

PREPARE *for marriage.*

WORKBOOK





THE STREET
• CHURCH •

Prepare for Marriage Workbook

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Introduction

Preparing for marriage is an exciting journey full of learning and growth. It is a short term investment into your life-long relationship and it will help to set a firm foundation to navigate life together. Marriage is the most important relationship you will ever have here on earth, and impacts your whole experience of life going forward. So taking time to prepare well is time well spent.

About the Course

The Prepare for Marriage course is designed to help engaged couples prepare for marriage alongside a mentor couple. If you are completing this course independent of a church community who can pair you with a mentor couple, seek out a married couple who has been married longer than 10 years, who you trust and ask them to walk this journey with you. There is a Mentor Guide which will equip them for this role.

There are five sections to the course:

- Your Relationship with God
- The Bible and Marriage
- Becoming One: Words
- Becoming One: You and Me
- Becoming One: Unity

For each section, you as a couple will watch a series of short video clips to unpack God's design for marriage and explore practical topics and tools. Each clip is paired with a number of questions and activities to encourage conversation which you complete in your own time.

The best results are achieved if you both complete a Workbook individually. Some of the questions and activities are designed to be discussed or completed together. Others are required to be completed separately with time to talk it over afterward.

At the end of each section you will meet with your mentor couple. Within this face to face session they will guide you through questions to talk over what you have discussed and to dive a little deeper. There will be time for discussion around the specific topics and also to raise any questions that have surfaced. The Mentor Sessions are a key component to the success of this course.

Your mentor couple should be in touch with you to arrange a time for your first session together. Ahead of this time, watch the "Course Overview" video and complete Session One: "Your Relationship with God" (including watching the three videos). If you do not yet have access your mentor couple will provide you with the video clips you need in advance.

Watch ► *Course Overview*

You may not know the mentor couple you will meet with. Before you head into the five sections, the course begins with you and your mentor couple getting to know each other and briefly looking at the Overview.

You can expect to talk through areas such as:

- Your upbringing, key life events and spiritual journey so far
- How you met and how your relationship has developed
- Your current living situation
- Why you want to get married

Briefly talk together about the expectations, components and structure of the course.

Course Objectives

- Understand the importance of unity within marriage.
- Consider Biblical principles relevant to marriage and discuss how you can apply these in your marriage.
- Get to know how you communicate together and look at effective ways of healthy communication and tools to deal constructively with conflict situations.
- Help you understand each other, and your differences and expectations.
- Explore the practical aspects of marriage through a Biblical framework.

1

Your relationship with God

“I have been crucified with Christ and I no longer live, but Christ lives in me. The life I now live in the body, I live by faith in the Son of God, who loved me and gave himself for me” – GALATIANS 2:20 (NIV)

This section covers:

- reflection on your relationship with God
- how to maintain your relationship with God as your primary relationship
- how to grow your faith together as a couple

Watch ▶ *You and God*

Your relationship with God is to be your number one priority. The growth and health of this relationship is your individual responsibility. In marriage there is an incredible opportunity to spur one another on and grow together in your faith. A marriage relationship can enhance your relationship with God. This works best if you are both heading in the same direction spiritually.

Discuss Together

Describe to each other how faith was or wasn't modelled in the home you grew up in.

If you grew up in a home with the influence of Christian adults, in what ways has their influence impacted your own faith journey?

Share where your relationship with God is at on a scale with zero being non-existent and 10 being thriving. Describe what this looks like for you right now.

Share with one another an example of a married couple you know or have known who are seeking God together. What is it that you notice about them? What is it that attracts you to them or that you admire about the way they follow Jesus?

Watch ► *You and the Word*

The Bible is the living Word of God and has the power to absolutely transform our living, our doing, and our being. Having an active and vibrant relationship with the Word is essential for our individual spiritual growth but can also be one of the most precious parts of your married life together. How you adapt and change to incorporate your learning and make spiritual conversations a natural part of

your marriage will be unique for you as a couple. While you are preparing for marriage, identify what your current relationship is with the Word, and what this could look like as you join your lives together.

Discuss Together

Describe a time when you found your Bible study to be the most satisfying in your life.

What is most challenging to you about spending time in the Word each day?

Discuss how you read the Bible and your thoughts on how you could adapt to learn and grow in this discipline together.

Have a think together about the tools or resources you already have access to, or what you might like to find out about.

If you would like some help in this area you could speak with your pastor or a person in your life who you know has a solid habit of reading and studying the Word. Or check out what tools are available online or through Christian bookstores.

Watch ▶ You and Prayer

Prayer is an amazing thing, enabling us to boldly enter into the presence of God and converse with Him. Having a vibrant and dedicated prayer life is a foundation stone of being a follower of Jesus as well as being important as you lay the foundation of your marriage. As you come together as a married couple you can bring your prayer lives together. You can share together and grow together in prayer over the years of your marriage in all seasons.

