been struggling with infertility for four years. The facilitator then ask, "is it possible to keep the faith and maintain a good marriage under this condition or has God given us a situation too difficult to bear?" Based on the responses, the facilitator can discuss with the participants the emotions, challenges and dynamics that arise in the situation of an "empty house."

General Questions

1. What do you notice about this house?
2. What do you think the house represents?
3. How do you think a couple in this house feels?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Empty Houses

Infertility is a very common and difficult situation in Africa. Depending upon the specific country and area, up to 30 percent of couples may experience the pain and suffering of infertility. There are many negative emotions and behaviors that may arise from infertility. A wife may become deeply depressed. The couple may blame each other. The empty house may become an angry house or a sad and silent one. A husband may leave his wife and take others, hoping to find one that will bear his child. In this way, he may acquire and then transmit the HIV virus.

How are we to respond to infertility? Do you remember the principle for this session? **“Look to the Cross for every problem that assails you.”** In fact, as hard as it is, the only way to respond to infertility is to indeed look to the Cross, to the person of Jesus, and to see how His love and wisdom can bring some kind of healing. Jesus and the Church teach us that marriage is still valid and life-giving even if no child comes from the union. A couple is still to give life to each other and still to give life to the community around them. If it is possible, a couple can consider adoption. A couple without children can see how they can be involved in reaching out to others within their extended family: to nieces, to nephews and even to orphans or disadvantaged children. Such a couple is truly “looking to the Cross;” they are taking the pain of their infertility and turning it around and using it to love one another and love others. May God give them comfort and healing for their courage and great love!

Such loving responses are difficult, yet they are what leads to life. Other responses – unfaithfulness or seeking other partners – may lead to death through HIV. Berating each other, fighting with each other and isolating each other are responses that also lead to a kind of death; the death of marriage as a life-giving, love-making union.

Couples who are struggling with infertility should be sure that they are “fertility literate” and should try and seek medical attention from a qualified health professional. Their situation should call forth our understanding, compassion and support as we too help them carry this cross.

Specific Questions

1. Are we bearing the pain and suffering of infertility?
2. How do we handle this situation? Are we able to “look to the Cross” and find responses that are life-giving?
3. Do we know couples who are struggling with infertility? How can we better understand and support them?

NOTE: *The facilitator can refer those who are interested for training in “fertility literacy.” See Faithful House Supplemental Resource Material following the appendices.*

5.3 Male and Female He Created Them



Session Objectives:

- To understand God's plan for the equality and complementarity of man and woman.
- To understand how God's plan of equality and complementarity is to be lived within marriage.
- To discuss common problems that emerge from a misunderstanding of God's plan.

STEP I: Gathering Views on the Complimentarity of Husband and Wife

General Questions

1. What is the difference between the three pictures of husband and wife?
2. What picture most accurately represents the situation in Africa? Why?
3. What picture best represents God's plan for marriage and family life?

NOTE: The facilitator may share with the group the posters from Appendix IV that also touch on the issue of equality and complementarity of husband and wife.

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the Complimentarity of Husband and Wife

In the Biblical account of Genesis we read that God created woman from the side of man: from his rib. Woman was not created from man's feet to be beneath him nor from his head to be above him, but from his side to be equal. Later in the *New Testament*, we see how Jesus valued women even in situations where it was against the culture. In fact, from a Christian point view all persons, male and female, have infinite value. We cannot say that this person is greater than another person, or one sex is greater than another sex.

While both men and women have infinite value as persons and in this way are equal, they are not the same. A man cannot conceive and bear a child. A woman cannot impregnate a man. Men and women have different bodies and different ways of being in the world. Men and women, husband and wife are to "complement" each other. They are to bring out the best in each other in their shared vocation to love.

This is a great challenge in our cultures: to find balance between husband and wife, to find a way of promoting the dignity of women and upholding the dignity of men, never compromising the dignity of either.

Specific Questions:

1. What picture best fits us as a couple?
2. Is there something we must change so that each of us feels both equal and "complemented?"
3. How in our day to day lives can we treat each other with dignity?

NOTE: *The facilitator then notes they will be moving into a discussion about the challenges of parenting. Once again, the principle of "looking to the Cross" applies in that we should raise our children in ways that reflect the faith, hope and love that is at the center of Christian discipleship.*

5.4 Positive Parenting

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, participants should be able to:

- Recognize that parents are the most important positive forces in their children's lives.
- Describe the principles of positive parenting.
- Understand the importance of the "No Touch" Rule and the "AB" Rule.



NOTE: Facilitators introduce the session on Positive Parenting by presenting a role-play in which a young boy of six tries to talk to his mother and father, but they are too busy to talk and play with him. The role-play goes forward ten years and the boy is being wild, drinking and misbehaving; now the parents can't communicate with him. Facilitators ask participants to share on lessons learnt in the role-play.

STEP I: Gathering Views on Positive Parenting

General Questions

1. Who are the most important people in a child's life? Why are they so important?
2. What are the challenges of parenting today?
3. What is the role of parents in teaching their children about sexuality and HIV/AIDS?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Positive Parenting

NOTE: Facilitators can supplement this discussion by quoting Scriptural passages such as Proverbs 22:6, Proverbs 19:18.

As a mother or a father, you are the most important teacher for your children. They will learn more from each of you than from any other person in the world. From you, they will learn lessons that they will carry with them the rest of their lives. Thus, it is extremely important that you teach your children well and be a role model for them.

While we do not have time to give a complete session on positive parenting, we would present to you seven principles. These principles are from the first seven letters of the alphabet and they help remind us of how we can be positive parents.

