



FAMILYLIFE™

TOGETHER

FOR GOOD

marriage workshop

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# SESSION 1

TOGETHER FOR GOOD

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# Together for Good

*"The divorce rate would be lower if instead of marrying for better or worse people would marry for good."*

- **Ruby Dee**

● Together for \_\_\_\_\_

● Together for \_\_\_\_\_ good

*"Both men and women live longer, happier, healthier and wealthier lives when they are married. Unmarried co-habitation doesn't cut it. Cohabitation does not bring the benefits - in physical health, wealth, and emotional wellbeing - that marriage does. And, married people have both more and better sex than do their unmarried counterparts."*

- **Linda Waite, *The Case for Marriage***

● Together for \_\_\_\_\_ good

*"I am convinced that if we as a society work diligently in every other area of life and neglect the family, it would be analogous to straightening deck chairs on the Titanic."*

- **Stephen Covey**

● Together for \_\_\_\_\_ good

*I in them and you in me—so that they may be brought to complete unity. Then the world will know that you sent me and have loved them even as you have loved me.*

John 17:23

# Marriage is a good gift from a good God

## Two Perpetual Issues

- Differences
- Drift

## Differences

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*“What counts in making a happy marriage is not so much how compatible you are, but how you deal with incompatibility.”*

**- Leo Tolstoy**

## YOUR TURN...

Think of the family system you grew up in as you answer these questions:

**I felt like I belonged. I was loved and safe...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

**Our home was busy and full of life...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

**There was discipline and structure in our home...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

**People shared feelings openly and honestly in our home...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

**My parents modeled a loving, growing relationship...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

**There was stress about money in our home...**

NEVER \_\_\_\_\_ ALWAYS

## Dealing with Differences

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

*As each part does its own special work it helps the other parts grow, so the whole body is healthy and growing and full of love.*

Ephesians 4:16

# Drift

Currents:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Dealing with Drift

- \_\_\_\_\_ the currents you can
- \_\_\_\_\_ the course
- Keep your eye on your \_\_\_\_\_

*"A good marriage isn't something you find.  
It's something you make."*

**- Gary Thomas, *A Lifelong Love***

## YOUR TURN...

Choose an image that best captures what you would like your marriage to be like in 20 years.

Share with your partner your reasons for choosing that image.





# SESSION 2

TOGETHER FOR GOOD TOOLS

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## Dealing with Drift - Staying connected

*"Marriage, ultimately, is the practice of becoming passionate friends."*

- **Harville Hendrix**

● \_\_\_\_\_

● \_\_\_\_\_

*"Couples often live out years of falsehood trying to protect and save a relationship, all the while destroying any chance of real relationship."*

- **Henry Cloud**, *Boundaries in Marriage*

● \_\_\_\_\_

Formula for health:

- 15 minutes a day (non-logistical talk)
- 1 evening/half day a week
- 1 day a month
- 1 weekend a year

*"If a married couple with children has fifteen minutes of uninterrupted, non-logistical, non-problem-solving talk every day, I would put them in the top 5% of all married couples. It's an extraordinary achievement."*

- **Bill Doherty**, *Take Back Your Marriage*

● \_\_\_\_\_

*"Ultimately the bond of all companionship, whether in marriage or in friendship, is conversation."*

- **Oscar Wilde**

# Communication Style Differences

**Identify your communication style by placing your initial on the continuum.  
Do the same for your spouse.**

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INTERNAL PROCESSOR EXTERNAL PROCESSOR

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FEELINGS FACTS

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MINIMIZING MAGNIFYING

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PERSONALIZING EXTERNALIZING

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DIGITAL FACE-TO-FACE

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INDIRECT DIRECT

*"The single biggest problem in communication is the illusion that it has taken place."*  
- **George Bernard Shaw**

**YOUR TURN...**

Compare communication styles.

# Speak Clearly

## 1. Think before you speak

T \_\_\_\_\_ ?

