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Premarital preparation course
Intro 1 What is this course about?

1. Did you say we should do this course before getting engaged?
If possible, yes. Here’s the thing: in our experience two out of ten couples who do this course end up deciding to actually not get married, or to delay their plans. It is much easier to do this without the additional pain having to break off an engagement.

No wise person would commit himself to living in a strange land without knowing something about what to expect and the difficulties he would inevitably face. No one commits himself to building a house without checking he has the resources to complete it. Yet loads of young men and women take these same unbelievable risks when it comes to engagement and marriage.

Although the thought of a poor or disastrous marriage is the furthest thing from your mind right now, the tragedy is that many marriages that started out just as yours will, have ended in divorce courts or grown slowly cold until the marriage is nothing more than two strangers living together in the same house. Although even the ‘perfect match’ will need a lot of hard work to make their marriage a success, if you choose to marry someone to whom you not reasonably well suited then a successful marriage will be a major challenge.

2. It’s about making a huge decision...
I wonder how many decisions we make every day. What clothes shall I wear? What shall I have for breakfast? What time shall I leave the house? And on it goes all day. I reckon we make hundreds of decisions every day. But some decisions are bigger than others – think of the person who gets paid a huge salary just to make the right decision every now and again for the future of the corporation, because one decision can win or lose a million dollars. And here’s the punch line: choosing a marriage partner is a massive decision that can make or break two lives. Choosing a marriage partner is a titanic decision. Marriage is for life. It affects every day emotions and happiness, your career, and your children and their children. Are you getting it? The stakes of marriage are really, really high. And if you choose wrong, the bible says that divorce is not an option.
3. It’s about choosing right...

It is possible to make the right choice. But it is wise to draw God into the decision-making progress as he not only knows both of you intimately, but he is eager to share with you his will for your lives: “Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understand and firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5v17 Amplified version).

4. It’s about underpinning your relationship...

This course scores high marks in deepening your love for each other. Many couples testify that they got to know each other more doing this course than they had in all of their previous time together. I guarantee you won’t fail to learn something new about your partner.

Without doing a course such as this, one usually goes into engagement and marriage knowing very little about the other’s assumptions and expectations of marriage and you naturally assume that you are both expecting the same thing! But the word ‘covenant’ comes from the word ‘agreement’, so it is important to get to a place of agreement if you are going to be able to walk together, and unless you know what to expect then you will probably find yourselves crashing around in the dark.

During this short course we take a look at what you each feel is the meaning of marriage, your respective expectations, your unique roles, and a few other specifics that are often flash-points for difficulty. The aim is to help you address as many things as possible up front, and to set you up for a great engagement and marriage. You will also form a friendship and trust with the couple that are mentoring you through the course which will also be useful once you are into your marriage.

5. It’s about maximizing the romance...

We are yet to meet a couple who have done this course who have felt that it stole the thunder from the actual moment of getting engaged. In fact, you get two-for-the-price-of-one because he needs to ask you if you would be willing to do this course with him (which is a pretty swoony moment), and then, when you are least expecting it, sometime during or after the course, he actually asks you to marry him! Double the romance. And trust me, because this course will give you confidence about the rightness of you being together forever, when you do get engaged you will experience much greater and deeper excitement and joy. You will know nothing of those nagging fears and doubts that can follow hard on the heels of getting engaged!

6. But what if we are already engaged?

No worries. Just do this course as an engaged couple. But please do keep an open mind in case you have made a wrong decision.
7. 7 biblical reasons to do this course

1. For which of you, intending to build a tower, does not first sit down and count the cost, checking whether he has enough to finish it (Lk 14v28). This course will assist you in assessing whether you are making the correct decision to get engaged, and highlight some of the costs (not just financial) that will be incurred on the journey to a successful godly marriage.

2. Through wisdom a house is built, and by understanding it is established (Pr 24v3). This course will feed you with wisdom and understanding.

3. People who isolate themselves seek their own desires; they rage against wise judgement (Pr 18v1). This course will prevent you from isolating yourself and draws in the perspective of others.

4. Where there is no counsel the people fall; but in a multitude of counsellors there is safety (Pr 11v14). This course will provide you with the counsel of others.

5. The simple believe every word. But the prudent man considers well his steps (Ps 14v15). This course will destroy some of the myths of marriage, and help you to carefully consider your steps to the altar.

6. Jesus spoke of building a life on either rock or sand (Mt 7v24). This course will help you build on a solid foundation.

7. Unless the Lord builds the house those who labour do so in vain (Ps 127v1-2). God is the creator of marriage. This course presents godly ways of building a relationship.

Intro 2 How does the course work?

1. The ingredients of this course
For a cake to rise and be tasty, it needs the right ingredients. For a relationship to rise into a tasty marriage, it also needs the right ingredients....like these ones:

\[
\text{The Couple (considering engagement / marriage)} + \text{The Mentor Couple (older, wiser married couple)} + \text{This booklet and a weekly meeting together} = \text{Clarity on whether the couple should get engaged / married}
\]
2. **What is the role of your mentor couple?**

Their aim is to become your trusted friends on this journey, to guide you through the course, listen to your answers and sometimes offer some advice. But the emphasis is on you doing most of the talking. They are also on the look-out for potential flashpoints which if left unresolved may cause problems. If they feel that you should either delay getting married or not get married, then they must have the freedom to tell you that. Please read Appendix O which will help you better understand their role.

3. **Your commitment to the course**

You will get out of the sessions what you are prepared to put into them. Do your homework diligently. Some homework is done together and some separately, and then you review your answers at the next session.

**Concurrently reading another marriage book**

We suggest that the mentor couple set you the task of reading together a respected book on marriage, (to be discussed in the sessions).

4. **Length of the course**

The course involves about 6 sessions depending on the pace that the material is covered.

**Intro 3 Reality check: the devil hates marriage**

**A. Satanic conspiracy against marriage**

The scary thing is that no one gets married thinking that it will not work, but statistics in most parts of the world state that 50% of marriages end in divorce, and out of the remaining 50% many marriages are not satisfying. What’s going on? How on earth can most people on earth be making such a mess of things? I mean, the incompetence of mankind with marriage is massive! Are we just a bunch of imbeciles or is something else going on that we might not know about? There sure is. Satan has set his sights on destroying marriage.
B. God adores marriage

Anything that God likes the devil hates…and God loves marriage. Think about it: God invented marriage and gave it the prime position in the opening chapters of the bible. God established marriage on the earth long before establishing governments, or even the Church. Furthermore, history not only begins with a marriage, but it will end with the Great Marriage of Jesus to his Church. And the clincher – Jesus chose to do his first miracle at a wedding in Cana - remember, the one where he turned water into wine just to save the bridegroom embarrassment on his wedding day? That is how serious God is about marriage. Here are four reasons to account for God’s passion for and Satan’s loathing of marriage:

1. Because marriage reflects the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph 5v25). The Church is the collective name for all the Christians on earth now, and that have ever lived, and who will live in the future before Jesus returns. And remember, God’s ultimate purpose of creation is to reveal Himself to all people that they might repent of their sin and join God’s family – the Church. Because this is God’s ultimate goal, God invented marriage to act as an advert, a visual aid, a kind of mirror to reflect and reveal something of the marriage-like relationship that he desires with every person.

When I was eighteen years old, I had some friends called Pete and Caroline who had recently got married… and I envied their amazing relationship. I was chatting this through with an older pastor called John saying, “they are so lucky that they can be with each other 24/7 as best friends!” And John replied, “Yes. Isn’t marriage amazing? But it is not as amazing as the relationship that you and Jesus have. He is not only with you 24/7, but he is the perfect partner and friend, loving you unconditionally forever!” Now, many years later, I can remember this conversation like it was yesterday because a good marriage had taught me something about Jesus’ amazing love for me. What a great advert marriage can be for Christianity!

Now then, please put on your fake horns and pretend that you are the devil: you exist to prevent people from becoming Christians, so this marriage business is a major problem for you. You want to do everything in your power to mess-up the advertising campaign of the opposition, don’t you? So, you try to turn it around so marriage actually becomes a bad advert for a relationship with God.

2. Because marriage reflects something of the character of God (Gen 1v27). Male and female are both made in the image of God, and children in a good marriage experience firsthand the beauty and benefits of manly and womanly parenting. Therefore, good Mums and Dads teach us something of the parental nature of God.
Back on with those horns again: you are not well pleased, are you? I remember the scene in the James Bond film *The Man with the Golden Gun* when the bad guy is in a Hall of Mirrors, and in every mirror he sees the image of his archenemy 007. In a psychotic frenzy he opens fire on every mirror he can see. And Satan is just like that: he maintains a constant barrage of bullets against every *marriage mirror* that he can see.

3. **Because marriage is the basic building block of society (Gen 1v28).** God instructed Adam and Eve to fill the earth through having children and to rule over the earth. God set up marriage and *children from marriage* as the means to a stable, godly rule in the earth. Marriage is the basic building block of a structured and peaceful society. When marriage breaks down, raising of children breaks down, and disobedience, disrespect, disorder, destruction all increase as godless anarchy ensues.

