

# Building A Strong Marriage Workbook



PREPARE/ENRICH Program  
Seventh-day Adventist Edition

Version  
2000

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Life Innovations, Inc.

**Bible Quotes taken from “Biblical Verses for the PREPARE/ENRICH Program”  
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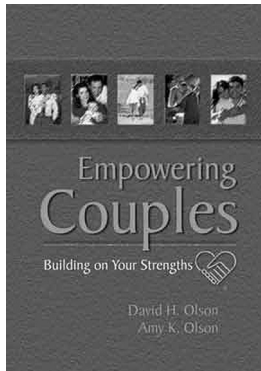
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## Greetings to Couples taking the PREPARE/ENRICH Program

Congratulations! Taking the **PREPARE/ENRICH Program** is a great first step in helping you build a stronger marriage. After you have completed this Program, there are some other important things that you can do that will help bring you a more happy marriage and family life.



**First**, we want to highly recommend the book **EMPOWERING COUPLES: Building on Your Strengths**, which is described in the last page of this workbook. This self-help book is a great resource that you can use at your own pace. It will remind you of the strengths and skills that you developed, but will also give you new ideas that can help strengthen your marriage. To review the book or order it online, visit our website at: [www.adventsource.org](http://www.adventsource.org).

**Second**, you can ask your counselor / pastor if they are planning to offer an **Empowering Couples Program** for a group of couples.

These groups are a great way to enrich your marriage and meet other couples who could become friends. This Program is often designed to be 4-6 weekly or monthly sessions that are about 2 hours in length. The sessions focus on important topics like *communication, conflict resolution, role relationship, finances, and spiritual beliefs*.

**Third**, if you ever have marital problems that don't go away after several months, it is time to get some professional help from your clergy or a counselor. If the person who gave you the PREPARE / ENRICH Program is not available, you can find other professionals trained in your area by visiting our *web site and search under counselor*. As with any problem, the sooner you seek help, the easier it will be to resolve.

**Fourth**, do not take your marriage for granted. Remember, that a happy marriage can only occur when you give it the time and attention that you did when you were dating. Always look for ways to continue to do things that will enrich your marriage.

*Coming together is a beginning,  
Keeping together is progress,  
Working together is success.*

**Wishing you a Happy Marriage!**

David H. Olson, Ph.D.  
President

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Visit our Web site at:  
[www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com)

## Greetings from the Adventist Church

Welcome to the wonderful and exciting process of getting ready for marriage. Employing the **PREPARE/ENRICH Program** is a good choice as you pursue this important enterprise. I am especially pleased that we have available the **Seventh-day Adventist edition of *Building A Strong Marriage Workbook*** in partnership with Life Innovations, Inc. This resource is intentional about providing a Biblical perspective on the principles that lead to strong and healthy marriages.

As you will soon find out, a healthy marriage is much more difficult to sustain than the messages we often receive from television programs and the movies. However, having a healthy marriage is not unlike the commitment it takes to have a well-functioning car. Those who are intentional about keeping their automobiles in good running condition service them at regular intervals in order to keep them in great shape. For your marriage to remain in good shape, you will need to determine from very early that you will service your marriage on a regular basis so that your marital oil will be kept at an appropriate level and your marital tires will remain at an optimum pressure.

A great way to keep your marriage in good running condition is to attend a yearly marriage strengthening event, like a ***From This Day Forward*** marriage conference. To be sure, there are other marriage strengthening programs you may be able to access to assist you in developing skills that will help nurture your marriage. The objective here is to be aware of the fact that the wedding is just the beginning of a very involved process to keep your relationship strong and healthy.

There will be times in the days ahead that you will question your decision to marry. This is a normal response to the very serious choice you have made. The truth is, you may question the option you made to marry even after the wedding day. Be prepared to deal with your feelings by being mindful of the fact that professional help is available for your relationship issues, just like specialists are available for all kinds of physical and psychological concerns.

As a Christian you have the added bonus of knowing that Jesus has promised to never leave you alone (Matthew 28:20), to keep you in perfect peace (John 14:27), and to supply all of your needs (Philippians 4:19). I encourage you to trust God, and allow Him to lead you and your mate everyday of your lives.

For stronger and healthier marriages,

Willie Oliver, Director  
Family Ministries

North American Division of the  
Seventh-day Adventist Church

# Building A Strong Marriage Workbook

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*“The very best of marriages  
Are made by best of friends,  
Who face together, hand in hand,  
The good and bad life sends.  
They aren't afraid to share  
The deepest feelings of the heart,  
And respect each other's needs  
To spend some time apart.*

*They support each other faithfully  
When troubles come their way,  
They don't blame in haste or anger,  
But who love in what they say.  
They make marriage like true friendship  
Full of deeds that show they care,  
And they find a world of happiness  
In all the love they share”.*

—Amanda Bradley

## Building a Strong Marriage

Congratulations! By participating in the PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Program, you have demonstrated your commitment to building a strong marriage. Over two million couples have participated in this successful program.

Given that nearly half of today's marriages end in divorce, it makes good sense to safeguard your relationship by investing time and money in keeping it vital. The PREPARE/ENRICH Couple Program is a sound strategy -- one that will pay off in the short-term as well as long-term.

The PREPARE/ENRICH Program was designed to help you develop a strong and growing relationship. Through the program you will learn as a couple to share your feelings and ideas and work together to achieve your goals. The Couple Program will assist you in identifying relationship areas for you to enrich, help you build on your strengths and teach you to communicate more effectively with your partner about a variety of important topics.

