

START
your
MARRIAGE
on a



The Pastor's Guide for Each Session

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who
build it labor in vain." Psalm 127:1*

Pastor Bruce Edwards

Start
Your
Marriage
on a
Strong
Foundation

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The content within this workbook comes from many different
sources and is meant to be used as a tool for premarital
counselling.

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INTRODUCTION

We're very excited for your engagement and for all that God will do as you move toward marriage. Thank you for the privilege of assisting you and your fiancée as you seek to prepare for a life together.

Over the next four sessions our prayer is that this will be the start of building a strong Biblical foundation in which you will be able to build a strong marriage that does not just survive, but one that thrives.

There is no way to cover all the aspects of marriage in just four short sessions, but we believe with the help of God together we will be able to sow seeds of sound Biblical counsel that will give you a great start.

As we begin, there are three major goals or purposes for our time together.

1. To help you build a solid, biblical foundation as you start your marriage.
2. To help you begin a dialogue about your marriage. There are a host of topics (communication, finances, sex, parenting, etc.) that we think are important to consider before you get married. The good news is that the conversation we are beginning is a life-long process. We'll solve some problems, but many others will be left for you to work through over the course of your entire marriage. We'll start the dialogue, and leave the rest to you
3. To prepare you for the journey of marriage not just the wedding day. We often find that couples get caught up in the frantic details of preparing for the wedding day, and don't spend much time getting ready for the marriage. The wedding day marks the beginning of your life together, but the marriage will

last for the rest of your life. So, it is good for you to take time to prepare for this life--long journey together. The information we share together is to help give you the foundation to build a strong and happy marriage.

The last thought we want to share is the importance of prayer. The family that prays together stays together. There is power in prayer. We are praying for you, and we will start each session and end each session in prayer. We each need our own prayer life, but strong marriages include prayer as a couple. *“One sends a thousand to flight, two sends ten thousand.”* There is exponential power in prayer!

Blessings,

Pastor Bruce and Trudy



***“Therefore, what God has joined together,
let not man separate.”***

Mark 10:9

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{ *The content in this workbook consists of material, thoughts, ideas, examples, etc. from many different sources and authors including Billy Joe Daugherty, Gary Smalley, John Trent, Mack Timberlake, Focus on the family and others. Most of all content with the greatest value comes from the Word of God.* }

SESSION 1 – *Pastor's Outline*

SESSION ONE – BUILD YOUR MARRIAGE ON THE ROCK

Key verse: Ecc. 4:12 – “A person standing alone can be attacked and defeated, but two can stand back-to-back and conquer. Three are even better, for a triple-braided cord is not easily broken.”

1. Marriage was and is God's IDEA

- Marriage is a Miracle, two become One
- Marriage is a Covenant not a Contract
- Marriage is a Lifelong covenant
- Marriage is between One man and One woman

2. Lay a strong foundation

- the foundation determines the strength and size
 - Matthew 7:24 ff
- Jesus – His Word is the rock
 - Place your faith in Jesus
 - Following Jesus
- Be Equally yoked

¹⁸ And the LORD God said, “It is not good that man should be alone; I will make him a helper comparable to him.”

¹⁹ Out of the ground the LORD God formed every beast of the field and every bird of the air and brought them to Adam to see what he would call them. And whatever Adam called each living creature, that was its name. ²⁰ So Adam gave names to all cattle, to the birds of the air, and to every beast of the field. But for Adam there was not found a helper comparable to him.

²¹ And the LORD God caused a deep sleep to fall on Adam, and he slept; and He took one of his ribs and closed up the flesh in its place. ²² Then the rib which the LORD God had taken from man He made into a woman, and He brought her to the man.

BUILD ON THE ROCK!

Laying the Foundation for a Strong Marriage

SCRIPTURE

*Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken.
Ecclesiastes 4:12*

1. Marriage is not a contract it is a “COVENANT”.
2. Building your life and marriage on the WORD of GOD is the only way to have a healthy and happy marriage.
3. Not only is the foundation of a strong marry built upon Jesus it requires the help of the HOLY SPIRIT.
4. Strong Godly marriages include 1) husband, 2) wife, and 3) JEUS - 3 strand chord.
5. Marriage was and is GOD's idea, not mans.
6. There is a BETTER way of doing marriage, it is doing it God's way the one who established the institution of marriage.
7. Marriage God's way is based on love – the GOD kind of love (agape).

Marks of Real Love

- **A TTRACTIONS** Are you attracted to one another? Physical desire is great, but physical restraint must also be great.
- **I NTEGRITY** character -- What attracts the women to her husband in Song of Solomon 1:3 is his good name, his honest reputation.

"Your name is like perfume poured out. No wonder the maidens love you!" Song of Solomon 1. 3b

- **S** _____ -- In your courtship, do you feel more secure, more valued than you did when you both started dating?
- **S** _____ foundation -- Do you both share the same faith in Jesus

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. After dating for some time, many couples wrestle with the question, "How do I know whether this person is the one for me?" In the blank space below, write your loved one's name. Then jot down a response that completes the sentence.