And if you are the devil your favourite three hobbies are stealing, killing and destroying (Jn 10v10), so you like the thought of an anarchist society very much indeed, don’t you? If you can disrupt marriage, then you can disrupt society, and a world in anarchy is not a good environment for people to submit to God and become Christians.

4. **Because God intends marriage to be a Christian Producing Machine.** Malachi 2v14-15 says that God’s specific intent for marriage is “to produce godly offspring”. Healthy, God-centred marriages are the best environment to produce children that adore God and his ways.

So if you are the devil, a new generation of God-following kids is a complete nightmare for you. The very thing that you want to stop is happening via marriage!

*Oh no! Red Alert! Defcon 5! Instruct your demons to put most other jobs on hold and to direct the bulk of their fiendish energies to the destruction of marriages and the perversion of male and female sexuality!*

C. **How does all this affect you?**

Do not fear – God is infinitely more powerful than the devil and in God’s strength, with godly preparation, you can have a great marriage. But, it does underline the seriousness of marriage, doesn’t it? And the huge importance of checking out as thoroughly as possible whether you are compatible enough to get married.

**Intro 4 The three foundations of marriage**

Key verse: Genesis 2v24: *For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and they will become one flesh.*

Premarital preparation course
These are the three pillars on which a healthy marriage is based.

1. **Leave**
   Definition: to relinquish all attachments and let go. Your partner needs no rival or threat. He/she must be your priority.
   - Physically: you will need your own home and ‘space’.
   - Emotionally: up until now, it is likely that your parents have been your prime source of emotional affirmation. Once married, after God the prime source of affirmation should be your spouse.
   - Spiritually: you need to see your new family as a spiritually unit under God, with the husband providing leadership for his wife.

2. **Cleave**
   Definition: to be united or joined to. (No guys, I didn’t say cleavage I said cleave).
   - There is a physical, emotional and spiritual joining that happens in marriage.
   - God joins together and only death should separate. ‘Uniting’ is not just a ‘one-off’ on the wedding day, but rather a permanent connection.

3. **Become One Flesh**
   - The oneness of marriage is referred to by Paul in Ephesians 5 as a spiritual mystery – how exciting! ‘One’ is how God views a married couple, but day-to-day oneness is a process. The glory and humility of the wife and husband is that they can only be complete with their spouse. Fulfilment depends on the other.
   - However, it is a mistake to look to your spouse for all your needs. God is the ultimate source of our identity and security, and no matter how good your spouse is, they will not be able to provide all your needs.
   - Also, friends will continue to play a vital role in your lives once you are married. Compatibility will not mean that each of you have to share the identical interests to the other. For example, if one of the wife’s passions is sky-diving, but her husband is scared of heights, then she needs to have friends to share this interest with. And so, her friends are providing ‘fulfilment’ to her in an area that her husband can’t. No problem.
SESSION 1: WHY AM I GETTING MARRIED?

The chapter to check you are in the zone…

Please answer the following questions on your own and do not share your answers with each other before the first session. Take your time to answer the questions thoroughly. Please come to the first session with your answers written down in paragraph or point form to help you share your answers verbally.

1. How would you define marriage?

2. What will you get out of marriage that you would not get by remaining unmarried?

3. Why do you want to marry your partner and not somebody else?

4. What are you bringing into this marriage that will help it work?

5. What goals do you have for your marriage? Please write them under the following headings:

   Family: How many kids do you want to have and when? What kind of ‘atmosphere’ do you hope to have in your family? How is your relationship with the potential in-laws? Is anyone opposed to your relationship?

   Career and study: What career path are you pursuing? Are you looking to continue your education? What will happen when you have children?


   Material possessions and finance: What is your expectation of houses and cars? Is one of you more extravagant than the other? Is one of you more naturally generous than the other?

   Spiritual: Do you share the same absolute values about God? Do you have similar expression of Christianity? What church will you attend? Will you both be happy there?
SESSION 2: WHO DOES WHAT?

The chapter about headship and submission...

In a society where terms like "male chauvinism" and "women's lib" are bandied about, there is often confusion and emotion that accompanies phrases like “husbands are the head of their wives” and “wives submit to your husbands”. With acknowledgements to Wayne Grudem for much of the following, here are four truths from the bible regarding this issue:

1. **Men and women are equal**: Genesis 1v26-28 declares men and women as equal beneficiaries of divine image and earthly rule. In Acts 2 the Holy Spirit was poured out on all flesh. 1 Corinthians 12v7 stresses the giving of gifts to each. Galatians 3v28 says there is neither male nor female in Christ.

2. **But men and women have different roles**: Equality and identity must not be confused. We are equal but we have different roles. Having different roles does not mean we are not equal. The trinity is a beautiful example of being equal in personhood and importance, but different in role and authority.

3. **The problem with society today**: Imagine a man striving to gain identity, self-worth and honour by achieving things. He would need to learn that his worth does not come from doing but from being. Similarly, pressured by the same fallen society, and confusing identity with role, some women strive to attain equality - which they already have - by aspiring to male roles sometimes saying, “I can do anything a man can do”. God has not created men to do everything that women can do. And he has not created women to do everything men can do. But he has created us both 100% equal.

4. **Headship** - a role unique to men: Eve sinned, yet God came to Adam. The bible speaks of the “sin of Adam”. This was not because woman bore no responsibility, but that man bore primary responsibility for all things in the garden, including sin. Ephesians 5 speaks of the husband as the head of the family.
Read this passage of scripture then answer the questions. Please do this next section separately, but once done, please share and discuss together before meeting with your mentors.

21 Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. 22 Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. 23 For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Savior. 24 Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. 25 Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her 26 to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, 27 and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. 28 In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. 29 After all, no one ever hated his own body, but he feeds and cares for it, just as Christ does the church— 30 for we are members of his body. 31 “For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh.” 32 This is a profound mystery—but I am talking about Christ and the church. 33 However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband (Eph 5v21-33)

1. Drawing your answer from V21, what is the reason and context for submission?

2. Would you agree that the primary instruction to the wife is to submit, and the husband to love?

3. What principles of submission can the wife learn from how the church submits to Christ?

4. What principles of love can the husband learn from how Christ loves the church?

5. For the woman to answer: what things could your husband do to make submission difficult? What things could your husband do to make submission a joy?

6. For the man to answer: what things could your wife do to make leading her difficult? What things could your wife do to make leading her a joy?

7. Thinking in terms of the husbands headship and the wife’s submission, write down some practical roles and responsibilities that you imagine each of you will have within the marriage.
SESSION 3 WHAT’S IN IT FOR ME...I MEAN YOU?

The chapter about needs and expectations...

Take 4 separate sheets of paper and title them:
1. Social
2. Emotional
3. Physical
4. Spiritual

Now draw a line down the centre dividing each piece of paper into two columns. On the left hand side, write down as many needs or expectations that you feel you will have of your partner when you are married (please be specific). They can be simple or elaborate. For example:

A husband might expect his wife to:
- Always be at the door when he arrives home
- Not get a job
- Have sex with him whenever he wants it
- Let him play touch-rugby with his mates every Saturday

A wife might expect her husband to:
- Always accompany her to her parent’s house
- Have Christmas at her parent’s house every year
- To be the spiritual leader in the home
- To stay late at parties rather than always trying to sneak home at 10.30pm to avoid the dancing

Once you have done this, switch papers with your partner. Then, on the right-hand side of the paper, write E or D or I in response to each expectation that your partner has of your (E stands for easy, D for difficult and I for impossible).

When you have done this, return your papers to each other and discuss together. Then, bring your papers along to the next session where you will feedback to your mentors, and discuss any D’s or I’s.
SESSION 4 WALKING THE TALK
The chapter about communication and conflict resolution…

Communication

Communication is the art of expressing your thoughts and feelings, to hear and be heard, to understand and be understood and to know and be known. It is a vital skill for a healthy marriage.

Before meeting with your mentors, consider and discuss the following questions with your partner:

- Is your strength talking or listening?
- Does your partner agree with your answer?
- Is this the same strength as your partner?
- How does this affect the communication dynamic of your relationship?
- In what ways can you become a better listener and communicator?
- How can you create space for each other to talk and be heard on the issues that matter to you both?
- Which topics do you avoid talking about? Why?

Resolving conflict

The fact that you will have conflicts is undisputed - even serious ones. The issue is how you will manage your conflict. If you can get good at resolving them, then you will have built a strong foundation for your relationship. Marriages break down because of irreconcilable differences. Therefore, the ability to resolve differences and compromising appropriately is an essential skill to a joyful and effective marriage.

Most people react in one of two ways in a conflict situation. Are you a rhino or a porcupine? When you've been wronged or hurt in some way, do you mount an aggressive charge or roll into a defensive ball? Maybe you react some other way?
Before meeting with your mentors, consider and discuss the following questions with your partner:

1. What sort of things do you conflict over?

2. How do you work through these conflicts?

3. Look up these scriptures and write down any points that apply to resolving conflict:
   - Luke 6v37-42
   - Ephesians 4v26-29
   - Proverbs 15v1 and 29v11
   - 1 Corinthians 13v1-13

**Three simple steps to resolving conflict**

1. Identify the point of difference and commit to work to an agreement. Choose to make ‘the difference’ smaller than the relationship.