*“Failing to prepare is like preparing to fail”*

—Anonymous

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### Goals of the PREPARE/ENRICH Program are to help you:

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- Explore your Relationship Strength and Growth Areas
- Strengthen your communication skills, including assertiveness and active listening
- Resolve your conflicts using the Ten Steps Procedure
- Explore your relationship & families-of-origin issues with the Couple & Family Map
- Develop a workable budget and financial plan
- Develop your personal, couple and family goals

The Couple Program contains a variety of couple exercises that can help you achieve these goals. These exercises are designed to encourage you to talk with each other and to plan together how to deal with a variety of important topics.

## What the Bible Says About Marriage

**Genesis 2:18,24** And the LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a companion who will help him. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one."

**Matthew 19:4-6** "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And Jesus said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."

**Ecclesiastes 4:9-11** Two people can accomplish more than twice as much as one; they get a better return for their labor. If one person falls, the other can reach out and help. But people who are alone when they fall are in real trouble. And on a cold night, two under the same blanket can gain warmth from each other. But how can one be warm alone?

**Proverbs 31:10,11** Who can find a virtuous and capable wife? She is worth more than precious rubies. Her husband can trust her, and she will greatly enrich his life.

**Ephesians 5:25** And you husbands must love your wives with the same love Christ showed the church. He gave up his life for her.

**Ephesians 5:31-33** As the Scriptures say, "A man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one." This is a great mystery, but it is an illustration of the way Christ and the church are one. So again I say, each man must love his wife as he loves himself, and she must respect her husband.

**1 Peter 3:7** In the same way, you husbands must give honor to your wives. Treat her with understanding as you live together. She may be weaker than you are, but she is your equal partner in God's gift of new life. If you don't treat her as you should, your prayers will not be heard.

**Genesis 2:23-24** "At last!" Adam exclaimed. "She is part of my own flesh and bone! She will be called 'woman,' because she was taken out of a man. This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.

**Matthew 18:19** "I also tell you this-if two of you agree down here on earth concerning anything you ask for, my Father in heaven will do it for you.

**Amos 3:3** Can two people walk together without agreeing on the direction?



## Preparing & Enriching Your Relationship

A core of the PREPARE/ENRICH Program is several Inventories that are designed for couples at different stages in their relationship. The following is a brief overview of the Inventories:

**PREPARE** is for couples preparing for marriage.

**PREPARE-MC** (Marriage with Children) is for premarital couples with children.

**PREPARE-CC** (Cohabiting Couples) is for cohabiting couples planning to marry.

**ENRICH** is for married couples seeking counseling or enrichment.

**MATE** is for older couples (50 years or older) planning to marry or facing other life transitions (retirement, relocation).

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**For Couples taking PREPARE, PREPARE-MC, PREPARE-CC or MATE:**

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*“Prepare for your Marriage, not just your Wedding”*

Most premarital couples spend a great deal of time, energy and money on a wedding ceremony that lasts a few hours. But they spend little time acquiring relationship skills needed to build a marriage that could last 50 years.

Granted, it's much easier to prepare for a successful wedding than a successful marriage. Wedding preparation focuses on concrete tasks, while preparing for marriage means you have to take time to share feelings -- both positive and negative. It also means you have to be intentional about planning for the future you will spend together.

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**For Couples taking ENRICH or MATE:**

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*“Enriching your relationship is a sound investment”*

Marriage is a challenge for most couples, filled with much joy and also some difficult times. Marriage is like a growing plant, you need to continue to nurture and provide it with positive things to keep it growing.

The Couple Program for married couples can be used to help you build on your strengths and deal more effectively with problematic issues. The Program is designed to give you more skills so that you can focus on and deal with important issues in your relationship. The ENRICH and MATE Inventories are an important part of facilitating that process of discovering, developing and enhancing your relationship skills.

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### Communication Skills that will Increase Your Intimacy:

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1. Look for the good in your partner and give him/her a compliment.
2. Praise your partner as much as possible.
3. Take time to listen to each other.
4. Listen to understand -- not to judge.
5. Use active listening, which involves summarizing your partner's comments before you share your reactions or feelings.
6. Be assertive. Share your feelings by using "I" statements (i.e. I feel... or I think...).
7. When issues arise, avoid blaming each other and seek solutions.
8. If problems persist, use the Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict (pages 12-14).
9. If problems still continue, seek counseling before they become more serious. Doing so will make it easier to find solutions.
10. Give your relationship the same priority and attention you gave it when you were dating.

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### Daily Dialogue and Daily Compliments:

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Engaging in a *Daily Dialogue* and *Daily Compliments* are two ways of keeping your relationship exciting and healthy. While these exercises may seem awkward at first, the more you share your feelings the easier it will become to do so.

The focus of the *Daily Dialogue* is on your feelings about each other and your life together. Set aside five minutes per day and 15 minutes on the weekends to discuss:

- what was dissatisfying about your relationship that day
- what you most enjoyed about your relationship that day

Giving at least one *Daily Compliment* to your partner will help you focus on your strengths as individuals. It will also highlight the positive things that attracted you to each other. Daily compliments will prevent your relationship from becoming routine and make it more mutually satisfying.

## What the Bible Says About Praising Each Other

**Proverbs 25:15** Patience can persuade a prince, and soft speech can crush strong opposition.

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

**Proverbs 15:1** A gentle answer turns away wrath, but harsh words stir up anger.

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

**Ephesians 4:29** Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

**Proverbs 15:30** A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health.

**Proverbs 25:11** Timely advice is as lovely as golden apples in a silver basket.

**Ephesians 4:29** Don't use foul or abusive language. Let everything you say be good and helpful, so that your words will be an encouragement to those who hear them.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

## What the Bible Says About Loving Your Partner

**1 Corinthians 13:4-7** Love is patient and kind. Love is not jealous or boastful or proud or rude. Love does not demand its own way. Love is not irritable, and it keeps no record of when it has been wronged. It is never glad about injustice but rejoices whenever the truth wins out. Love never gives up, never loses faith, is always hopeful, and endures through every circumstance.