H \_\_\_\_\_ ?

I \_\_\_\_\_ ?

N \_\_\_\_\_ ?

K \_\_\_\_\_ ?

*The more talk, the less truth; the  
wise measure their words.*

Proverbs 10:19

Positive : Negative Ratio

⎣ : ⎤

(Source: Gottman, J.M., & Levenson, R.W. 1992)

*Do not let any unwholesome talk come out of your mouths,  
but only what is helpful for building others up according to  
their needs, that it may benefit those who listen.*

Ephesians 4:29

## 2. Articulate your needs clearly

## 3. Words Matter

# Listen Carefully

## 1. Listen to understand

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*"The biggest communication problem is we do not listen to understand. We listen to reply."*

- **Stephen Covey**

## 2. Ask good questions

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## 3. Ask your partner what they need from you

*"The first duty of love is to listen."*

- **Paul Tillich**

# Speaking Clearly + Listening Carefully = Understanding

## YOUR TURN...

Choose a question below. Ask your spouse. Listen carefully. Switch. Repeat.

How have we changed as a couple in the last 5 years?

What would you like our life to be like in 5 years?

Describe one time in our life where you felt especially close to me.

What made you feel that way?



# SESSION 3

TOGETHER FOR GOOD TOOLS

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# Dealing with Differences - Managing conflict

**Conflict is inevitable.**

A natural by-product of two individuals trying to live together for good.



Conflict starts with a \_\_\_\_\_

*It only takes a spark, remember, to set off a forest fire. A careless or wrongly placed word out of your mouth can do that.*

James 3:5

#### THE SPARKS

- work-family balance
- parenting issues
- extended family
- finances
- sexual issues
- unrealistic expectations
- scheduling issues - last minute changes, lateness, forgetting commitments
- feeling neglected
- feeling disrespected
- feeling unappreciated
- feeling manipulated
- feeling embarrassed
- jealousy
- resistance to change
- passive-aggressive behavior
- hurtful words
- silence

#### YOUR TURN...


Check off the ones that spark conflict in your relationship.

## First response

Understand it...

Ask yourself...

Tell yourself...



*My spouse is not  
my enemy*

# Managing conflict

Choose your bucket.

Water	Gas
<input type="radio"/> are able to express what they need	<input type="radio"/> can only express anger/sadness
<input type="radio"/> believe the best	<input type="radio"/> expect the worst
<input type="radio"/> think win-win	<input type="radio"/> think win-lose
<input type="radio"/> focus on the issue	<input type="radio"/> make it personal
<input type="radio"/> don't keep score	<input type="radio"/> keep score
<input type="radio"/> humble	<input type="radio"/> defensive
<input type="radio"/> honest	<input type="radio"/> hidden
<input type="radio"/> engage	<input type="radio"/> stonewall

## YOUR TURN...

Put a check mark by any that are true of **you** most or all of the time.

Don't let fuel accumulate.

*"Conflict is the price smart couples pay for intimacy."*  
- **Drs. Les and Leslie Parrott**

Put out the fire with forgiveness.

*"A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers."*  
- **Ruth Bell Graham**

*Make allowance for each other's faults, and forgive anyone who offends you. Remember, the Lord forgave you, so you must forgive others.*  
Colossians 3:13

## seeking forgiveness

Be willing to say you were wrong.

Accept responsibility.

Be willing to say you are sorry.

Recognize and empathize with your spouse's feelings (hurt, rejection, disrespected...).

Be willing to change.

Be willing to ask for forgiveness.

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

"I was wrong about \_\_\_\_\_  
I'm sorry for making you feel \_\_\_\_\_  
I'm going to try not to do that again.  
Please forgive me."

## granting forgiveness

Do it internally first.

Decide to forgive. Ask God for help.

Do it specifically.

Do it generously.

Remind yourself of a time when you needed to be forgiven. Offer the same gift to your spouse.

Do it again.