2. Take it in turns to listen to and appreciate each other’s point of view. **Don’t** interrupt when your partner is speaking. **Do** then repeat back to them what you feel they are trying to communicate.

3. Assess the size and importance of the disagreement and work towards a compromise if necessary. Remember, not all conflicts are as important to resolve as they may appear at first.

**Action points**

1. What is the one main thing you can each do to communicate better?
2. Read Appendix A and B for further information on communication and conflict.
SESSION 5 LOVING OUR DIFFERENCES

The chapter about appreciating our differences...

Love languages

Generally speaking, people are not very skilled in loving. All too often we express our love to others in the way that we think is meaningful because it is the way that we ourselves love to be loved. However, this expression of love does not always work for the other person. By understanding each others ‘love language’, you will become more skilled in loving each other in a way that actually makes your partner feel loved.

It is impossible to over-emphasize the importance of love in marriage. Those who feel loved in turn feel secure, confident, and able to give love. We are convinced that the best love manual in the world is the bible because God is love - he is the expert.

In this session, we are going to explore the art of communicating love. We will begin to answer the questions:

- What does loving someone really look like?
- How can we be assured that our love is actually being felt by the other person?

There seem to be five primary ways of showing love, and everyone seems to develop a leaning towards one or two of these five ways of giving and receiving love. These are words of encouragement, acts of service, gift giving, quality time and physical touch.

Read about these five love languages on the next page, and then take the short Love Language Questionnaire. The following concepts have been taken from The Five Love Languages, an excellent book by Gary Chapman (Northfield Publishing, 1995).
1. Words of Encouragement

If your love language is words of encouragement, it means you feel loved when someone speaks words of encouragement to you. You will also tend to think that others feel loved when you speak words of encouragement to them. But remember that if this is not their love language then they may not feel as loved as you would expect. You need to learn to speak their ‘language’.

2. Acts of Service

If this is your love language, you feel loved when someone does an act of kindness for you, such as tidying the house or doing a job for you. Conversely, you will feel unloved and let down if someone does not complete a job for you. You will tend to assume that others feel loved by you when you do an act of service for them.

3. Gift Giving

You will feel especially loved when you receive a small gift, or a card. Also, you will tend to express your love by giving things to others. If the wife’s language is gift giving, husbands make sure you remember the flowers on the anniversary. But if her language is quality time, you had better take the day off work because flowers alone will not do the trick!

4. Quality Time

You will feel loved by a person spending time with you, and listening attentively to you. It is not really just watching the TV together, but rather about investing yourself in the other person and giving them your full attention.

5. Physical Touch and Closeness

You will feel loved through holding hands, hugging, standing close and so on. This love language is not primarily about sexual fulfilment, rather physical affection.

Love Language Questionnaire

Rate the sentences 1 to 5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your future spouse (FS). 5 represents what you most appreciate and 1 represents what you least appreciate in each group. No individual grouping can have a number repeated.
**Group One**

A ___ Your FS says, “You did a great job on that. I appreciate it.”

B ___ Your FS unexpectedly fixes something of yours that is broken

C ___ Your FS brings you a treat from the shop

D ___ Your FS invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat

E ___ Your FS makes a point of hugging you before you leave the house

**Group Two**

A ___ Your FS tells you how much he/she appreciates you

B ___ Your FS volunteers to do the dishes telling you to relax

C ___ Your FS brings you flowers / chocolates, just because they care

D ___ Your FS invites you to sit down and talk about your day

E ___ Your FS often tousles your hair

**Group Three**

A ___ Your FS tells others about a recent success you had

B ___ Your FS cleans out your car

C ___ Your FS surprises you with an unexpected gift

D ___ Your FS surprises you with a special afternoon trip somewhere

E ___ Your FS holds your hand as you walk around the shops

**Group Four**

A ___ Your FS praises you about one of your special qualities

B ___ Your FS makes lunch for you

C ___ Your FS surprises you by buying you your favourite magazine

D ___ Your FS plans a special night out for the two of you

E ___ Your FS often stands by your side with their arm around you

**Group Five**

A ___ Your FS tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you

B ___ Your FS fills out your tedious tax return for you

C ___ Your FS sends you something special through the mail
D ___ Your FS unexpectedly kidnaps you for lunch
E ___ Your FS is physically affectionate to you in public

Transfer your scores from above to this table below:

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Encouraging words</th>
<th>Acts of service</th>
<th>Gift giving</th>
<th>Quality time</th>
<th>Touch</th>
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<td>D</td>
<td>E</td>
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<tr>
<td>Group 2</td>
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Bring your score sheets to the session ready to discuss the exercise, the results, and the questions below.

1. Do you agree with the top two as being your primary love languages?
2. Which ways have you been expressing love to your partner?
3. How can you better love your partner in line with their primary love languages?

Appreciating our differences

Separately, please complete the questionnaire on the next page. Mark the line with your own preferences first, then add your partners at the end. Then share your answers with each other.

Are there any surprises?

Discuss how these differences can be used for good in a relationship and also consider where there may be weakness in the relationship if you are too different or too similar in some areas.
Place initials on the line at the point that you feel represents how you both are:

For example: (P = PJ, A = Ashleigh)

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<thead>
<tr>
<th></th>
<th>Relaxation</th>
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<td>Time with others</td>
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<td><strong>Punctuality</strong></td>
<td>Have time in hand</td>
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<td>Cut it fine</td>
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<td><strong>Sleeping</strong></td>
<td>Go to bed early</td>
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<td><strong>Sport</strong></td>
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<td>Uninterested</td>
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<td><strong>Tidiness</strong></td>
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<td><strong>Telephone</strong></td>
<td>Talk at length</td>
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<td>Talk briefly</td>
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<td><strong>T.V.</strong></td>
<td>Watch a lot</td>
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<td><strong>Other Issues</strong></td>
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SESSION 6 flash points: FINANCE, IN LAWS, AND SEX

The chapter about the Big Three...

These are three areas that if not handled well can cause tension in marriage. Please discuss and answer the questions, or comment on statements together, ready to share your answers and comments with your mentor couple.

Finance

1Tim 6v10 says, ‘the love of money is a root of all sorts of evil, and some by longing for it have wandered away from the faith and pierced themselves with many griefs’. Did you see it? If not handled well, money can bring grief on your relationship.

Who should handle the money?

Ultimately with the God-given role of headship within the family, the husband needs to have the final say with finance, but a wise husband will ‘team it’ with his wife as much as possible. One or other of the spouses may be better skilled at dealing with the day-to-day details of money, accounts... but this should not result in ‘control’ or an exclusion of the other partner in the decision making process. NB. There should be no money secrets between you.

Questions

1. Are you a saver or a spender?
2. How does this affect your relationship?
3. Do either of you have any major financial goals? (e.g. purchase a flat next year, pay off debts)
4. Who will run the finances?
5. Will you do a monthly budget?
6. Will you have a joint account or separate accounts? What are the pros and cons of your approach?
7. Who will sign the cheques?
8. What about savings?
9. What about giving?

In laws

Whether you like it or not, your perception of marriage will have been influenced by the relationships in your family. No family is perfect and all families express their values differently. One of the most exciting things about marriage is choosing which of these values to bring into your own new family, and which to leave out.

1. How good is your relationship with your family and your partner’s family?
2. Has there been any resistance to your relationship?
3. Are either of you ‘too close’ to your existing family in a way that may intrude on your future marriage?
4. What aspects of your parents or other marriages do you most admire and would want to copy and not copy?

Some hints on relating to in-laws

- Take a positive view of your in-law relationships. Try to move beyond any stereotypes of in-law relationships. Treat your in-laws with the same consideration and respect that you give your parents.

- Recognize the importance of your partner’s family early in your marriage. Look for ways of communicating appreciation for them.

- Consider the needs of your in-laws at this time in their lives. They are losing a child, or at least feel like they are! Accept the fact that parents cannot automatically stop being interested in and concerned about their children just because the latter got married, and that parental advice and support can be a wonderful blessing. When your in-laws show an interest in some area of your life and give advice, respond just as you would if a friend was giving you some advice. If it is good advice, thank them for their concern and heed it. If it is not what you want to do, thank them for their suggestion but continue what you had planned to do in the first place. Remember the difference between a suggestion and manipulation. A suggestion allows the receiver to decide what to with the suggestion while manipulation requires a certain response. Be wary of discussing your disagreements and your spouse’s faults with either of your families. Present a united front to any attempts by parents or in-laws to interfere. Be respectful yet firm.

Sex

Sex has to be one of God’s greatest inventions. God’s plan is for sex to be a phenomenal part of a marriage, providing the couple with emotional and physical highs, loads of fun, and a deep sense of love and oneness.

Be happy with your wife and find your joy with the girl you married – pretty and graceful as a deer – let her charms keep you happy, let her surround you with her love (Prov 5v18-19 GNB).

Of course, the devil is out to distort and corrupt any good thing that God has made, and sex is no exception. Because God says that sex is designed only for the context of marriage, the devil’s plan is to get you having sex outside of marriage, and then to minimize the amount of sex that you have inside marriage.

