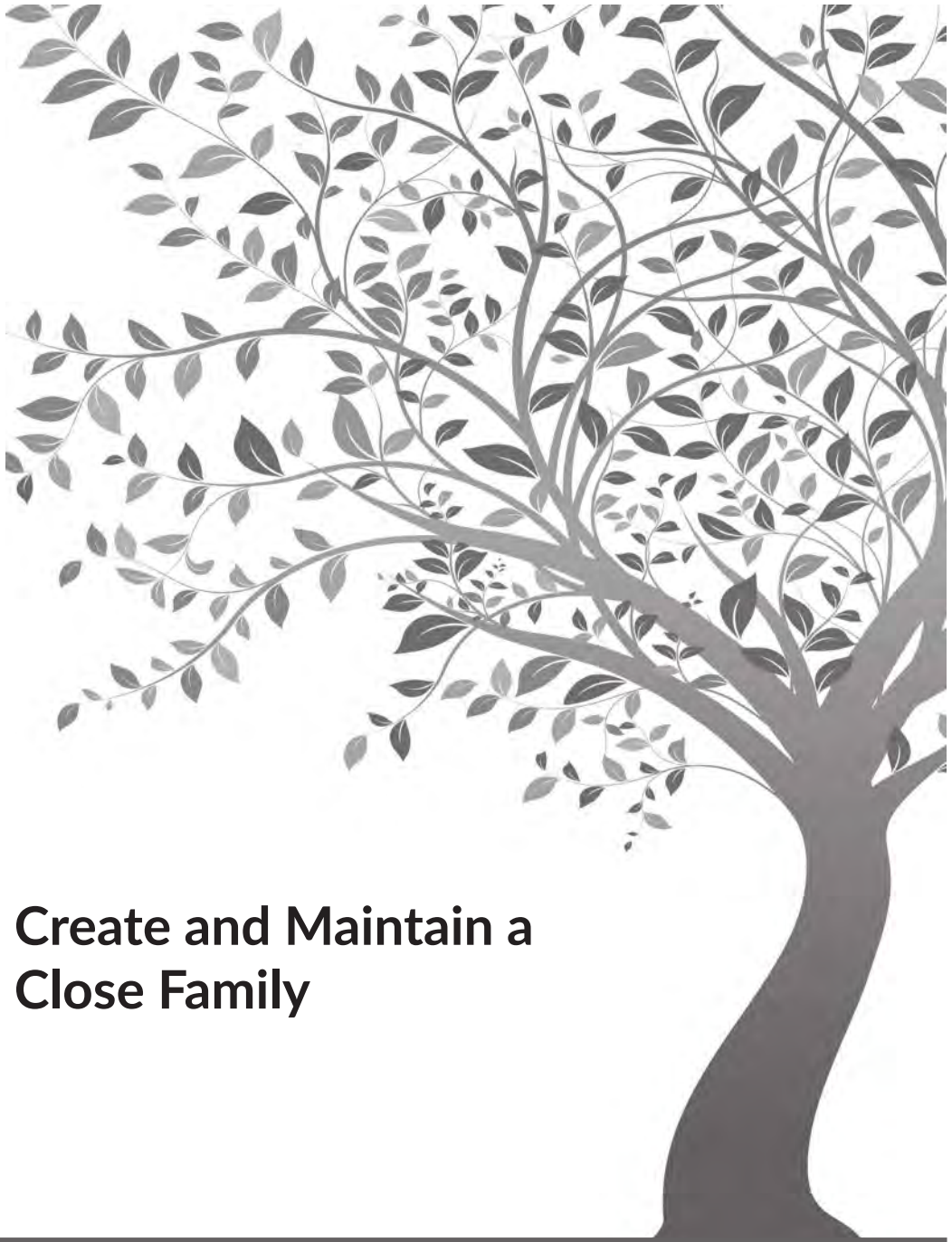
SERIES G



Create and Maintain a Close Family

Be the glue that holds these irreplaceable parts together.



SERIES G: Topic 1

Dating

Dating is exciting because to make a good connection you have to make yourself vulnerable. It is extremely satisfying when you find a relationship that brings out your best qualities. There is nothing more exhilarating than a close encounter with a person who could be the right match for you. The person you are dating could put you in touch with, and appear to be, the answer to some of your most profound emotional needs. He or she could give you validation and make you feel more alive than you have ever felt.

Many people are more afraid of dating than of speaking in public. Dating causes you to reveal yourself and risk that some of your weak parts might be found unacceptable. When you are comfortable with yourself, it makes others feel relaxed around you. If your relationship continues, the other person will eventually find out what you are like, so resist the temptation to appear different than you really are. For many people the best single piece of advice is:

> **Making your relationship work before you marry is the best way to know how it will work once you're married.**

Having a teammate—someone you can speak to openly and comfortably on any subject—is the most romantic and endearing experience you can have. It is sharing the same goals, covering for each other, and "pulling on the rope in the same direction."

