



ALFRED STREET BAPTIST CHURCH

# Pre-Marital Training Couples Guide



Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley, Pastor



# Overview

This curriculum for Pre-Marital training was established by the Pastor of Alfred Street Baptist Church, Rev. Dr. Howard-John Wesley. Facilitators such as ministers, deacons and lay members were trained by the Pastor or an Assistant Minister on this standard curriculum.

## Goals of Pre-Marital Counseling

- I. Share biblically-based principles that define what marriage is and are the basics for building a Christian marriage.
- II. Develop strategies for overcoming everyday marital problems, conflict, and anger.
- III. Establish a prayerful foundation for a successful marriage – Increase the things that strengthen a marriage and decrease things that weaken a marriage.

## The Six Sessions of Pre-Marital Counseling

The six sessions of Pre-Marital training vary in length of time depending on the session and the amount of discussion/questions that take place during the session. Most sessions are 1 to 1 ½ hour but are extended up to two hours when questions or circumstances arise that need to be addressed.

Homework is given after each session.

# Session I

## Introduction

Opening Prayer

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Introductions

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module 1

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Prenuptial Commitment Form

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Bride and Groom Fact Sheets

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

- 1) Complete the Pre-Nuptial Questionnaire on things that every couple should have discussed at this point.
  - 2) Read Chapter 1 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.
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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

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Next Meeting:

# Introductions

## I. Getting to Know You

- A. Counselors introduce themselves
- B. The Couple likewise shares information about themselves and the journey that brought them here.

## II. Why Pre-marital Training? Marriage isn't Easy.

- A. It takes more than falling in love to make a marriage work—it takes staying in love
- B. Some people are not strong enough and/or ready to make marriage work
- C. Since mid-60's, half of marriages ended in divorce
- D. 90% of all marriages have seriously contemplated divorce more than once in their first seven years
- E. In most homicide cases, the spouse is the primary suspect

## III. Rules of This Class

- A. Always sit with your fiancée
- B. Can't say things such as "I told you so," "See!"
- C. Come prayerfully open to receive and to share
- D. Prayerfully digest what you receive

## IV. The Five Sessions of Pre-Marital Counseling

- A. Introductory Session (1.5 hours)
  - Get to Know one other
  - Learn about the Pre-Marital Training Process
- B. The Five Biblical Principles of Godly Marriages (1 to 1.5 hours)
  - Learn what God's intention is for marriage
  - Examine what the Word says about marriage.
- C. Keeping the Love Bank Full: Emotional Needs and Love Languages (1 hour)

- Review the Five Love Languages based on Gary Chapman's Book
- Identify each other's emotional needs and how to deal with them.
- Self-Assessment of Emotional Needs

### D. Love Busters & The Seven Deadly Sins (1 to 2 hours)

- Discuss the 7 Deadly Sins in a Marriage
- Learn how to deal with them

### E. Conflict and Communication (1 1/2 to 2 hours)

- Learn Five Key Steps To Better Communication Between You and Your Spouse-To-Be
- Techniques for Resolving Conflict

### F. Wrap-up and Review (1 hour)

- Discuss the homework from Session 5
- Review the coursework (Mini test)
- Give additional resources

## V. What Is Involved In Getting Married at ASBC

- A. Pre-Marital Counseling is mandatory for all marriages at ASBC
- B. Must be completed within 60 days of the wedding
- C. Upon completion of all sessions, counselor signs off and informs coordinator
- D. Couple meets with the officiating minister to go over the wedding

## VI. Commitment to This Course of Study

- A. Complete the Pre-marital Commitment Form, Bride Fact Sheet and Groom Fact Sheet
- B. Must attend all six sessions of the class

## VII. Listen to Otis Moss, III - Preach! CD

Sex in the City

## Pre-Nuptial Counseling Commitment

I, \_\_\_\_\_ agree to prayerfully commit to the following:

1. I will attend six (6) sessions and schedule each session in my planner to avoid conflicts with other activities.
2. I will be prayerful and purposed and will complete my individual assignment prior to attending the sessions.
3. I agree to honor God's word through meditation, prayer and study.
4. I will respect and maintain the confidentiality of each session.
5. The sessions will meet on \_\_\_\_\_ from \_\_\_\_\_ until \_\_\_\_\_.

I understand that by making this commitment, I will give myself the opportunity to receive the maximum benefit from discovering, enhancing and placing my relationship with my intended spouse in the hands of God.

Signature \_\_\_\_\_

Date \_\_\_\_\_

Wedding Date \_\_\_\_\_

# Pre-Nuptial Counseling Questionnaire (Session 1)

Please answer the questions below.

1. Why do you want to get married?
2. Are you a Christian?
3. What is your denominational/religious preference?
4. How long have you known your intended spouse?
5. What are your common interests?
6. Will you both be employed?
7. Have you ever been engaged or married previously?
8. Have you had arguments with each other or another family member or mutual acquaintance?
9. What is your attitude towards children?
10. Do you have a quick temper?
11. When differences occur, are you willing to compromise?
12. How important is sex in your marriage?
13. Who will handle the finances in the marriage?

## Groom Fact Sheet

Full Name:

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Address:

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Home Phone:

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Mobile Phone:

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Work Phone:

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E-mail Address:

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DOB:

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Name of Parents:

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Religion:

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Name of Church:

---

POC/Emergency:

---

Wedding Date:

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Officiant:

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Wedding Location:

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# Bride Fact Sheet

Full Name:

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Address:

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Home Phone:

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Mobile Phone:

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Work Phone:

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E-mail Address:

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DOB:

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Name of Parents:

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Religion:

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Name of Church:

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POC/Emergency:

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Wedding Date:

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Officiant:

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Wedding Location:

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# Session II

## The Five Biblical Principles of Godly Marriages

Opening Prayer

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Status Update

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Review Module I Homework

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module II (*The Five Biblical Principles of Godly Marriages*)

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

Complete The Personal History Questionnaire. Many questions must be answered on the personal life of the couple. Each individual completes the questionnaire separately, then switches the questionnaires, reads it and later discusses this with their mate.