The physical relationship before marriage

Scripture tells us that the commitment of marriage is the prerequisite for sex. In terms of the physical side of the relationship, what is permissible during engagement?

People tend to either have little or no self control (unfortunately this is usually the norm probably in our cultural context) and can end up with major regret, or they are bound up in a rigid legalistic approach to purity based on do’s and don’ts and the corresponding guilt and condemnation associated with failure.
I believe that the correct attitude is not ‘how much can we get away with’ but ‘how can we best glorify God & honour my future spouse?’ Rather than asking, “What can we get away with?” we should ask, “How can we use our engagement to prepare us for the best experience of sex in marriage?” Waiting does, as many will testify.

A good motto is ‘clothes on, hands off’. Ask the Holy Spirit to help you as he will not lead you to gratify the desires of the sinful nature (Galatians 5v16).

Scripture also speaks of the fact that there is a proper time for sexual passion to be aroused, and that time is not before marriage (Song of Songs 2v7). By sexually arousing each other, you’ve taken each other to a point where you can no longer fulfill the desires you’ve awakened - is this a loving thing to do? When in doubt, leave it out. You’ll have plenty of time once married to awaken, arouse and enjoy one another – don’t step outside of God’s plans now only to regret it later on.

Therefore:

- Discuss candidly with one another what physical activities you believe God wants you to reserve for marriage.

- Confess, privately or together, any area in which you have sinned (you may want to share this with the couple who are leading you through this course so that they can help you).

- Avoid situations which promote over stimulation. Stay within the by-waters of sexual affection and avoid the strong current of sexual arousal. Many get swept over by the falls because either they underestimate the power of the current, or they overestimate their own swimming skills.

- Share with each other the things you enjoy which can be positive substitutions for too much physical intimacy.

- Keep reminding each other that the best is yet to come!

Questions
Most couples find themselves in one of these situations. Which one best describes you?

1. We have not and do not have a sexual relationship with each other, but we can’t wait to get married and start one!

2. We were in a sexual relationship in the past with each other, but are now pursuing purity (a) successfully, or (b) unsuccessfully.

3. We are currently in a sexual relationship together and (a) have no problem with it, or (b) feel guilty about it.

_Someone once said the devil does all that he can to get you into bed before you get married, and then all he can to keep you out of bed once you are married!_
How do you feel about the following reasons to refrain from sex before marriage?
1. Because it is against God’s will, and it is not possible to violate God’s laws without regretful consequences.
2. Because it promotes guilt.
3. Because by abstaining you build muscles of self-control that will be useful in tempting situations even when you are married.
4. Because it reduces the excitement of the wedding night, and dishonours the unique institution of marriage.
5. Because it means that you will not have a strong testimony when you want to advise others (like your kids) to abstain until they are married.

What do you feel about these reasons to have lots of sex once you are married?
1. It communicates your love and interest in each other. Everyone loves to be pursued, especially wives.
2. It satisfies your sexual desires, and eliminates any ‘need’ for either to seek sexual satisfaction elsewhere.
3. It is biblical! The only reason given for not having lots of sex, is to devote yourselves to prayer for a time. See 1 Corinthians 7v5.

HIV Status
We encourage each couple to know their HIV status as this may effect contraception and other considerations.

Soul-Ties
Any significant past romantic relationships, if not ‘cut off’ may cause a strain on a marriage – either through jealously, or through what we call a soul tie. Please read Appendix F on Soul Ties, and then talk things through together, and with your mentors.

Read Appendix C to H for further information on these matters.
APPENDIX A COMMUNICATION
This material is adapted from the Marriage Preparation Course from Jubilee Church, Cape Town, and used with their permission.

A. Reasons for a gradual decrease in communications

Different interests and involvements: Life is busy and because much of the time you are apart at work, it is important to keep communicating about each other’s ‘worlds’ rather than becoming isolated. If all you share is the same name, house, bed and children you will grow apart. But if you try to share too much then things can get somewhat claustrophobic! The key word is “balance”. You should learn as much as possible about each other’s interests and cultivate mutual interests and friends to add flavour to your relationship.

Opposite temperaments: Conversation is influenced by our temperaments. The challenge is to try and see life as your partner does.

Familiarity: Never assume that you know all there is to know about our partner. Keep exploring.

Lack of time: During courtship most people have fewer responsibilities and so have time to talk. As we get older, responsibilities increase and we have less time available for meaningful communication. Intimate sharing requires lots of time. We should make every effort to create this time.

Conflict: Poorly handled conflict usually results in a decline in communication.

B. Actions that block communication

Explosion: an effective self-defence tool that usually shuts down communication.

Tears: another effective psychological weapon that can put an end to conversation, as the topic has to change to “see how you made me cry.” But non-manipulative tears are of course fine!

Criticism: an effective weapon in stifling conversation. It is a natural inclination to criticize others, but this not only breaks down communication but also breaks down love.

Silence: a form of retreat into a self-protective shell. It is usually an act of resentment which is effective in getting the other person to keep quiet. Silence kills communication.

Chatterbox: usually a sign of an insecure person who is afraid of exposing their weaknesses – kills off two-way communication.

C. Attitudes that block communication

Pride: communication is about sharing your own feelings and often admitting your own shortcomings, that both require humility.
Fear of upsetting my partner: sometimes we refrain from communicating what we really feel because we're afraid it may hurt or upset our partner. But Eph 4v15 tells us to "speak the truth in love". Keeping silent for fear of upsetting our partners can be harmful. Suppressed emotions can lead to bitterness or self-pity, which in turn will have a negative effect on the marriage relationship. The answer is not to keep quiet but rather to speak the truth in a loving way.

Self-centeredness: focusing almost exclusively on our own interests or needs can be a major barrier to intimate communication. We can be so concerned about ourselves that we have nothing left to give to our partner.

D. Practical suggestions for improving communication

Listen to each other: listening attentively is a basic communication skill that is essential in marriage. Real listening is receiving and accepting the message as it is sent – seeking to understand what the other person really means. Sensitive listening is reaching out to the other person and actively caring about what he says and what he wants to say. One of the keys to a successful marriage is waiting to hear your spouse out – not interrupting, not finishing the sentence off, and not second-guessing.

Report emotions immediately: acting on emotions, especially negative ones, can be detrimental to marriage. The answer lies in reporting emotions at the time you are experiencing them, or at the best possible opportunity. The more you report your feelings the less likely you are to act on them or to suppress them thus avoiding unpleasant consequences. One of the most helpful phrases is to say something like this; “I feel like…” In starting this way you’re acknowledging and reporting on a felt emotion, and you are giving your spouse an opportunity to speak into that feeling you have had. Often this will lead to a common understanding that there has been a misunderstanding and the basis for the feeling dissipates.

Be honest: say what you feel. Let your partner know what you are feeling and how they have hurt you, if they have. Don’t reply with “Nothing is the matter” when there is obviously something wrong. Try to report emotions in love using “I feel like…” messages to avoid hurting or condemning your partner.

Be clear: explain yourself as fully as possible. More marital arguments are caused by misunderstanding our partner’s motives than by any other factor. Don’t hint at the way you feel or what you would like to happen – say it directly.

Be specific: avoid generalisations: Don’t use words like “never” and “always” when they are usually not true. Avoid using abstract words that mean different things to different people. Rather use action words that are specific. For example, don’t say, “I wish you would be more loving.” Rather say “I wish you could put your arms around me more frequently.”

Don’t attack your partner: condemning, blaming, criticism, faultfinding is counter-productive, and breaks down the relationship and always reduces the level of
communication. For example, rather say "I feel upset when you behave that way" than "You upset me when you behave that way".

**Don't defend yourself:** defensiveness reduces the level of communication. Don't justify your behavior, rather attempt to find out why your partner misunderstood it in the first place and discuss how such misunderstandings can be avoided in the future.

**Fight for time together:** one of the most critical times of the day is the few minutes after arriving home from work. How one partner greets the other can set the tone for the rest of the evening. Make time to share. Watching T.V. can be fun but it doesn't provide much of an opportunity to communicate.

**Praying together:** praying together is a powerful way to build strength into a marriage. Prayer times together can be planned or spontaneous. It is a great idea to set aside a few minutes a day to pray for each other and the day ahead. Don't be embarrassed to initiate prayer.
APPENDIX B HANDLING CONFLICT

This material is adapted from the Marriage Preparation Course from Jubilee Church, Cape Town, and used with their permission.

A NATURAL PART OF MARRIAGE
Every couple experiences conflict and has to deal with problems that threaten the closeness of the relationship. Such conflict is a natural part of marriage. Whenever two people have to make decisions together there will always be differences of opinion because each is different. Conflict in marriage is not bad or evil - it is a common ingredient in every marriage. When couples say they never have differences, they are either being untruthful or the spirit of one has been crushed by the other. Couples with happy relationships that bring out the best in both parties are couples who have learned to handle their conflict successfully.