- **A is for Attitude** – We should have a positive attitude towards our children, looking for the good news in them. Attitude is part of consciousness, our deep loving awareness of the gift of our child. Most children are treated with a negative attitude and are seen as a problem and not as a gift.
- **B is for Being Present** - To love your child is to spend time with your child. Most children are raised without their parents being present and involved in their lives. Parents should spend quality time with their children and celebrate important events like birthdays and feast days.
- **C is for Communication** – Just as you learned about communicating with your spouse, you must learn to communicate well with your child. This first involves willingness to listen well to them and to their concerns.
- **D is for Development** – As a positive parent, you should have an awareness of a child’s developmental stage. We cannot expect a three year old to behave like a ten year old. We must be attentive to developmental stages such as puberty, when children have special needs and issues.
- **E is for Expectations** - A positive parent sets clear and high expectations for a child – for their behaviour, for their school performance and for their generosity towards others. Parents must talk with each other about their expectations and communicate them to the child. Parents should reward or affirm their children when they do well. Parents should have a clear plan of discipline for when expectations are not met. If discipline is needed, it should be consistent from one parent to the other.
- **F is for Failure and Forgiveness** – There will always be times when we disappoint and fail our children and when our children disappoint and fail us. We must be willing to forgive and be forgiven. If a child fails we cannot give them a burden of guilt to carry for long; rather we must forgive them and love them with an unconditional love.
- **G is for God and Grace** – The greatest hope we have for our children is that their lives will be centred in God and they will know the faith, hope and love that is our baptismal promise. On a daily basis parents, through their example and through their priorities, should help children cultivate their relationship with God and the fruits that flow from that relationship.

NOTE: More points can be found in Appendix I, Section on Christian Family

Step III: Life Application on Positive Parenting

Specific Questions

1. What positive parenting did I experience as a child?
2. What negative parenting did I experience as a child?
3. What can we do to become more positive parents?

NOTE: *The facilitator thanks the participants for their responses and insights. In this session, we have outlined the importance of positive parenting beginning with a positive, loving attitude towards your child and ending with an emphasis on helping your child understand his or her own life in God. We have many models of positive parenting: those we may have experienced in our own lives, the models of Mary and Joseph and most importantly, the model of God Our Father, who always loves us completely and unconditionally.*

5.5 Protecting Your Children

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

- Understand that any child could be at risk for sexual abuse.
- Teach young children to protect themselves from abuse by using “THE NO TOUCH RULE”.
- Teach older children the importance and meaning of chastity.

5.5.1 The “NO TOUCH RULE”

STEP I: Gathering Views on the “NO TOUCH RULE”

NOTE: Facilitators introduce this session by asking participants to act a role-play in which a mother and father teach their five-year-old son about HIV/ AIDS and the “NO TOUCH RULE.”



General Questions

1. What positive parenting skills did you see in this role-play?
2. What dangers exist for little children in our society today? How should we protect them from these dangers?
3. Who should be primarily responsible for teaching children about HIV/AIDS?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the “NO TOUCH RULE”

One of the most basic and important lessons you will teach your children is how to “be safe” and protect themselves from sexual abuse, i.e. being molested or raped. This is especially true in a time of HIV/AIDS, when we want to do everything possible to ensure that our children do not become infected with the HIV virus.

While we may feel comfortable talking with our children about some dangers – for example the danger of running out into the road if a car is approaching – we may not feel comfortable talking with them about sexual issues. Furthermore, we may not know the best time to teach them and what words and expressions to use.

One way of speaking with smaller children about the dangers of HIV/AIDS and how to avoid it is by teaching them the “NO TOUCH RULE.”

- The “NO TOUCH RULE” is based upon the developmental stage of a child. At an early age, a child cannot reason and think as well as they can when they are older. Thus, they must be taught with clear and simple directions. As a small child’s level of reasoning is not yet well developed, the explanation of the “reasoning behind the rule” does not have to be as thorough as a rule given to an older child.
- All children, by five years of age, should be taught the “NO TOUCH RULE” that says, “**No person should ever touch my private body parts.**”
- If someone – be it a stranger or even a family member – tries to touch my private body parts, I must do three things:
 1. **Shout “NO”**
 2. **Run away from person**
 3. **Tell an adult.**
- The only exception to the NO TOUCH RULE is if a mother or father is helping you wash your private parts or helping you after using the toilet.

STEP III: Life Application for “No Touch Rule”

Specific Questions

1. Imagine one of you is the parent and the other the child. Explain the “NO TOUCH RULE” to the child.
2. What ways are there to protect young children from abuse?

NOTE: *The facilitator can summarize the rule by helping the child remember three steps: **No, Run, Tell**. The facilitator asks the participants to present a role-play practicing how a parent should ask the child, “What would you do if a stranger came and gave you a toy or sweets if he could hold your private parts?” Or, ask the child, “What would you do if a cousin came and told you he was supposed to put his finger in your private parts?”*

5.5.2 The “A B RULE”



STEP I: Gathering Views on The A B RULE

NOTE: Facilitators introduce this session by presenting a role-play in which a girl of 14 is approached by a boy of 18. He first befriends her, and then later tries to coax her into playing sex. The girl responds firmly and directly with THE A B RULE.

General Questions

1. What do you imagine the boy is thinking as he makes friends with the girl?
2. What do you imagine the girl is thinking as the boy makes friends with her?
3. What changes do boys and girls experience at the time of puberty?
4. What should we be doing as parents when our children are approaching and entering puberty to protect them from HIV infection?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the A B RULE”

The A B RULE is very essential for young people. A B means “Always Be Chaste.”

To understand the importance of chastity, we must first understand what is happening at the time of puberty when boys and girls have an awakening of their sexuality. Their bodies awaken in the following ways:

- Both boys and girls become taller.

- A girl begins to develop breasts and pubic hair.
- A girl begins to menstruate.
- A boy's voice grows deeper and he develops pubic hair.
- A boy's penis and testicles begin to enlarge.
- A boy can discharge semen-containing fluid from his penis.

These physical changes are accompanied by emotional changes:

- Boys become attracted to girls.
- Girls become attracted to boys.
- Both boys and girls may withdraw from their parents and want to spend more time with their peers.
- Some boys and girls may at times be tired or irritable or moody.

At the time of puberty, a girl becomes a woman – capable of conceiving and bearing a child and a boy becomes a man – capable of impregnating a woman.

The time of puberty is a critical time for young people. It can be a time when they make decisions about having sex. While their bodies may be capable of “playing sex,” young boys and girls do not have the emotional or spiritual maturity to be parents. As well, young girls may be vulnerable to sexual exploitation. An older boy or man may encourage them to have sex, offering them cash or gifts or some other kind of favour. Thus, at puberty young boys and girls need education and supervision to protect them from sexual activity and HIV infection.