**Matthew 7:12** Do for others what you would like them to do for you. This is a summary of all that is taught in the law and the prophets.

**1 Peter 4:8** Most important of all, continue to show deep love for each other, for love covers a multitude of sins.

**John 13:14,15** And since I, the Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you ought to wash each other's feet. I have given you an example to follow. Do as I have done to you.

**Galatians 6:9** So don't get tired of doing what is good. Don't get discouraged and give up, for we will reap a harvest of blessing at the appropriate time.

**John 13:34** So now I am giving you a new commandment: Love each other. Just as I have loved you, you should love each other.

**Romans 12:9,10** Don't just pretend that you love others. Really love them. Hate what is wrong. Stand on the side of the good. Love each other with genuine affection, and take delight in honoring each other.

**Romans 12:20,21** Instead, do what the Scriptures say: "If your enemies are hungry, feed them. If they are thirsty, give them something to drink, and they will be ashamed of what they have done to you." Don't let evil get the best of you, but conquer evil by doing good.

## Sharing Strength and Growth Areas

By nature, human beings tend to focus on the negative and forget to celebrate the positive things in their lives. The PREPARE/ENRICH Program helps you to identify and build on the positive aspects of your relationship -- that is, your relationship strengths.

Of course everyone sees things in a little different light. In fact, you and your partner are likely to have different views of your couple strengths. Sharing your different perspectives will be helpful for two important reasons: *First*, increased awareness of how each of you views the relationship will help you understand each other. *Second*, once your couple strengths are identified, you can build on them and create a more enduring relationship.

The following exercise will help you identify and talk about your individual views of your couple strength and growth areas.

### Instructions: Sharing Strength and Growth Areas Couple Communication Exercise I

1. We ask that you not share or discuss any information until you have both completed the exercise individually.
2. Select three categories in which you feel you have considerable agreement with your partner. Put an "S" in the strength column across from this area.
3. Select three categories in which you feel you have some disagreements or areas that you might need to improve. Put a "G" in the growth column from this area.

### Instructions: Couple Discussion

1. Now that you have each identified three strength and three growth areas, you can begin by individually sharing what you each perceive as your relationship strengths. Do not show each other your responses, but begin verbally sharing them— each taking a turn.
2. One partner proposes a strength area, discusses the strength, then the other partner indicates one strength they have selected. This process should be repeated until all three strength areas have been discussed by both partners.
3. Use the same procedure to share and discuss the growth areas.
4. After completing the above steps, briefly discuss these questions:
  - a. Did your partner's responses surprise you.
  - b. Where did you have the most disagreements regarding your strength and growth areas.
  - c. Where did you have the most agreements regarding your strength and growth areas?



## Sharing Strength and Growth Areas: Couple Communication Exercise I

*(detach this sheet to complete this exercise)*

<u>AREAS</u>	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
MARRIAGE EXPECTATIONS (PREPARE/PREPARE-MC) _____ <i>We have realistic expectations about love, commitment, and conflicts.</i>		
COHABITATION ISSUES (PREPARE-CC) _____ <i>We agree on our experience(s) as a cohabiting couple.</i>		
MARITAL SATISFACTION (ENRICH) _____ <i>I am satisfied with most aspects of our couple relationship.</i>		
PERSONALITY ISSUES (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>I like my partner's personality and habits.</i>		
COMMUNICATION (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We share feelings with and understand each other.</i>		
CONFLICT RESOLUTION (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We are able to discuss and resolve differences.</i>		
FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We agree on budget and financial matters.</i>		
LEISURE ACTIVITIES (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We share some similar interests and spend time together and apart.</i>		
SEXUAL EXPECTATIONS/RELATIONSHIP (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We are comfortable discussing sexual issues and preferences.</i>		
CHILDREN AND PARENTING (not on MATE) _____ <i>We agree on issues related to having and raising children.</i>		
FAMILY AND FRIENDS (not on MATE) _____ <i>We feel good about our relationships with relatives and friends.</i>		
ROLE RELATIONSHIP (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We agree on how to share decision-making and responsibilities.</i>		
SPIRITUAL BELIEFS (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We hold similar religious values and beliefs.</i>		
LIFE TRANSITIONS (MATE) _____ <i>We are open to change in our life and lifestyle.</i>		
INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES (MATE) _____ <i>We agree on how to deal with our children, parents and grandchildren.</i>		
HEALTH ISSUES (MATE) _____ <i>We have a positive attitude about health and aging as a couple.</i>		

## **Creating a Wish List**

### **Couple Communication Exercise II**

In this exercise, you will each individually make a Wish List of things that you would like your partner to do more often. Next, you will be asked to take turns sharing your Wish Lists with each other.

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

**Assertiveness** means your ability to express feelings and ask for what you want.

**Active listening** is the ability to listen accurately and repeat back to the speaker the message you have heard.

**Make a Wish List of three things that you want your partner to do more often?**

- 1.
  
- 2.
  
- 3.

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

**In what ways are you good at being assertive?**

**In what ways do you effectively use active listening skills?**



## Sharing Strength and Growth Areas: Couple Communication Exercise I

*(detach this sheet to complete this exercise)*

<u>AREAS</u>	STRENGTH AREAS	GROWTH AREAS
MARRIAGE EXPECTATIONS (PREPARE/PREPARE-MC) _____ <i>We have realistic expectations about love, commitment, and conflicts.</i>		
COHABITATION ISSUES (PREPARE-CC) _____ <i>We agree on our experience(s) as a cohabiting couple.</i>		
MARITAL SATISFACTION (ENRICH) _____ <i>I am satisfied with most aspects of our couple relationship.</i>		
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ROLE RELATIONSHIP (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We agree on how to share decision-making and responsibilities.</i>		
SPIRITUAL BELIEFS (ALL INVENTORIES) _____ <i>We hold similar religious values and beliefs.</i>		
LIFE TRANSITIONS (MATE) _____ <i>We are open to change in our life and lifestyle.</i>		
INTERGENERATIONAL ISSUES (MATE) _____ <i>We agree on how to deal with our children, parents and grandchildren.</i>		
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**Make a Wish List of three things that you want your partner to do more often?**

- 1.
  