Here are your directions:

- Go to [www.marriagebuilders.com](http://www.marriagebuilders.com)
  - Select “Questionnaires” at the top of the home page
  - From the listing on the left side of the page, select “Personal History Questionnaire”
  - Share your results with each other and bring any issues to the next session
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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

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Next Meeting:

# Five Biblical Principles of Successful Marriages

## I. Introduction

### A. What Makes Marriage So Difficult and End in Divorce

1. Man's view about what marriage is -
2. God's view about what marriage is - It is God's desire that marriage should last a lifetime

### B. Marriage Is Ordained By God

1. True marriages are called and created by God
2. Satanic attack - God's Word provides instruction for safeguarding and strengthening your marriage

Ephesians 6:12-17

Psalms 119:105

## II. The Five Biblical Principles of Godly Marriages

### A. Leave and Cleave: Genesis 2:24

1. Everything/everyone, except God, must come second to the marriage  
Children, job, friendships, money, being right
2. Me and Mine must become us and ours
3. Marriage is not a best-kept secret
4. Navigate the balance between individuality and co-dependency. Oneness is not a loss of individuality
5. Challenges
  - a. Parental – sometimes parents must be kept out of the intimate details of your marriage
    - Don't leave your home to go stay with your parents unless absolutely necessary for safety and health
    - Don't share everything about your marriage with your parents

- Don't force your spouse to have to confront your parents – that is your responsibility

### b. Children

- The best thing for a child to see is a healthy relationship between a husband and wife.
- Don't let your children drive a wedge between you.
- Don't let your children become an idol by placing them above your marital responsibilities (more love for the child than the spouse).

### c. Friends

- No secret or private
- No relationships that challenge, are disrespectful, or upsetting to your spouse
- No sharing of private information that your spouse is not aware of (especially about you or your relationship with your spouse)

### B. The 100/100 Rule: Ephesians 5:22-33

1. Marriage is a covenant between a husband and a wife – Both have responsibilities to one another and to the home
2. Requires 100% effort on both parts if they will be equally yoked
3. Submission to Christ and accountability to God is the foundation of marriage

### C. Naked and Not Ashamed: Genesis 2:25

1. Marriage requires vulnerability not a defensive spirit
2. Marriage requires full and complete honesty about all matters - Can I be honest with you?
3. Respect and negotiate privacy without secrecy

4. Sexuality and intimacy are Godly parts of a growing marriage - Hebrews 13:4
- D. Learn To Let It Go: Matthew 6:14, Ephesians 4:32, Colossians 3:13
  1. Offence is inevitable, forgetting is impossible, and yet forgiving is mandatory
  2. Forgiveness is the starting line, restoration is the goal
    - a. Remembering without reliving
    - b. The bedroom cannot be the doghouse
    - c. Requires patience on both parts
  3. Forgiveness should lead to restoration - I Corinthians 13:5
- E. Three In One: Matthew 6:33, Philippians 4:13
  1. Marriage takes strength other than your own

2. A husband and a wife submitted to and seeking God will grow stronger
  - a. Pray together
  - b. Worship together
3. God must be the center of your marriage. See your spouse through God's eyes, as a disciple of Christ, a vessel of the Holy Spirit and an extension of yourself
4. Are there any differences or difficulties that prevent you from seeking God Together?

### III. Read "What Is The Basis For Marriage"

### IV. Prayer (by each of us for their marriage)

# What Is The Basis For Marriage

*By Walter Wangerin Jr.*

Marriage begins when two people make the clear unqualified promise to be faithful, each to the other, until the end of their days. That spoken promise makes the difference. A new relationship is initiated. Marriage begins when each vows to commit herself or himself, unto the other and to no other human in this world. “I promise you my faithfulness, until death parts us.” That vow once spoken, once heard, permits a new, enduring trust: each one may trust the vow of the other one.

A promise made, a promise witnessed, a promise heard, remembered, and trusted—this is the ground of marriage. Not emotions. No, not even love. Not physical desires or personal needs or sexuality. Not the practical fact of living together. Not even the piercing

foresight or some peculiar miracle of All-seeing God. Rather a promise, a vow, makes the marriage.

Here is a marvelous work, performed by those who are made in the image of God—for we create, in this promise, a new thing, a changeless stability in an ever-changing world. We do the thing that God does, establishing a covenant with another human being, we ask faith in our faithfulness to that covenant. We transfigure the relationship thereafter, transfiguring ourselves, for we shape our behaviors by the covenant. We have called forth a spiritual house in which each of us may dwell securely. Whether we know it or not, it is a divine thing we do, and it is holy

# Bible Verses

## Genesis 1:26-28 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>26</sup> Then God said, "Let us make mankind in our image, in our likeness, so that they may rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky, over the livestock and all the wild animals, and over all the creatures that move along the ground." <sup>27</sup> So God created mankind in his own image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them. <sup>28</sup> God blessed them and said to them, "Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish in the sea and the birds in the sky and over every living creature that moves on the ground."

## Proverbs 18:22 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>22</sup> He who finds a wife finds what is good and receives favor from the LORD.

## Proverbs 19:14 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>14</sup> Houses and wealth are inherited from parents, but a prudent wife is from the LORD.

## Matthew 19:4-6 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>4</sup> "Haven't you read," he replied, "that at the beginning the Creator 'made them male and female,' and said, 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh'? <sup>6</sup> So they are no longer two, but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate."

## Malachi 2:13-14 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>13</sup> Another thing you do: You flood the LORD's altar with tears. You weep and wail because he no longer looks with favor on your offerings or accepts them with pleasure from your hands. <sup>14</sup> You ask, "Why?" It is because the LORD is the witness between you and the wife of your youth. You have been unfaithful to her, though she is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.

## 1 Peter 5:8 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>8</sup> Be alert and of sober mind. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour.

## John 10:10 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>10</sup> The thief comes only to steal and kill and destroy; I have come that they may have life, and have it to the full.

## Ephesians 6:12-17 (New International Version, ©2011)

<sup>12</sup> For our struggle is not against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the powers of this dark world and against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly realms. <sup>13</sup> Therefore put on the full armor of God, so that when the day of evil comes, you may be able to stand your ground, and after you have done everything, to stand. <sup>14</sup> Stand firm then, with the belt of truth buckled around your waist, with the breastplate of righteousness in place, <sup>15</sup> and with your feet fitted with the readiness that comes from the gospel of peace. <sup>16</sup> In addition to all this, take up the shield of faith, with which you can extinguish all the flaming arrows of the evil one. <sup>17</sup> Take the helmet of salvation and the sword of the Spirit, which is the word of God.

### **Psalm 119:105 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>105</sup> Your word is a lamp for my feet, a light on my path.

### **Genesis 2:24 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>24</sup> That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh.

### **Ephesians 5:22–33 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>22</sup> Wives, submit yourselves to your own husbands as you do to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything.

<sup>25</sup> Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her <sup>26</sup> to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, <sup>27</sup> and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. <sup>28</sup> In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. <sup>29</sup> After all, no one ever hated their own body, but they feed and care for their body, just as Christ does the church— <sup>30</sup> for we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” <sup>32</sup> This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.

### **Genesis 2:25 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>25</sup> Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

### **Hebrews 13:4 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>4</sup> Marriage should be honored by all, and the marriage bed kept pure, for God will judge the adulterer and all the sexually immoral.

### **Matthew 6:14 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>14</sup> For if you forgive other people when they sin against you, your heavenly Father will also forgive you.

### **Ephesians 4:32 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>32</sup> Be kind and compassionate to one another, forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you.

### **Colossians 3:13 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>13</sup> Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance against someone. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.