At the time of puberty, it is very important that parents talk with their children about chastity. Chastity is purity of a person's sexual life in thought, word and deed even in areas of masturbation and pornography. A chaste person has sexual self-control because he or she desires to love God and desires to truly love others.

“The Chastity Golden Coin”

Now that we have defined what chastity is, our challenge is to convey its meaning to children. One way to do this is by using what we call “The Chastity Golden Coin.” (*Remember that Jesus on occasion used coins to illustrate a point.*)



NOTE: Facilitators find out the most valuable thing in that particular community and relate it to the gift of chastity

Golden coins have value that allows you to purchase things. Think for a minute of your body, including your sexual parts, as a golden coin. The golden coin that is your body, including your sexuality has infinite value. It has such a high value that God himself, Jesus Christ, came and died for your body!

If you imagine your body and your sexuality as this precious, valuable, beautiful golden coin, what are you going to do with the coin? Will you throw it away? Will you spend it on something that is cheap and does not last? Or, will you hold on to the coin and treasure it, so that it increases in value and can be spent to purchase something that lasts for eternity?

As a girl becomes a woman and as a boy becomes a man, each becomes much more aware of the coin that is her or his body and sexuality. They each realize that there is a great energy and attraction that exists in their bodies. Young men want to be with young women and young women want to be with young men. The great energy and interest in sex make it very tempting to “spend the coin” and begin having sex. Yet that is not God’s plans for our bodies.

- If you play sex before marriage, you are throwing away your coin. You are not valuing the precious body that God gave to you.
- If you play sex before marriage, you are taking someone’s coin from them and using it for yourself. You are stealing from them and, because you are stealing from them, you are stealing from God.
- If you play sex before marriage, not only may you lose the coin, you may lose your life by becoming infected with *the HIV virus*.

God desires that we use the coin of our bodies in one of two ways:

1. If you desire to become married, you hold on to the coin until the day of your wedding. If you do this, the coin will hold its infinite and everlasting value.
2. If you are called to a religious vocation to become a priest or a religious or to be a committed single layperson, then you commit yourself to a life of celibacy in which your coin is offered fully and completely to Jesus. The celibate person is not negating his or her sexuality, but rather they are consecrating their sexuality, offering it to Jesus and to the whole body of the Church.

As a young person discerning your path in life, you need to remain chaste so that when the time comes to enter married life or religious life or to remain a committed layperson, you have self-control of your sexual energy and use it for the good of God and others.

Secondary Virginity: “Picking up the Coin Again”

NOTE: The facilitator begins this exercise by dropping a coin and then “picking it up again.” The facilitator then asks the participants the following questions:

1. What does the coin represent?
2. What do you think is symbolized by the dropping of the coin and then picking it up again?

“Picking up the coin again” symbolizes secondary virginity. Every one of us has sinned and fallen short of the glory of God. This is true of sexual sin. For many reasons – peer pressure, poverty, curiosity or even coercion – a young person may be sexually active. In so doing, they have “dropped their coin” and are not living out God’s plan for their sexuality. Yet, they can “pick up their coin again.” Instead of leaving the coin on the ground where it can be trampled and ruined, they can pick up the coin and reclaim the precious gift of their sexuality.

In the life of Jesus we have a very clear example of a person “picking up the coin again.” Jesus encountered a woman caught in the act of adultery who was about to be stoned. He asked those gathered around the woman, “Let he who is without sin cast the first stone.” No one did. They dropped their stones and walked away. Jesus turned to the woman and said, “Has anyone of these condemned you? Then neither do I. Go and sin no more.”

Here we see Jesus telling the woman to “pick up your coin again.” Do not sin, do not commit adultery, do not cheapen your body and sexuality. Jesus does so by forgiving the woman and by recognizing her dignity as a person. In the same way, persons who are committing sexual sin through premarital sex or through adultery can begin their lives again. They can become “secondary virgins,” committing themselves to chastity even if they have been unchaste before. As they do, they must see that God has forgiven them and that they indeed can practice “**AB:** Always **Be** Chaste, Always **By** Christ.”

“The Coin Has Two Sides”

There is a second story to be told with the chastity golden coin. When you examine a coin you will see that it has two sides. The two sides of the coin represent the two parts of chastity:

1. Thou shall always love: On one side of the coin, we see that God created us for love and to do the good for another. As a chaste person, you want to keep loving people. To love people means that you value them as persons,



recognizing that they too hold a precious coin. Because you love them, you would never want to harm them, stealing away their coin.

2. Thou shall not use: On the other side of the coin God tells us we should never “use” another person. By using we mean taking something – like sex – from another person for our own ends. Using is the opposite of loving. When we use someone rather than giving of ourselves, we are “taking”; we are “stealing” from another person, a person who has just as much value as we.

Each of us holds in our hand this precious coin, the gift of our bodies and our sexuality. As we clutch it, we are reminded of its two sides: “Thou shall always love” and “Thou shall not use.” The time will come when we shall share our coin with someone:

- If you become married, your coin is shared with your spouse and only your spouse.
- If you become a priest or a religious, or a committed layperson, this coin is offered fully and completely to Jesus.

Remember this about your body and your sexuality: Your body is precious beyond any measure. Your body should always be directed towards truly loving persons and never towards using them. Chastity teaches us that through the grace of God we can live our lives by “always loving and never using others!”

NOTE: *The facilitator can further supplement the discussion by reading and handing out the message on chastity outlined below.*

“A B” Means, “Always Be Chaste.”

Chaste is a word that is very important for you to understand.

- Chaste means to honour your body by not having sex before marriage.
- Chaste means to be strong and honourable by having sexual self-control. If you are a boy, you should not try to have sex with girls. If you are a girl, you should not allow boys or men to lead you into having sex.
- Chaste means that whether you are a boy or a girl, you are proud that you are a virgin.
- Chaste means to honour God by respecting your own body and the bodies of others.

