

Session 8: The Greatest Blessing

Supplies for this session: pens, paper, highlighters, optional blindfold for ice breaker, laptop/projector for video, Il Shim notebooks

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 ideas for what steps to take when you feel ready to begin your future Matching process.

2. Play an Icebreaker (10 minutes)

You have two options to choose, based on what you feel is better for your group size.

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.

Blind Pictionary

- Split into two groups (this can even be done with just one group).
- One person will start blindfolded in each group. Whisper to them something they have to draw (here are some options: a pig, an iphone, an apple tree, a man running, a sandwich, a spider, skateboarder, baseball).
- They have to draw their given word blindly while everyone else guesses what it is. Whoever guesses it correctly, will be blindfolded next.
- Play a few rounds.

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 partners 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 (20 minutes)**

- Read through the “Session 8 Reading.”
- Sit in a circle and “popcorn” read (someone reads, then picks the next person to read, and so on.)
- Discuss each section together and have them highlight one or two things that stood out to them before moving onto the next section.

5. **Discussion: (15 minutes)**

Have students form two circles, one inside and one outside. Each person on the inside should be paired with a person on the outside, facing each other. Say aloud each of these questions, one at a time, for the pairs to discuss. Before going to the next question, have the outside circle rotate one seat so that everyone gets a new person to discuss with.

- In your opinion, what makes The Blessing so special/unique?
- When do you think a person is ready to start a relationship through the matching?
- What do you admire about your parent’s blessing/marriage?

Option: If you do not have enough people to do this, you can simply form small groups or discuss as a whole.

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

- Ask everyone to write down, in their notebooks, 10 qualities or aspects of a person that they would be looking for in a future spouse.
- Share those lists in small groups or partners
- Show video from **22:45 to 24:54**
 - www.youtube.com/watch?v=Zi5OeujeW2E&list=PLrRRQeaYyVOx9eE5WqoLuQiPxbtr3TOC0&index=3
- Summarize the idea that we need to check and grow ourselves before we think about our dream partner.

- Now ask everyone to look back at their list and ask themselves, “Do I have these qualities?” Have them circle which qualities they believe they have, and then write down 3 aspects of themselves 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, or elsewhere, that you admire? What do you admire about their relationship?
- How do you think the Blessing can be an important step in your future?
- 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

Today's culture is all about getting what you want instantly - especially with relationships. Society is glamorizing the hook-up culture, but what benefits does that offer for you in the long term? Not many. However, research has shown that married people experience less depression, less poverty, and better health¹. Married people have also shown to be happier, experience longer lives, build more wealth, and have children who show greater academic success, are less vulnerable to emotional illness, and are more likely to have positive attitudes towards forming lasting marriages². There are endless benefits for you! However, the beauty of Unificationism is that it takes marriage a step further with the understanding that successful marriages not only benefit ourselves, but society and the world.

Why Choose the Marriage Blessing?

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 today's society has lost some of its spiritual value and significance as a result of the Fall. That is why we cherish the Marriage Blessing. The Marriage Blessing is the greatest blessing you can receive because it's the first time in 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 with God. However, Adam and Eve fell and all of their descendants have been unable to receive God's Blessing. Furthermore, the mistakes they made and issues they weren't able to resolve were continually passed down from generation to generation. That's why True Parents, Rev. and Mrs. Moon, have focused much of their efforts on the Marriage Blessing. Because of the work and foundation that they have made, God is finally able to give His/Her Blessing to humankind and see true, God-centered marriages and families develop.

// Section Recap: We're lucky to live during the time of True Parents because this the first time ever where God was able to bless our marriages. This is the first time we have been able to latch ourselves onto God's lineage and start anew with His/Her true vision.

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

² <http://www.foryourmarriage.org/blogs/social-benefits-marriage/>

Re-Rooting Ourselves Back to God

The ultimate purpose of the Marriage Blessing is to build a foundation for a God-centered, happy, and peaceful family. While there are many good families in the world, marriage doesn't always produce a strong family. We know that DNA gets passed down from parent to child, but along with DNA, other things, such as destructive habits and unresolved issues, unfortunately, get passed down as well. A person can question why they get angry so easily, and then see that their mother gets angry easily as well.

Ever since the Fall, we inherited bad habits and sin that have spread into our families, society, and culture. True Parents have seen and taught that since the family is the school of love, peaceful families can help bring about a peaceful world. They began the Marriage Blessing so that we can be connected back to God's lineage - God's family - and pledge to build relationships rooted in love that reflects His/Her values. However, the beauty of the blessing is that it is meant for everyone! All races, cultures, and faiths are invited and encouraged to dedicate their marriage to God.

During the Marriage Blessing ceremony, couples drink Holy Wine and are sprinkled with Holy Water to symbolize the break from Satan's lineage and the recreation of roots back into God's family - to God's lineage. Children who are born from couples who received the Blessing are called *blessed children*, because they are now created new into God's lineage. Through the Blessing, every person is able to give birth to blessed children and raise a family with God's values and standards.

When we look at the world today, we can see that many romantic relationships end with break ups, 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 and carry out the love of God. God exists with what we call *dual characteristics*, 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 love as God intended and create a family that helps to create a peaceful and better world.

// Section Recap: We inherit so many things from our parents - both good and bad. If we do not work on fixing our bad habits and issues, we will eventually bring that into our marriage and pass that onto our children. Focusing on our own personal growth before the Marriage Blessing is critical to your success with your future spouse. The Marriage Blessing is a time to vow that we will work towards loving others and building a family as God originally intended.

Growing with Our Future Spouse

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 further and change positively 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 create new memories with one another, share joy together, and give each other strength and comfort during 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.

// Section Recap: A Blessed Marriage is a great opportunity to not only love and be loved by someone special, but also allows you, and your future spouse, to help each other grow into better people. You'll have someone to lean on, find comfort in, and experience new things with.

About the Process

Right now, you are still at an age where you should be working on molding yourself into the best version of you. Take this time of your life to figure out how you can grow and improve yourself so that when ready, you'll be able to offer so many amazing qualities to someone else. So, what is the next step when you actually want to start making that commitment?

The Matching process is an intentional, family-driven engagement process that generally takes place prior to the Blessing³. This is when individuals mentally and spiritually prepare for and find their future spouse. Focusing on including God and your family, you can connect with other individuals who are looking to make the same commitment as well. Once you have taken time to really get to know this person and you and your family feel it is right, you can then get *matched*, or engaged. Then, as an engaged couple, you both work together to prepare for the Blessing.

Thinking about this whole process can be a bit daunting. However, it will be some time from now before you feel ready to begin this process. But the key thing to

³ <https://bfm.familyfed.org/matching/the-matching-process/>

remember is that the first step is to stay connected 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.
- If you have concerns about the matching process, talk with your parents and decide how you can work together to make both of you feel more comfortable throughout the experience.
- The matching 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.
- There are many resources available to you and your parents at 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!

// Section Recap: Your future spouse will be the person that you continue to grow, love, and enjoy life with. It is a big step to take, and can be quite scary, but communication with your parents is the key to making sure that the process goes smoothly and successfully.