

A black and white photograph of a couple holding hands, serving as the background for the cover. The image is split horizontally by a dark green band containing the title.

PREPARE  ENRICH

# Workbook

*for Couples*

*with* BIBLICAL  
REFERENCES



# WELCOME

## CONGRATULATIONS!

You have taken an important step in building a strong marriage and healthy relationship by taking the PREPARE/ENRICH assessment. For over 35 years, research studies have demonstrated PREPARE/ENRICH can improve your relationship skills and happiness as a couple.

The PREPARE/ENRICH Workbook for Couples is a complement to your assessment results. It contains skill-building exercises that will help you to understand and apply the insights from the assessment. The exercises consist of questions to both ponder individually and discuss as a couple, plus activities to do together. Begin with the recommended Six Core Exercises and continue with the remaining exercises in any order. This version also includes Bible verses for reflection, inspiration, and encouragement.

### KEY

★ = Six Core Exercises



= Couple Discussion



= Tips or Optional Activity

### Additional Resources

PREPARE/ENRICH offers additional ways to help you prioritize, enrich, and strengthen your relationship:

- Join our Strong Couple's Club at [prepare-enrich.com/strong.couples.club.html](http://prepare-enrich.com/strong.couples.club.html)
- Read our blog at [blog.prepare-enrich.com](http://blog.prepare-enrich.com)
- Connect with us on social media:
  - [facebook.com/prepare.enrich](https://facebook.com/prepare.enrich)
  - [twitter.com/prepareenrich](https://twitter.com/prepareenrich)
  - [youtube.com/prepareenrich](https://youtube.com/prepareenrich)
- Take our "do it yourself" assessment, Couple Checkup, on your wedding anniversary at [couplecheckup.com](http://couplecheckup.com)

If you find you have ongoing problems that don't go away over time, it is important to seek professional counseling. Like any problem or illness, the sooner you go for help, the better the chances are for recovery. If problems persist, contact your current Facilitator or go to [prepare-enrich.com](http://prepare-enrich.com) to find a Facilitator in your area.





# WORKBOOK FOR COUPLES CONTENTS

★ = Six Core Exercises

★ <b>Sharing Strength and Growth Areas</b> .....	4
<b>Communication</b>	
Assertiveness and Active Listening .....	5
★ Creating a Wish List Using Assertiveness and Active Listening .....	6
Daily Dialogue and Daily Compliments .....	7
<b>Personal Stress Profile</b>	
★ Identifying Most Critical Issues .....	9
Balancing your Priorities .....	10
Wedding Stress .....	11
<b>Conflict Resolution</b>	
★ Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict .....	13
How to Take a Time-Out .....	14
Seeking and Granting Forgiveness .....	15
<b>Financial Management</b>	
The Challenges of Money .....	17
The Meaning of Money .....	18
Priorities: Put Your Money Where Your Heart Is .....	19
Importance of Financial Goals .....	21
Budget Worksheet .....	22
<b>Leisure Activities</b>	
The Dating Exercise .....	24
<b>Sex and Affection</b>	
The Expression of Intimacy .....	25
<b>Relationship Roles</b>	
Sharing Roles .....	27
<b>Spiritual Beliefs</b>	
Your Spiritual Journey .....	29
<b>Marriage Expectations</b>	
Managing Your Expectations .....	31
<b>Children and Parenting</b>	
Couple Discussion about Children .....	33
Planning a Weekly Family Conference .....	33
Stepfamilies: Choosing Realistic Expectations .....	34
★ <b>Couple and Family Maps</b>	
Mapping Your Relationship .....	36
Closeness Exercises .....	38
Flexibility Exercises .....	39
★ <b>Personality</b>	
SCOPE Out Your Personality .....	41
<b>Goals</b>	
Achieving Your Goals...Together .....	43



## SHARING STRENGTH AND GROWTH AREAS

*But the Holy Spirit produces this kind of fruit in our lives: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control . . . — Galatians 5:22-23*

**Check what areas you agree or disagree most with your partner.**

- 1. Select three Strength Areas** (most agreement and positive aspects of your relationship)
- 2. Select three Growth Areas** (most disagreement and areas you want to improve)

	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
<b>1. COMMUNICATION</b> <i>We share feelings and understand each other.</i>		
<b>2. CONFLICT RESOLUTION</b> <i>We are able to discuss and resolve differences.</i>		
<b>3. PARTNER STYLE AND HABITS</b> <i>We appreciate each other's personality and habits.</i>		
<b>4. FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT</b> <i>We agree on budget and financial matters.</i>		
<b>5. LEISURE ACTIVITIES</b> <i>We have a good balance of activities together and apart.</i>		
<b>6. SEXUALITY AND AFFECTION</b> <i>We are comfortable discussing sexual issues and affection.</i>		
<b>7. FAMILY AND FRIENDS</b> <i>We feel good about our relationships with relatives and friends.</i>		
<b>8. RELATIONSHIP ROLES</b> <i>We agree on how to share decision-making and responsibilities.</i>		
<b>9. CHILDREN AND PARENTING</b> <i>We agree on issues related to having and raising children.</i>		
<b>10. SPIRITUAL BELIEFS</b> <i>We hold similar religious values and beliefs.</i>		