I believe _____ is the one for me because

2. Take a moment and share your responses to # 1 with your loved one. If you are participating in a group study, discuss your responses with the group.

3. One of the marks of real love is affection, often accompanied by a physical desire for one another. It's natural to want to express your affection for one another. As we learned in the video lesson, **great affection** must be coupled with **great restraint**. Lack of restraint in your physical relationship leads to guilt and other consequences that short-circuit opportunities for communication and greater intimacy.
4. If your physical relationship has progressed too far, you run the risk of violating God's plan, which reserves sexual intimacy for marriage. If you and your loved one have progressed beyond what you know to be right, stop and pray. Ask the Lord to forgive you and to give both of you the resolve and the restraint to reserve the gift of sexual intimacy for marriage.

If you are living together and are not yet married, talk to one another about one of you moving out and living elsewhere until the wedding. Committing to and maintaining a celibate relationship until marriage is almost impossible for couples who live together.

5. Personal integrity and character are directly related to respect and love. Do you have any major or minor reservations about the character or integrity of your loved one?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

6. If you checked “no,” skip to # 7. If you checked “yes” or “not sure,” jot down a few phrases or questions that you would like to address with your loved one. Then stop now and discuss these issues or set a time to talk about these matters soon.

7. A healthy relationship of real, enduring love provides a great sense of security. Check the statement below that most accurately reflects how you feel about your relationship.

☐ I feel totally secure, confident, and at peace in our relationship.

☐ I feel secure when we are together, but I or my loved one wrestle with jealousy and anxiety when we are apart.

☐ I feel okay about our relationship, but I don't necessarily feel more secure.

☐ Things are great with us from time to time, but one or both of us starts an argument out of jealousy or insecurity.

8. If you did not check “I feel totally secure,” jot down a few words that explain your feelings and discuss with your loved one.

9. In the space below, briefly describe your relationship with the Lord and your spiritual heritage (e.g., upbringing, home life, church background, Christian training, etc.).

10. Now compare your comments from # 9 with your loved one. Check the phrase that best describes your level of spiritual compatibility with your loved one?

- ☐ We have almost identical spiritual foundations.
- ☐ We share many similarities but also some differences.
- ☐ We are somewhat similar, but we have many differences.
- ☐ We have different spiritual foundations and little in common in this area of life.

11. The Bible talks about the importance of both partners in a marriage knowing Christ as Savior and Lord. Take a moment to read these verses from 2 Corinthians 6:14-15.

*Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have **in common**? Or what fellowship **can** light have with **darkness**? **What** harmony is there between Christ and Belial? **Mat** does a believer have in common with an unbeliever?*

What do these verses say to you about compatibility between a Christian and a non- Christian in marriage?

12. If you or your loved one is not a Christian, talk to your pastor or minister. Without a common foundation of faith in Jesus Christ, couples struggle building a successful marriage. **PLEASE:** Do not begin a life-long relationship on an unequal spiritual footing. Couples who have ignored God's Word in this area have lived to regret their decision.

13. Another issue that couples must address is in which church or denomination will they become involved. If you and your loved one come from different denominational backgrounds, with which church or denomination do you plan to affiliate?

Why? _____

14. Are you content with knowing that your children's spiritual development will be shaped by this church or denomination?

☐ Yes ☐ No ☐ Not sure

15. Issues such as a common faith in Jesus Christ and participation in a family of faith (church) are not easily resolved if postponed until after the wedding. Now, before the wedding, is the opportune time to discuss and seek unanimity and harmony in these crucial areas of life.

After having read these statements and responded to these questions, which of the following responses most closely represents your attitude on this subject? (Check one of the following or write out your own response.)

- ☐ We are spiritually compatible and do not foresee any problems in this area of our lives.
- ☐ We are not spiritually compatible, but we plan to do something about this before marriage.
- ☐ We are not spiritually compatible, but we think we can work all of this out after we marry.

☐ We are not spiritually compatible, and we do not think it really

☐ Other: _____

PERSONAL APPLICATION

16. Of all of the foundational principles mentioned in this session, which of the following marks of real love are readily apparent in your relationship. Check each one that applies.
17. If you sense the need for additional guidance or direction in one or more of these areas, talk with your pastor or minister. Take a moment to make a list of subjects that you want to discuss with your minister or marriage counselor in your next meeting with him.
18. You are to be commended for participating in this premarital training course. Most couples do not take time to build a rock-solid foundation. May the Lord bless you for being one of the few who care enough to build your marriage on the Rock of Jesus Christ!
19. Close this session by praying with your loved one. Express your love for God and commit your hearts to seeking His best as you consider and plan for the future.

*How do you know, wife, whether you will save your husband?
Or, how do you know, husband, whether you
will save your wife?*

1 Corinthians 7:16

[illegible]

SESSION 2 – Pastor's Outline

SESSION TWO – BUILD YOUR MARRIAGE ON LOVE

“For this reason, a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and the two shall become one flesh.”