If the feelings resurface, internally reaffirm forgiveness.  
Remind yourself that the offence was forgiven.

*Love keeps no record of wrongs.  
1 Corinthians 13:5*

"I forgive you for \_\_\_\_\_  
I felt \_\_\_\_\_, but I know I've done things that have  
made you feel that way too. I am choosing to let this go  
and I won't hold it against you any more."

## YOUR TURN...

Think of a recent conflict:

What were the sparks?

Which buckets did you use?

Is the fire out?

Forgiveness?





# SESSION 4

TOGETHER FOR GOOD - A GOOD GIFT

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*"The goal of sex is the big O (and it ain't orgasm). It's Oneness. Loving the whole person, not just the body parts."*  
- **Tim Gardner**, *Sacred Sex*

Sex is a \_\_\_\_\_ from a \_\_\_\_\_

## Deeper Issues

- The 3 A's

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*"It is not love to ignore your spouse's sin, or brokenness, or immaturity."*  
- **John Eldredge**, *Love and War*

*Sexual drives are strong, but marriage is strong enough to contain them and provide for a balanced and fulfilling sexual life in a world of sexual disorder. The marriage bed must be a place of mutuality—the husband seeking to satisfy his wife, the wife seeking to satisfy her husband. Marriage is not a place to "stand up for your rights." Marriage is a decision to serve the other, whether in bed or out. Abstaining from sex is permissible for a period of time if you both agree to it, and if it's for the purposes of prayer and fasting—but only for such times. Then come back together again.*

1 Corinthians 7:2-6

## Drift:

- Cultural Currents
- External Currents
- Internal Currents

## Differences:

- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_
- \_\_\_\_\_

## Dealing with Differences

- Understanding
- Appreciating

## Dealing with Drift

- Priority
- Passion
- Playfulness

## HOMework

Find a time and place where you and your spouse can be alone and comfortable for 60 minutes. Using the following guide, have an honest and gentle conversation about your sexual relationship. Both respond to each topic before moving to the next.

### CULTURAL CURRENTS

I think my attitude and feelings about sexuality have been shaped by culture and my family of origin in this way...

### EXTERNAL CURRENTS

When I think about our schedule in this phase of life, I feel...

When I think about changing our schedule to allow more space and time for our sex life, I wonder about...

On a scale of 1-10, I would rate the stress in our life at \_\_\_\_\_. Here's how I think that may be affecting our sex life...

### INTERNAL CURRENTS

One thing that is really unsettling me in our relationship right now...

One thing that would make me feel even more secure in our relationship...

### HEALTH

The health issue (physical, mental, emotional) that is affecting me most in our sexual relationship...

### PAST EXPERIENCES

One thing from my past I would appreciate your help and understanding in dealing with...

## **DIFFERENCES (PHYSIOLOGICAL, LOVE LANGUAGE, LIBIDO)**

### Understanding:

One sexual difference between us I'm not sure you understand...

One sexual difference between us I wish I understood better...

### Appreciating:

One sexual difference between us I really appreciate...

## **PRIORITY**

One thing I am willing to do to make our sexual relationship more of a priority...

## **PASSION**

The thing I enjoy most in our sex life is when you...

The thing I wish we would do more of...

## **PLAY**

One thing I find truly fun in our sex life...

One thing I think would be fun to try...

## **MAKE A PLAN...**

Agree together on two things you can do to move towards a healthier and more fulfilling sexual relationship. Commit to these things for the next 30 days. Check in with each other. Celebrate. Choose two more. Repeat.



# SESSION 5

TOGETHER FOR GOOD - A GREATER GOOD

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*A cord of three strands is not easily broken.*  
Ecclesiastes 4:12 (HCSB)

Marriage is a great good...but there is a greater good.

*“There is a God-shaped vacuum in the heart of every person, and it can never be filled by any created thing. It can only be filled by God, made known through Jesus Christ.”*  
- **Blaise Pascal**, *Pensées*

The decision to follow Jesus changes everything.