A chaste person is practicing what God has intended – not to have sex until you are married. In a time of AIDS, to be chaste is the best way to avoid the HIV virus. If you are “unchaste,” that is, if you have sex with someone outside marriage, then you are opening up your body to the HIV virus! Please do not open your body to the HIV virus. Keep it safe by “AB” Always Be Chaste.

Know that it is not easy to be chaste. Your body may be telling you it wants to have sex. Boys may try and get girls to have sex by promising some things. Older boys or men may offer money or gifts in order for girls to have sex with them. You must be strong in insisting to “Always Be Chaste.” Do not let a cunning person trick you into not being chaste.

Boys and men have a special responsibility to fully respect women. Boys and men may want to trick or even force a girl to have sex so they can experience the thrill of having sex. To do so – to trick or force a girl to have sex – is a grave sin as it hurts the body of a girl that God has made and robs the parties involved of their golden coins.

You must understand that in a time of AIDS to live by the “A B Rule” is the difference between life and death. If you do not live by this rule and you begin to have sex, you are opening your body to the HIV virus. The HIV virus is deadly – it will kill you. If you become infected with HIV, you will die a very sad and painful death.

You must realize that if you have sex with someone, you don’t know if that person has AIDS or not. A person with HIV can look perfectly strong and healthy. They can lie and tell you that they have been tested – but have they really?

If you can live by the A B RULE, you will be happier. You will not be distracted by “playing sex.” You will be able to avoid the HIV virus. You will be able to pursue your life goals. You will be honouring your own body and you will be honouring the body of others. Finally, you will be following God’s plan; He wants each of us to experience “life in its abundance.” Please follow the A B RULE: **Always Be Chaste! Always By Christ.**

Finally, chastity is a gift we can desire and ask from God for our children and ourselves

NOTE: Read 1 Cor. 6: 12-20.

STEP III: Life Application on the “A B RULE”

Specific Questions

1. Imagine that one of you is the parent and the other is a child entering puberty. Tell the child as best as you can about what chastity is.
2. What ways are there to help your children learn and practice chastity?

NOTE: Children are very vulnerable to becoming sexually active at the time of puberty and afterwards. Parents can help protect them by teaching them about chastity and by supporting their decision to be chaste. In so doing, should help them become serious and committed to the “NO TOUCH RULE” and the “BC RULE.” Finally, we must work with our communities and society at large in order that chastity becomes a lifestyle and not an exception for our young people.

5.6 God’s House of Mercy

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session, the participants should be able:

- To understand and appreciate God’s House of Mercy that is open to all.
- To realize our own needs for God’s mercy.
- To recognize how our “faithful houses” are to be part of God’s House of Mercy.



NOTE: In this session, the facilitator should prayerfully lead the participants to a mood of prayer, allowing time for reflection and reconciliation between couples. If possible the Sacrament of Reconciliation should be available. The facilitator may light a candle or have a crucifix to symbolize the presence of God. Read aloud: Luke 15:20-24; Isaiah 1:18. The facilitator emphasises that there is no sin that God cannot forgive and forget.

As we close our final session, we would ask you to imagine one more house, a house bigger and more beautiful than any house you have ever seen. This house has room for every single person in the universe! This house welcomes with an open door a married couple working each day to be faithful to each other. This house welcomes a couple that have been bearing pain of different kinds in their marriage. And this house welcomes those who are HIV positive and those who are sick and dying of AIDS.

As you enter this glorious house, the host will greet you. He will kiss your hand and give you a new robe. As you enter further, he will lead you to a banquet room where guests are feasting on every fine food. On entering this house, any pain or guilt or suffering you are carrying is lifted from you and you are warm, free and loved.

My people, you have entered God's house of mercy. You have been greeted and welcomed and escorted by Jesus the Son. No matter what your sin and what your circumstance, God stands waiting, begging for you to enter His house of mercy.

All of us need to enter this house of mercy. We enter this house through our prayers and through the sacraments of Reconciliation and Eucharist. No sin is bigger than God's house of mercy. If we accept his gift of mercy, He can redeem our lives; we change our sinful ways and we can again live as God intended, one with Him and one in Him.

As we think back to our meetings, we have come a long way in building our *Faithful Houses*. **Ending in the very place where we began – in God's love and mercy.** Our challenge is to become more and more aware of this love and mercy, letting them enter and infuse our own houses. This is what God truly intended when he said, "Love one another as I have loved you: Build your houses with the same great love with which I have built my own.

Let us close with a prayer, calling to mind God's infinite mercy:

"Lord as we build our own Faithful Houses, we turn to the house you have shared with us, your house of love and divine mercy. In your house we can always take refuge. In your house, we find the strength to follow your son Jesus: He who was most chaste; He who was most good; He who bore all things for love of us. As we have found love and mercy in you, may we be loving and merciful with one another so that in all ways your house may shine in our very own." In Jesus' name we pray.

Amen.

5.7 Closing of Module Four and *The Faithful House* Program.

Once the physical house has been built, it is not the end of things. We must continually work on the house to ensure it is clean and maintained. The same is true with *The Faithful House*. It should have ongoing work and maintenance. Thus, while we are formally concluding the sessions on *The Faithful House*, we want you to keep working to maintain and strengthen your house.

All of us must take the basics of what we have learned and build upon them. Let us be changed by the knowledge we have accumulated in building a *Faithful House* and make an about turn. If we did not pray before, let us pray now. If we did not respect our spouses before, let us begin to respect them now. If we were not faithful before, let us be faithful now.

In these ways and others we may take into our hearts the words of St. Paul, “*May what has begun in the Lord Jesus Christ continue all the days of your life.*” (Philippians 1:6).

NOTE: Facilitators should introduce the idea of support groups (see Appendix II), and urge participants to form such groups in this manner:

Some of you may be interested in forming small groups or associations that can support one another in living a faithful married life. These groups and associations can help ensure that couples surround themselves with houses that share the same values. These associations can also be a source of support and wisdom in addressing the problems and challenges of married and family life.

NOTE: The facilitator must evaluate the program (see Evaluation Form in Appendix V).

Finally, if possible, the end of program could be concluded with a simple celebration. The Faithful House Celebration could take the form of Mass, sharing a meal, lighting candles and renewal of marriage vows. The couple can also be invited to honor each other before other couples and share how they have benefited from the program.