### **1 Corinthians 13:5 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>5</sup> It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs.

### **Matthew 6:33 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>33</sup> But seek first His kingdom and His righteousness, and all these things will be given to you as well.

### **Philippians 4:13 (New International Version, ©2011)**

<sup>13</sup> I can do everything through him who gives me strength.

# Session III

## The Love Bank

Opening Prayer

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Status Update

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Review Module II (Five Biblical Principals of A Godly Marriage and the Honesty Questionnaire)

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module III (The Love Bank)

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

1. Complete the Emotional Needs Questionnaire. Many questions must be answered on the emotional needs of a person. Each individual completes the questionnaire separately, then switches the questionnaires, reads it and later discusses this with their mate.

Here are your directions:

- Go to [www.marriagebuilders.com](http://www.marriagebuilders.com)
- Select “Questionnaires” at the top of the home page
- From the listing on the left side of the page, select “Emotional Needs Questionnaire”
- Share your results with each other and bring any issues to the next session

2. Read Chapter 2 and 3 of Preparing for Marriage God’s Way and do the exercises
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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

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Next Meeting:

# Keeping Your Account Full

## I. Introduction

### A. What Is The Love Bank

1. Your account of certain needs and desires that sustain the emotion of love
2. It is based on a system of deposits and withdrawals just as your financial bank account.

### B. Opening the Love Bank Account - Romantic Love

1. The feeling of being in love
2. Finding someone irresistible
3. Believing that life without each other would be a mistake
4. Certain needs were met which created the emotional feeling of being.

## II. Making Deposits and Withdrawals in the Love Bank Account

- A. When a spouse makes you feel good, deposits are made into the account and the balance increases.
- B. When a spouse does things that make you feel bad, withdrawals are made and the balance decreases and you begin to dislike and lose feelings of love (Genesis 3:1-6, I Corinthians 11:3, John 4:34, Luke 22:42, I Timothy 2:12-14)

## III. Keeping the Love Bank Account High - Caring Love

- A. Staying in love requires that your love bank account remain above a certain (the romantic) threshold
- B. Make a decision to do what you can to make your spouse happy and increase your love bank account
- C. How willing are you to do whatever it takes to make your spouse happy?

D. Do you really know what to do to make them happy?

E. Acts of caring love trigger romantic love

## IV. His Needs – Her Needs

### A. Women's Basic Emotional Needs

- Feel Cared About
- Feel Understood
- Feel Respected
- Feel Secure

### B. Men's Basic Needs

- Feel Trusted
- Feel Accepted
- Feel Appreciated

## V. The Five Love Languages

### Love Language #1: Words of Affirmation

Giving gifts to a man can show reciprocal interest. It may be as simple as bringing him his favorite food, picking up that trendy tie, creating a CD with his favorite music or getting him the latest, hot-off-the-press piece of technology. Giving gifts is a nonverbal way of expressing your interest or care for another—it let's the person know you were thinking about him.

The love language of Receiving Gifts can include an endless list of ideas, but here are just a few:

- Book collections, magazines, online courses or college classes, museum passes, maps and computer programs can give the gift of education.
- Game tickets, autographed paraphernalia, useable equipment (golf club, tennis shoes), lessons, gym

memberships, workout gear and personal trainers can ignite the excitement of a sport or fitness fan.

- Homemade meals, takeout pizza, a nicely wrapped box of top-notch chocolates, vintage wine and getting the groceries can all make great gifts.
- Has your special someone been eyeing the same shirt or watch every time you pass the corner J. Crew? Remember that the gift of clothes, accessories, shoes and jewelry can help make it a special evening for someone who loves to receive gifts.

Though receiving gifts is an easy love language to learn, be aware that special days, events and moments mean more to him than most people. Forgetting an anniversary or birthday may put you in the doghouse, so mark your calendar in advance!

### Love Language #2: Quality Time

Spending quality time with the one you love may sound obvious, but for those who value this love language the most, it is essential. Beyond showing up for important events or putting a few nights aside for “dates,” this love language is more about the amount of attention you devote to your partner rather than the event itself.

Take for example a Tuesday night that has been penciled in for dinner and a movie. To make it special, you make reservations at his favorite restaurant and plan to catch the action movie he’s been raving about.

At dinner you take a few calls on your cell phone, complain about the service and hurry the meal along in order to catch the movie. At the theater you take prolonged “bathroom breaks” since you don’t like action films and say little about it when you get home. After all, you just wanted to make sure the night was all about him. The problem is, with this behavior, you make the night all about you.

The love language of Quality Time is more about one-on-one focus and interest in being together than anything else. Putting down the remote control to talk on the couch or discussing your favorite shows during commercials are ways to stay connected. Turning the cell phone off while you are out together and asking about his day is more important than where you actually go.

Do you need some ideas about how to spend more quality time together? Try these for starters:

- Take a walk together
- Go to a movie and then discuss it afterward
- a weekend trip
- Play a board game
- time to sit and talk when it seems there is a problem
- Cook, exercise, create, read or play together

Quality time is a powerful communicator. If you are a social creature who craves the crowds, it may require more effort for you to focus your attention on a man who values one-on-one time, but remember that there will always be moments of compromise for the one you love.

### Love Language #3: Receiving Gifts

### Love Language #4: Acts of Service

If you just pictured popping the hood of his car while pulling out the tool box, don’t fret. This love language is more about the little things that matter most. Though the word “service” conjures up images of “kitchen maid,” don’t be misled; there is no blood, sweat and tears involved. Simple acts of service are highly valued and appreciated by men with this love language.

For example, if Mr. Right loves to cook, show you care by picking up groceries or needed materials beforehand. You can also help with chopping or basting, and setting or clearing the table. Around the house there are a number of ways to show acts of service, such as making the bed, doing the dishes, vacuuming or the dreaded (gulp) taking out the trash.

If housework isn’t your forte, there are many other possibilities available, such as:

- Washing the car
- Picking up children from school
- Helping children with homework
- Making travel arrangements
- Running errands at the bank, post office or store
- Handling the bills and accounting

Start by providing services that are often requested. If the man in your life complains that he doesn't get enough exercise (and wants it), you can offer to go for walks with him, learn a sport that you can play together or plan to meet him at the gym after work. Even if it isn't your first priority, it shows him that you care.

Just avoid ignoring his requests while helping others. This would definitely cause him to feel hurt and neglected.

### **Love Language #5: Physical Touch**

Some people like their personal space and others love to be close. Over time you learn what the man in your life is most comfortable with. If he hates public displays of affection, it probably wouldn't translate well to kiss and hug him in public. On the other hand, if your man responds well to physical touch, don't be afraid to show him how much you love him with hugs, kisses and other warm gestures of your affection!

As babies, physical touch is the first love language

we experience. It is no wonder that as we grow, we continue to feel warm and cared for when another gives us a sincere hug or kiss.