³² This is a great mystery, but I speak concerning Christ and the church.

³³ Nevertheless let each one of you in particular so love his own wife as himself, and let the wife see that she respects her husband.

Ephesians 5:31-33

Key Verse: 1 Cor. 13:4-8 *“Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. ⁵ It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. ⁶ Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. ⁷ It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. ⁸ Love never fails...”*

1. Marriage is all about giving Unconditional love to your spouse (family). This is “the blessing”

The Blessing is giving and receiving unconditional love and it includes 3 key elements:

1. meaningful touch (discuss)
2. positive words of affirmation (discuss)
3. genuine commitment (discuss)

2. It's the God Kind of Love

- It is not only unconditional – it is sacrificial
- It is not a feeling it is a choice

3. The Blessing is a Gift – we choose to give or withhold

- Dt. 30:19 – curse or blessing?
- Have you received the blessing from your parent or other key people in your life?
- Do you give or withhold? Why?

4. Marriage is not 50/50 but each giving 100 percent.

Notes: _____

GIVE THE BLESSING

A Wedding Gift You'll Never Take Back

SCRIPTURE

When Esau heard his father's words, he burst out with a loud and bitter cry and said to his father, "Bless me--me too, my father!" *Genesis 27.'34*

*For thus reason a man will leave his father and **mother** and be united to his wife, **and they will become one flesh.** Genesis 2:24*

"Blessing mean "adding" to another's life. The Blessing is first an "attitude" of high value, but it is also to be lived out with our actions."

1. The blessing is all about giving u_____ love to your spouse (*to be*) and children (*family*).
2. The blessing includes these powerful elements -
 - a) meaningful touch
 - b) positive w_____ of affirmation
 - c) genuine commitment.
3. As you grew up in your family, did you get a gift?
4. Story of Isaac, Rebekah, Jacob, and Esau -- Genesis 27
5. If we have this gift, this blessing, then we have a "leg up" on relationships.

6. You have a choice – c _____ or b _____
(Dt. 30:19)
7. The gift of the blessing is ...
- Appropriate _____ -- Being held, kissed, cuddled, and touched.
 - L _____ verbalized. -- Being told, “I love you. You are special to me.”
8. Even if you did not receive the gift of the blessing as a child, the Lord can reverse the curse in your life because He loves you.

However, the LORD your God would not listen to Balaam but turned the curse into a blessing for you, because the LORD your God loves you. Deuteronomy 23:5

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. What about you? Now that you've learned about the gift of the blessing, would you say that ...
- ☐ Yes, my parents gave me the blessing.
- ☐ I received only a part of the blessing
- ☐ I did not receive the blessing in my home.
2. What impact do you think receiving or not receiving the blessing has had on your life? Jot down a few thoughts and discuss with your loved one or the group.

3. Believe it or not, our parents have an influence on our selection of a potential mate. Women bring into marriage expectations for their husbands that are influenced by their fathers' strengths and weaknesses. Men, too, have expectations for their wives that are shaped by their mothers.

Take a moment to jot down some traits or strengths of your parents in the two columns on the next page. Then discuss with your loved one how you think your parents have influenced your expectations of your spouse and of marriage in general.

CHARACTERISTICS OF MY MOTHER	CHARACTERISTICS OF MY FATHER

4. If you have not yet spent some time with your future in-laws, try to do so before you marry. By talking with his future father-in-law, a man will learn much about what his bride expects of him in marriage AND a man will learn much about his future bride.

By talking with her future mother-in-law, a woman will learn much about what her groom expects of her in marriage. If you have already become acquainted with those adults who may/will be your future in-laws, what have you learned that has helped you better understand your loved one? Jot down some thoughts and discuss with your loved one.

5. Think about your parents' marriage. What did your parents experience in their marriage that you want to experience when you marry? What did your parents experience that you do NOT want to experience when you marry? After writing your responses below, discuss with

6. When you love someone what are some ways you express your love for that person?

7. When someone love you, how do you expect him/her to show you or express his/her love for you?

8. Discuss your responses to # 6 and #7 with your loved one. Do you foresee any “mixed signals” in the way the two of you many communicate or show love for one another in marriage? Take a moment to talk about both the similarities and the difference in the ways you and your loved one express and acknowledge love.
9. The greatest wedding gift that a bride receives is the gift of her husbands – his strength – his character, his personality. Likewise, the greatest wedding gift the groom receives is his brides—her strengths. Character, and personality

Think for a moment about what you would bring to a marriage and what your loved one would bring. To the best of your ability, describe these two gifts in the columns on the next page then discuss with one another.

WHAT I WOULD BRING	WHAT MY LOVED ONE WOULD BRING

10. Currently half of all marriages end in divorce. What do you think are the factors or major reasons why couples divorce?