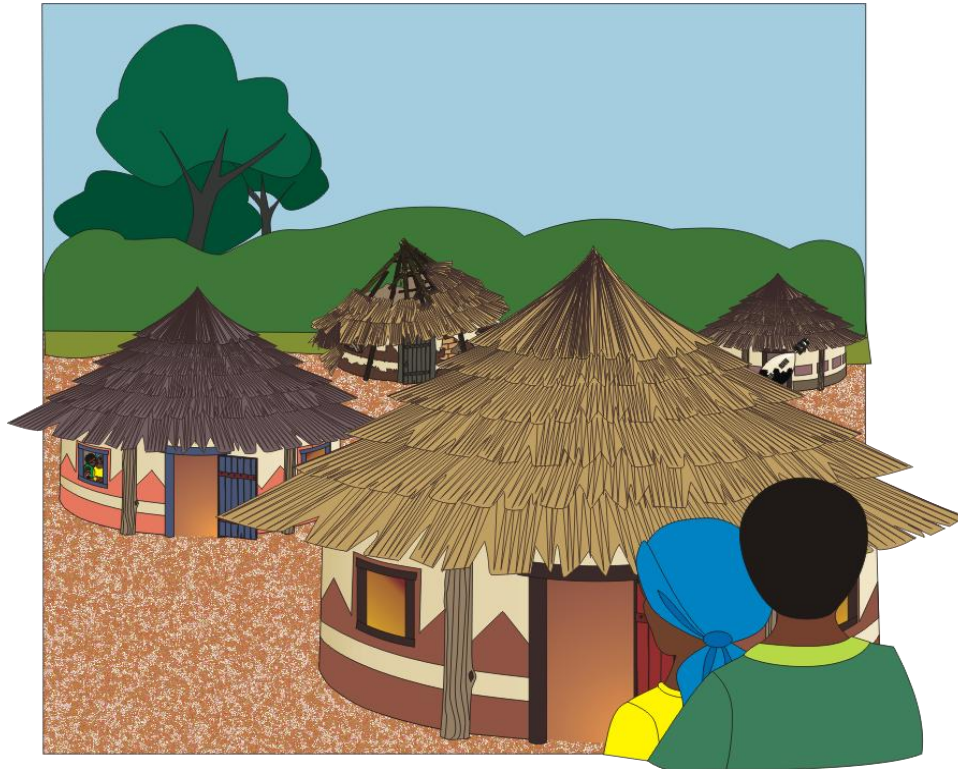
6. Additional Topics for Facilitators and Small Groups

6.1 Culture and the Houses Around Us

Session Objectives:

By the end of this session participants should be able to:

- Realize the influence of culture on their “*faithful houses*.”
- Identify cultural and modern influences that pose a risk to *The Faithful House*.
- Identify cultural and modern influences that affirm life and avoid risk to *The Faithful House*.



STEP I: Gathering Views on Culture and The Houses Around Us

General Questions

1. What are the cultural and modern influences (knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours) around you that will decrease the risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS?
2. What are the cultural and modern influences (knowledge, attitudes, practices and behaviours) around you that will increase the risk of acquiring HIV/AIDS?
Act in a role-play.

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Culture and The Houses Around Us

Our houses don't stand alone. They are influenced by the houses around them. One of the deepest influences on our houses comes from the culture around us. The role of culture is especially important in a time of HIV/AIDS. There may be cultural practices

and traditions that put our house at risk of acquiring HIV infection and there may be values and traditions within our culture that can help protect us against HIV/AIDS. Therefore, cultures must be carefully examined to discover their influence on the values, behaviours and the life styles of *The Faithful House*.

These are some of the specific cultural influences that can be considered in relation to AIDS:

Houses in which cultural or modern values or practices increase HIV risk:

- Widow inheritance and purification
- Women having to prove their fertility before marriage by having a child
- Men proving their manhood by having sex before marriage
- Seeing women as property or objects instead of persons.
- Pornography on the internet or on TV

Houses in which cultural values or practices decrease HIV risk:

- Teaching and supporting chastity in young men and women
- Emphasizing respect for the dignity of women
- Dressing modestly
- Fathers involved with teaching their children to be chaste
- Attending church
- Associating with other couples and families that share your values
- Seeking spiritual support

STEP III: Life Application on Culture and The Houses Around Us

Specific Questions

1. If there is one thing that you could change in your culture to decrease the risk of HIV, what would that change be? What are you going to do about it as an individual?
2. What positive cultural and modern influences can you encourage in your marriage, family and community that will help decrease the spread of HIV?

NOTE: *The facilitator thanks participants for their contributions. In summary, as we work to ensure that our house is safe, we must be aware of how our culture can either negatively or positively influence our own houses. In order to counteract the negative influence of certain cultural values and practices, we must be sure that our own values and beliefs are strong and not broken down. We must also realize that through our example and through our faith we can positively influence culture so that it helps promote the life and dignity of all people as well as reducing HIV risk.*

6.2 The House that is Poor



Session Objectives:

- To understand the reality of poverty and its impact on marriage and family life.
- To challenge couples to use their togetherness to minimize the effects of poverty.
- To challenge the community to care for and support those who are poor.

STEP I: Gathering Views on the House That Is Poor

General Questions:

1. What do you notice about this house?
2. Do you think it easy to live in this house?
3. What would happen to the family if the mother or father were to get AIDS?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on the House That Is Poor

Poverty within our families and communities is a profound problem. Poverty can lead to disease and to despair. Those who are poor suffer disproportionately compared to those who are well off. John Paul II, the late Holy Father, said this about poverty:

“We must see another’s poverty as our own and be convinced that the poor can wait no longer.”

The root causes of poverty are varied and complex. Poverty may come from economic circumstances, from lack of jobs and education. Poverty may come about from diseases like AIDS in which people lose their health and vitality. Or poverty may come from a breakdown in relationships, for example if a wife is widowed and has children to care for.