If the man in your life likes to be close, give him lots of physical attention. When you are in public, hold hands, give random hugs, kiss him across the table or stand close while waiting at a red light. When the two of you are alone, there are other ways to show him you how much you love him through physical intimacy. Making love and finding out what makes him feel good are just a few ways to use physical touch as a means of emotional language.

Physical love is a powerful communicator. It shows your man that you are attracted to him and want to be close. For a man who values this love language above all others, you want to avoid physically neglecting him, or worse yet, physical abuse. Pulling your hand away from him or not feeling interested in making love can send a huge message (in the wrong direction).

From the book: *Things I Wished I Had Known Before I Got Married – The Five Love Languages*

profile chart

# Love Language Review

**How to relate to a person with this language**

## Communication

## Actions

## What to Avoid

<b>Words of Affirmation</b>	Compliments Affirmations Kind Words	Send notes/cards	Criticism
<b>Quality Time</b>	One-on-One time Not interrupting Face-to-face conversation	Take long walks together Doing things together Taking trips	Long periods of being apart More time with friends than with spouse
<b>Receiving Gifts</b>	Positive Fact-oriented information	Give gifts on special occasions and not so special occasions	Forgetting special days
<b>Acts of Service</b>	Action words like "I can," "I will," "What else can I do?"	Helping with house and yard chores Repair/maintenance Acts of kindness	Ignoring spouse's requests while helping others
<b>Physical Touch</b>	A lot of nonverbal Verbals need to be word pictures	Touches Hugs Pats Kisses	Physical neglect or abuse

## Additional Handout

# Observations from the Book *Men Are From Mars, Women Are From Venus*

1. It is important to remember that men and women have reciprocally different natures. Men and women need to appreciate these differences, and cease expecting each other to act and feel the way they do.

2. Men love to have their abilities recognized and appreciated, and hate to have them scorned or ignored; women love to have their feelings recognized and appreciated, and hate to have them scorned or ignored. Men don't rate feelings highly as in their view they can result in hotly impassioned, wildly unstable behavior; women don't rate abilities highly as in their view they can result in coldly dispassionate, aggressively competitive behavior.

3. Men like to work on their own, and exercise their abilities by solving problems quickly and singlehandedly; women like to co-operate, and exercise their feelings through interactive communication with one another. Men value solutions, and view unsolicited assistance as undermining their effort to solve problems alone; women value assistance, and view unsolicited solutions as undermining their effort to proceed interactively. Men desire that their solutions will be appreciated; women desire that their assistance will be appreciated.

4. When faced with tough problems, men become non-communicative so they can work out how best to help themselves, while women become communicative so that others can work out how best to help them. Men like to demonstrate their abilities by being allowed to solve problems without interference; women like to demonstrate their feelings by being allowed to relate problems without interference.

5. When men do communicate, they like to get to the point, and generally only want to listen if they feel the conversation has a point; women enjoy talking for its own sake, and are happy to listen unconditionally.

6. A man's instinct is to look after himself, even if it means sacrificing others; a woman's instinct is to look after others, even if it means sacrificing herself. In a relationship, a man has to learn how to care for his partner rather than sacrificing her needs in favour of his own, and a woman has to learn how to be cared for by her partner rather than sacrificing her own needs in favour of his, so that the needs of both are met. If they do this successfully, both win, unlike their instinctive behaviors where one person gains from another's loss. This has to be worked at, because if either partner feels their efforts towards the relationship are not being successful in pleasing their partner, they may feel hurt and decide to revert to their instinctive behavior. Unfortunately this then causes the other partner to do the same, and the relationship unravels inexorably. In a relationship, a man needs to feel that his attentions are needed, and a woman needs to feel that her needs are attended. To achieve this, a man has to express his desire to fulfil her needs and her worthiness to receive his care, and a woman has to express her desire for his care and his worthiness to fulfil her needs. Both must remember to appreciate, accept, and forgive the other, and avoid blaming them when they fail.

7. Men talk in very literal terms for the purpose of relaying information; women employ artistic license and dramatic vocabulary to fully express and relate their feelings. Men like to sort their thoughts out before communicating them, and have the tendency to

become distant and non-communicative as they ponder their concerns. At this time, a woman needs reassurance that her partner still rates her as worthy of being taken care of. Women like to sort their thoughts out in the process of communicating them, and have the tendency to pour forth a litany of general grievances as they relate their concerns. At this time, a man needs reassurance that his partner still rates him as worthy of taking care of things. Both must try to avoid feeling personally to blame when their partners are dealing with problems.

When a man is troubled, he does not want his partner to express concern for him, but loves to be told that the problem is easily within his abilities to rectify because of the implicit vote of confidence in his abilities. When a woman is troubled, she loves her partner to express concern for her, but does not want to be told that the problem is a simple one to solve because of the implicit dismissal of her concerns about the issue. A solution should be sought once her feelings have been fully listened to: too quick a solution justifies his abilities but devalues her concerns, too enduring a problem justifies her concerns but devalues his abilities.

Men feel validated and gratified when they are left to sort things out by themselves, and feel undermined by being offered sympathy or unsolicited assistance. Women feel validated and gratified by being offered sympathy or unsolicited assistance, and feel undermined when they are left to sort things out by themselves.

To accommodate their partners' responses, each should make small changes to their behaviors and communication towards the other, but without compromising their own true natures.

8. Men periodically bolt for cover when they suddenly fear that their self-sufficiency is becoming threatened. At these times they may become utterly unapproachable, demanding the right to be left on their own and to be allowed not to express their feelings, but if given support by being afforded space for a little while, they will soon feel better and spring back into their usual loving selves once again. It can be hard for women to handle the suddenness and speed with which men bolt for cover, and then subsequently spring back.

At times when men retreat into themselves, they can

assist their partners not to be overly concerned or take it personally by providing some brief reassurance that they will return in due course. Women should resist the temptation to try to drag their partners back prematurely or criticize them over this natural behavior.

9. Men periodically sink into a depression when they feel it is time for emotional cleansing and resolution. At these times they may become utterly negative in their outlook, dwelling on every problem which troubles them, including long-standing ones which will generally have been raised and addressed before, and if they cannot find any real issues to concentrate on, then they will find some random other things to worry about.

They suspend their normal giving natures, demanding the right to express their feelings and not to be left on their own, and if supported and allowed enough time to express and release their negative feelings, they will begin to feel happier again and return to their usual loving selves. The slowness in which they sink into depression and subsequently recover may be hard for men to handle.

At times when women sink into themselves, they can assist their partners not to be overly concerned or take it personally by providing some brief reassurance that it is not their partners' fault. Men should resist the temptation to try to lift their partners back up prematurely or criticize them over this natural behavior.

Men demand the right to be free from time to time; women demand the right to be heard from time to time. When a man feels free he finds it easier to support a woman's need to be heard; when a woman feels heard she finds it easier to support a man's need to be free.