11. Most couples do not enter marriage thinking that they will eventually divorce. What factors or ingredients are present in your relationship with your loved one that you believe will keep your marriage intact throughout the years? Write down some thoughts and discuss your responses with your loved one.

12. If you have been married before and the marriage ended in divorce, what mistakes or failures led to your divorce? (If you have never been married, skip to # 14).
13. In most divorces, both husband and wife share responsibility for the demise of the relationship. If you have been divorced, what responsibility do you bear for the breakdown of your marriage?
14. Marriage is not a 50/50 proposition. Marriage is more like an 100/100 proposition. Each partner gives far more than his or her share out of love and commitment for his/her mate.

Take a moment to read this well-known passage from 1 Corinthians 13 in the left column below. Then in the right column, list some specific, practical ways you can incorporate God's love into your marriage.

1 Co. 13:4-8a	Specific ways I can apply such love to my marriage -
<p>Love suffers long <i>and</i> is kind; love does not envy; love does not parade itself, is not puffed up; ⁵ does not behave rudely, does not seek its own, is not provoked, thinks no evil; ⁶ does not rejoice in iniquity, but rejoices in the truth; ⁷ bears all things, believes all things, hopes all things, endures all things. ⁸ Love never fails.</p>	

PERSONAL APPLICATION

15. How can you do a better job of blessing your loved one?

16. What kind of words are you speaking over your loved one?
Words that are positive, build up, edify, encourage, etc. or words that tear down, criticize, negative...

17. Regardless of whether you received the gift of the blessing from your parents, the Lord can reverse the curse and empower you to share the blessing with your future spouse and your children--when or if you become a parent.

Close this session by praying with your loved one. Ask the Lord to help you to understand more fully how to bless your loved one. Thank God for insights you have gained through this session and commit yourself to continue this vital process of preparing for marriage.

But he said to me, "My grace is sufficient for you, for my power is made perfect in weakness." Therefore, I will boast all the more gladly about my weaknesses, so that Christ's power may rest on me. 2 Corinthians 12:9

BUILT^{to}LAST



Building A Strong Marriage

[illegible]

SESSION 3 – Pastor' Outline

SESSION THREE – CELEBRATE YOUR DIFFERENCES

Key Verses – Colossians 3:13-15: *“Get along with each other and forgive each other. If someone does wrong to you, forgive that person because the Lord forgave you. Do all these things; but most important, love each other. Love is what holds you all together in perfect unity. Let the peace that Christ gives control your thinking, because you were all called together in one body to have peace. Always be thankful.”*

John 16:33 *“These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”*

1. Strengths and Weaknesses -

- In every relationship, issues and differences come up that lead to conflict.
- What often draws couples together in a courtship are the differences, but later in marriage, the same differences can create strife and contention – the key is learning to -
- Starts with understanding our differences

- TAKE ANIMAL PERSONALITY TEST

Discuss results

2. Learning to blend your personalities together -

- In-laws
- Hobbies
- Preferences
- Finances
- *Other areas* _____

Notes: _____

CELEBRATE YOUR DIFFERENCES

Complimenting Each Other's Strengths and Differences for a Strong Relationship

*Catch for us the foxes, the little foxes that ruin the vineyards,
our vineyards that are in bloom. - Song of Solomon 2:15*

*A wife **of noble** character who can find? She is worth far
more than rubies. - Proverbs 31:10*

1. In every relationship, issues can come up that can lead to conflict. The key is to keep the issues
_____.
2. Often it is the woman or wife who spots issues that may lead to conflict.
3. What often draws us together in a courtship is our

But later in marriage, these same differences can pull us apart.

Gary Smalley Christian author and counselor on marriage and relationships created the 4 Animal Personality Test with the goal of creating a tool to help couples, families and singles discover their God given strengths and to better understand each other to help strengthen their marriages and relationships. We are going to use this tool to help facilitate our discussion on how to blend our strengths and weaknesses together as a couple. The following is a brief description of each of the different personality types.

Lion

This personality likes to lead. The lion is good at making decisions and is very goal oriented. They enjoy challenges, difficult assignments, and opportunity for advancement. Because lions are thinking of the goal, they can step on people to reach it. Lions can be very aggressive and competitive. Lions must learn not to be too bossy or to take charge in other's affairs.

Strength: Goal-oriented, strong, direct

Weakness: Argumentative, too dictatorial

Limitation: Doesn't understand that directness can hurt others, hard time expressing grace

Otter

Otters are very social creature. Otter personalities love people. They enjoy being popular and influencing and motivating others. Otter can sometimes be hurt when people do not like them. Otter personalities usually have lots of friends, but not deep relationships. They love to goof-off. (They are notorious for messy rooms.) Otters like to hurry and finish jobs. (Jobs are not often done well.) The otter personality is like Tigger in Winnie the Pooh.