Again, we must “look to the Cross.” In so doing, we realize that a couple living in a Faithful House is much less likely to experience worsening poverty than a couple who abandons their Faithful house. For example, if a poor man becomes so discouraged that he begins drinking heavily, the families poverty will worsen; if out of desperation, a woman turns to prostitution for money and gets AIDS, the families poverty will worsen. Thus, a couple must stay together and support each other, even in the midst of extreme poverty. If they don’t, their situation may well worsen even further.

Living in a poor house, a couple must look to their “roof” – to their consciousness – to see what they may be able to do to improve their situation. It may be something simple: getting a chicken for eggs, planting a garden or looking elsewhere for a job.

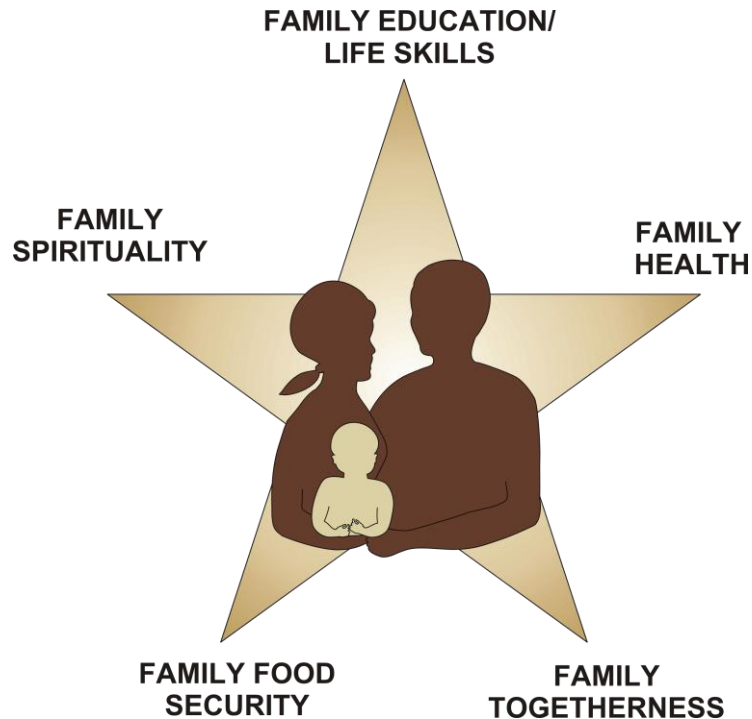
The Christian community must look carefully at these couples and their families to see how they can be of help and support to them. As John Paul II said, the “poverty of one is the poverty of us all.”

NOTE: *At this point, the facilitator should initiate a discussion asking couples how they deal with poverty in their own lives, what stresses it creates and what suggestions they have for others who are struggling with poverty.*

Specific Questions:

1. How do we deal with poverty in our own house?
2. Are there things that we can do to improve our situation?
3. Who is poor in our own community and how can we reach out to them?

6.3 A STAR within the House



Session Objectives

- To discuss important themes lead to happy and successful family life.
- To identify areas that a couple can have control of within their family life.
- To arrive at a plan for improving the health and well-being of the family.

STEP I: Gathering Views on A Star Within the House

NOTE: To introduce this session, act a role play with two families. In family one, there is arguing and fighting. The father goes out drinking and the children are left to watch themselves. They must struggle to get food and one of the children comes down sick with malaria, yet they don't take him for treatment. In family two, the husband and wife are trying to **consciously** work together and care for the children. They eat together and pray together. The couple insures there is local food available so the children don't go hungry.

General Questions:

1. Which family would you like to be part of?
2. Which family is more likely to be poor?
3. If each of these families is poor, which family is most likely to improve their well being?
4. What do you think the "secrets" to good family life are?

STEP II: Supplemental Views on A Star Within the House

We believe that within the family, there are five things that are very important. If a couple can consciously make these things a priority, their family life will be much better.

1. **Family spirituality:** How do you as a family pray together? How do you as a family participate in the sacramental life of your church? Remember, the “family that prays together, stays together.”
2. **Family togetherness:** To be a family is not always easy. There may be different needs and expectations. There may be stress related to poverty, to hunger or to sickness. The family may have had to take in relatives and so forth. As a family, you must have a plan for how you will solve and reconcile such problems. In this context, we want the words of Jesus, “Peace be with you, my own peace I give you,” to be real within your house.
3. **Family food security:** In many circumstances there is a shortage of food because of drought or poor harvest. How will you as a family plan in order to avoid hunger and malnutrition? Are you able to plant your crops for food before cash crops? Is there a way you can make the land you farm more productive and more sustainable?
4. **Family health:** What factors can you control to improve the health of your family? We have talked about HIV and avoiding its risk through abstinence, chastity and secondary virginity. What other areas can you take control of? Do you live where there is malaria? Can you prevent malaria through draining any nearby pools of water or using insecticide treated nets? Can you be sure your child receives his or her immunizations? Can you recognize common illnesses such as diarrhea, dehydration or pneumonia?
5. **Family education/life skills:** Can your children attend school? Can you help them do well in school by supporting them and setting appropriate expectations? Are there other skills or trades besides formal schooling that they can develop in order to have economic livelihood?

Specific questions:

1. Which one of the points on the star is the hardest to put into place?
2. Have you known a family that was really working to put these five points in place? What was different about them?
3. Do you think it is possible to act out of consciousness and influence these five points of the star for the better?
4. What will you do differently in your family to better realize these five points?

NOTE: *The facilitator may know someone who can present a supplemental section on small income generation. This may be one way of assisting families who are struggling and a way of helping them with food security and education.*

6.4 Preparing for Pregnancy

Session Objectives:

- By the end of this session, participants should be able to:
- Recognize that women can die from complications of pregnancy and childbirth.
- Recognize the importance of good care during pregnancy, labour and delivery.
- Understand how the letters in the word VITAL can help them prepare for pregnancy.



STEP I: Gathering Views on Preparing for Pregnancy

General Questions

1. What factors lead to the death of mothers during pregnancy and childbirth in our society?
2. How do couples prepare themselves for pregnancy and childbirth?
3. Where is the safest place and where is the most dangerous place for mothers to have their babies?