Discuss Together

Was prayer part of the home you grew up in? If yes, describe your experience.

Describe your current prayer life to each other.

How important do you think prayer is within a marriage?

What do you observe about a role model in your life who has/had a rich and deep prayer life?

Over the next 7 days commit to individually praying for each other and for your marriage relationship.

If you do not already have a habit of praying together, start now. Talk about some ways that you could bring prayer into your relationship on a regular basis. How do you think you could incorporate this into life once you are married?

*Devote yourselves to prayer,
being watchful and thankful.*

- COLOSSIANS 4:2 (NIV)

2

The Bible and Marriage

*That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife,
and they become one flesh. — GENESIS 2:24 (NIV)*

This section covers:

- establishing a Biblical foundation for marriage
- considering a vision for your marriage

Watch ► *In the Beginning*

A Biblical design for marriage is of one man and one woman, leaving their family of origin and single life to be united with each other and to become one. It is a covenant relationship that brings every part of these two lives together. All marriage relationships have been affected by the sin. So therefore to have a marriage which reflects God’s design takes intentionality and a lifelong pursuit.

Discuss Together

What is your idea of marriage?

Read together Genesis 2:18-25. Record in your own words what you think each of the following verses or expressions mean about the relationship between a husband and wife.

Verse 18

Verses 20b - 23

Verse 24: A man will leave his father and mother...

Be united to his wife...

They will become one flesh...

Verse 25

Leave, Unite, Become one flesh. What is important about the order?

We live in a fallen world, in the period of time between the perfection of Eden and the perfection of Heaven. Therefore our sin nature, our fleshly desires, can impact our marriage relationship. Read Genesis 3 (especially verses 7, 8, and 16). What impact does mankind's rebellion against God have on relationships in general and the marriage relationship in particular?

How ready are you to 'completely commit yourself' to each other?

How will your wedding day signify a stake in the ground moment of your coming together as one and growing a new life together?

What thoughts come to mind in regards to your wedding vows when you think about the verse in Genesis 2:24?

What impact will the single, independent life you both have lived up until now have on your uniting together? How will you navigate this?

Watch ▶ God's Design

Through the words of Paul in Ephesians 5:21-33 we are given some clear instructions that are for husbands and clear instructions that are for wives. These verses, with the correct context and understanding can provide a wonderful roadmap to a beautiful unity within marriage.

Discuss Together

Read Ephesians 5:21-33 and record your thoughts.

What does "submit to one another" mean in the context of general relationships between Christians (verse 21)? How is this applicable in marriage?

What do you think "Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord..." mean (verses 22-24)?

What do you think “Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her...” mean (verses 25–30)?

How would you like to see these principles applied in your marriage?

The Bible doesn't say the husband is to 'make' his wife submit. It is an instruction to the wife and is primarily between her and God. Talk about this together.

Neither does the Bible doesn't say the wife is to 'make' her husband love her. It is an instruction to the husband and is primarily between him and God. Talk about this together.

Often these verses are related to the topic of identifying the man as the head of the home, as Christ is the head of the church. What are your views on this? Consider the concept of love and submission.

Watch ▶ Companionship

In the book of Genesis we read the story of creation which culminates in the creation of Adam and Eve. It is a beautiful story in which we see that God intended man and woman to be a perfect fit for one another. God creates exactly what is needed for humanity to be complete.

Discuss Together

Looking more closely at Genesis 2:18, talk together about your thoughts and opinion on the description of 'suitable helper' given to Eve.

Watch ▶ Crafting a Vision

Marriage is less about the big day and more about the everyday. More than just planning a wedding day, planning for your marriage helps establish a firm foundation for your life together and gives you a matrix to use for all decisions and plans both big and small. Crafting a vision to articulate for yourselves your non-negotiables and what you are committed to and will fight for provides a common ground that you can work towards together.

Discuss Together

What ratio of time do you spend thinking about your wedding versus your marriage?

15 years from now, what would you like your situation and achievements to be? Think about areas like children, living situation, career, travel etc.

Thinking about married couples you know who have been married a long time, what stands out to you about them?

Who are some married couples you know and admire that you could approach to talk with about their marriage?

*A good marriage isn't
something you find; it's
something you make.*

- GARY L. THOMAS

Complete Independantly

Think about the following questions individually, then come together to discuss your answers with each other.

Individually, what are you working towards right now or what direction are you heading in right now? Is this where you want to go together as a married couple?

What are the key things that you personally are committed to and want to fight for?

What do you feel is non-negotiable for you in life? Is there anything that is completely off the table or anything you consider to be absolutely necessary?

Thinking about the idea that within deep Christian friendship in a marriage we can help each other on the journey to becoming more and more like Christ. How does that fit with what you envision your marriage to be about?