### COUPLE DISCUSSION

- Take turns sharing what each of you perceive as your relationship strengths. Verbally share one strength at a time, until you each have shared three.
- Use the same procedure to share and discuss growth areas.
- Discuss these three questions:
  - Did any of your partner's responses surprise you?
  - In what areas did you mostly agree with your partner?
  - In what areas did you mostly disagree with your partner?







# COMMUNICATION

*Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry. — James 1:19*

## ASSERTIVENESS

**Assertiveness is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in the relationship.**

Assertiveness is a valuable communication skill. In successful couples, both individuals tend to be quite assertive. Rather than assuming their partner can read their minds, they share how they feel and ask clearly and directly for what they want.

Assertive individuals take responsibility for their messages by using “I” statements. They avoid statements beginning with “you.” In making constructive requests, they are positive and respectful in their communication. They use polite phrases such as “please” and “thank you”.

### Examples of Assertive Statements

*“I’m feeling out of balance. While I love spending time with you, I also want to spend time with my friends. I would like us to find some time to talk about this.”*

*“I want to take a ski vacation next winter, but I know you like to go to the beach. I’m feeling confused about what choice we should make.”*

## ACTIVE LISTENING

**Active listening is the ability to let your partner know you understand them by restating their message.**

Good communication depends on you carefully listening to another person. Active listening involves listening attentively without interruption and then restating what was heard. Acknowledge content AND the feelings of the speaker. The active listening process lets the sender know whether or not the message they sent was clearly understood by having the listener restate what they heard.

### Examples of Active Listening

*“I heard you say you are feeling ‘out of balance’, and enjoy the time we spend together but that you also need more time to be with your friends. You want to plan a time to talk about this.”*

*“If I understand what you said, you are concerned because you want to go skiing next winter. But you think I would rather to go to the beach. Is that correct?”*

When each person knows what the other person feels and wants (assertiveness) and when each knows they have been heard and understood (active listening), intimacy is increased. These two communication skills can help you grow closer as a couple.



## COMMUNICATION

*May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you,  
O Lord, my rock and my redeemer. — Psalm 19:14*

### CREATING A WISH LIST

In this exercise, you will each individually make a Wish List of things you would like more or less of in your relationship. Next, take turns sharing your Wish Lists with each other.

**Assertiveness** is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in your relationship.

**Active listening** is the ability to let your partner know you understand them by restating their message.

In sharing your Wish List with your partner, you will be demonstrating your Assertiveness skills. In giving feedback to your partner about their Wish List, you will be demonstrating your Active Listening skills.

**Make a Wish List of three things you would like more or less of in your relationship.**

1. \_\_\_\_\_
2. \_\_\_\_\_
3. \_\_\_\_\_

### SHARING YOUR WISH LIST

Take turns sharing your Wish List with each other, keeping in mind the following:

- Speaker's Job:
  - Speak for yourself ("I" statements e.g. "I wish...").
  - Describe how you would feel if your wish came true.
- Listener's Job:
  - Repeat/summarize what you have heard.
  - Describe the wish AND how your partner would feel if the wish came true.

### COUPLE DISCUSSION

After completing the Wish List Exercise, discuss the following questions:

- How good were each of you at being assertive?
- In what ways did you each effectively use active listening skills?







## COMMUNICATION

*Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.*  
— Proverbs 12:18

### DAILY DIALOGUE AND DAILY COMPLIMENTS

**Daily Dialogue** is an intentional effort to talk about your relationship, rather than discussing your activities that day. The focus of this dialogue should be on your feelings about each other and your lives together. Set aside five minutes per day to discuss the following:

- What did you most enjoy about your relationship today?
- What was dissatisfying about your relationship today?
- How can you be helpful to each other?

**Daily Compliments** help you focus on the positive things you like about each other. Every day give your partner at least one genuine compliment. These can be general (*"you are fun to be with"*) or specific (*"I appreciate that you were on time for the concert"*).