STEP II: Supplementing Views on Preparing for Pregnancy

In preparing your house for a new baby, you must think about certain things and make certain preparations. Just as you prepare your physical house to receive a child a wife, with the help of her husband, should prepare her own body for conceiving a child, carrying the child in her womb and giving birth to a child. This preparation helps ensure that a woman will be healthy during pregnancy and will not risk her life by bleeding to death or by having a long, obstructed labour.

A couple can prepare this part of their house by understanding the word “**vital**.” The word vital has two meanings. The first meaning of vital is “with life” and the second meaning of vital is “very important.” In medicine, we talk of a person’s vital signs: the breathing, the heart beat and the blood pressure that tells us the person is alive.

The word vital applies very well to women. Women play a vital role in giving birth to children and seeing that children are raised with love and with care. While we hope that everything goes well during pregnancy, we know that the opposite can happen – that a woman may have serious complications during the course of pregnancy, labor and delivery that may threaten her life or the life of her baby. In its extreme, a serious untreated complication, such as heavy bleeding after the birth of the baby, may lead to the death of the mother. Her vitality – her life – may be lost in giving life to her child.

This should not happen. Couples can help prevent this tragedy by following the recommendations in the letters contained in the word **V-I-T-A-L**.

- **V = Vitamins:** Good nutrition is essential for good pregnancy outcomes. Women who are of reproductive age and could become pregnant should be eating a well balanced diet with enough protein, carbohydrates, fat, vitamin and minerals. While a well balanced diet is important, women should be taking vitamins that have folic acid and vitamin A. Folic acid helps prevent certain birth defects and anemia. Vitamins containing folic acid should be taken on an ongoing basis – before, during and after pregnancy. Naturally folic acid is found in greens and citrus fruits like oranges.
- **I = Iron:** The majority of pregnant women in Africa are low or deficient in iron. Low iron leads to anemia (lack of enough blood). Anemic women do not have enough red blood and they may feel weak, tired or dizzy. Anemic women may not tolerate the normal blood loss associated with delivering a baby and therefore may be at a higher risk of death. Women who are pregnant should ideally take iron as a supplement throughout pregnancy. Natural sources of iron are millet, liver, red meat, chicken and fish.
- **T = Testing:** As previously discussed, couples planning for pregnancy should have an HIV test. This will help a couple decide if the woman should become pregnant and, if they are HIV positive and they decide to have a child, what they should do to prevent mother-to-child transmission (PMTCT). In addition to an HIV test, the couple should ideally be tested for other diseases such as syphilis or malaria. Testing before pregnancy will allow them to be treated before the woman becomes pregnant.
- **A = Attendant:** Women who are contemplating becoming pregnant must decide in advance who will attend to their births. In so doing they must decide

whether to go to a skilled birth attendant (nurse-midwife, nurse or doctor) or a traditional birth attendant (TBA). If they have risk factors, they should not go to a TBA. If they do choose to deliver with a TBA, they should be confident that the TBA will be able to quickly and efficiently refer them to a midwife or doctor if any problems arise.

- **L = Location:** Couples who are contemplating becoming pregnant must decide where they will have their babies. It is best if they give birth at a health center or hospital where good emergency obstetrical care can be given should they develop complications. If they are delivering their babies at a location that is remote from a health center or hospital, they must have a plan for getting to such a location if complications arise.

STEP III: Life Application on Preparing for Pregnancy

Specific Questions

1. If a couple has had a child, talk about your birth preparation and birth experience. Were there any complications or difficulties? What would you do differently in future pregnancies and deliveries?
2. If a couple is preparing for marriage or does not have a child yet, how will you best prepare for pregnancy and childbirth?
3. Go through the word **VITAL**, recalling what each letter stands for and examining if you are following the recommendations the word contains.

NOTE: *The facilitator thanks the participants for their responses and insights. A very important part of maintaining our “faithful house” is the physical and emotional care a woman receives in preparing for pregnancy, in carrying the child, and in giving birth. This **VITAL** preparation and care help ensure that The Faithful House will be a house of life.*

With the blessing of a child that comes after this preparation, it is important that the parents bring up this child according to God’s plan.

7. Appendices

7.1 Appendix II - Adaptation of *The Faithful House* for Singles

The facilitators should be creative in adjusting the questions where necessary to fit the audience without altering the message.

Modules 1

General Questions

1. As you want to build a strong house, what will you consider important to have and why?
2. What are the qualities of a future partner and how would you choose a partner with similar values and foundation in God?
3. As singles what are the practical ways of expressing love to each other?
4. What are the factors that may lead to unfaithfulness in a relationship or marriage?
5. What do people value most in relationships/marriage?

Module 2

General Questions

1. As a single what areas do you find difficult to share with others?
2. What hinders young people from exercising forgiveness?
3. How does your relationship with Jesus influence the choices you make?

Module 3

General Questions:

1. Why is chastity important for singles?
2. What makes chastity hard to practice?
3. How can singles support one another in a chaste lifestyle?

NOTE: *The facilitator follows up on these questions by emphasizing the BC Rule and the importance of “waiting until the wedding night.”*

After the workshop, singles are encouraged to form positive peer support groups that help them make choices and adapt behaviours that avoid risk and affirm life.

7.2 Appendix III– Formation of On-going Support Groups

These are small groups of three to five couples that have completed *The Faithful House* program. This small number of couples allows each member to have adequate time to share. It is better to divide these people by geographical location, that is, by parish, sub-parish or village.

The members of the small groups should be meet at least once a month for 2 hours. They should meet in one another's homes on a rotating basis.

Activities should include:

1. Praying together
2. Sharing how they have been living after *The Faithful House* program (the joys and challenges)
3. Mutual support and encouragement
4. Expanding on the talks given in *The Faithful House* program (Different speakers can be invited to address these topics.)
5. Sharing on other issues related to marriage and family life (nutrition, hygiene, development, etc.)

NB: Care should be taken to observe time and couples should understand that strict confidentiality must be observed.

Meals:

Big feasts should be avoided as some members may fear to take the group to their homes. In general, it is better to avoid eating because:

- Some members may spend most of the time preparing meals instead of sharing with the group.
- Some members of the group might be reluctant to accept guests for fear of what to feed the group.