Spend some time thinking about how you could become 'one'/'united' in these four areas:

Spiritually, with all your heart (For example; reading or studying either the Bible or other Christian literature, prayer, being an active part of a church community, serving, worship)

Emotionally, with all your soul (For example; taking marriage enrichment opportunities, keeping open and honest communication lines, sharing of hopes and dreams, needs and wants, prioritising time to spend just with each other).

Intellectually, with all your mind (For example; being available for vibrant discussion on topics that are important to your spouse, listening well and asking questions in conversation, talking about topical issues and opinions you have, learning a new skill together).

Physically, with all your strength (For example; set a fitness goal together, intentionally plan time for regular physical intimacy, helping each other with practical tasks and projects, be present physically for comfort and support during difficult seasons).

3

Becoming One: Words

Gracious words are a honeycomb, sweet to the soul and healing to the bones.

— PROVERBS 16:24 (NIV)

This section covers:

- establishing healthy communication
- managing conflict

Watch ► *Communication*

Healthy communication is key to a great marriage. This includes clearly and assertively communicating with honesty and respect. This happens through the words we choose to say, how we choose to say them and what we do with our bodies. It also relies on the development of active listening, that seeks to fully understand, rather than only seeking to be understood. Within a marriage relationship there are different types of communication and all serve a different purpose in growing and strengthening your relationship together.

Discuss Together

Read Ephesians 4:29-32 and record your thoughts. What do these verses say should and should not characterise our communication and attitudes toward each other?

Ephesians 4:15 suggests our communication should be characterised by truth and love. What should you do when it seems that being truthful does not seem loving?

Complete Independantly

Fill in the following table individually, then come together to discuss your answers with each other.

Rate yourself and your partner on the following aspects of communication.

How good are you at: 1 (poor) - 5 (very good)	Me	You
Communicating information		
Sharing Feelings		
Hearing and understanding each other		
Recognising your body language		

How often do you: 1 (seldom) - 5 (very often)	Me	You
Compliment each other		
Criticise each other		
Compliment your partner to other people		
Criticise your partner to other people		
Use a harsh, sharp or sarcastic tone		

How often do you: 1 (seldom) - 5 (very often)	Both
Argue with each other	
Talk about each other's needs	
Talk about long term goals	
Have spiritual conversations	

Discuss Together

Identify the listening principles in these verses:

Proverbs 15:23

Proverbs 18:13

Romans 12:15

Ephesians 4:29

Reflect on the example of communication in the video clip. What stood out to you the most? What aspect is most challenging for you?

Watch ► Conflict

Dealing with conflict situations is part of being in a relationship with others, so are a certain feature of being a married couple. Conflict can be managed in a healthy way which maintains respect for one another and does not damage the unity between you. The key is to put your own victory aside and fight for restoration. With a few simple tools and a heart of humility and forgiveness, a healthy environment for managing conflict situations is possible.

Complete Independantly

Fill in the following table individually, then come together to discuss your answers with each other.

The following table describes styles of dealing with a conflict. In the columns Me and You record (individually) the styles that you think you both use: 0 (never), 1 (rarely), 2 (sometimes) or 3 (often).

Style	Description	Me	You
Bury	You bury the problem, hoping it will go away; you hide it, so neither of you can see the problem.		
Blast	You go off with a big blast like a bomb, hoping it will destroy the problem.		
Bolt	You bolt off and run away from the problem so that you don't have to face it.		
Bargain	You bargain with your partner and use another problem to put pressure on them about the original problem, and so you never sort it out.		
Be-a-baby	You try and manipulate your partner by going weak and pathetic.		
Buck-pass	You plead that you couldn't help it, because it was a result of the way you were brought up or from the impact of a life event, other key influence over your life or circumstance.		
Blame-shift	You present a cast-iron case as to why it was 'all their fault'.		

Compare your answers and talk about examples of when these reactions have occurred.

Do you think any of these are a satisfactory way of dealing with a conflict?

*Before you marry a person,
you should first make them use
a computer with slow Internet to
see who they really are.*

- WILL FERRELL

Discuss Together

How did your parents, or the people in the home you were raised resolve conflict? Did the same person usually get their way?

Read Independantly

Read through the following independantly, then discuss together.

In addition to what you have heard in the Communication and Conflict videos, let's recap expressing your feelings, needs and wants in your relationship in an assertive and respectful way.

Rather than assuming your spouse can read your mind, good communication within marriage requires both people to share how they feel and ask clearly and directly for what they are needing or wanting.

Consider the use of 'I' statements, and avoid replying with 'yeah but' or using absolute statements like 'you never' or 'you always'.

Examples:

- "I am feeling out of sorts. While I love spending time with you, I also want to spend time with my friends. I would like us to find some time to talk about this."
- "I am feeling uncomfortable about the level of influence others are having in our wedding preparations. I understand you have a very close relationship with your family and I would like to know what your thoughts and expectations are, so we can agree what role others will have on decision making. Can we make time to discuss this together."