If a man's periodic need to be free coincides with a woman's periodic need to be heard, the best solution is for the woman to make do with being heard by her friends instead.

10. Men and women need to remember that the emotional needs of the opposite sex are not the same as their own. Providing our partners with the wrong type of emotional needs will not be greatly appreciated.

Deep inside every man is a knight in shining armour seeking a damsel in distress who will love him, and shower him with trust, acceptance, appreciation,

admiration, approval, and encouragement. Deep inside every woman is a damsel in distress seeking a knight in shining armour who will love her, and shower her with caring, understanding, respect, devotion, validation, and reassurance. Men must listen attentively to women to understand their needs, avoiding getting angry or defensive; women must have faith in men's abilities and best efforts to fulfill their needs, avoiding trying to change or control them.

#### 11. Chapter 10: Scoring Points with the Opposite Sex

Men feel loved if their efforts at giving are appreciated; women feel loved according to what they receive. For women, loving someone means knowing and attending to their needs without waiting to be asked, and so a loved person should never have to ask for anything as their needs ought to be anticipated ahead of time. So women give unconditionally, and proactively seek ways to help others, whereas men only give when they feel that their efforts will be fairly appreciated and rewarded, and often will not know how or what to give without being specifically asked. Men often quickly suspend giving when feeling pleased about having done something; women may only suspend giving when feeling displeased with their partners for doing nothing.

Men value results; for women it's the thought that counts. Consequently, men value big things much

more than do women, who feel more appreciated by receiving lots of little gifts instead. A woman may consider a bunch of flowers to be just as good a proof of love as an entire month of hard work towards paying the bills.

If men and women do not take account of these different perspectives, they may fail to give their partners what they actually want. When this occurs, the man will frequently suspend giving as he feels he is not receiving enough reward back for what he has given, but the woman will continue to give unconditionally even though she feels she is giving more and has started to feel unloved, unappreciated and resentful.

Men should try to identify various little ways to give to their partners without waiting to be asked first, and should avoid the mistake of assuming their partners to be happy giving and not asking for anything back. Women should be careful not to give a false impression to their partners of being happy when they are not, and if they begin to feel resentful they should gently reduce their giving, learn to ask for things back, and be sure to keep expressing lots of appreciation of their partners' efforts so as to encourage them to give more. Men should try to listen lovingly and respectfully to women's feelings, women should try to express their feelings in a loving and respectful manner. If men give, and women appreciate, both end up feeling happy.

# Session IV

## Love Busters & The Seven Deadly Sins

Opening Prayer

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Status Update

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Review Module 3 (The Love Bank and the Five Love Languages, Questionnaires)

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module IV – (Love Busters & The Seven Deadly Sins)

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

1. Read Chapter 4 and 5 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.
  2. Create a household budget – Read Chapter 11 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and complete the exercises
  3. Read Chapter 12 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and complete the exercises on Sex
  4. Draft a list of household chores; decide and agree on who will do what.
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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

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Next Meeting:

# The Everyday Problems That Cause Stress in a Marriage

## I. Finances

- A. 80% of marriages that end in divorce do so because of financial issues
- B. Debt vs. Desire: different spending styles and perspectives of money
- C. Many couples are not financially married
  - 1. Self-identity and money are closely related
  - 2. Protection of assets is a protection of self
- D. Lack of budgeting and financial discipline
- E. Unhealthy and ungodly love of money
- F. Luke 12:34

## II. Family and Friends

- A. Sense of loyalty, commitment, responsibility and obligation
- B. “They were here first and will be here if you’re not”
- C. Friends not liked or trusted/jealous or controlling spouse
- D. Taking up time for one another
- E. Negative influences or TMI

## III. Children (*These kids are wearing me out!*)

- A. Less time and energy to meet marital needs
- B. They become the targets of giving and receiving love versus spouse
  - 1. Caring for children becomes more important than caring for one another
  - 2. Sleeping in the bed issue
- C. Discipline issues raise differences in our own upbringing

## IV. Household Chores (*Whose job is it?*)

- A. Different gender expectations and background
  - 1. Lack of clarity about chores

- 2. Personal habits about being single that are challenged in shared space
- 3. Where are we eating?
- B. Insensitivity failure to acknowledge appreciation
- C. It’s never 50/50

## V. Career Choices (*I’ve got a job to do*)

- A. Careers dominate a time schedule
- B. Am I as important as your job
- C. Our sense of self-worth is attached to our productivity and career advancements
- D. Silent envy
- E. Bringing home work
- F. Advances by co-workers or clients

## VI. Sex

- A. Daily life is not sexy and simply living together is not foreplay
- B. “I’m tired” – rejection is translated as not being attractive
- C. Honest communication can be mistaken for criticism which shuts down sexual desire
- D. Independent sexuality can be a threat
  - 1. Masturbation
  - 2. Pornography
- E. Gender differences

## VII. Drugs and Alcohol

- A. Addictions make it impossible to solve conflicts
- B. Intoxication undermines confidence and respect
- C. Addictions open the door to: Infidelity, abuse, emotional scarring, molestation, etc.
- D. Alcoholics/addicts have a secret life

# General Guidelines

## I. Finances

- A. Develop a budget that you are committed to long term and short term goals
- B. Establish separate spending accounts and agree upon a maximum spending limit for each spouse
- C. No less than quarterly, jointly examine your financial status together
- D. Be honest about all debt

## II. Family and Friends/Social Media

- A. Be clear on friends of the opposite sex
- B. Do not befriend ex-lovers
- C. Your family is your responsibility
- D. Be prepared for the major issues
  - Parental care
  - Family/friends living with you
  - Dinner/outings with others
  - Loaning money: both of you should get the credit
  - “Let me talk to my spouse and get back to you:

## III. Children

- A. Children are best served by mutually agreed upon disciplinary tactics
- B. Do not make unilateral decisions about the children
- C. Three in one bed is one too many
- D. Do not let a child play one against the other

## IV. Household Chores

- A. Agree upon my and your majority chores
- B. Volunteer to do what your spouse does without being asked
- C. Always acknowledge effort
- D. Give each other a week off

## V. Career

- A. Practice joint agreement
- B. Schedule at least 12 hours per week of undivided attention and time
- C. Institute family and date night and stick to it

## VI. Sex

## VII. Drugs and alcohol

# When a Spender Wed a Saver, a Budget Cemented Their Future

When my husband popped the question and I said yes, we saw it as nothing more than a deep commitment to each other. It was the most meaningful way we knew to express that we wanted to spend the rest of our lives together. It was all about love.

But once we were married, we realized there was much more to marriage than just loving the other person. We had to pick out an apartment together. Buy furniture together. Grocery shop together. We were put in situations with each other that allowed our personalities to really shine through. And we learned a little something: We were two very different people.