However, once in a while the group can eat together with each couple bringing a dish (packed food.) In this way, no burden is placed on the host couple.

7.3 Appendix IV - List of Posters

- 1) Poster on Unfaithfulness



2) Poster on Roof of unconsciousness



3) Poster on Culture and houses around us

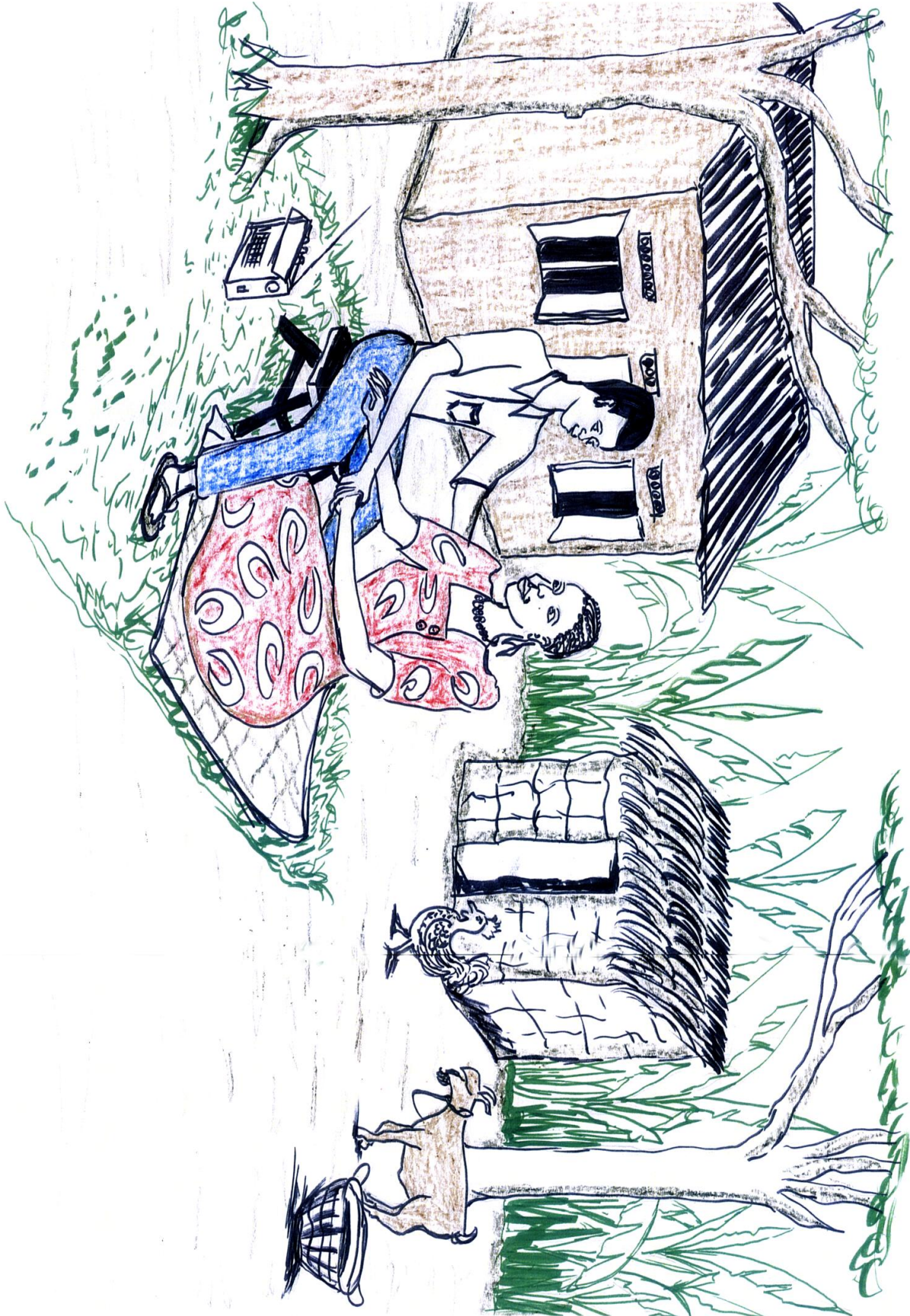


4) Posters on Broken Houses





5) The desired family



7.4 Appendix V – Evaluation Forms

Daily evaluation is done at the end of each day. In the morning, a review of the previous day is done and feedback given before a new session is introduced.

Daily Faithful House Session Evaluation	
1. What went well in the last sessions?	
2. Comment on the facilitator's presentation: The sessions were taught at a level appropriate for participants.	
Comment:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
3. Content Relevance: The content of the module was relevant to the local situation.	
Comment:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
4. Methodology (participatory exercises): The training methods were useful.	
Comment:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
5. The training methods were well suited to the content.	
Comment:	<input type="checkbox"/> Agree <input type="checkbox"/> Disagree
6. Other comments: Please tell us what you think would have made this module more useful, clear or relevant.	
7. What did not go well in the last sessions?	
8. What needs improvement in the next sessions?	

Final Faithful House Program Evaluation

As part of *The Faithful House* program evaluation, we would like to see how you assess yourself after participating in the workshop. There are areas in which you have gained experience or skills, and therefore feel comfortable, and other areas that you find less familiar or more difficult, and in which you may feel less comfortable. We are asking you to complete this evaluation form to see if this training has helped you to become more confident in building, completing and maintaining the *Faithful House*.

Please complete this form to give us your evaluation of the workshop session. The focus is on the content of the session and the methods used to present it.

Please answer the questions below as honestly as possible. You do not have to write your name on the sheet.

Final Faithful House Program Evaluation

1. What one thing about the program did you like?
2. What one thing about the program were you not happy with?
3. What new knowledge did you learn through this program?
4. How are you going to use this knowledge/information?
5. What new skills did you learn through this workshop and how are you going to use these skills?
6. How does what you have learned in this workshop influence you to change your behavior?"
7. What one thing would you want to change in your behavior in order to avoid risk?
8. What new behavior would you like to adopt in your behavior in order to affirm life?
9. Is there anything you think the facilitator could have done better or differently? Give suggestions.