It often takes more than a year for a candidate to feel comfortable enough around you for you to observe his or her less desirable traits. You won't find a cockroach every time you turn on the light, but when you find one, there could be many more nearby. Take as much time as you need to make sure you know what you are getting.

Dating is the audition during which you both gather the information you will need to render a good decision. Know your partner's thinking, attitudes and beliefs on every subject, and make sure he or she has the same information about you. You both need to try to avoid making a mistake.

Go for the quality, be patient and look for the land mines before you sign up. (Yes, there will be land mines.) Your marriage, no matter how well you have chosen, will present you with the biggest challenges of your life. Those challenges will keep you humble and flexible, but also happy—if you both have the right qualities and attitudes.

You are getting your candidate "as is." If you feel you need to change him or her, you will be in for a lifetime of aggravation and disapproval.

It is better if the skills, deficits and qualities of the other person dovetail with yours. While opposites have produced many of the best marriages, those marriages are riskier. When in doubt, do more homework.

The characteristic that once made your spouse so appealing can drive you crazy over time.

- The big spender may keep the family finances shaky your entire life together.
- The "looker" who primps for hours may make you late for every event.
- A messy house may be the price for her hobby or carefree spirit.
- The handsome guy who needs everything his way will get uglier.
- The wonderful provider has no time for you or the kids.
- The wife who loves to cook may make you heavier than you should be.
- Know and like the family of your candidate; someday they may need to move in with you or you with them. Over time, more of their characteristics will be visible in your spouse.

> **Treat every date as a rehearsal for the date that follows.**

Finding dates—go where the guys/girls are, or where you can find people who do what you enjoy. Reduce the time you spend on solitary interests like reading or surfing the Web. Get a job where you can interact with people of the opposite sex. Tell your friends and acquaintances you are interested in meeting a quality person.

Internet—let your computer expand your market and do some prescreening for you. Some of the online dating services include spark.com, eHarmony.com, Match.com, ChristianMingle.\com, SpeedDate.com, itsjustlunch.com or, for people over 50, OurTime.com. Costs for these services at the time of this writing range from $25 to $60 per month. Features and privacy issues of these services vary widely, so check them out before you commit.

Arrange to meet in a neutral public place until you are comfortable revealing where you live. Create and use a secondary email address for screening candidates.

Nothing can validate or fulfill a person more than the right person. But romance is art—and there is no accounting for taste. The other person gets to cast the only vote and can have a change of mind any time. If there's no magic, you can't manufacture it.

Stress-Busting Hints

- Be the first person to attempt to get acquainted.
- Remember that her topics are more interesting to her than your topics are.
- Nice comments about her appearance show you appreciate her effort to look good for you. Showing interest in her life, thoughts and interests suggests your interest in her is genuine. Comments about her physical characteristics can suggest you are shallow and that her looks are more important to you than her substance.
- Accept your date the way he is.
- Practice your social skills with everyone you meet.
- Questions about her youth, family, and where she grew up are usually good conversation starters.
- Before asking for a date, give her some details on what you propose to do. If you give her a choice, give her details on both.
- Start with a low-key outing such as a bike ride, hike or public event. Select a quiet location where you can hear each other and where your date will feel safe so you can talk easily.
- Have your cell phone turned off.
- Remember, you don't learn unless you listen.

- Don't panic if conversation lags; remember, this experience is a trial run. Your date may be shy or lack conversation skills, too—relax.
- Keep two or three questions or topics in mind to talk about in case you have to jump-start the conversation. Be slow to move from one topic to the next.
- Give the other person enough information about your interests to help him or her to form questions about yours. Be careful not to let talk about your interests use up all the time or trump the other person's interests.

No matter how close you seem to have grown in any encounter, unless the person is willing to accept you and all your Bubbles you don't have a connection. When the relationship goes away, losing the conditions that validated you is more serious than losing the person. Your need caused you to see more in the relationship than was actually there. Appreciate the moments together and use the lessons you learned to improve your skills for your next relationship. Chasing a romance rarely works. It tends to make you annoying, and you will probably end up embarrassing yourself in the process.

> **There is no such thing as being rejected, only not being chosen.**

Once your interest has been rejected, let it go. You were fortunate to have the practice and the memories. The song "Haven't Met You Yet" by Michael Bublé can get you in the right frame of mind for the search.



ASK YOURSELF

What can I work on to help me become the right person for the type of person I want to marry?

What do I like doing?

I know I'm the bait and I have to put myself where the fish are. Where am I most likely to find a good candidate and have enough time with her to get acquainted?

Where could I find candidates who are doing things I would like to do?