Good communication also requires active listening. Active listening is the ability to let someone know you understand them by restating their message to clarify this understanding and not make an assumption. It involves listening attentively without interruption and then restating what was heard. It is important to acknowledge the content AND the feelings of the speaker.

Examples:

- "I heard you say you are feeling 'out of sorts', and enjoy the time we spend together but that you also need time to spend with your friends. You want to plan a time to talk about this."
- "If I understand what you said, you are uncomfortable about the amount of influence others,

particularly my family, are having on our wedding plans. You understand we are close and want to hear my thoughts and expectations so we can agree together on how we make the decisions we need to make. Is that correct?"

Complete Together

Think of two things that you would like more or less of in your relationship. Practice using good communication skills such as:

- expressing your feelings, needs or wants clearly and assertively
- using 'I' statements
- avoiding statements like 'you never' or 'you always'
- listen actively to ensure you understand completely
- consider your tone and body language

Take turns sharing with each other, and repeating back what you heard the other person say until you reach full understanding. You could begin by saying:

"I would like..." and then describe how you would feel if this were to become a reality in your relationship.

After completing the activity above discuss the following questions:

How good were each of you at communicating clearly?

In what ways did you each effectively use active listening skills?

Read Independantly

As we have discussed, all married couples will have conflict situations and need to face differences and disagreements big and small. The amount of conflict is not related to marital happiness as much as how the conflict is managed.

Below is a Ten Step Model that you can use as a simple and effective tool.

Ten Step Conflict Resolution Model

- Set a time and place for a discussion.
- Define the conflict/problem you are having - be specific.
- List the ways you each contribute to the conflict/problem.
- List any past attempts to resolve this that were not successful.
- Brainstorm ideas and try to list 10 possible solutions. Do not judge or criticise any of the suggestions at this point.
- Discuss and evaluate each of these possible solutions. (Be as objective as possible and talk about how useful and appropriate each suggestion feels for gaining resolution to the issue.)
- Agree on one solution to try .
- Agree how you will each work toward this solution.
- Set up another time to discuss your progress.
- Reward each other for progress. (If you notice your partner making a positive contribution toward the solution, praise his/her effort.)

Complete Together

Think of a conflict situation that has been recent for you or is something that you have struggled to reconcile in the past and practice using this model together. If you have no experience of a conflict situation together, then pick a scenario that you can imagine would bring a conflict situation and role play this scenario.

Define the conflict:

How I will work toward this solution:

How my partner will work toward this solution:

Time when we will next discuss this:

Read Independantly

Time Out - a helpful tool for when you need it.

Sometimes a conflict situation causes one or both of you to need some space and time before you come back together and seek to resolve the conflict and restore unity. Physiologically, when this is the case, the "fight or flight" response is triggered and a person goes into protection mode with little or no regard for the other person. In this state it is not uncommon for someone to say or do things they later regret. Also, it is nearly impossible while in an intensive, heated frame of mind to have a productive conversation or use active listening techniques which will lead to a mutually agreed upon resolution.

Here are five simple things to help you when a Time Out is needed.

1. **Indicators a Time Out is needed**

Notice what your body is doing, if there are significant changes to your physical stance pay attention to these. For example: Are your fists clenched? Is your face red? Has your breathing quickened? Are you crying excessively? Are you having thoughts of causing harm to yourself, someone else or the environment around you? Do you feel emotionally closed off?

Learn to recognise the signs that things are spiraling out of control for you and that you are no longer able to have a productive conversation with your spouse.

2. **Requesting a Time Out**

Call a time-out for yourself, even if it is not you who visibly needs it. It is usually unhelpful

to suggest the other person take a time out. Be direct and say exactly what you need. For example: "I'm too angry/upset to talk right now and I need a time-out. Just an hour to calm down and collect my thoughts." It is important to follow this up with a suggested time when you think you'll be ready to come back to the conversation/conflict and work towards reconciliation.

3. **Relax and calm down**

Do something physically that will help your body to expel energy and calm down. For example: Take some deep breaths. Go for a jog. Take a walk. Have a hot bath or shower. You could try doing something to help your emotional self to relax also. For example: Write in a journal. Read or watch something uplifting or easy going. Spend time in prayer. Listen to calming music. This will be unique to who you are and what will bring your level of intense feeling down to a calm and manageable place where you can think, converse and react in a rational manner.

4. **Take time to process what is going on**

Try to identify what you were thinking and/or feeling that became so difficult to discuss and caused tension to rise within yourself or between you as a couple. Think about "I" messages you could use to tell your spouse about how you were feeling or what you were thinking .

Spend a few moments considering your spouse's point of view, what they might be feeling and why they may have reacted the way they did.