A. SOME REASONS FOR CONFLICT
There are many reasons for conflict arising in a marriage as interpersonal friction is common between people who are constantly in close proximity to each other. A successful marriage is not necessarily friction-free, but is rather a relationship where irritations and tensions are resolved quickly and constructively. There are three main causes of interpersonal friction:

1. Differences in thinking perspectives.
2. Differences in temperament.
3. Poor communication patterns.

B. THINGS TO AVOID WHEN IN CONFLICT

Silence: ‘time outs’ involving silence can of course be helpful, and certainly thinking before speaking is a good thing, but keeping silent in order to control, manipulate or shut down communication is never a good thing.

Over-quick thinking: if one partner is a much quicker thinker and speaker than the other, then the quicker one needs to go slower so as not to steam-roll the other one.
**Bringing up past hurts:** deal with things as they come up, and then forgive and forget. Do not use things from the past as ammo for the present. Keep the current issue the only issue.

**Dramatics:** getting highly emotional is out! No tantrums, throwing things, shouting, stamping, banging doors, or hitting allowed. Crying is of course allowed…so long as it is not manipulative. Threats or suggestions of divorce and suicide are completely out. Avoid exaggeration.

**C. TIPS TO HANDLING CONFLICT IN A HEALTHY MANNER**

**Don't attack out of the blue:** this can provoke a defensive attitude. Ask permission to share which puts your partner in a different frame of mind as he/she has agreed to listen and gives them a chance to collect themselves. A good introductory line might be, “Can I share something with you?”

**Attack the problem not your partner:** accusing our partners of misdemeanours can put them on the defensive. Rather soften the criticism by saying, “I’m probably being oversensitive, but when you did that I felt…” or “I know you didn't mean it, but when you said that I felt…”

**Recognize your partner's right to views and opinions**

**Don't bargain in order to resolve conflict:** for example, don't go the route of “I'll buy you a new microwave oven if you let me play golf every Saturday”.

**Don't fight to win:** rather have a win-win approach.

**Use the ‘timeout’ rule:** when tensions are running high either partner is allowed to call a ‘time out’ to cool down before returning to the issue…which usually doesn’t seem so serious after the time out!

**What when nothing seems to work?** Call a truce and return to the discussion later when you have both cooled down. If you are still unable to agree on a decision, then the bible tells the wife to submit to her husband and the husband to love his wife. So, the wife must accept and support the husband’s decision fully but the husband must make the final decision in loving consideration of his wife. Also, in tough situations it can be wise to invite some close mutual friends to help mediate.
APPENDIX C GETTING PHYSICAL

CHAPTER 1 THE SEX DEED
This material is adapted from the Marriage Preparation Course from Jubilee Church, Cape Town, and used with their permission.

One of the most striking passages in the New Testament concerning lovemaking is 1 Corinthians 7v2-5. The central principles in this passage are:

a) Sex is approved by God.
b) Both husband and wife have sexual needs that should be fulfilled in marriage.
c) In marriage, you forfeit control of your body to your spouse. Neither husband nor wife has “full rights” over their own person, but share themselves with their spouse. Their bodies belong to each other.
d) Partners should not refuse to meet the sexual needs of the other.

From this passage, we see that we should not condemn our spouse to suffer in a state of unrelieved sexual frustration. If you do this you are asking for sustained love and loyalty whilst withholding a key experience of unity in which love and loyalty is continually generated.

Sex is not merely for reproduction, but for also for pleasure. It is a profound and meaningful communication of love. It is a way of saying to your mate “Now that we are one, you are not alone. You are a vital part of me. I am a vital part of you”.

Sex in marriage is a gift of God to us for pleasure, unity, and a means of fulfillment for our God-given sex drives.

Wrong attitudes to sex

Sex is gross: reasons for this mistaken view of sex can include (a) a bad sexual experience, possibly even abuse earlier in life (b) fear of the unknown, or (c) bad role-models or teaching from your parents. For example, some women teach their daughters that sex is ‘dull, dirty and only to be done out of a sense of duty’.

Sex without marriage relationship: sex-for-sex’s-sake was never God’s intention. Sex is not an end in itself put rather a celebration of a life-long marriage relationship. Remove the marriage relationship dimension and sex becomes a hollow act.
Guidelines for developing a good sexual relationship
a) Be knowledgeable. Read as much from healthy sources as you can to learn about how the body functions, birth control, male and female sexuality, and sexual technique.

b) As in all things in your marriage relationship, seek your spouse’s fulfillment and pleasure above your own, trusting that they in turn will be doing the same for you.

c) Openly discuss any details of your sexual relationship, communicating to your partner what you do and do not find pleasurable.

d) Solve your problems before entering the bedroom.

Variety is the spice of life
Occasionally the quickie can be a very meaningful expression of love, but too often is allowed to become the norm. An unimaginative approach to sex can result in boredom. It is important to make room for variation and discovery. Essential criteria are:
  a) Do you both enjoy it?
  b) Does it add to your sense of fun and pleasure?
  c) Does it refresh your relationship?

Some questions to answer & things to consider
Here are some questions that you need to discuss regarding the physical relationship during engagement.

- What have you enjoyed most about your physical relationship so far?

- What fears do you have as your physical relationship progresses toward intercourse in marriage? How can these be overcome?

- What is your view of contraception? Do you believe it is primarily the responsibility of the husband or the wife? Is there one method with which you would feel most comfortable? Do you want to combine methods of contraception? If you choose ‘the pill’ it is usually best to start taking it a few months prior to your wedding date so that the woman’s body can adjust.
- If either of you have had previous sexual relationships this should be discussed with the couple who are mentoring you so that they can help you. You would both be encouraged to know your HIV status as this could affect your contraception options and other considerations.

Honeymoon (your first night together)

- One of the benefits of having abstained from sexual arousal during courtship is that on your first night together, anything more than a casual kiss goodnight will better than anything before!

- Take things slow: take your time to get to know each other physically, have a candlelit bath together, undress one another...

- Don’t have too many preconceived ideas of what will happen or should happen, just enjoy one another in a relaxed atmosphere.

- Husbands, right from the first night seek to bless your new wife, think of things she would like, make her pleasure and comfort your No. 1 focus.

- For a virgin, sexual intercourse can be uncomfortable at first. Be gentle and slow and keep talking to each other about what is nice and what isn’t. Have a towel or tissues close at hand.

Recommended books that help ‘first-timers’ include *Intended for Pleasure* (Ed and Gaye Wheat; Fleming H Revell Company), or *The Act of Marriage* (Tim & Beverly LaHaye; Zondervan). Be free to chat to either your mentors or other mature married friends to get a few basic do’s and don’ts for the honeymoon. However, please only do this just before the wedding to minimise the pre-marriage temptations!

**CHAPTER 2 FORNICATION….AND HOW FAR IS TOO FAR?**

**Fornication means sex outside marriage**

God has reserved sex for marriage. Simple as that. No exceptions. When a married person is involved in sex outside their marriage it is called adultery. When two unmarried people have sex it is called fornication. So, the big question is…..

**When does sex start?**

The bible is crystal clear that sex is reserved exclusively for marriage between a man and a woman. No debate. No argument. No grey area. But the big question for unmarried people is this: *when does sex start?* Good question. To get your mind moving, try these two questions for size:

When does life start? When does drunkenness start? I am not absolutely sure when sex actually starts, but we all know that there is a great deal more to sex than the final bit at the end! It is a process, isn’t it?

**So how far can I go?**
More like ‘how safe can I stay?’ Come on! Let’s have a renewed fear of God in this area! We are a new generation radically sold out to God. We ask not “how far can we go?” but rather “how safe can we stay?” Our battle cries include:

“Flee sexual immorality!” (1 Cor 6v18)

“Let there be even a hint of sexual immorality amongst us” (Eph 5v3)

What does the bible say about how far I can go?

Here are some verses from the bible and comments from me that I think give us some clear guidelines: “Treat younger men as brothers, older women as mothers, and younger women as sisters, with absolute purity” (1 Tim 5v1-2).

Mmm! Interesting. So guys, imagine you are at the movies with your girl. In the back row. And it is a chick-flick. Where can you touch her? Can you kiss her? How can you kiss her? The answer is simple, like you would your Mum or your sister. Ouch. So girls, you are home alone with a nice smelling, close-shaven (or ruggedly stubbled guy – you choose), the candles are burning and the music is soft, and he is acting so delicious!

15 Mk 10v7; Heb 13v4
16 Mk 10v6-9; 1 Cor 7; Heb 13v4

It makes you just wanna …… treat him like your Dad or your brother! If you are not convinced of my theory, look at the final three words in the verse above.

What about touching?

“There were two sisters who became prostitutes in Egypt, engaging in prostitution from their youth. In that land their breasts were fondled and there virgin bosoms caressed” (Ez 23v2-3)

Although this verse is a metaphor describing Israel’s unfaithfulness to God, the principles are helpful to us. Prostitution describes sex outside marriage, doesn’t it? And the details of the action here are that these sisters had their breast touched. So guys, take this one like a man: hands off those holy hills. As you sit reading this book, please place your right hand over your heart and repeat out loud: “I solemnly swear that this is the only chest that I will touch until I am married.”

Well done guys! Go for it!

What about french-kissing?