Never did this fact become clearer than when we approached spending money together. I kept my life stress-free by not worrying about costs or prices when I shopped. If I liked it and had the money, I bought it. My husband, Johnny, kept his life stress-free by analyzing and reanalyzing costs until he found the best deal. We were at extreme ends of the spending spectrum, and we were desperate to find some middle ground before our newlywed bliss became blissless.

## Budgeting Creates Our Path for Future Bliss

We finally found one thing we both agreed on wholeheartedly: what we wanted for our future. And we realized that had to create a budget if we wanted to reach our goals. There'd be no more "he says" or "she

says," just "the budget says." Here's what worked best for us.

- **Compromising.** We worked on our budget together. It wasn't one person telling the other person what to do. Giving every dollar a name required compromise and lots of trial and error.
- **Goal setting.** We set specific financial goals. We both wanted to become debt-free, but we needed a plan to get there. We decided how much debt we wanted to have paid down by the end of the month, by the end of six months, by the end of a year. Our big goal was to retire our combined \$20,000 in debt in less than two years, all while saving money for retirement and a rainy day.
- **Keeping track.** Even after we created a budget, there was still the matter of sticking to it. And we did that by tracking every cent. As soon as we spent money, we wrote it down to enter into a spreadsheet later. These were the days before nifty budgeting apps, and we weren't perfect, but we were consistent, which was the key to our success.

Keeping a budget ended up strengthening our marriage since it helped to teach us communication and compromise. We went through some growing pains, but that spender and saver who married over seven years ago met that big goal, and we still compromise every day to save for the future. Thank goodness we decided to give budgeting a try.

# Session V

## Communication And Conflict

Opening Prayer

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Status Update

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Review Module 4 (Love Busters & The Seven Deadly Sins)

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module V – (Communication/Conflict)

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

1. Read Chapter 6, 7 and 8 of *Preparing for Marriage God's Way* and do the exercises.
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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

# Communication/ Conflict

*“I see communication as a huge umbrella that covers and affects all that goes on between human beings. Communication is the largest single factor determining what kinds of relationships he makes with others and what happens to him in the world about him.”*

*- Virginia Shaw*

## I. General Observations

- A. In the marriage relationship, communication is not optional, it is vital
- B. Unhealthy Communication leads to a deteriorating and dying marriage relationship
- C. Healthy communication leads to a fruitful marriage relationship
- D. Two people cannot walk, work or live together without good communication - Amos 3:3
- E. Your marriage relationship is second only to your relationship with God

## II. Effects of Failed Communication

- A. Issues remain unclarified (Prov. 18:17)
- B. Wrong ideas and assumption are uncorrected
- C. Conflicts remain unresolved
- D. Confusion and disorder develop
- E. Wise decision making is thwarted
- F. The development of deep unity, intimacy and emotional closeness is hindered
- G. Interpersonal problems are intensified
- H. Boredom, discontentment and frustration with the relationship are fostered
- I. Spiritual growth, mutual sharpening and stimulation are impeded
- J. Shallow relationships, distancing, estrangement and drifting apart are promoted
- K. Bad attitudes toward, suspiciousness of the other person are nurtured
- L. Understanding each other deeply is prevented.

## III. Ways We Communicate

- A. Verbally
- B. Visually (the eyes are the window to our souls)
- C. Facial Expressions and Body Motions (Hands, Feet, Shoulders, Rigidity, etc.)
- D. Our Actions (slap/caress, presence/absence, listening/refusing to listen, etc.)
- E. Attitude (helping/not helping, giving/withholding a present, sharing/not sharing)

## IV. Five Key Steps To Better Communication Between You and Your Spouse-To-Be

*“Finally, be ye all of one mind, having compassion, one of another . . . do not repay evil with evil or insult with insult, but with blessing, because to this you were called so that you may inherit a blessing.”*

*— I Peter 3:8,9*

- A. Take time for one another (Be willing to talk to each other)
- B. Speak for yourself
- C. Understand that your partner's perceptions are different from yours
- D. Really listen (Be willing to listen to each other - James 1:19,20; Proverbs 18:13)
- E. Check out what your partner is saying (Seeking to understand what the other is really saying - Proverb 18:15; 2:2; 4:5,7; 14:29; 16:22; 24:3-4)

# Men Are from Mars, Women Are from Venus

Men are from Mars, Women are from Venus (published in May 1992) is a book by John Gray offering suggestions for improving heterosexual couples' relationships. The book is based on the idea that members of the two genders have diametrically different communication styles, emotional needs and personal values to each other and that heterosexual couples can use this model to improve their relationship. It spawned a series of follow-on books expanding on specific situations (see below).

One example of the theories Gray offers is that men complain about problems because they are asking for solutions while women complain about problems because they want their problems to be acknowledged. Another claim made in the book is that, in intimate relationships, women and men have "point systems" which are completely different from each other. Gray also believes that the genders can be understood in terms of purported differences in how they behave under stress.

Gray suggests that men and women count (or score) the giving and receiving of love differently. He says that men tend to give larger blocks of points (20, 30, 40 points etc.) for what they think are Big Acts, while women give each act of love one point at a time.

According to Gray, women tend to keep a Points System that few men are aware of.

Gray writes that men and women each monitor the amount of give and take in a relationship and if the balance becomes off and one person feels they have given more than they have been given to, resentment develops. He states that this is a time when communication is very important to help bring the relationship back into balance.

Example: A man might count a \$200 present as 20 points and helping his partner to carry a heavy bag as 1 point (or he may not even assign any point to the

latter), but a woman may count these acts as only 1 point each.

For the woman, the total sum of points may come from different aspects. For example: - the different parts of the environment where the present is given each get 1 point (candles, music, privacy, location etc.) - the card gets 1 point, - flowers get 1 point, - if he tells her "I love you" in the morning it is 1 point, - if he sincerely takes a moment to notice her and gives her some positive verbal feedback in the evening it is 1 point, - if he hugs her, it is 1 point, - the gift itself gets 1 point.

According to Gray, women and men are often surprised to find that their partner "keeps score" at all, and that their scoring methods are different.

The emotional stroke delivered by the sincere attention is as important as the value of the item. This can lead to conflict when a man thinks his work has earned 20 points and deserves appropriate recognition while the woman has only given him 1 point and recognizes him accordingly.

Men tend to think they can do one Big Thing for her (scoring 50 points) and not do anything else. They assume the woman will be satisfied with it.

To the woman, she would rather have many Little Acts on a regular basis. The reason is that women like to think their man is thinking of them and cares for them on a regular basis.

## Gray's "cave and wave"

Another major idea in Gray's books are the differences he believes operate in terms of the way the genders react under stress. He believes that many men withdraw until they find a solution to the problem. He refers to this as "retreating into their cave". In some cases they may literally retreat, for example, to the garage or spend time with friends. The point of retreating is

to take time to determine a solution. In these “caves”, men (writes Gray) are not necessarily focused on the problem at hand; many times this is a “time-out” of sorts to allow them to distance themselves from the problems so their brains can focus on something else. Gray posits that this allows them to revisit the problem later with a fresh perspective.