- 2.
  
- 3.

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

**In what ways are you good at being assertive?**

**In what ways do you effectively use active listening skills?**

## Assertiveness and Active Listening Skills

*"It takes two to speak the truth...one to speak and another to hear."*

—Henry David Thoreau

### **Assertiveness:**

*Assertiveness is the ability to ask for what you want and need.*

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

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

When each person knows what the other person wants -- when each knows they have been heard and understood -- intimacy is increased. Assertiveness also helps people to feel good about themselves and increases the likelihood that they will achieve their personal goals.

### **Examples of Assertive Statements:**

*"I enjoy spending time with you, but I also want to spend more time with my friends. I would like us to find some time to talk about this."*

*"I want to take a ski vacation next winter but I know you like to go to the beach."*

### **Active Listening:**

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

### **Examples of Active Listening:**

*"I heard you say that you enjoy the time we spend together but that you need more time to be with your friends. You want to plan a time to talk about this."*

*"If I understand what you said, you want to go skiing next winter. But I would like to go to the beach. Is that correct?"*

## What the Bible Says About Communication

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

**Proverbs 17:27** A truly wise person uses few words; a person with understanding is eventempered.

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

**Matthew 7:3** And why worry about a speck in the eye of a brother when you have a board in your own?

**Proverbs 20:19** A gossip tells secrets, so don't hang around with someone who talks too much.

**James 1:19** My dear brothers and sisters, be quick to listen, slow to speak and slow to get angry.

**Proverbs 18:13** What a shame, what folly, to give advice before listening to the facts!

## Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict

*" Don't find fault, find a remedy."*  
—Henry Ford

Every couple has differences and disagreements. But healthy couples find ways to resolve marital disputes without turning them into marital wars. Couples who accept and appreciate the fact that their partner has independent opinions tend to reach successful and satisfying resolutions.

When you have issues that are ongoing, use this Ten Step approach to deal with them. The exercise may boost your success in ending issues that resist resolution.

As simple as the Ten Step exercise looks, remember it is not a game. Take time to work on all of the steps. Focus on one issue at a time and you will discover new solutions to old problems.

- 1. Set a time and place for discussion.**
- 2. Define the problem or issue of disagreement.**
- 3. How do you each contribute to the problem?**
- 4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.**
- 5. Brainstorm. List all possible solutions.**
- 6. Discuss and evaluate these possible solutions.**
- 7. Agree on one solution to try.**
- 8. Agree on how each individual will work toward this solution.**
- 9. Set up another meeting. Discuss your progress.**
- 10. Reward each other as you each contribute toward the solution.**

## What the Bible Says About Conflict Resolution

**Colossians 3:19** And you husbands must love your wives and never treat them harshly.

**Ephesians 4:26** And "don't sin by letting anger gain control over you." Don't let the sun go down while you are still angry.

**Proverbs 14:29** Those who control their anger have great understanding; those with a hasty temper will make mistakes.

**Proverbs 17:14** Beginning a quarrel is like opening a floodgate, so drop the matter before a dispute breaks out.

**Ecclesiastes 7:8-9** Finishing is better than starting. Patience is better than pride. Don't be quicktempered, for anger is the friend of fools.

**Romans 12:19** Don't quarrel with anyone. Be at peace with everyone, just as much as possible.

**1 Thessalonians 5:11** So encourage each other and build each other up, just as you are already doing.

**Romans 12:17** Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Do things in such a way that everyone can see you are honorable.

## What the Bible Says About Self-Control

**Proverbs 25:28** A person without self-control is as defenseless as a city with broken-down walls.

**Galatians 5:22-23** But when the Holy Spirit controls our lives, he will produce this kind of fruit in us: love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, and self-control. Here there is no conflict with the law.

**2 Timothy 1:7** For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and self-discipline.

**Titus 2:2** Teach the older men to exercise self-control, to be worthy of respect, and to live wisely. They must have strong faith and be filled with love and patience.

**1 Peter 1:13** So think clearly and exercise self-control. Look forward to the special blessings that will come to you at the return of Jesus Christ.

**2 Peter 1:5,6** So make every effort to apply the benefits of these promises to your life. Then your faith will produce a life of moral excellence. A life of moral excellence leads to knowing God better. Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness.

## Ten Steps for Resolving Couple Conflict Worksheet

1. Schedule a specific place, date and time for a couple meeting within the next week. Allow at least 30 minutes.

Meeting Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

2. Select one important issue you would like to resolve. List the specific issue or problem for discussion below:

\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

3. How do you each contribute to the problem? Without blaming each other, list the things you each do that have not helped to resolve the problem.

**Male:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

**Female:**

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

4. List past attempts to resolve the issue that were not successful.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

5. Brainstorm—pool your new ideas and try to attain five possible solutions to the problem. Do not judge or criticize any of the suggestions at this point.