● \_\_\_\_\_

● \_\_\_\_\_

*“You become more that person God had in mind when he thought you up. You don’t just become holier. You become you-ier. You will change; God wants you to become a ‘new creation’.”*

- **John Ortberg**, *The Me I Want to Be*

● \_\_\_\_\_

*“Being ‘married for a mission’ can revitalize a lot of marriages in which the partners think they suffer from a lack of compatibility; my suspicion is that many of these couples actually suffer from a lack of purpose.”*

- **Gary Thomas**, *A Lifelong Love*

## Growing Together For Good

There is only one way to be \_\_\_\_\_

*I am the way, and the truth and the life, the only way to the Father is through me.*

John 14:6

There are different ways to \_\_\_\_\_

# Spiritual Pathways

I feel closest to God when I'm surrounded by what God has made – the mountains, forests, lakes, sea, gardens, a sunset. Experiencing God's beauty and creativity in nature is more moving to me than learning new concepts about God, participating in a formal religious service or in social causes.

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I feel closest to God when I am learning about God. I crave uninterrupted study time - reading God's word or good Christian books - and welcome the opportunity to share what I've learned by teaching or participating in discussions or debates.

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I feel closest to God when I feel like I have "touched souls" with another person or a group of people, when we have shared deeply and honestly with one another. I feel like I learn more about God when I am studying, fellowshiping and worshipping with others.

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I feel closest to God when I am with a friend going through a difficult time, helping others in my community, volunteering at a local shelter or going on a mission trip. It means more to me to nurse someone to health, bring them a meal or repair their house than it does to teach a class or go on a prayer retreat.

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I feel closest to God when I am involved in worship. I am energized, moved and nourished in deep ways through music and corporate acts of worship. Being with other believers, raising our voices together, praising our awesome God...it's a taste of Heaven!

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I feel closest to God in solitude and silence. If I can escape for 30 minutes (or more) a day to a quiet place to pray, journal, read God's word, to be alone and uninterrupted with God, I am very happy. I come away refreshed and strengthened.

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I feel closest to God when I am standing up for justice and truth. I feel God's pleasure when I am trying to help right wrongs, meet the needs of the poor and marginalized and make the world more like God intended it to be.

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**YOUR TURN...**

Share your rankings with your spouse.

# Growing Together For Good

1. \_\_\_\_\_

2. \_\_\_\_\_

## YOUR TURN...

Here is a short list of activities across all spiritual pathways that you can engage in - individually or as a couple - to grow spiritually. Put a check mark by those you are currently doing and circle at least one you are willing to try.

- |  |   |
|--|---|
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray                                | <input type="checkbox"/> Seek out a mentor couple                         |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Pray as a couple                    | <input type="checkbox"/> Be a mentor couple                               |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Bible                      | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to church                                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read the Bible together             | <input type="checkbox"/> Go to church together                            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a devotional book              | <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in the cause of justice                   |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Read a devotional book together     | <input type="checkbox"/> Engage in the cause of justice together          |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Participate in a small group        | <input type="checkbox"/> Carve out some regular quiet time to be with God |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go on a spiritual retreat           | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in God's creation                     |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Go to a Christian camp              | <input type="checkbox"/> Spend time in God's creation together            |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer for a good cause          | <input type="checkbox"/> Worship together                                 |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Volunteer together for a good cause | <input type="checkbox"/> _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a class                        | <input type="checkbox"/> _____  |
| <input type="checkbox"/> Take a class together               |   |