Gray holds that this retreat into the cave has historically been hard for women to understand because when they are stressed their natural reaction is to talk about issues (even if talking does not solve the problem). This leads to a natural dynamic of the man retreating as the woman tries to grow closer. According to Gray this becomes a major source of conflict between women and men.

The “wave” is a term Gray uses to describe a natural cycle for women that is centered around their abilities to give to other people. He claims that when they feel

full of love and energy to give to others their wave is in a stable place. When they give to others (and don’t receive the same amount of love and attention in return) their wave begins to grow until it eventually crashes. This is a time when a woman needs the love, listening, understanding and reassurance of those around her (including self love). Gray holds that once she is rejuvenated (by getting the support she needs) she is able to rise like a wave and once again has love and energy to give. Men, advised Gray, must support this natural cycle by not being threatened by it or telling her why she should not feel this way.

Men can simply listen to her, constantly reassure her of his love/commitment/monogamy or take a few chores off her back (just a few simple chores will do). Most men get threatened because they think, “Why can’t she be happy?” or think she is blaming him, but that is not the case.

# Conflict

There are certain subjects guaranteed to put an abrupt end to your domestic bliss. I'm not talking about those big, life-changing blow-ups. There are plenty of little, seemingly innocuous annoyances that can put a damper on a usually peaceful, happy home

## I . What Do We Have Conflicts About

### A. 30 Things Guaranteed To Start A Fight (Learn to Let It Go)

1. How many times he presses the snooze button
2. Taking out the trash
3. Whose turn it is to take Little Bobby to yet another birthday party
4. Changing the toilet paper roll//Putting down the toilet seat
5. How long a mother-in-law plans to visit
6. Snoring
7. Putting a cap on the toothpaste
8. The fact he "Friended" an ex on Facebook
9. Who takes longer to get ready
10. Size the new TV should be
11. Farting
12. Washing the dishes
13. Getting lost
14. What to name the dog
15. Cleaning the bathroom
16. Keeping a gift an ex gave you long ago
17. What temp the bedroom should be set to
18. Which side of the family to spend Christmas with
19. Burping
20. The dirty clothes left on the floor
21. Who gets to pick what to watch on TV tonight
22. Emptying the dishwasher
23. How to dress the kids
24. He doesn't think your friend is good enough to date his
25. You root for opposing teams

26. He doesn't want to hang out with your friends

27. He ate all of your cookies, etc.

28. Walking the dog

29. Which one of you is more likable

30. Where to put things in the fridge

### B. Life-changing Blow-ups (Need to sit and discuss)

1. One of you announces he doesn't want more kids and you do
2. When one of you have gambled away your 401[k] on a bad investment
3. One of you may be transferred to another state for your job
4. You want to move a relative into your home to live for awhile
5. Improper behavior (porn, drinking, drugs, infidelity)

## II. Ways We Typically Handle Conflict

### A. Conquest - Do It My Way: Hang in there until I win. I must win!

1. Selfish Demands without listening
2. Disrespectful judgments that accuse and attempt to guilt
3. Tit-For-Tat
4. Angry Outburst

### B. Independent Behavior

1. Activities conceived and executed as if your spouse didn't exist
2. Perceived as being innocent, or a freedom they have, when it's actually weakening the bond of love
3. Translated as "this is off limits to you"

### C. Surrender

1. Unless I give in, this conflict will go on forever. Defeat at least brings peace!
2. Withdrawal: Pull back for now. This is not over yet, but if I let the dust settle, I can see better how to win. Step back, regroup, then go for the throat!
- D. Resolution: Find a way that I can live with you, I can trust and respect you, and you can trust and respect me.

### III. Communicating During Conflict

- A. Control your anger
- B. Listen with your mouth shut
- C. Listen with your mind open
- D. Be careful of what you say and do (Never hit, call names or say “I don’t love you”)
- E. Be willing to apologize
- F. Be willing to “really” forgive (Ref. “Ten Steps to Forgiveness”)

### IV. When Anger Is Experienced During Conflict

- A. Consequences
  1. Needs are not met
  2. Goals are blocked or not reached
  3. Values are trampled
  4. And most of all, the ‘self’ – the feeling part, or the heart – is hurt or taken advantage of, especially by someone who is supposed to love or care about us.
- B. Handling Anger
  1. Venting: Fighting back, exploding verbally or physically. This approach tends to intensify anger and usually ensures that changes will not occur in the relationship.
  2. Suppressing: Avoiding the issues; seeking peace at any price or just forgetting the problem. Unfortunately, suppressed anger frequently leads to a person’s withdrawing from a relationship, health problems, or an eventual explosion of rage.
  3. Processing: Dealing with anger constructively.
    - Admit to yourself and to your mate that you are angry

- Take time out to release the anger
- Find positive ways to release your anger: Take a walk, exercise, talk it out, write.
- Try to figure out what is causing your anger
- Share your feelings with your mate when you are in control of yourself using “I” statements

#### C. Three things you must never do in a marriage

1. Never hit!
2. Never call names!
3. Never say, “I don’t love you!”

### V. Techniques for Resolving Everyday Conflicts

1. Understand that any two individuals will from time to time come into conflict. Establish and practice joint agreement from the start and never do anything without your spouse’s enthusiastic support.
2. Set aside time to deal with the conflict. Make a promise to each other to have a pleasant, safe, and respectful conversation – no demands, ultimatum, outbursts. If you can’t make that promise in that moment, promise to return to the issue when you can.
3. Define the problem or conflict. State the conflict and practice complete honesty – sharing everything you think, feel, like, desire, etc.
4. Identify each person’s understanding of the problem.
5. Discover areas of agreement and disagreement. Brainstorm possible solutions giving honest input to what you feel about it without being personally attached to it
6. Stay on the subject which represents the immediate conflict.
7. Explore options of resolution.
8. Focus on the solution, not the problem. How the two of you solve this problem should be your major concern.
9. Value the other person. When you value the ideas and feelings of your partner or your partner, you value that person.
10. Seek common goals. Goals give your marriage relationship direction. You and your spouse-to-be

need to work together in deciding what the goals for your marriage will be. You need to have common goals to build intimacy in your relationship and give you guidelines in problem solving.

11. Allow for the needs of each partner to be met. Need-attainment is basic for survival and growth. When needs are met, conflict can be resolved. Identify the needs. Identify the needs each of you has which are not being met in the conflict. Settle on the solution you can both enthusiastically support.
12. Close the issue. When a conflict or problem has been satisfactorily resolved, close the issue with a kiss or hug. This is very important. It is an active sign you have made a decision you can both accept

and you are ready to move on.