1) \_\_\_\_\_

2) \_\_\_\_\_

3) \_\_\_\_\_

4) \_\_\_\_\_

5) \_\_\_\_\_

6. **Discuss and evaluate each of these possible solutions. Be as objective as you can. Talk about how useful and appropriate each suggestion might be for resolving your issues.**

7. **After you have expressed your feelings, select one solution that you both agree to try.**

Trial Solution: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

8. **Agree how you will each work toward this solution. Be as specific as possible.**

Male: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

Female: \_\_\_\_\_  
\_\_\_\_\_

9. **Set a place, date and time within the next week for another meeting to discuss your progress.**

Meeting Place: \_\_\_\_\_

Date: \_\_\_\_\_ Time: \_\_\_\_\_

10. **Pay attention to each other as the week passes. If you notice your partner making a positive contribution toward the solution, praise his/her effort.**

**Future Weekly Meetings**

At your next weekly meeting, if you have not improved, go through Steps 5–8 and try a different solution. If you have shown improvement, use this exercise to overcome other problems.

**Make couple meetings a regular part of your weekly schedule.**



## OVERVIEW OF COUPLE & FAMILY MAP

*"In marrying another person, you are also marrying their family"*

When you get married, you are also marrying your partner and his/her family-of-origin. Especially in the early years of a marriage, marked differences in closeness and flexibility styles of your families can present problems for you as a couple.

In completing the PREPARE/ENRICH Questionnaire, you described your own couple relationship and family-of-origin. The two dimensions on the Couple and Family Map are closeness and flexibility. A description of each dimension follows.

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### CLOSENESS

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*"Once the realization is accepted that even between the closest human beings infinite distance must continue to exist, a wonderful living side by side can grow up."*

—Rainer Maria Rilke

Couple and family closeness focuses on the *emotional closeness you feel toward your partner or other members of your family*. It also examines the balance of separateness and togetherness in relationships. In healthy relationships, individuals enjoy time together and time spent apart. This balance is an important aspect of closeness. Families or couples that are too close may become too dependent. Too little closeness may lead couples and families to become disconnected, lacking in loyalty and closeness.

**Below we've described five levels of closeness:**

**Overly connected** relationships have an extreme amount of closeness and loyalty is demanded. Family members are very dependent on each other. These relationships focus too much on togetherness or "We".

**Very Connected, Connected** and **Somewhat Connected** relationships enjoy a balance of "We" and "I." There is a comfortable level of both emotional closeness and emotional separateness. Family members are interdependent and loyal to each other.

**Disconnected** relationships have an intense level of emotional separateness. Loyalty is lacking and members are too independent. The focus is unbalanced because there is too much focus on the “I”. In order for your relationship to grow, you must invest more in your marriage and less in operating as independent people. As Kahil Gibran writes:

*“Sing and dance together and be joyous  
but let each of you be alone —  
even as the strings of a lute are alone  
though they quiver with the same music.  
But let there be spaces in your togetherness  
and let the winds of the heavens dance between you.”*

## What the Bible Says About Family & Friends

**Proverbs 27:9** The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.

**1 Corinthians 15:33** Don't be fooled by those who say such things, for "bad company corrupts good character."

**Proverbs 13:20** Whoever walks with the wise will become wise; whoever walks with fools will suffer harm.

**Proverbs 14:7** Stay away from fools, for you won't find knowledge there.

**Proverbs 27:6** Wounds from a friend are better than many kisses from an enemy.

---

## FLEXIBILITY

---

*"Change is the one thing in life that is certain."*

—Anonymous

Flexibility focuses on a couple or family's ability to make and adjust to changes in roles and leadership in response to stress and crisis. Here again, balance is the key. Flexibility indicators include how you balance stability versus change, leadership, roles and discipline.

When faced with stress, families and couples with too much flexibility may become overly flexible; nobody is in charge. Families with too little flexibility may become inflexible. In such relationships, one leader makes most of the decisions and establishes the rules.

Couples and families should seek to maintain a balance between stability and change.

**Below we've described the five levels of flexibility:**

- **Overly Flexible** relationships are prone to too much change. They lack consistent leadership. Decision-making is impulsive, discipline is erratic and roles often shift dramatically. They tend to be overly flexible.
- **Very Flexible, Flexible and Somewhat Inflexible** relationships are open to change when necessary. Leadership and decision-making is equally shared. Parenting is democratic.
- **Inflexible** relationships resist change. One individual controls the leadership. Roles seldom change. Discipline is strict. The relationship is inflexible and unbending.

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### Couple and Family Types

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The Couple and Family Map defines 25 types of couple or family relationships. Each relationship type represents a different interaction pattern or style that develops over time. The 25 types or patterns are based on combining five levels of closeness and five levels of flexibility.

There are **9 balanced types, 12 mid-range types and 4 unbalanced types.**

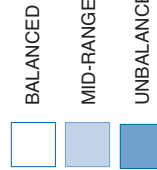
The **9 balanced types** are found in the balanced levels of both closeness and flexibility. These couples and families are considered the most functional and healthy. They are able to balance both separateness versus togetherness (closeness) and stability versus change (flexibility).



# Couple & Family Map

## C L O S E N E S S

	DISCONNECTED	SOMEWHAT CONNECTED	CONNECTED	VERY CONNECTED	OVERLY CONNECTED	INDICATORS OF FLEXIBILITY
<b>F</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Ability to change</li> <li>Leadership</li> <li>Role sharing</li> <li>Discipline</li> </ul>
<b>L</b>						
<b>E</b>						
<b>X</b>						
<b>I</b>						
<b>B</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Can change when necessary</li> <li>Shared leadership</li> <li>Role sharing</li> <li>Democratic discipline</li> </ul>
<b>I</b>						
<b>L</b>						
<b>I</b>						<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>Too little change</li> <li>Authoritarian leadership</li> <li>Roles seldom change</li> <li>Strict discipline</li> </ul>
<b>T</b>						
<b>Y</b>						
<b>INDICATORS OF CLOSENESS</b>	<b>UNBALANCED</b> Disconnected	<b>BALANCED</b> Somewhat Connected to Very Connected			<b>UNBALANCED</b> Overly Connected	
<b>Separateness (I) vs. Togetherness (We)</b>	Too Much (I) Separateness	Good I-We Balance			Too Much (We) Togetherness	
<b>Closeness</b>	Little Closeness	Moderate to High Closeness			Too Much Closeness	
<b>Loyalty</b>	Lack of Loyalty	Moderate to High Loyalty			Loyalty Demanded	
<b>Independence</b>	High Independence	Interdependent			High Dependency	



The **12 mid-range types** are balanced on one dimension (closeness or flexibility) and unbalanced on the other. These couples and families generally function well until they are under stress. Then they often tend to slip to a more unbalanced level.