## YOUR TURN...

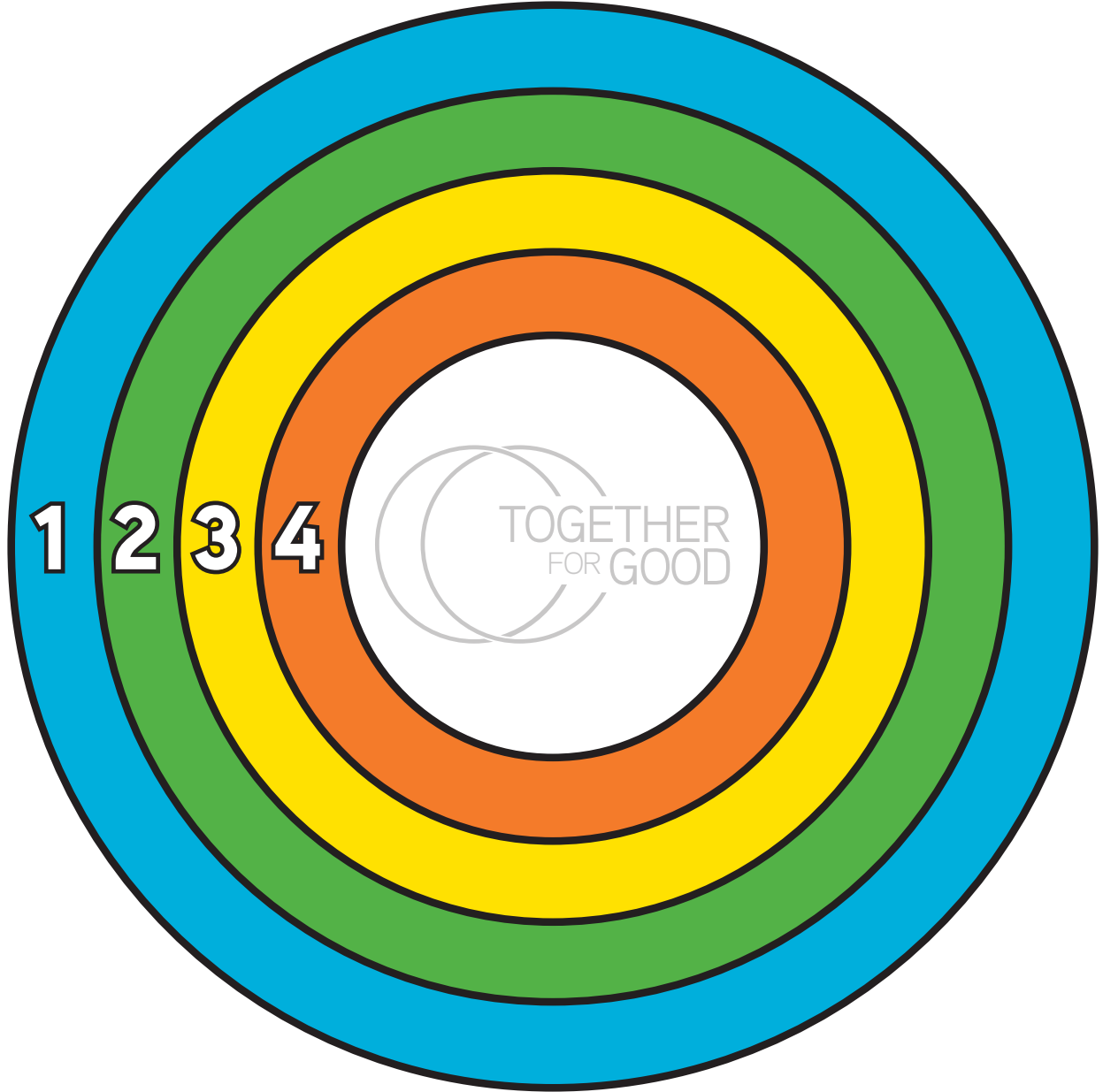
Compare your responses.  
Choose one new spiritual activity you can do together.  
Commit to doing it regularly for 30 days.

*"You did the best that you knew how. Now  
that you know better, you'll do better."*

- **Maya Angelou**

*So let's not allow ourselves to get fatigued  
doing good. At the right time we will harvest  
a good crop if we don't give up, or quit.*

Galatians 6:9





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