Strength: People person, open, positive

Weakness: Talks too much, too permissive

Limitation: Remembering past commitments, follow through with discipline

Golden Retriever

Good at making friends. Very loyal. Retriever personalities do not like big changes. They look for security. Can be very sensitive. Very caring. Has deep relationships, but usually only a couple of close friends. Wants to be loved by everyone. Looks for appreciation. Works best in a limited situation with a steady work pattern.

Strength: Accommodating, calm, affirming

Weakness: Indecisive, indifferent, unable to express emotional, too soft on other people

Limitation: Seeing the need to be more assertive, holding others accountable

Beaver

Organized. Beavers think that there is a right way to do everything, and they want to do it exact that way. Beaver personalities are very creative. They desire to solve everything. Desire to take their time and do it right. Beavers do not like sudden changes. They need reassurance.

Strength: High standards, order, respect

Weakness: Unrealistic expectations of self & others, too perfect.

Limitation: Seeing the optimistic side of things, expressing flexibility

Personality Type	Jot down some words that describe this personality.
Lion	
Otter	
Golden Retriever	
Beaver	

While the four personality types are still fresh in your mind, take a moment to fill out the *Personal Strengths Survey* and the *Survey Chart* on the next few pages.

- Complete one for yourself and one on your loved one.
- After you have finished, write you're the most dominant personality types you came up with for you and your spouse and then check with your loved one and write his/her results in the spaces under the graph.

DO PERSONALITY ASSESSMENT (on the next few pages)

Four Animals Personal Strengths Survey

*In each box, circle each word or phrase that describes a
consistent character trait of yours.*

Total the number circled and multiply by 2.

LION

Takes charge

Determined

Assertive

Firm

Enterprising

Competitive

Enjoys challenges

Bold

Purposeful

Decision Maker

Leader

Goal-driven

Self-reliant

Adventurous

“Let's do it now!”

Double the number circled

OTTER

Takes risks

Visionary

Motivator

Energetic

Very Verbal

Promoter

Avoids details

Fun-loving

Likes variety

Enjoys change

Creative

Group-oriented

Mixes easily

Optimistic

“Trust me! It'll work out!”

Double the number circled

Continued

GOLDEN RETRIVER

Loyal
Nondemanding
Even keel
Avoids conflict
Enjoys routine
Dislikes change
Deep relationships

Adaptable
Sympathetic
Thoughtful
Nurturing
Patient
Tolerant
Good Listener

“How was it done in the past?”

Double the number circled

BEAVER

Deliberate
Controlled
Reserved
Predictable
Practical
Orderly
Factual

Discerning
Detailed
Analytical
Inquisitive
Precise
Persistent
Scheduled

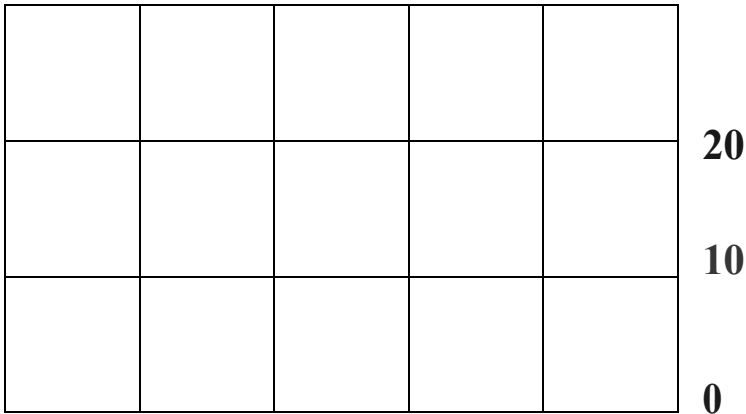
How was it done in the past?

Double the number circled

Chart the totals from the four boxes on the following graph.

Personal Strengths Survey Chart

L O GR B



RESULTS

MY ASSESSMENTS:

My Personality _____

Loved One's Personality _____

MY LOVED ONES ASSESSMENTS:

My Personality _____

Loved One's Personality _____

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. We are often attracted to the strengths of different personality. What aspects of your loved one's personality do you enjoy? Jot down some ideas and discuss with your loved one.

2. Why do you think your personality and your loved one's personality make a good match?

3. Can you imagine a situation in which your personality and your loved one's personality could clash or collide? (Please say “yes.”) In what way might you and your loved one respond differently to a situation and come into conflict?

4. Something or things in your loved one's personality attract you to him/her. Consciously working to incorporate some of those same traits into your life will help you blend your strengths with those of your loved one. What traits in your loved one's personality do you think you need to blend into your life?

5. Stop and discuss # 3, # 4, and # 5 with your loved one or with the group.

6. Blending strengths is a challenge when couples have different interests. She likes tennis. He likes to hunt. She likes to vacation at the beach. He prefers snow skiing. Expecting your mate to give up all of his/her interests after marrying is both unrealistic and unfair.

Take a moment to identify your hobbies/interests and your loved one's hobbies/interests. If necessary, work with your loved one to compile these lists. After listing interests, circle those that are the most important to you.

