

Session 8: The Greatest Blessing

Supplies for this session: pens.

1. Welcome & Check In (5 minutes)

- Welcome everyone to their eighth session!
- Introduce what the session will be about:
 - The value of Marriage
 - The value of The Blessing
 - Your Path towards the Blessing
- Share what they can gain from their investment into the session:
 - An understanding of the benefits of committing to marriage.
 - A clearer perspective on why the Blessing is different from marriage.
 - Some idea's for what steps to take when you feel ready to being your future Matching process.

2. Play an Icebreaker (10 minutes)

Don't Make Eye Contact

- Have everyone stand in a large circle, close their eyes, and face their head towards the floor.
- Count "1, 2, 3, Look" and when you say "Look" everyone should look up and look at someone's eyes in the circle.
- If two people make eye contact, they are out of the game.
 - Some people like to have dramatic death scenes to symbolize their leaving the game.
- Make the circle smaller each time someone leaves the game.
- Continue this process until there is 1-2 people, who are the winners of the game.

3. Review Homework from Last Week (10 minutes)

- Check in on how the youth are doing regarding their 3 hours of service internship with your local church community.
- Confirm that everyone filled out the "My Plans for the Internet" form and went over it with their parents.
- Have the youth share their paragraphs on "The Kind of Husband/Wife I want to be" in trinities or small groups.
- Reiterate the main point of the Hon Dok Hae: God was meant to be our Parent, but instead His/Her heart was broken as a result of the Fall.

4. Read the Session Reading (10 minutes)

- Read through the "Session 8 Reading."
- Make sure to read it out loud and to pause between paragraphs to summarize or clarify points.
- Ask thoughtful questions that connect the content to the lives of the participants. Make sure they connect the dots of how this reading can actually make a difference in *their* lives.
- Take turns reading paragraphs so the youth aren't listening to one person's voice the whole time.

5. Discussion: (15 minutes)

Split into small groups or discuss as one large group. Make sure each person has an opportunity to share. The point of discussions is to allow each person to share their personal thoughts and feelings on a topic, so no answer is right or wrong. It's a good idea to acknowledge each person after sharing and thank them for having the courage to do so.

- In your opinion, what makes The Blessing so special?
- When do you think a person is ready to start a relationship through the matching?

6. Activity: Am I What I'm Looking For? (10 minutes)

- Ask everyone to write down 10 qualities or aspects of a person that they would be looking for in a future spouse.
- Share those lists in small groups
- Now ask everyone to ask themselves, "do I have these qualities?" and remind the group that we should become the type of spouse that we would want to have in the future.
- Have the youth choose 2-3 qualities they are achieving from their list, and 2-3 qualities that they need to work on.

7. Personal Reflection Points (7 minutes)

Allow some quiet time for the youth to write and/or think about these questions in their Il Shim notebooks. Feel free to play some quiet and reflective music in the background.

- Is there a married couple in your church community that you admire? What do you admire about their relationship?
- Do you think the Blessing is an important step in your future? Why or why not?
- What do you hope your future marriage will look like? What kind of relationship do you envision for yourself?

8. This Week's Homework: (5 minutes)

- Continue completing your 3 hours of service internship with your local community.
- Complete a 7 Day prayer condition with your parents this week. Focus on the 4 points of the Il Shim Pledge:
 - I promise to make sincere effort to develop my relationship with God and my life of faith through prayer and through my lifestyle.
 - I will strive to inherit the Unificationist traditions of honoring True Parents, upholding the value of the Blessing by maintaining my sexual purity until the Blessing, and living for the sake of others.
 - I commit to the process of growing and deepening my relationship with my parents by practicing healthy and open communication.
 - I will endeavor to find ways to serve my local church community and wider society with my unique passions and talents.

These things I pledge before God, True Parents, my parents, and my community.

- Complete the 10-Year Vision Worksheet in your packet.

9. Closing Prayer (3 minutes)

Offer a closing prayer focusing on preparing ourselves for a fulfilling and happy future blessing.