5. **Get back on track**

Resume the conversation together and revisit the original cause of conflict. Try using some of the communication skills you have learnt and active listening skills as well. You could use the Ten Step Method approach as suggested.

Remember to include space for forgiveness. You may both need to extend and receive this. Forgiveness is the decision to give up the right for vengeance, retribution, and negative thoughts toward your spouse in order to be free from anger and resentment. This process promotes restoration and it can allow reconciliation to take place in the relationship.

Holding onto unforgiveness is like drinking poison and expecting the other person to die. In reality unforgiveness affects ourselves. Remember what we discovered in the book of Matthew within the video clip. As followers of Jesus we are called to, and responsible for, the seeking of forgiveness and to freely give forgiveness.

Discuss Together

The above is information for you to draw upon over your marriage relationship. But if there has been a situation recently or you find one or both of you need to have time out as a regular way of dealing with conflict then take some time now to discuss what this could look like for you going forward. Perhaps you want to revisit a conflict situation you faced recently that you now realise you would have done better with a time out. Consider the following questions:

How would taking a Time Out have helped you?

Would having a Time Out have resolved the issue and reached reconciliation with more or less hurt?

If your spouse asks for a Time Out, describe to each other how you intend to respond in that moment.

*In sharp contrast with
our culture, the Bible teaches
that the essence of marriage is
a sacrificial commitment to the
good of the other. That means
that love is more fundamentally
action than emotion.*

- TIM KELLER

*As God by creation
made two of one,
so again by marriage
He made one of two.*

- THOMAS ADAMS

4

Becoming One: You and Me

And over all these virtues put on love, which binds them all together in perfect unity. — COLOSSIANS 3:14 (NIV)

This section covers:

- exploring our differences
- managing expectations
- learning how we give and receive love

Watch ▶ *Exploring Differences*

Our differences come in all shapes and sizes. We are a mixture of strengths and weaknesses. In a marriage our differences complement each other and help us to be more balanced, even though at times our differences can create tension. Knowing your differences and identifying strengths and weaknesses is healthy understanding.

Complete Independantly

The following Character Assessment is to help you get to know each other better and to identify combinations of character traits that may pose challenges in your marriage. Each pair of traits on the following pages are approximate opposites. For each, put a tick in the column that best describes you, and your fiancé, in respect to that pair of traits. DO NOT discuss the assessments together before you meet with your mentors.

When you meet with your mentors, focus on the character traits for which the two of you assessed the same person differently. Remember, these traits are neither right nor wrong — they are just what you are like.

Some couples find it useful to complete more detailed personality inventories (e.g. Four Temperaments; Myers Briggs; Strengths Finder) to better understand themselves and each other and how they can relate effectively.

Me

	Very	Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Very	
Tense						Relaxed
Optimistic						Pessimistic
Light-hearted						Serious
Reserved						Affectionate
Social						Private
Procrastinating						Urgent
Lethargic						Energetic
Spontaneous						Restrained
Vocal						Quiet
Ambitious						Content
Compliant						Stubborn
Insensitive						Sympathetic
Emotional						Unemotional
Logical						Intuitive
Tolerant						Intolerant
Methodical						Disorganised
Free-spender						Thrifty
Forward planner						Live in the moment
Self-sufficient						Reliant
Practical						Dreamer
Early riser						Night Owl
Cautious						Bold

My Partner

	Very	Somewhat	Neutral	Somewhat	Very	
Tense						Relaxed
Optimistic						Pessimistic
Light-hearted						Serious
Reserved						Affectionate
Social						Private
Procrastinating						Urgent
Lethargic						Energetic
Spontaneous						Restrained
Vocal						Quiet
Ambitious						Content
Compliant						Stubborn
Insensitive						Sympathetic
Emotional						Unemotional
Logical						Intuitive
Tolerant						Intolerant
Methodical						Disorganised
Free-spender						Thrifty
Forward planner						Live in the moment
Self-sufficient						Reliant
Early riser						Night Owl
Practical						Dreamer
Cautious						Bold

From your point of view, write down the most important strengths and likeable qualities in your fiancé.

From your point of view write down the key weaknesses or difficult characteristics in your fiancé.

Do you believe these weaknesses and difficult characteristics will disappear over time or that you can change them?

If they were not to disappear or change, could you live with them long-term?

In what areas do you think you can help meet the needs of and complement your fiancé?

In what areas do you hope that your fiancé will help meet your needs and complement you?

*Unity is oneness of purpose,
not sameness of persons.*

- TONY EVANS

Watch ▶ Managing Expectations

We develop expectations over our lifetime. Whether you realise it or not you will already have expectations of your marriage and for your marriage. Working out as a couple what your expectations are, and if they are realistic or not can help provide a framework as you plan ahead together. Exploring where your expectations come from and which ones you will work together to meet can take time and this conversation will need to be revisited more than once. Walk forward with honesty, openness and some flexibility as you discover your expectations together.