Aka deep-kissing, smooching or snoggin’. Well I don’t have a verse for this one, although 1 Tim 5v1-2 probably covers it. But pretending that it doesn’t, we know that it is highly arousing and intimate. We also know that the bible says “do not awake passion before it’s time”. You do the math.

Can I show off my body by the way that I dress?

1 Thess 4v1-8, in the context of sexual purity, speaks about not taking advantage of your brother (or sister). And here’s the thing: what they see seriously affects guys. So girls, please dress nice but beware of really tight or really short outfits. When girls see a guy in a tight T-shirt they might think something sensible like, “I guess he’s an athlete or something”; but when a guy sees a girl in tight stuff he just thinks “Fresh Meat” or “Hubba Hubba” or something equally primal. You are probably familiar with the story of how King David first fell in lust with Bathsheba. David usually takes a lot of stick for idly wondering around the roof of his palace when he should have been out at war, but equally guilty was Bathsheba who was merrily bathing naked on her rooftop, presumably aware that the palace overlooked it. Ladies, choose your bathing venues carefully!

17 Prov 5v18-19
18 Song of Solomon 2v7

And let’s get our language accurate…
Girlfriends and boyfriends don’t make love, they fornicate. Ladies, if he puts on his best Italian accent and asks to make love to you, ask him to rephrase to “My darling, will you fornicate with me?” Kind of takes the romance out of it, doesn’t it? Then slap him and stomp off.

**Guard your virginity**

Ladies, your virginity is not a trophy to be won by some guy on the hunt. Men, your virginity is not a prize to be surrendered to some women’s seductive powers. Virginity is not an old-fashioned and embarrassing thing – no, it is highly prized in God’s eyes. Hold on to it. Reserve it for marriage.

**What if you have already blown it?**

I have good news for you, dear friend. Bring it to God. Come humbly and with a repentant heart, and he will forgive you and make you brand new! Don’t delay. Come to him now and allow him to wash you whiter than snow. No guilt or shame. Thank you Jesus.

**CHAPTER 3 GOD’S PURPOSE FOR SEXUALITY AND MARRIAGE**

1. **Why do so many marriages end in sadness?**

The scary thing is that no one gets married thinking that it will not work, but statistics in most parts of the world state that 50% of marriages end in divorce, and out of the remaining 50% many marriages are not satisfying.

What’s going on? How on earth can most people on earth be making such a mess of things? I mean, the incompetence of mankind with marriage is massive! Are we just a bunch of imbeciles or is something else going on that we might not know about?

*What’s going on is this: there is a massive satanic attack on both marriage and sexuality.*

2. **God adores marriage. Satan hates marriage.**

Anything that God likes the devil hates…and God loves marriage. God invented marriage in the opening verses of the bible. He put marriage in place before putting the church in place, and before putting governments in place. And not only does history begin with a marriage, but it will end with The Great Marriage of Jesus to his Church! And the clincher – Jesus chose to do his first miracle at a wedding in Cana (remember, the one where he turned water into wine just to save the bridegroom embarrassment on his wedding day). God is wild about marriage!

3. **Here are 4 reasons to account for God’s extreme passion for sexuality and marriage, and conversely, Satan’s extreme loathing of marriage…..**

Firstly, because sexuality and marriage reflect the relationship between Christ and the Church (Eph 5v25). The Church is the collective name for all the Christians on earth now, and that have ever lived, and will live in the future before Jesus returns. And remember, God’s ultimate purpose of creation is to reveal himself to all people that they might repent of their sin and join God’s family – the Church. So because this is God’s ultimate goal…. God invented marriage to act as an advert, a visual aid, a kind of mirror to reflect and reveal something of the marriage-like relationship that he desires with every person.

When I was 18 year old, I had some good friends called Pete and Caroline who had recently got married….and I envied their amazing relationship. I was chatting this through with an older pastor called John Bell saying, “….they are so lucky that they can spend 24/7 with each other as best friends!” And John replied, “Yes. Isn’t
marriage amazing? But it is not as amazing as the relationship that you and Jesus have. He is not only with you 24/7, but he is the perfect partner and friend, loving you unconditionally forever!” I am now 34 years old and remember this conversation like it was yesterday because a good marriage had taught me something about Jesus’ amazing love for me. What a great advert marriage can be for Christianity! Now then, please put on your fake horns and pretend that you are the devil: you exist to prevent people from becoming Christians, so this marriage business is a major problem for you! You want to do everything in your power to mess-up the advertising campaign of the opposition, don’t you? So, you try to turn it around so marriage is actually a bad advert for a relationship with God.

Secondly, because sexuality and marriage reflects the character of God (Gen 1v27). Male and female are both made in the image of God, and a child in a good marriage experiences firsthand the beauty and benefits of manly and womanly impact on his or her life. Therefore, good Mums and Dads teach us something of the parental nature of God. Back on with those horns again: you are not well pleased, are you? In the Gulf War the Iraqi’s were fond of violating posters of President Bush. So too, you want to violate this ‘poster’ of your arch enemy: God. I remember the scene in the James Bond film The Man with the Golden Gun when the bad guy is in a Hall of Mirrors, and in every mirror he sees the image of his archenemy 007. And in a psychotic frenzy he opens fire on every mirror he can see. And Satan is just like that: he maintains a constant barrage of bullets against every marriage mirror that he can see.

Thirdly, marriage is the basic building block of society (Gen 1v28). God instructed Adam and Eve to fill the earth through having children and to rule over the earth. God set up marriage and children from marriage as the means to a stable, godly rule in the earth. Marriage is the basic building block of a structured, peaceful society. When marriage breaks down, raising of children breaks down, disobedience, disrespect, disorder, destruction all increase and godless anarchy ensures. Why are kids in the USA carrying guns to school? Because single parents and nonparent homes are producing chaotic kids. And if you are the devil your favorite three hobbies are stealing, killing and destroying (Jn 10v10), so you like the thought of an anarchist society very much indeed, don’t you? If you can disrupt marriage, then you can disrupt society, and a world in anarchy is not a good environment for people to submit to God and become Christians.

And fourthly, God intends marriage to be a Christian Producing Machine. Malachi 2v14-15 says that God’s specific intent of marriage is “to produce godly offspring”. Healthy, God-centred marriages are the best environment to produce children that adore God and his ways. So if you are the devil, this possibility is a complete nightmare for you. The very thing that you want to stop is happening via marriage!

Oh no! Red Alert! Defcon 5! Instruct your demons to put most other jobs on hold and to direct the bulk of their fiendish energies to the destruction of marriages and the perversion of male and female sexuality!

CHAPTER 4 SINGLE AND ROCKING
The second chapter has helped us to see the wonderful plan of God for male and female sexuality and marriage. But before coming back to marriage later in the book, I want to talk now about the issue of singleness. This is not a book just for married people, or hope-to-be-married-before-too-long people. Single people are also sexual
people and have an equal role in declaring God’s glory through their own sexuality and godly living in the whole realm of sexuality. So let’s turn to see what the bible says about being single:

1. Which is better: marriage or singleness?
The bible teaches that they are both good. Chapter 1 listed four spectacularly good things about marriage. God is the inventor of marriage and the one who said that it is not good for man to be alone. And then Paul writes to the Corinthians that it is also good for a man not to marry. Both are good.

2. What is the ‘gift of singleness’?
Paul speaks of both the marriage state and the single state as a gift from God. This is not referring to a gift in the same vein as prophecy and other ‘traditional’ gifts of the Holy Spirit, but more to divine enablement from God to cope with the state that you find yourself in. When the disciples reasoned with Jesus that there might actually be significant benefits to being single, Jesus answered saying that not everyone would agree with them, but only those to whom it has been given. God gives enablement to single people to be single. Being single is not about slugging it out all your days in despondent loneliness. No! You have God at work within you! Wonderful!

1 Gen 2v18
2 1 Cor 7v1-7, 25-35
3 1 Cor 7v7
4 Mt 19v10-11

3. Some biblical reasons for being single
Here are some biblical reasons for being single that we find in Mt 19v10-12 and 1 Cor 7v25-35:
1. Because you were born that way. This refers to those who, for a variety of reasons, you just don’t want to get married. That is fine.
2. Because you have been made that way by men. This seems to be a reference to the barbaric ancient practice of forced castration. Maybe the application for us today is that you find yourself in such unique manmade circumstances (e.g. in prison, or in a war-ravaged environment, or with an extremely debilitating sickness) that marriage for you is not an option.
3. For the sake of the kingdom of God. Here, you would choose singleness because that state enables you to better fulfill a calling that you have. An example of this might be a ministry that requires excessive travel. Paul uses the phrase ‘free from concern’ and says that a married man is concerned how he can please his wife whereas an unmarried person does not have that concern. But please note that this is not to make married people feel like they have chosen a less godly option! The bible is teaching that it is right for a man to be concerned for his wife, but by so doing he will be better suited to certain callings over others.