	<u>HE LIKES</u>	<u>SHE LIKES</u>
Sports		
Vacations		
Hobbies		
Leisure activities		
Other interests		

8. In reviewing the lists in # 7, do you perceive any problems in harmonizing your interests?

☐ Yes ☐ No

9. If you checked “yes,” briefly describe the issue. Then discuss with your loved one.

10. Another issue that many couples face is where to spend holidays and vacations and how often to visit parents/in-laws. Take a moment to complete the following sentences. Then compare your responses with your loved one or the group. If you detect an area of disagreement with your loved one, take a moment to discuss the issue.

- A reasonable length of stay for a visiting parent or in-law is _____ days/weeks.
- A reasonable length of time for visiting my parents is _____ days per visit.
- A reasonable length of time for visiting his/her parents is _____ days per visit.
- I would like to visit my parents about _____ times a year.
- As for visiting parents and in-laws during holidays like Thanksgiving and Christmas, I believe that we should

- Spending our vacation visiting our parents is a _____ idea.
- When it comes to inviting an aging parent to come live with us, I believe it would be best to _____

PERSONAL APPLICATION

11. Should you and your loved one decide to marry, in what ways will your personality be a positive force in strengthening your marriage?

12. In what ways will your loved one's personality be a positive force in your marriage?

13. Close this session by praying with your loved one. Ask the Lord to help you blend the best of you and your loved one's personalities and differences to bring balance and joy to your relationship.

This image shows a single sheet of white paper with horizontal ruling lines. The lines are evenly spaced and run across the width of the page. There are no margins, text, or other markings on the paper.

SESSION 4

SESSION FOUR – *Pastor's Outline for BUILT TO LAST*

(Keep the Flame Burning)

Key Verse: Ephesians 4:32 *“Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.”*

1. Keeping peace in the relationship and home.

- Peace is not an absence of Conflict.
- The source of peace is Jesus.



“No Jesus, No Peace –
Know Jesus, Know Peace.”

- Trust Jesus.

“You will keep him in perfect peace, whose mind is stayed on You, because he trusts in You.” Isaiah 26:3

2. Selfishness it at the root of all conflict

- It is a tool of the enemy.
- What the Bible says.
 - *“For where jealousy and selfish ambition exist, there is disorder [unrest, rebellion] and every evil thing and morally degrading practice.” James 3:16 AMP*

- *“Do nothing from selfishness or empty conceit, but with h_____ of mind regard one another as more important than yourselves; do not merely look out for your own personal interests, but also for the interests of others”* **Philippians 2:3-4.**
- *“Do not think of y_____ more highly than you ought, but rather think of yourself with sober judgment, in accordance with the measure of faith God has given you.”* Romans 12:3
- *“No one should seek their own good, but the good of others.”*
1 Corinthians 10:24

3. Be a Peace MAKER

- 3 Skills need to be a peacemaker
 1. Know how to diffuse a situation
 2. Know how resolve differences
 3. Know how to restore the relationship

*“Blessed are the peacemakers,
For they shall be called sons of God.”*
Mat. 5:9

*Good marriages are NOT those without conflict –
Good marriages are those that can resolve their conflicts.*

3. Effective Communication

- Make time for it
- Avoid hurtful words – speak positively
- Be aware of nonverbal communication
- Listen – Listen – Listen
- Purpose of communication is to express – LOVE
- Know your spouses – Love Language
 - Words of affirmation
 - Quality time
 - Physical touch
 - Acts of service
 - Receiving gifts

“You have the ability to choose how you communicate”

Notes: _____

BUILT TO LAST – KEEPING THE PASSION!

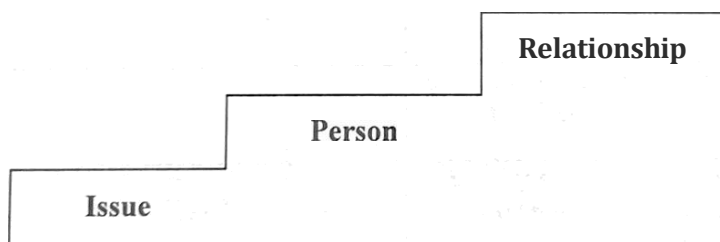
Communicating to Resolve Conflict and Enrich Intimacy

SCRIPTURE

Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. Ephesians 4. 32

As a wise master builder, I laid a foundation, and another is building upon it. But let each man be careful how he builds upon it. 1 Corinthians 3.10b

1. Every day there's a choice of what you can do in your marriage.
2. Both husband and wife need to ask themselves: How am I building? How am I adding to our relationship?
3. Commit to keep conflict at the _____ level.



4. It takes about a year for most issues to come out in a relationship. Surviving the first year of marriage is a major victory.
5. If you cannot agree on an issue, you need an _____ strategy, a cooling off period.