### COMMUNICATION SKILLS TO INCREASE INTIMACY

1. **Give full attention to your partner when talking.** Turn off the phone, shut off the television, make eye contact.
2. **Focus on the good qualities in each other and praise each other often.**
3. **Be assertive.** Share your thoughts, feelings, and needs. A good way to be assertive without being critical is to use "I" rather than "You" statements. (e.g. *"I worry when you don't let me know you'll be late"* rather than *"You are always late"*).
4. **Avoid criticism.**
5. **If you must criticize, balance it with at least one positive comment.** (e.g. *"I appreciate how you take the trash out each week. In the future can you remember to also wheel the trash can back from the end of the driveway?"*).
6. **Listen to understand, not to judge.**
7. **Use active listening.** Summarize your partner's comments before sharing your own reactions or feelings.
8. **Avoid blaming each other and work together for a solution.**
9. **Use the Ten Steps approach.** For problems that come up again and again, use the *Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict*.
10. **Seek counseling.** If you are not able to resolve issues, seek counseling before they become more serious.



## WHAT THE BIBLE SAYS ABOUT COMMUNICATION

---

*All Scripture is inspired by God and is useful to teach us...what is right. God uses it to prepare and equip His people to do every good work. —II Timothy 3:16-17*

### **PSALM 19:14**

May the words of my mouth and the meditation of my heart be pleasing to you, O Lord, my rock and my redeemer.

### **PROVERBS 17:27**

A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is even tempered.

### **PROVERBS 12:18**

Some people make cutting remarks, but the words of the wise bring healing.

### **MATTHEW 7:3**

And why worry about a speck in your friend's eye when you have a log in your own?

### **PROVERBS 20:19**

A gossip goes around telling secrets, so don't hang around with chatterers.

### **JAMES 1:19**

Understand this, my dear brothers and sisters: You must all be quick to listen, slow to speak, and slow to get angry.

### **PROVERBS 18:13**

Spouting off before listening to the facts is both shameful and foolish.





# PERSONAL STRESS PROFILE

Then Jesus said, "Come to me, all of you who are weary and carry heavy burdens, and I will give you rest. — Matthew 11:28

## IDENTIFYING MOST CRITICAL ISSUES

### Do you control stress in your life or does stress control you?

Stressors are events that cause an emotional and/or physical reaction. Stress can be positive (wedding, job promotion) or negative (loss of job, car accident, major illness). But what is important is to be able to manage the many stressors in your life.

One way to manage stress is to prioritize the issues that are most important to you. Another is to decide what issues can be changed or resolved and which ones cannot. This exercise will help you focus on the high priority issues and those that can be changed (Box 1).

## COUPLE EXERCISE

1. Select up to **four issues** that are the most stressful for each of you.
2. Review each issue and put it into one of the four cells below. (Box 1 contains the "Most Critical Issues.")

	Able to Change	Difficult to Change
High Priority	<div>Box 1</div> <div>MOST CRITICAL ISSUES</div> <div>What changes can you each make?</div>	<div>Box 2</div> <div></div> <div>How do you plan to cope?</div>
Low Priority	<div>Box 3</div> <div></div> <div>Are you spending too much time on low priority issues?</div>	<div>Box 4</div> <div>LEAST CRITICAL ISSUES</div> <div>Can you accept or forget about these issues?</div>

## COUPLE DISCUSSION

- Select one issue from Box 1 that you will work on together as a couple.
- Work together as a team to achieve your goals.
  - Communicate about the issue.
  - Use good conflict resolution skills.
  - Be flexible with one another.





## PERSONAL STRESS PROFILE

*My health may fail, and my spirit may grow weak, but God remains the strength of my heart; He is mine forever. — Psalm 73:26*

### BALANCING YOUR PRIORITIES

First, indicate how much time you "Now" spend on each of these areas. Next, decide on the amount of time you would ideally spend: "Your Goal." Then decide how you can achieve your goal.

	NOW (hours/week)	GOAL	How will you move towards your goal?
<b>WORK</b>			
Time on job/school	_____	_____	_____
Bringing work home	_____	_____	_____
Commuting	_____	_____	_____
<b>PERSONAL</b>			
Exercise	_____	_____	_____
Television	_____	_____	_____
Computer/video games	_____	_____	_____
Hobby/recreation	_____	_____	_____
Reading	_____	_____	_____
Friends	_____	_____	_____
Religious activities	_____	_____	_____
Volunteering	_____	_____	_____
Sleep (hours per night)	_____	_____	_____
<b>MARRIAGE (Couple)</b>			
At home together	_____	_____	_____
Activities/dates	_____	_____	_____
Discussions (minutes per day)	_____	_____	_____
<b>HOME</b>			
Cleaning	_____	_____	_____
Cooking	_____	_____	_____
Grocery shopping	_____	_____	_____
Errands	_____	_____	_____
Lawn/garden	_____	_____	_____
Home maintenance	_____	_____	_____
<b>FAMILY (if children at home)</b>			
Number of meals together	_____	_____	_____
Family activities	_____	_____	_____
Transporting children	_____	_____	_____
Helping with homework	_____	_____	_____
At home together	_____	_____	_____

### COUPLE DISCUSSION

- What areas feel out of balance to each of you?
- What steps must you take in order for your goal to become reality?