Discuss Together

The following section includes some areas to think about together to become aware of your expectations and where these may differ. This may also help you to identify any unrealistic expectations you have that you are unaware of. For the next few pages of questions fill in the blanks individually and then discuss your answers together. If there are expectations that surprise you or are vastly different, take some time to uncover where these expectations have come from and why they are so important to you going forward. You may need to pause on some of these and spend more time in discussion to bring your expectations into alignment.

How long do you want to keep your careers? How far are you expecting to progress in your career?

Were there distinct male/female roles and tasks in your family of origin? What are your expectations of how these will impact the roles and tasks you undertake or have responsibility for?

At home or in our family:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

I expect my partner to...

I don't expect my partner to...

Do you want to have children? If so, how many? How soon?

Infertility is a reality for some couples. How would you respond as a couple if you found that one or both of you is infertile?

If you have children, what are your expectations around discipline in your home?

Do you expect any interference in your marriage from your parents or in-laws?

What do you expect are some key aspects of your family of origin that you would like to repeat in your family?

What are you expecting to not repeat from your family of origin in your family?

Have you decided what changes, if any, you will make to your surnames?

What are your expectations around leisure time, both individually or together? Have a general discussion but also fill in the blanks for you individually and then discuss your answers together. If there are answers you have that clash, discuss why you feel this way and why this is important for you.

For my or our leisure time:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

Do you expect to have pets? If yes, what sort and how many?

How are you expecting to celebrate Easter and Christmas? Birthdays and anniversaries?

For Easter:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

For Christmas:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

For birthdays:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

For anniversaires:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

Do you have particular expectations around other holidays? Like annual leave or long weekends?

For Holidays:

I would enjoy and/or I expect to...

I don't enjoy and/or I don't expect to...

Do you expect to always live in the area you currently live? Or do you see yourself living in a particular country or area? How often would you think it reasonable to move your family around?

Do you expect to own your own home? Or would you prefer to rent your accommodation?

What do you expect to be your greatest challenge in the early years of marriage?

What do you expect to be your greatest joy in the early years of marriage?

Some of our expectations are around priorities of time. We all have the same number of hours in a week and how you spend these hours will impact your marriage relationship. If you have considerable differences in your expectations around how you spend your time, points of tension can develop in your relationship. For your relationship you may find these differences bring balance. But if as you discuss them you feel they may cause ongoing tension, discuss what you can do to move closer together in your expectations.

Talk about working or studying from home. Either within normal work or school hours or when overtime is needed. Consider if this was only sometimes or if it was happening very often.

What are your expectations around the length of time for commuting to and from your workplace? Will this impact your accommodation options?

Do you have expectations around your personal time? Consider things like exercise, watching programmes or movies, computer games, hobbies, social media, time with friends either together or individually, volunteering and sleep.

What expectations do you have for completing tasks around home? Consider tasks like cooking, cleaning, grocery shopping and home maintenance.

Talk about expectations you have for your time as a couple. Consider activities that you want to do together, dates, time for conversation, eating meals and sexual intimacy.

Watch ▶ *Defining Love*

When we think about a marriage relationship, love is one of the primary words that comes to mind. A Biblical model of marriage prioritises three types of love and actively pursues growth in each of them. Agape love, Philia love and Eros love.

Discuss Together

List examples where you have observed other married couples demonstrate Agape or Philia love to one another.

How might 'dying to self' be expressed in marriage?

*Love is patient, love is kind.
It does not envy, it does not
boast, it is not proud. It does not
dishonor others, it is not self-
seeking, it is not easily angered,
it keeps no record of wrongs.
Love does not delight in evil but
rejoices with the truth. It always
protects, always trusts, always
hopes, always perseveres.*

- 1 CORINTHIANS 13:4-7 (NIV)

Complete Independantly

Complete the online Love Languages quiz and record your results: www.5lovelanguages.com/quizzes

My Love Languages:

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____

Read Individually

Take a look over the additional information for each love language before discussing your results together.

GIFTS

Connection - "You know me and were thinking about me when I wasn't even around." Giving them something that is personally meaningful to them shows that you know them which translates as love.

Disconnection - "I feel like you don't love me because you don't know me." This is what they can interpret from a gift that doesn't hold any meaning to them. If a lot of time passes without being given a gift they may feel like you haven't thought about them which feels like a lack of love.

PHYSICAL TOUCH

Connection - "I feel connected when we are touching." This does not have to always be sexual. It is a simple closeness and proximity to each other that matters. They appreciate an initiation of physical closeness and touching that is frequently given.

Disconnection - "I feel rejected and neglected when you don't touch me or are physically distant from me."