Session 8 Reading: The Greatest Blessing

Marriage is an amazing commitment between a man and woman to love each other in sickness and in health and for better and for worse. Although it may seem like people don't see as much value in marriage these days, the research says that marriage is a beneficial investment! For instance, married people experience less depression and less poverty. Men who are married tend to make more money than single men with similar education and job histories. Married women report higher levels of physical and psychological health. Children raised by their own married mother and father are more likely to stay in school, have better reports on behavior and attendance in school, and are more likely to graduate from college. They are also more likely to be successful in forming their own lasting marriages in the future. Overall the facts are clear, married people tend to be happier, healthier, and are more successful in their careers. You can learn more about the benefits of marriage by checking out these resources:

- <http://www.familyfacts.org/briefs/1/the-benefits-of-marriage>
- <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/what-are-the-social-benefits-of-marriage/>

As Unificationists, we believe that marriage is an essential part of God's plan and our path towards becoming the best versions of ourselves. However, we see that marriage in our current society has lost some of its spiritual value and significance as a result of the Fall. That is why we celebrate the Marriage Blessing. The Korean word for the Blessing is "chukbok," which literally means "praying for blessings." The Marriage Blessing is the greatest blessing you can receive because it's the first time in human history that God has been able to give His/Her Blessing to married couples! If Adam and Eve had not fallen and instead become mature before having a romantic relationship, they would have experienced their Blessing ceremony. However, Adam and Eve fell and all of their descendants have been unable to receive God's Blessing. That's why True Parents have focused much of their effort on the Marriage Blessing. Because of True Parents God is finally able to give His/Her Blessing to humankind. God can finally have His/Her wishes fulfilled and have His/Her grief of the past six thousand years resolved.

The ultimate purpose of the Marriage Blessing is to build a foundation for a happy and true family. While there are many happy families in the world, marriage doesn't always produce a happy family. This is because we have inherited bad habits and ancestral sins from our society and ancestors. When we partake of the holy wine ceremony at our Blessing, our connection to Satan's lineage is cut off and our mistakes and sins that have occurred in our life are also eliminated. It doesn't mean that drinking of the holy wine fixes everything in your life, but it does give you a direct connection to God's blood lineage and a fresh start in your spiritual life. That's why we call children who are born after their parents Blessing as "Blessed Children." Blessed Children have been born directly into God's lineage, instead of Satan's lineage, and don't have the "original sin" which is what humanity has inherited from the Fall of Adam and Eve.

When we look at the world today we can see that many romantic relationships end with hurt and pain. But God's original plan for the Marriage Blessing was that it is the place in which a man and a woman can inherit the love of God. God exists with the dual characteristics of masculinity and femininity, and so the union of a man and woman represents God in His/Her entirety.

Getting Blessed is a statement that says we will perfect ourselves and become like God. Being in a Blessed Marriage gives you the opportunity to grow into a more well-rounded and loving person. Through the ups and downs of a Blessed Marriage you learn to love your spouse unconditionally and see them from God's point of view. You will help your spouse grow and change through your relationship. But even more importantly, you will find opportunities to challenge and grow your own character. That's the beauty of a Blessed Marriage; that you and your spouse will grow your character together and your ability to love one another. Throughout your marriage you will comfort each other when you feel lonely, share joy together, and give each other strength during your difficulties. True Parents have taught us that over time you will become like one body, each spouse representing a foot of one body. And together you will leave footprints of love for humanity and for God.

When it comes time for you to begin your initial path towards the Matching and Marriage Blessing it can be rather daunting. It will be some time from now before you feel ready to begin this process, but a key thing to remember is that the first step is to talk to your parents. They are the ones who will help guide you in creating the right process for you. If you have trouble communicating with your parents about this important topic, you can also talk to another elder figure in your community who can act as a mediator and support you and your parents during this process.

Here are some general tips and information to keep in mind regarding your future Matching and Blessing Process:

- If you have feelings about a friend who you think might be a good candidate for your future Matching and Blessing, tell your parents about it.
- It can be difficult to trust that your parents will find the right person for you. So figure out the right type of involvement you want to have with your parents, and then continually communicate together.
- If you decide to get matched by your parents, the process can take a significant amount of time. Make sure you go into the process for the long term result, and not the short term payoff.
- You can also decide to go through the Cheon Il Guk Matching process in which a spouse will be chosen for you from around the world.
- There are many resources available to you and your parents at <http://bfm.familyfed.org>

The Matching and Blessing may seem like a long ways a way, but remember that the process begins now. This is your time to work on your relationship with God, your family, and become the kind of future spouse you want to be!