The **4 unbalanced types** are found in the unbalanced levels of both closeness and flexibility. These couples and families are considered the most dysfunctional and unhealthy. They tend to be stuck at the extremes, being either “Disconnected” or “Overly connected” (closeness) and either “Inflexible” or “Overly flexible” (flexibility).

Although there is no absolute “best level” for any relationship, some relationships that always function at the unbalanced level may have problems. Ultimately, your goal is to find the type of couple pattern that is most mutually satisfying to you and your partner.

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### Your Couple and Family Type

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Knowing your Couple and Family Relationships will help you to explore similarities and differences. Your partner and you should discuss the following questions about your Couple Relationship and Families-of-Origin.

- a. What are the similarities and differences in your description of *your relationship*?
- b. How does your description of your couple relationship relate to *your Family-of-Origin (or current family)*?
- c. What are the similarities and differences in *your Family-of-Origin (or current family)*?
- d. What *do* you want to bring from your Family-of-Origin into your marriage?
- e. What *don't* you want to bring from your Family-of-Origin into your marriage?

## What the Bible Says About Personality Issues

**2 Peter 1:5-6** Knowing God leads to self-control. Self-control leads to patient endurance, and patient endurance leads to godliness. Godliness leads to love for other Christians, and finally you will grow to have genuine love for everyone.

**Proverbs 11:11-12** Upright citizens bless a city and make it prosper, but the talk of the wicked tears it apart. It is foolish to belittle a neighbor; a person with good sense remains silent.

**Proverbs 11:13** A gossip goes around revealing secrets, but those who are trustworthy can keep a confidence.

**Proverbs 12:22** The Lord hates those who don't keep their word, but he delights in those who do.

**Proverbs 25:19** Putting confidence in an unreliable person is like chewing with a toothache or walking on a broken foot.

**Proverbs 12:25** Worry weighs a person down; an encouraging word cheers a person up.

**Proverbs 17:22** A cheerful heart is good medicine, but a broken spirit saps a person's strength.

**Matthew 6:34** "So don't worry about tomorrow, for tomorrow will bring its own worries. Today's trouble is enough for today."

# FINANCIAL MANAGEMENT

*"The golden rule of budgeting: Spend less than you earn and save and invest the rest."*

Money is a powerful word that conjures up a number of emotions, among them lust, envy, fear, anger, hope, scorn and disgust. Little wonder then, that the most common source of disagreement in families in the United States is money. In fact, 37 percent of all married couples indicate that the number one problem in their marriage is money.

Budgeting doesn't mean having less; it means doing more with what you have. Unfortunately, many people avoid managing their money because they think it will mean they have less money to spend. In the long-run, tracking and managing your finances will result in peace of mind and a more comfortable and secure lifestyle.

## **A Word to the Wise About Saving:**

In addition to budgeting, savings are also important to any financial management plan. It's a simple fact: interest on savings compounds. Money invested in a safe place at a good rate of return grows at a steady rate. By saving a few hundred dollars a month over 30 to 40 years, a person can become a millionaire. It takes some planning and careful budgeting but the result is financial gain that can help dreams come true.

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## **What is Budgeting?**

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Budgeting is simply the process of allocating expenses on a regular basis. A good budget is simple, realistic and clear. It builds in some personal control for each family member. In creating a realistic budget, focus first on the most basic needs like food, housing and clothing. Second, focus on what you would like to purchase in the future.

The goal is to help you construct a workable budget. First, establish how much income you can count on, outline your expenditures by category and estimate how much money you need for each category.

The next step in budgeting is to set financial goals. With a target or goal in sight you'll be more motivated to work together to achieve your goals. You will be asked the following questions: What are your short-term goals? What are your long-term goals?

# BUDGET WORKSHEET

<u>INCOME:</u> (Take Home Pay)	<u>Current Budget</u>	<u>Future Plan</u>
Male: _____	_____	_____
Female: _____	_____	_____
Other Income: _____	_____	_____
<b>TOTAL INCOME:</b> _____	_____	_____
<b><u>EXPENSES:</u> (Monthly)</b>		
<i>Tithe:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Offerings:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Housing:</i>		
Rent or Mortgage: _____	_____	_____
Utilities: _____	_____	_____
Phone: _____	_____	_____
Cell Phone/Internet: _____	_____	_____
<i>Loans/Debt:</i>		
Car: _____	_____	_____
Personal: _____	_____	_____
Credit Cards: _____	_____	_____
<i>Transportation:</i>		
Gasoline: _____	_____	_____
Repairs/Maintenance: _____	_____	_____
<i>Food:</i>		
Food at home: _____	_____	_____
Food away from home: _____	_____	_____
<i>Health Care:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Insurance:</i>		
Car: _____	_____	_____
Home: _____	_____	_____
<i>Apparel:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Personal Goods:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Household Supplies:</i> _____	_____	_____
<i>Services:</i>		
Dry Cleaning/Laundry: _____	_____	_____
Garbage: _____	_____	_____
<i>Other expenditures:</i>		
Daycare: _____	_____	_____
Child Support: _____	_____	_____
Other: _____	_____	_____
<b>TOTAL EXPENSES:</b> _____	_____	_____
<b>Surplus or Deficit:</b> _____	_____	_____



## What the Bible Says About Finances & Money

**Luke 16:13** "No one can serve two masters. For you will hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and money."