6. Build a lasting marriage by p_____ with your spouse several times a week.

DISCUSSION QUESTIONS

1. “He said/she said” is one way of describing male-female conflict. Conflict in relationships is inevitable, but it doesn't have to become a wedge. Conflict can open the door to greater intimacy. How have disagreements helped bring you and your loved one closer?

2. How did your parents handle conflict in their marriage?

- ☐ They never fought.
- ☐ They talked things out.
- ☐ They fought like cats and dogs!

3. How do you think your parent's method of handling conflict has influenced how you deal with contentious issues?

4. Ephesians 4:26-32 contains excellent counsel on relationships and communication. On the next page read the scripture printed in the left column. Think about how you can apply or personalize the truths in your life and relationships. Then in the right column, jot down some ideas on how you can apply the scriptural truths to your life.

THE BIBLE SAYS	I CAN APPLY THIS BY
<i>V. 26-27 -- "In your anger do not sin": Do not let the sun go down while you are still angry, and do not give the devil foothold.</i>	
<i>V. 28 -- He who has been stealing must steal no longer, but must work, doing something useful with his own hands, that he may have something to share with those in need.</i>	
<i>V. 29 -- Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths, but only what is helpful for building others up according to their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.</i>	
<i>V. 30 -- And do not grieve the Holy Spirit of God, with whom you were sealed for the day of redemption.</i>	
<i>V. 31 - Get rid of all bitterness, rage and anger, brawling and slander, along with every form of malice.</i>	
<i>V. 32 -- Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.</i>	

5. We talked about three levels of conflict: *issue*, *person*, and *relationship*. In the left column on the next page are statements that couples might use when disagreeing or in conflict. Read each statement, then in the right column write the word "issue," "person," or "relationship" to identify whether the speaker is dealing with the issue, attacking the person, or endangering the relationship.

HE SAID/SHE SAID	ISSUE, PERSON, OR RELATIONSHIP
"You're crazy!"	
"I don't know why I ever married you in the first place!"	
"I don't want a "TV in our bedroom."	
"Why can't you do anything right?"	
"I don't like having to wait every time we go somewhere!"	
"Why don't you get out of the house and stay out!"	
"I detest green! I'd much rather have the blue one."	

6. Two keys to resolving conflict are (1) to *keep* conflict at the issue level and (2) to develop an "exit strategy." Being able to identify and stay focused on the issue is essential in keeping conflict from escalating. In the space below, identify the issue in these dangerously degenerating relationships.

SOMEONE SAID	THE ISSUE
"You're as sensitive as a rock! The next time you forget our anniversary I'm going to pack your bags and send you back to your mama!"	
"You've got the cooking skills of a moron. What's wrong with you? Can't you do anything right?"	
"How do I know you really mean it? Promises, promises! You're full of promises! They don't mean anything anymore!"	
"A hundred and fifty bucks for a belt?! You've got to be crazy! Money doesn't <i>grow on</i> trees, or didn't your father ever teach you <i>that</i> ?"	

7. An exit strategy is a _____ off period when two people decide to set aside an Issue for a while, consider the *other* person's position, and then resume discussion later. In the midst of an argument or disagreement, how do you determine when it's time to implement an exit strategy?
-

8. Finances are a common source of conflict between couples. How much have you and your loved one focused on financial matters? Check the actions that you have taken thus far:

- ☐ We have projected a realistic estimate of our income
- ☐ We have talked at length about finances--spending, saving, investing.
- ☐ We have worked out a budget for our first year of marriage.
- ☐ We have agreed upon a monthly amount that will go into savings/investments. We have agreed on who will pay the bills.
- ☐ We have talked with a financial planner.
- ☐ We have realistic financial goals for the future.
- ☐ We have developed a prioritized list that we will follow when making major purchases.
- ☐ We both agree on whether we should accept money from our parents.
- ☐ We are both committed to tithing to the Lord through our local church.

9. One of the most dangerous financial traps for adults is credit card debt. Take a moment and work with your loved one to answer these questions:

- How much combined credit card debt do the two of you currently have? \$ _____

(Any amount that cannot be paid off in one month is too much credit card debt.)

- Being realistic, how long will it take to pay off your credit card debts? _____

- How many credit cards are absolutely essential in your lives?

- How many credit cards can you destroy and live without?

- To be able to pay off your credit card debt in full each month, what limit needs to be placed on monthly credit card purchases? \$ _____ per month

- What is the largest purchase that either of you will agree to make without having to consult with the other?

\$ _____

“Honor the Lord with your wealth and with the first fruits of all your income.” Proverbs 3: 9

10. Unresolved conflict limits or restricts intimacy. A couple cannot enjoy an intimate relationship when smoldering issues keep the coals of conflict hot.

Think about issues in your relationship with your loved one. What issues have been “set aside” that need to be re-examined and resolved? Jot down some notes and discuss with your loved one.

PERSONAL APPLICATION

11. If you truly desire to keep the flame of love burning throughout your marriage, then check each statement in the commitment below and sign and date your commitment.

I Commit to ...