ACTS OF SERVICE

Connection - "I feel loved when you take care of things that are important to me." Help matters a great deal. Anticipating needs and meeting them and accomplishing specific tasks are all felt as expressions of love.

Disconnection - "I feel like you don't love me, because you don't care about things that are important to me." They can feel unloved if they perceive they are doing it alone.

WORDS OF AFFIRMATION

Connection - "I feel loved when I believe that you like me." Words are life. They feel like words contain the value someone has for them.

Disconnection - "I feel rejected when your words are harsh." They feel like they are not enough or not going to make it without verbal affirmation and encouragement.

QUALITY TIME

Connection - "I feel loved when you show interest in me." Sharing in an activity or conversation that is important to them shows love. Being present in what you are doing together is important. For them, actively listening to them makes all the difference.

Disconnection - "I feel rejected when you don't value my interests." Not spending time together can communicate: "I don't have time for you and I'm not going to make time." They may hear: "Other things are more important to me than you." Being with them, but not being present, can feel the same as not being there at all.

Discuss Together

How similar or different are you in the primary ways you receive love?

Talk about how you think or feel these similarities or differences will impact your marriage relationship?

Over your relationship, describe to each other a way that you have felt especially loved.

Describe to each other one thing you would appreciate as an ongoing expression of love

*Love, as distinct from
“being in love”, is not merely
a feeling. It is a deep unity,
maintained by the will and
deliberately strengthened by
habit; reinforced by the grace
which both partners ask, and
receive from God. They can have
this love for each other even at
those moments when they do not
like each other.*

- C.S. LEWIS

5

Becoming One: Unity

“Finally, all of you, be like-minded, be sympathetic, love one another, be compassionate and humble.” — 1 PETER 3:8 (NIV)

This section covers:

- sexual intimacy
- financial management
- the purpose of marriage beyond just the two of you

Watch ▶ *Sexual Intimacy*

Sexual intimacy is an incredibly important aspect of marriage. God designed it and the Bible has a lot to say about it. Sexual intimacy within marriage is for fun, it is for protection, it is for procreation and it is integral to the building of unity and oneness. It is a lifelong journey, one to be enjoyed and accepted as a wonderful gift from God.

Discuss Together

Where have you learnt about sex and sexual intimacy? (We recommended that, prior to your wedding, you read a book on sexuality written from a Biblical perspective.)

In your opinion, what have you thought to be true about sex within marriage?

How are you managing your sexual attraction to one another during your engagement? What boundaries have you set?

If you are sexually active together, or you are struggling to stick within the boundaries you have set for yourselves, consider the following points and discuss together your thoughts about each.

In what way is your sexual behaviour contributing to your holiness?

In what way could your sexual behaviour be putting a stumbling block in your life? Consider Ephesians 5:3

How could your decision to choose to not obey the Lord in this area compromise your spiritual growth?

How could your decisions about sexual behaviour before marriage be stealing from the honour and dignity of your wedding celebration and establishment of your new home?

Discuss the boundaries you will set for yourselves when you are married to guard sexual integrity. Consider travel for work, time alone with friends or colleagues of the opposite sex and positions within church ministry. You may also want to consider the material you watch and read either independently or together as a couple.

Note down any boundaries you have agreed upon:

Have you discussed with each other any past sexual experiences? If applicable, is this an area you have accepted?

Have you discussed a suitable form of contraception?

Your wedding night is a special and precious moment. For some couples this night can be filled with particular expectations or a lot of pressure. Talk about your expectations for your wedding night. What you are looking forward to and what you are nervous about?

Talk about your honeymoon. What expectations do you have?

There will be time with your mentor couple to have discussions separately as ‘men only’ and ‘women only’. This is an opportunity to discuss any concerns or anxieties you may have about the sexual aspect of your future marriage relationship.

Watch ▶ *Money, Money, Money*

Money is a practical and necessary part of life. Coming together in marriage to create a new economic unit will require some time to establish a shared understanding between you and to develop a plan for how you will navigate this area together.

Nearly all married couples will experience periods of financial difficulty and challenge. Therefore, it is wise to lay a firm foundation on Biblical principles as you begin.

Discuss Together

What do the following passages say about finances and possessions?

Matthew 6:25 -34

Proverbs 11:24-25

1 Timothy 5:8

1 Timothy 6:6-10

Describe the financial situation in your family of origin and your adult life. Do you want the same for your marriage?

Have you discussed all the debts and savings/assets each of you will bring into your marriage? Does this cause any concern?

Share your thoughts with each other on operating your accounts as joint, everything coming together, or maintaining separate accounts. Consider this in light of Genesis 2:24 and the practical implications both of these models would have in your marriage.

If you plan to combine your finances, do you think you should have money for personal spending that you are not answerable to your spouse for? If so, how much (per month)?

Do you think you should agree on a price limit above which each of you would check with your spouse before committing to buy something? If so, how much?