## VI. Marriage Talk

- A. Schedule a time to talk about the health of your marriage no less than monthly.
- B. Prepare the following
  1. Three things you have done that I truly appreciate
  2. Three things I wish you would have done differently – make sure that you speak in terms of feelings (Take ownership of your feelings)
  3. Three things I'd like for us to do next (Devil works through silent frustration)

# 5 Bad Relationship Habits To Dump

By Bob Strauss

OK, so you used to be married and now you're not. You may be out there happily dating, but are the habits from your wedded days dogging you? Consider the fact that when you're married, you have the luxury of a long, indefinite "til death do us part" future in which to settle into a comfortable routine or slowly work through issues with your spouse. On a date, though, everything happens in accelerated time, with equally accelerated consequences. An indelicate remark on your first rendezvous may forever put the kibosh on a second. In fact, there are five key behaviors left over from your married days that can wreak havoc on your current romantic forays. We asked Marty Friedman, author of *Straight Talk for Men About Marriage*, to discuss how to recognize — and get rid of — these bad habits so your love life can prosper.

**Bad Habit #1:** Never ending your arguments. One of the dubious perks of being married, Friedman says, is being able to "stomp out of the room, cool yourself down, and bring up the issue again a few days or weeks later — or let it fester forever." While having a knock-down, drag-out argument with someone you've just started dating isn't exactly a good sign, you don't want to fall into the trap of thinking, "If I ignore the problem, it'll just go away." That just won't cut it when you're dating.

**Tactic to try:** The challenge now, says Friedman, "is to hang in there and keep the lines of communication open." You want to work through the issue, not allow it to linger.

**Bad Habit #2:** Letting yourself go. When two people are married for a long time, they stop trying to impress each other — thus fueling the market for dumpsy sweatshirts, socks with sandals, and New York Yankees baseball caps. This may be fine for a lazy evening at home, but it's a sure-fire date repellent, according to Friedman. "It's easy to say, 'I just want someone who

likes me for who I am,' but truthfully, the way humans operate is to feel more comfortable with and attracted to someone who cares enough about appearance to look presentable."

**Tactic to try:** Simply put, make an effort. There is such a thing as dressing up, and it's worth trying when wooing someone.

**Bad Habit #3:** Under-communicating your needs. Most married couples have the ability to read each other's minds: to intuit, from an imperceptibly cocked eyebrow or a slightly fluttery tone of voice, that now may not be the best time to admit to spending junior's college fund on a 72-inch plasma TV. Unless your date is a professional poker player, don't expect her to interpret your tics and grimaces as a request for a nice glass of iced tea.

**Tactic to try:** "You need to state your needs and feelings out loud, in a responsible way," Friedman says. "The good news is, by speaking up you can help shape how your new partner treats you."

**Bad Habit #4:** Sniping instead of talking. The only time you're allowed to treat constant bickering as a form of affection is when you're both at least 75 and celebrating your golden wedding anniversary.

**Tactic to try:** Instead of criticizing your new partner, Friedman says, you should make an effort to "request what you need in a specific, caring way. For example: instead of shouting 'You're always late for everything,' you can say gently, 'This Saturday night, it would really mean a lot to me if you showed up on time or even a few minutes early.'"

**Bad Habit #5:** Not saying "thank you." Common courtesy is one of the first casualties of an unsuccessful marriage — and even thriving couples can occasionally say things to each other that would make Emily Post blanch.

**Tactic to try:** “You should start your new relationship on a solid foundation of gratitude and appreciation, right from the beginning,” Friedman says. “Be thankful for the little things... even the fact that this person is spending the evening with you.” And while you’re at it, go ahead — say it out loud.

Bob Strauss is a freelance writer and children’s book author who lives in New York City. He’s also written the *Dinosaur* guide on About.com, the online information network owned by the New York Times.

# Session VI

## Wrap-Up and Review

Opening Prayer

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Status Update

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Review Module V (Communication/Conflict)

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Pre-Marital Counseling Module VI (Wrap-up and Review)

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Questions and Answers

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Homework

1. Before the wedding Read Chapter 9, 10 and 13 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.
  2. After the wedding, Do Part 2 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.
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Congratulations on Completion of Pre-Marital Training!!

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Evaluation

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Closing Prayer (each one of us)

# Wrap-up and Review

## (1 hour)

- Discussion of homework from Session V
- Review the coursework
  1. What is God's view of marriage
  2. What are the five Biblical Principles of Marriage?
  3. What are the Five Love Languages?
  4. What is your mate's love language(s)?
  5. What are the seven deadly sins?
  6. What is communication?
  7. In what ways are you going to make sure that communications is strong in your marriage?
  8. What are some of the key things that you must do before you have that conversation about a conflict in the marriage?
  9. How are you going to handle conflict in the marriage?
  10. What is the only relationship that you have that is greater than you and your spouse?
- Use additional resources
 

**The couples are reminded that this is just the start of their learning experience and it will be up to them to continue to learn about keeping their marriage strong throughout their marriage.**

  - Review questionnaires and exercise used in this class as often as necessary
    - (Honesty Questionnaire (The rule of honesty is a successful marriage)
    - Emotional Needs Questionnaire (What does my spouse really need to be happy?)
    - Recreational Survey (What do we like to do as a couple?)
    - Love Language Survey (How can I make deposits in his/her Love Bank)
  - Financial Survey (Getting Married Financially)
  - Prayer – We learned to pray together in class and the practice should continue in the marriage
  - The Bible – The Word is the definitive source to seek
  - Devotions
  - ASBC Marriage Events/Seminars
  - Websites
  - Books
    - *Preparing For Marriage God's Way* by Wayne Mack
    - *Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married* by Gary Chapman
    - *The Five Love Languages* by Gary Chapman
    - *The 4 Seasons of Marriage* by Gary Chapman
    - *Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts* by Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott
    - *Trading Places* by Drs. Les & Leslie Parrott
    - *Let It Go – Forgive So You Can Be Forgiven* by T.D. Jakes
    - *Marriage Matters* by Rev. Tony Evans
    - *Getting Ready For Marriage Workbook* by Jerry D. Hardin & Diane C. Sloan
    - *Men Are Like Waffles, Women Are Like Spaghetti* by Bill and Pam Farrell
    - *Building My Marriage Before It Begins* by Dr. Ken Wackes
    - *Extraordinary Marriage* by Rodney and Selma Wilson
    - *When Anger Hurts Your Relationships* by Kim Paleg and Matthew McKay
    - *Marriage – Keeping the Knot Tied* by Rev. Lovely and Nora Callaway
    - *Moments Together for Couples (60 weeks of Devotions)* by Dennis and Barbara Rainey

### Homework:

- 3) Before the wedding read Chapter 9, 10 and 13 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.
- 4) After the wedding, read Part 2 of Preparing for Marriage God's Way and do the exercises.









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