**Proverbs 3:9-10** Honor the LORD with your wealth and with the best part of everything your land produces. Then he will fill your barns with grain, and your vats will overflow with the finest wine.

**Proverbs 13:11** Wealth from get-rich-quick schemes quickly disappears; wealth from hard work grows.

**Ecclesiastes 5:10** Those who love money will never have enough. How absurd to think that wealth brings true happiness!

**Hebrews 13:5** Stay away from the love of money; be satisfied with what you have. For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you."

**1 Timothy 6:6-10** Yet true religion with contentment is great wealth. After all, we didn't bring anything with us when we came into the world, and we certainly cannot carry anything with us when we die. So if we have enough food and clothing, let us be content. But people who long to be rich fall into temptation and are trapped by many foolish and harmful desires that plunge them into ruin and destruction. For the love of money is at the root of all kinds of evil.

**1 Timothy 6: 17-19** Tell those who are rich in this world not to be proud and not to trust in their money, which will soon be gone. But their trust should be in the living God, who richly gives us all we need for our enjoyment. Tell them to use their money to do good. They should be rich in good works and should give generously to those in need, always being ready to share with others whatever God has given them. By doing this they will be storing up their treasure as a good foundation for the future so that they may take hold of real life.

**Matthew 6:19-21** "Don't store up treasures here on earth where they can erode away or may be stolen. Store them in heaven where they will never lose their value and are safe from thieves. If your profits are in heaven, your heart will be there too."



## FINANCIAL GOALS

*"Thrift used to be a basic American virtue.  
Now the American virtue is to spend money."  
—David Brinkley*

### **Importance of Financial Goals:**

Couples argue about finances more than any other topic. Regardless of how much or how little money a couple has, deciding what to purchase and how to spend their money is problematic for most couples.

Typically, most couples focus on only short-term financial goals like: *"Today I will pay \$100 on my credit card bill."* But short-term goals also relate to achieving long-term goals like: *"We want to save enough to make a down payment on a house."*

One way to reduce the amount of conflict regarding finances is for you and your partner to discuss and decide on your short-term and long-term financial goals.

### **Identifying and Deciding on Your Financial Goals**

Each person should individually decide on their short-term and long-term financial goals and then share them with each other. *Short-term* goals should be what you can achieve in six months to one year. *Long term goals* should be achieved from one to five years. Remember, your goals should be realistic, clear and specific.

#### **Short-Term Goals:** (six months to one year)

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

#### **Long-Term Goals:** (one to five years)

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

*(detach this sheet to complete this exercise)*

# MAKING YOUR GOALS A REALITY

## Importance of Goals

Why are goals important? In countless ways, goals add meaning and purpose to our lives. Striving to achieve goals helps motivate us to focus beyond the immediate situation. When you share your goals with each other, you get to know each other better. Sharing common goals also increases the chance that you will achieve your goals. Working toward achieving your goals also makes you feel closer as a couple.

## Identifying Your Goals

Each person needs to first identify their personal, couple and family goals. Then you need to discuss your separate goals and agree on which ones to give priority to over the next year or so. Remember, the goals should be specific and clearly stated.

### Personal Goals:

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

### Couple Goals:

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

### Family Goals:

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

### **Achieving One Specific Goal using the CHANGE Model:**

Once you have identified and discussed your goals, select one goal that you would like to focus on now. Then use the CHANGE Model below to identify the steps you need to follow to achieve this goal.

Commit yourselves to a specific goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

Habits .....break old and start a new behavior:

\_\_\_\_\_

Action .....take one step at a time:

\_\_\_\_\_

Never give up .....realize that lapses might occur:

\_\_\_\_\_

Goal-oriented .....focus on the positive:

\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluate and reward yourself:

\_\_\_\_\_

*Good luck on achieving your Goal!!*

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

### Couple Goals:

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

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

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Commit yourselves to a specific goal:

\_\_\_\_\_

Habits .....break old and start a new behavior:

\_\_\_\_\_

Action .....take one step at a time:

\_\_\_\_\_

Never give up .....realize that lapses might occur:

\_\_\_\_\_

Goal-oriented .....focus on the positive:

\_\_\_\_\_

Evaluate and reward yourself:

\_\_\_\_\_

*Good luck on achieving your Goal!!*

## What the Bible Says About Divorce

**Matthew 19:4-6** "Haven't you read the Scriptures?" Jesus replied. "They record that from the beginning 'God made them male and female.' And he said, 'This explains why a man leaves his father and mother and is joined to his wife, and the two are united into one.' Since they are no longer two but one, let no one separate them, for God has joined them together."

**Malachi 2:16** "For I hate divorce!" says the LORD, the God of Israel. "It is as cruel as putting on a victim's bloodstained coat," says the LORD Almighty. "So guard yourself; always remain loyal to your wife."

## What the Bible Says About Health Issues

**1 Corinthians 6:19-20** Don't you know that your body is the temple of the Holy Spirit, who lives in you and was given to you by God? You do not belong to yourself, for God bought you with a high price. So you must honor God with your body.

**Ephesians 5: 18** Don't be drunk with wine, because that will ruin your life. Instead, let the Holy Spirit fill and control you.

**Psalms 38:3** Because of your anger, my whole body is sick; my health is broken because of my sins.

**Proverbs 3:7-8** Don't be impressed with your own wisdom. Instead, fear the LORD and turn your back on evil. Then you will gain renewed health and vitality.