4. Temptations that singles may face
In his great book The Single Issue, Al Hsu unpacks the following list of temptations that single people may face:
- Tempted to put life on hold: don’t fall for the lie that proper life will start at marriage. Crack on with life now in all its fullness.
- Tempted to be over-committed: singles don’t have the escape line of ‘sorry, but I need to spend time with the family’. Singles must beware of busyness, workaholism and burnout.
Tempted to be self-centered: John Stott says, “Apart from sexual temptation, the greatest temptation we face is that of self-centredness … if we are not careful, we may find the whole world revolving round ourselves”.

Tempted to be unaccountable: a marriage partner holds you accountable for your lifestyle. Singles should have other people who help fulfill this role to a degree. 5 The Single Issue, Al Hsu, IVP, 1997. Chapter 9.

Tempted to have awful holidays: get into groups to go out on Valentine’s Day and on holidays, or go with other families.

Tempted to live a life of regret: don’t drive along with your eyes glued to the rear-view mirror.

5. The benefits of being single

Henry Thoreau said, “A man who goes alone can start today. But he who travels with another must wait until the other is ready”6. Singles have such freedom and mobility that they can use for God’s glory. Singleness is a gift, a blessing that should be seized with gratitude and exploited for the kingdom of God. Neither Jesus nor Paul were married, and look what they accomplished for God! Go for it!

6. Single and honouring God

Whether single or married, we must honour God with our sexuality and live according to God’s will. Single people should honour marriage by loving holy as single people, and by supporting the institution of marriage. Avoid jealousy and regret. Lean into God. Remember that ultimate satisfaction only comes from God.

I have learned the secret of being content in any and every situation (Phil 4v11)

6 The Single Issue, Al Hsu, IVP, 1997. Pg 195
APPENDIX D SOUL TIES

Part of the God-given intent of our soul is that it can cleave to another person, especially via a romantic relationship. Some Christians have taken the concept of Soul Ties a bit far, and got rather spooky-spiritual about it. I hope that this article presents a simple biblical teaching complimented by some pastoral experience and advice.

What is your soul?

We are commanded to love God with all our heart and soul and strength\(^1\)….so we definitely have a soul! The soul is obviously different from our bodies\(^2\) which are our temporary ‘house’ on earth. And then we have a spirit that is the part of us that gets reborn. So by exclusion, your soul must be all the other bits! A well-used definition of a soul is *mind, will and emotions.*

The emotions of a soul: After a recent whiz through all the references to souls in the NIV translation of the bible, it seems that the major element of the soul is the emotional element. Here are just a few references to souls: your soul can love (Dt 6v5), be in anguish (Ps 6v3), be bitter (1 Sam 1v10 NIV and often in Job), be restored (Ps 23), and be downcast or hopeful (Ps 42).

The mind and will of a soul: But the soul is not just this emotional gooey thing, because with it we can either obey or disobey God (Dt 26v16), and praise God (Ps 103).

The joining / cleaving element of a soul

Then there are some instances in the bible that show that the soul is the bit that joins us emotionally to other people. Here are four examples:

**Jacob and Joseph:** “…his life is bound up in the lad’s life and his soul is knit with the lad’s soul” (Gen 44v30 Amp). This speaks of a wonderfully close relationship between a father and his son.

**Jonathan and David:** “The soul of Jonathan was knit to the soul of David” (1 Sam 18v1, KJV, Amp, NAS). This refers to a good and godly soul-tie between two friends. God has made our souls with the capacity to cling to others in friendship love.

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\(^1\) Dt 6v5. See also Heb 4v12.

\(^2\) Mt 10v28
Shechem and Dina: “He seized her and lay with her and humiliated her. And his soul was drawn to Dinah the daughter of Jacob. He loved her…” (Gen 34v1-8 ESV). Here we see that the soul can cling to someone in romantic and sexual love. We also see that sexual relations can strengthen a soul tie. This is an example of an ungodly soul-tie.

Godly marriage: God’s intent is that a man and woman cleave to each other and actually become one flesh (Mk 10v7).

A bonding weapon for good or harm

In terms of romantic love, your soul cannot distinguish between good bonding and bad bonding. It is like super-glue – it will cleave to whoever you allow it to cleave to….and it doesn’t easily let go. Your soul’s tenacity in bonding is actually good news. Isn’t it great that God has given you equipment to love and keep loving your wife or husband all of your days, and to help you love your friends and family unconditionally as well? But your soul can’t distinguish between who is the future marriage partner and who is not! It will stick to whoever you allow it to.

How do soul-ties get formed?

Remember, whether we are talking about good soul ties or bad soul ties – the principles of joining are the same. Two souls get tied through shared experiences and time spent together. So a mother is emotionally tied to her child by nature of the foetus being inside her. Friendships formed on the battlefield or in crisis are often deep and lasting ones.

But let’s talk about romantic and sexual soul ties: apparently innocent relationships even in early teens can form ties that may remain for decades to come. Spending time alone together, talking about personal and emotional things, keeping each other’s secrets, sending and receiving love letters, spending time thinking about each other, kissing, touching, hugging, and sex (most of all) can all deepen soul-ties.

Are you now beginning to see the wisdom in Jesus’ instruction in Mk 10v7 that a man should ONLY cleave (develop a romantic soul-tie) with his wife? Your soul is designed to stick to someone and stick forever. So if you go sticking your soul to several partners, don’t be surprised when (a) you have painful break-ups, and (b) you find that you can’t quite let go of them.
FIVE STEPS TO FREEDOM
If you find yourself trapped in an ungodly soul-tie, I suggest the following action plan:

1. **Repent:** In the tragic instance of a rape where one person is the victim of wicked actions of another person, then repentance by the victim is of course not necessary. But in other relationships where soul-ties have been formed, both parties usually feel that they need to ask God for forgiveness for their contribution.

2. **Get prayed for by others:** Paul taught the Corinthians that we have special God-weapons to deal with things like soul-ties that seem to have an especially strong hold over us, especially in the realm of our minds: *The weapons we fight with are not the weapons of the world. On the contrary, they have divine power to demolish strongholds. We demolish arguments and every pretension that sets itself up against the knowledge of God, and we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ (2 Cor 10v4).* This is seriously good news! You can combine your prayers with others and declare an end to the soul-tie, in the mighty name of Jesus.

3. **Now live a sanctified and disciplined life:** The strong hold that the soul tie had over you has been broken through prayer. Now you need to guard your thoughts and actions so as not to rekindle this soul-tie.

4. **Take appropriate action**: If applicable and wise, make contact with the person that you had the soul-tie with and say sorry for getting them caught up in that situation with you. A phone call or letter might do, but beware of a lengthy and intimate chat that actually strengthens the very thing you are trying to break. This contact can be a helpful ‘signing off’ and a sense of closure is the usual result. Another thing is that from now on you will need to avoid time alone with that person. Due to the variations of each situation, I can only give broad principles here, but talk it through with your mentors to work out what is appropriate for your situation.

5. **Keep accountable.** You need someone, maybe a close friend or your mentors, to walk along side you to help you not slip back into the soul-tie.

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3 Mt 3v8. Mt 12v33.
How do I handle this issue with my future spouse?

We do not advise you to have a full on confession session together. The likely result of this is to load your future spouse with a whole load of muck from your past life – never a blessing! However, if your partner already knows about your past conquests, then it may be good to have an honest chat. Say a sincere sorry. Offer unconditional and thorough forgiveness. This issue must not remain unresolved or it may pop up later in times of stress.

Individually with your mentor (usually best man-to-man and woman-to-woman), you may like to specifically confess the soul-tie(s), and cut it off in prayer. But when talking to or praying with your future spouse it is best to keep things very general, and not mention names, places or instances. Isn’t it wonderful that both of you can go into marriage with a clean slate and a whole-soul! Hallelujah!
First, become whole-souled. Remember, God has made you with the ability to cleave romantically to another. Sadly, many people find themselves stuck or cleaved to several different people whom they cleaved to sometime in the past and have never quite ‘got over’. What is going on? Why do you still think about and even pine after them even though it is now many years on and you may now be in love with another person? Here’s what is going on: portions of your soul are still emotionally or romantically tied to those people. If you don’t get free, it means that when you come to marry ‘Mr or Mrs Right’ you will not be able to max-out the sticky area of your soul to cleave to your marriage partner. It is like you left little bits of your soul here and there! Our pre-marriage years are the time to stay whole-souled, and repair your soul if it has been shattered.

One of the worst songs ever is one by Lou Bega. It goes “I got a girl in Paris, and a girl in Rome...” And he proceeds to boast of having a girl in every port around the world. May I give some advice to any women reading this book: DO NOT MARRY LOU BEGA. His stickability is spread so far and wide that I doubt he has much left for you, girl!

The writer of Proverbs uses the analogy of drinking water from your own well and not letting others drink from you, so that you keep your loving potential maxed-out, and so that your marriage partner satisfies you always, unhindered by memories and longings of past conquests:

Drink water from your own cistern, running water from your own well. Should your springs overflow in the street, your streams of water in the public squares? Let them be yours alone, never to be shared with strangers. May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth. A loving doe, a graceful deer, may her breasts satisfy you always, may you be ever captivated by her love” (Prov 5v15-19).