- ☐ work to build an affectionate relationship built on integrity and spiritual harmony,
- ☐ bless our relationship through appropriate touch and verbal expressions of love,
- ☐ strengthen our relationship by building on my personal strengths and seeking to understand and complement your strengths as well, and
- ☐ seek to resolve issues as soon as possible and not let them drive us apart.

Name: _____ **Date:** _____

SELF EVALUATION FOR STRONGER MARRIAGE

Respond to each of the statements below by putting an X in the appropriate box;

1 = fully and completely

2 = To some extent

3 = I'm not sure

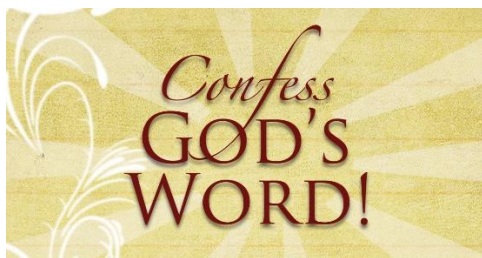
4 = Not at all sure

		1	2	3	4
1	I understand that marriage is a life-long covenant, and I am ready to commit.				
2	My loved one understands that marriage is a life-long covenant and is ready to commit				
3	We have a strong affection for one another				
4	We are physically attracted to one another				
5	We are able to exercise appropriate restraint in our physical relationship				
6	I believe my loved one is a person of honesty and integrity and I trust him/her fully				
7	I feel totally secure and at peace in our relationship				
8	We both have similar, complementary spiritual foundations.				
9	I received the gift of the blessing from my parents <i>when I</i> was growing up				
10	2. My loved one received the gift of the blessing from his/her parents growing up				
11	I understand my personality type, its strengths and weaknesses.				
12	I understand my loved one's personality type with its strengths and weaknesses.				
13	We understand how our personalities affect us and our relationship				
14	We know how to keep conflict on the issue level and under control.				
15	We have discussed the importance of having an exit strategy whenever we cannot agree				
16	We understand the importance of praying to together				

17	We plan to incorporate a time of praying together into our daily schedules.				
18	We have discussed and identified unresolved issues in our relationship				
19	We have discussed finances and have started or begun planning a budget				
20	We have spent <i>time</i> discussing our parents and our family heritage and how these factors influence use and how these factors influence				
21	We agree on whether we want to have children and, if so, how many we would like to have.				

*Use the space below to clarify your responses
or to make any comments.*

10 Powerful Confessions for Your Marriage



Each of the following confessions are based on God's Word. There is power in your words. You can speak the confession out loud as often as you want to. It is good to also memorize

the scriptures that go along with them if.

1. We are united as one flesh and what God has joined together, no one can separate. (Matthew 19:6)
2. We are imitators of God and walk in love, valuing one another and seeking the best for each other. (Ephesians 5:1-2)
3. We rejoice and find satisfaction in one another. (Proverbs 5:18-19)
4. We do not battle one another, but come together against the enemy's lies, standing firm on God's Word. (Ephesians 6:12)
5. We avoid hatred and instead choose love because it covers all wrong. (Proverbs 10:12)
6. We honor our marriage by keeping the marriage bed pure and undefiled. (Hebrews 13:4)
7. We love another through patience and kindness, knowing it always protects, trusts, hopes, and perseveres.
(1 Corinthians 13:4-7).
8. We are on guard, standing firm in faith, courageous, and strong in our marriage – doing everything in love
(1 Corinthians 16:13-14)
9. I am thankful that my wife is a good thing – and God's favor is upon us. (Proverbs 18:22)
10. My husband trusts me and I do right by him all the days of my life. (Proverbs 31:11-12)

10 Bible Verses for Couples

1. It's Not Good to Be Alone

The Lord God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him." – Genesis 2:18



2. God's Design for Marriage

The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. – Genesis 2:23-24

3. Honoring Marriage

Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral. – Hebrews 13:4

4. Bearing Spiritual Fruit

But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, forbearance, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Against such things, there is no law. – Galatians 5:22-23

5. Genuine Affection

Love each other with genuine affection and take delight in honoring each other. – Romans 12:10

6. Make Allowances

Always be humble and gentle. Be patient with each other, making allowance for each other's faults because of your love. –

Ephesians 4:2

7. Kindness and Forgiveness Matters

Be kind to each other, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, just as God through Christ has forgiven you. – **Ephesians 4:32**

8. Love Covers

“Above all, love each other deeply, because love covers over a multitude of sins.” – **1 Peter 4:8**

9. God has Great Plans for You

“For I know the plans I have for you,” declares the Lord, “plans to prosper you and not to harm you, plans to give you hope and a future.” – **Jeremiah 29:11**

10. Marriage

“Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate.” – **Mark 10:9**

With God
you're

**STRONGER
TOGETHER**



MARRIAGES

BUILT TO
LAST

*"Unless the Lord builds the house, those who
build it labor in vain." Psalm 127:1*