**Proverbs 10:27** Fear of the LORD lengthens one's life, but the years of the wicked are cut short.

**Proverbs 15:30** A cheerful look brings joy to the heart; good news makes for good health.

**Daniel 1:14-16** So the attendant agreed to Daniel's suggestion and tested them for ten days. At the end of the ten days, Daniel and his three friends looked healthier and better nourished than the young men who had been eating the food assigned by the king. So after that, the attendant fed them only vegetables instead of the rich foods and wines.

## What the Bible Says About Parenting

**Psalms 127:3** Children are a gift from the LORD; they are a reward from him.

**Proverbs 22:6** Teach your children to choose the right path, and when they are older, they will remain upon it.

**Proverbs 13:24** If you refuse to discipline your children, it proves you don't love them; if you love your children, you will be prompt to discipline them.

**Deuteronomy 6:6-7** And you must commit yourselves wholeheartedly to these commands I am giving you today. Repeat them again and again to your children. Talk about them when you are at home and when you are away on a journey, when you are lying down and when you are getting up again.

**Ephesians 6:1-2** Children, obey your parents because you belong to the Lord, for this is the right thing to do. "Honor your father and mother." This is the first of the Ten Commandments that ends with a promise.

**Colossians 3:21** Fathers, don't aggravate your children. If you do, they will become discouraged and quit trying.

**Exodus 20:12** "Honor your father and mother. Then you will live a long, full life in the land the LORD your God will give you."

**Leviticus 19:32** "Show your fear of God by standing up in the presence of elderly people and showing respect for the aged. I am the LORD."

**Matthew 19:13-15** Some children were brought to Jesus so he could lay his hands on them and pray for them. The disciples told them not to bother him. But Jesus said, "Let the children come to me. Don't stop them! For the Kingdom of Heaven belongs to such as these." And he put his hands on their heads and blessed them before he left.

## What the Bible Says About Sexuality

**Proverbs 5:18-20** Let your wife be a fountain of blessing for you. Rejoice in the wife of your youth. She is a loving doe, a graceful deer. Let her breasts satisfy you always. May you always be captivated by her love.

**1 Corinthians 7:3** The husband should not deprive his wife of sexual intimacy, which is her right as a married woman, nor should the wife deprive her husband.

**1 Corinthians 7:4-5** The wife gives authority over her body to her husband, and the husband also gives authority over his body to his wife. So do not deprive each other of sexual relations.



**Hebrews 13:4** Give honor to marriage, and remain faithful to one another in marriage. God will surely judge people who are immoral and those who commit adultery.

**Ephesians 5:28** In the same way, husbands ought to love their wives as they love their own bodies. For a man is actually loving himself when he loves his wife.

**Song of Solomon 7:10-12** I am my lover's, the one he desires. Come, my love, let us go out into the fields and spend the night among the wildflowers. Let us get up early and go out to the vineyards. Let us see whether the vines have budded, whether the blossoms have opened, and whether the pomegranates are in flower. And there I will give you my love.

## What the Bible Says About Spiritual Beliefs

**Psalms 23:1** The Lord is my Shepherd I shall not want.

**Psalms 27:1** The Lord is my light and my salvation – so why should I be afraid? The Lord protects me from danger – so why should I tremble?

**2 Timothy 1:7** For God has not given us a spirit of fear and timidity, but of power, love, and selfdiscipline.

**Hebrews 13:5,6** For God has said, "I will never fail you. I will never forsake you." That is why we can say with confidence, "The Lord is my helper, so I will not be afraid. What can mere mortals do to me?"

**1 Peter 5:6,7** So humble yourselves under the mighty power of God, and in his good time he will honor you. Give all your worries and cares to God, for he cares about what happens to you.

**Deuteronomy 31:8** "Do not be afraid or discouraged, for the Lord is the one who goes before you. He will be with you; he will neither fail you nor forsake you."

**Matthew 10:39** If you cling to your life, you will lose it; but if you give it up for me, you will find it.



# EMPOWERING COUPLES

## Building on Your Strengths

David H. Olson & Amy K. Olson

"Empowering Couples is the most helpful workbook on strengthening marriage I have read. This is a user-friendly book. Empowering Couples is a book you will want to keep and refer to throughout your marriage." *Steve Beinre, Foundations Newsletter, 2000*

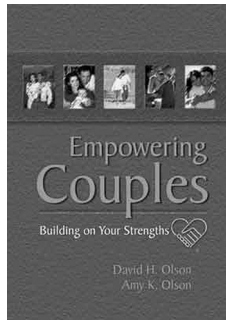
### Every Couple Should Have One:

Based on the **PREPARE/ENRICH** Program, ten chapters focus on important topic areas for couples including: *Communication, Conflict Resolution, Role Relationship, Managing Finances, Sexual Relationship, Children & Parenting and Spiritual Beliefs.*

❖ Each chapter contains new ideas and suggestions not provided in our current program.

❖ Couples can use it on their own to get ideas about how to empower their relationship.

❖ When couples take either the **PREPARE** or **ENRICH** Program, they can use *Empowering Couples* as a reminder of how to maintain their strengths.



### Self Help Book for Couples

The foundation of *Empowering Couples* is based on the **PREPARE/ENRICH** Program. The book is built on over 20 years of clinical experience and research with couples.

### Goals of Empowering Couples:

- ❖ To identify couple strengths.
- ❖ To build more couple strengths.
- ❖ To identify some stumbling blocks.
- ❖ To develop communication and conflict resolution skills.

### Overview of Chapters

Each chapter Contains:

- ❖ Couple Quiz on Chapter Topic
- ❖ Strengths of Happy Couples
- ❖ Common Stumbling blocks for couples
- ❖ Stepping stones for improving problem areas
- ❖ Couple discussion exercises

## Turn Your Stumbling Blocks Into Stepping Stones!

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