Do you think it is important to give regularly to the church or other areas of God's work? Have you discussed how much or what proportion of your income you should give?

Complete Independantly

Fill in the following table individually. For each expense indicate if it is: a priority in your budget, a maybe, or not a priority for you to include in your budget. Once you have completed the table, compare your answers and discuss any that you have a particular difference of opinion over. How will you reconcile your differences of priority?

Expense	A priority	Maybe	Not a priority
Owning a house			
Owning a holiday house			
Overseas travel			
Owning a car			
Owning 2 cars			
Online streaming subscriptions			
Sports or gym memberships			
Updated home furnishings			
Personal grooming			
Regular new clothes			
Upgrading digital devices e.g. phone			
Hospitality			
Help for family members			
Eating out			
Investments e.g. shares, rental property			
Retirement savings			
Insurances e.g. life, health, income			
Lotto tickets			
Hire purchases			
Credit Cards			
Giving to church			
Giving to charity			

Complete Together

Having a budget can be an extremely helpful tool to remain on the same page with your finances as well as to avoid getting into financial trouble. This is something that should be regularly revisited and adjusted based on your circumstances and changes in life. You can begin by using the template below or find a local budgeting service. Our recommendation is to visit capmoney.org and if a CAP Money course is available in your area to prioritise attending this before, or soon after you are married.

Monthly Income (after tax)	
	Him
	Her
	TOTAL Income

Monthly Expenses	Budgeted Amount
Giving	Church
	Charity
	Hospitality
	Extended family support
	Gifts (birthdays, weddings etc.)
Household	Rent or Mortgage
	Power/gas
	Internet
	Phone plans
	Streaming Subscriptions
	Home and/or contents insurance
	Home maintenance
	Groceries
Health	Doctor appointments
	Dentist
	Medications/perscriptions
	Health Insurance

Debt	Personal	
	Credit Cards	
	Student Loan (extra payments)	
Transport	Petrol	
	Vehicle Maintenance	
	Registration/Fees	
	Vehicle Insurance	
	Public transport	
Leisure	Entertainment	
	Eating out	
	Travel/holidays	
	Hobbies	
Personal	Clothing (Him)	
	Clothing (Her)	
	Personal Grooming (Him)	
	Personal Grooming (Her)	
	Individual Allowance (Him)	
	Individual Allowance (Her)	
Other	Savings	
	Childcare	
	Contingency	
	TOTAL Expenses	
	Surplus or Deficit	

Watch ▶ Beyond Us

In every area of your life you will have opportunities to share your faith in Jesus and your marriage is a fabulous example of this. While you are preparing for marriage this opportunity is highlighted as you will find yourself in many conversations with people who may ask questions about some of the decisions you are making.

Discuss Together

Talk about what stood out to you or surprised you in the video.

Consider your wedding service and wedding reception programme and what you could include that would testify to your relationship with God and His love.

*In your hearts revere Christ
as Lord. Always be prepared to
give an answer to everyone who
asks you to give a reason for the
hope you have.*

- 1 PETER 3:15 (NIV)

*The real soul mate
is the one you are actually
married to.*

- J.R.R. TOLKEIN

3-4 Month Debrief

Set a date 3-4 months after your wedding to debrief your journey so far. Use the questions below to help start your conversation, and note down anything you feel is useful or helpful to record. Your mentor couple will be in touch with you to arrange a time to talk through your journey so far and you can use these debrief questions to prompt areas to discuss.

Describe three highlights of being married.

Talk about any aspects of marriage that are very different from what you expected.

Describe the greatest challenge you have experienced.

Talk about any issues you have had establishing your new family unit separate from your families of origin.

Describe to each other to what extent you feel you are becoming united.

Talk about the spiritual temperature in your home. Are you:

Having spiritual conversations with each other?

Discussing what you are reading about in the Bible?

Praying together?

Talk about how your schedules are working out. Do you feel you are getting enough time together?

Talk about your roles within your marriage. How is the leadership and decision-making working out?
What about love and submission?

Think about the character assessments you did in the pre-marriage course. How are you managing those areas where you are very different? Any issues arising from areas in which you are similar? How are you going in support of each other in areas of weakness?

How would you rate your communication and management of conflict situations? Is there an example you can give that explains an area of growth you want to work on?

Talk about your financial situation. Any particular issues? Different expectations? Do you feel your budget is still realistic?

Tell each other three things that you have appreciated in the way your spouse has shown love to you. What is one other thing that you would appreciate?

Talk about your sex life. Are your expectations being met? Is there anything you would like more or less of? Are there any issues from the past that have cropped up that you would like to discuss?

Are you noticing opportunities to minister to others?

Talk about areas of marriage or your experience so far that were not covered in the Prepare for Marriage course. Is there anything you would like your mentor couple to hear to perhaps add for the next couple?

Any other issues you would like to talk about?