Second, become complete in Christ. For a marriage to work it needs to have two complete and secure people coming together. The bible teaches that ultimately only Jesus can satisfy us. As wonderful as a spouse is, as friends are, as money and a career can be, none of these people or things can ultimately give you satisfaction and fulfilment. This can only be found in God. So, pin your ears back and develop your own personal, deep and meaningful relationship with Jesus. When an immature Christian (and how much more a non-Christian) enter marriage, they will try to draw things from their spouse that they should be drawing from God...that their spouse cannot obviously not provide. The result is frustration and strain.

Third, build solid character. For a marriage to work, both parties need to have a good level of maturity and strength of character, and the more self-improvement that can be done before ‘I do’, the better! So if you have a problem with lust, or anger, or jealousy, I promise you that these character weaknesses will not disappear with those magic words ‘I do’! On the contrary, in the intimate scenario of a marriage we find that our faults can actually get exaggerated. And now the stakes are raised –
before you just got into a rage with your boss or friends, but now it is with your precious spouse! This leads us into the next one....

Fourth, learn self-control. We could talk about self-control in several relevant areas, but allow me to hone in on the realm of sexual self-control. Some time ago I was asked to give a talk to teenagers on ‘Coping with hormones’. I cried out to God asking him to help me understand why he has made us to have seriously active hormones and sexual desires for many years before we can get married and find an outlet for satisfaction. I felt God nudge my mind to the phrase, ‘so that you can learn self-control whilst the stakes are low’.

Once again, let me stress that when you say the words ‘I do’, you are not then exempt from sexual temptation towards other men or women. The devil does all that he can to get you into bed before you are married, and all he can to keep you out of your marriage bed once you are married. The devil works hard to get you to fornicate (sex involving an unmarried person) before you are married, and then he tries to get you to adulterate (sex outside marriage involving a married person) once you are married yourself. So learn to control your urges before you get married, because if you fall in this area once you are married then the damage in your life and other lives can be enormous.

Fifth, avoid pornography and fantasy. Avoid books, movies and thought patterns that establish soulish strongholds that will dilute your passion with your future spouse.

Sixth, learn to understand and respect the opposite sex. I think that this point is especially relevant to those who have been brought up in a culture or situation where meaningful contact with the opposite sex was minimal. Going into marriage as a sexist is not good!

Seventh, build many friendships. Once you are married you will both still need lots of friends. If you have isolated yourself in your pre-marriage years through a very clingy and exclusive relationship with a girl/boyfriend then you will have work hard as a couple to make good friends.

Eighth, get skilled in agape love. ‘Eros’ is the Greek word for sexual love, ‘phileo’ the Greek word for friendship love, and ‘agape’ is the Greek word for unconditional love. Without downplaying the importance of the other forms of love, agape is definitely the one that keeps a marriage together for the long haul. So practice loving and serving people whom you don’t actually like very much! Don’t only hang
around with a crowd that you easily like, because there will be times in your marriage that you find your spouse not so easy to love. Get some training in now.

**Ninth, protect the opposite sex from yourself.** For example girls, dress in such a manner that doesn't easily provoke the guys to temptation. Remember, guys are easily aroused by what they see. And guys, don't lead girls on and casually throw around phrases such as ‘I love you’. Girls are more fragile than guys are in this regard. A wise man once said, “Don't say 'I love you' unless the next words out of your mouth will be, ‘Will you marry me?’”

**Tenth, seek first God's kingdom.** Jesus said that if we pursue him and his agenda, then he will organize these other good things to come and find us!⁴ Throw yourself into serving God and trust him to lead you into marriage in due course.

**Eleventh, pray and have faith for your marriage partner.** Ask God to protect him/her and grow him/her in all these areas we have just mentioned. Trust God to bring you together when the time is right.

**Twelfth, stay pure and uncleaved.** If you have your hands full with Mr Wrong, it doesn't leave much room for Mr Right, does it?

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⁴ Mt 6:33

Premarital preparation course 44
I want to stress that I not trying to reduce this exciting process of finding a marriage partner to some checklist or formula. I appreciate that God works uniquely in each situation, and that there may be factors in your situation that are unusual. However, my concern is to help you be wise and cautious in making this massive, life-impacting decision. And I also know that in matters of love we can easily be blind to reality. So here is a bit of a summary checklist of principles drawn mostly from principles that I see in Genesis 24, that describes the bringing together of Isaac and Rebekah.

**You will both be ready to leave.** You will be at a marriageable place in terms of maturity and finances.

**You will be believers.** Do not be unequally yoked. You will both have a fear of God and hunger for God. The situation will line-up with God’s word. For example, one of you will not already be married to someone else.

**You will enjoy spending time together and be physically attracted to each other.** You will have seen each others inner character. Dating is trial and error. Dating is about hiding the real me behind make-up and hot dance moves. Courtship is about testing the character of each other and the rightness of the relationship. Your team of advisors will confirm. This would usually include parents, trusted friends and church leaders. Common sense will confirm. Are you compatible? Are you financial viable? Are you happy with the other’s career path projection? The inner witness of the Holy Spirit will confirm. You will have a sense that God is joining you.

**The whole situation will line-up with God’s word.** For example, he cannot already be married, nor is a gay marriage permissible.

**You will have seen his inner character.** Dating is trial and error. Dating is about hiding the real me behind make-up and dancing. Courtship is about testing the character of the man and rightness of the relationship before God and man.

**Your team of advisors will confirm.** This would usually include parents, trusted friends and church leaders.

**Common sense will confirm.** Are you compatible? Are you financial viable? Are you happy with the other’s career path projection?

**The inner witness of the Holy Spirit will confirm.** You will have a sense that God is joining you.
APPENDIX F SATANIC COUNTER-ATTACKS 1-6

Remember that Satan is committed to trying to violate every good thing that God has made. Male and female are good. Sex is good. Marriage is good. And the devil is out to mess it all up!

In World War 2, General Montgomery was fighting against General Rommel in North Africa. In Monty's Headquarters there was a picture on the wall of Rommel. Apparently Monty would stare at it trying to work out what that "scheming desert fox" was up to. We too have a scheming enemy, but the wonderful promise of God is that we need not be unaware of the devil's schemes.

The next few chapters expose his primary schemes to destroy marriage and sexuality, and will enable us to live alert and vigilant lives to help nullify his evil attacks.

7 2 Cor 2v11. Eph 6v11.
8 1 Peter 5v7

CHAPTER 1 HOMOSEXUALITY

Why make such a big deal about this gay business?
Because of the four Godly purposes of marriage laid out in Chapter 1, that's why! Male and female sexuality and heterosexual marriage are designed to reflect the glory of God, and so provoke people to long for God. The issue of homosexuality is a huge one – it is not simply about a person's sexual preferences, it is about the creatorship and personality of God. Homosexuality is the most blatant distortion of sexuality. If sucked into the lies it can undermine all that God said is 'good' about sexuality and marriage and leave us with questions such as: What is female? What is male? What is true sex? What is marriage?

Speaking the truth in love
Jesus dealt with the woman caught in adultery with the perfect combination of truth and love; he told her that he was not condemning her but that she should stop sinning. This is what we should strive for in our dealings with gay people. Love without truth is weak. Truth without love is harsh.

Definition of Terms
Heterosexual: a person with 'natural' sexual orientation towards the opposite sex.
Homosexual: someone who experiences sexual or excessive physical or emotional attraction towards someone of the same sex. This word can cover both males and females. Obviously there is a line that is crossed when moving from inclination to practice.
Lesbian: a term sometimes used to describe a female homosexual.
Gay: a contemporary phrase that covers both male and female homosexuality.

What does the bible teach about being gay?
Let me start off with what I believe is the summary of the biblical teaching on homosexuality:
1. God loves homosexuals. God loves all people equally. His love is not conditional upon race, gender, age, class or sexual orientation.
2. But homosexuality is a sin.
Now let us see what the bible says in greater detail:

Genesis 1 & 2
I believe that the biblical case that homosexuality is a sin is won conclusively in these opening chapters of the bible. God’s response to Adam’s need for physical & Premarital preparation course
emotional companionship was a woman, not a man. The ‘one flesh’ is only given to man and wife. And then we can’t ignore creation, can we? God has made the male and female and sex organs complementary. George W. Bush made a helpful statement, saying,

“I am mindful that we’re all sinners, and I caution those who may try to take the speck out of their neighbour’s eye when they have got a log in their own. I think it’s very important for our society to respect each individual, to welcome those with good hearts, to be a welcoming country.

On the other hand, that does not mean that somebody like me needs to compromise on issues such as marriage. And that’s really where the issue is headed here in Washington, and that is the definition of marriage.

I believe marriage is between a man and a woman, and I believe we ought to codify that one way or the other and we have lawyers looking at the best way to do that.” (President Bush on the 31st July 2003)

Prior to The Fall, there was only the male / female relationship. Then, like all life on earth, natural, godly human heterosexual pairing was affected and distorted, and all sorts of sexual sins emerged:
- Polygamy (Gen 4v19)
- Adultery (Gen 12v27)
- Incest (Gen 19v33)
- Prostitution (Gen 38v15)
- Rape (Gen 34v2)
- Homosexuality (Gen 19v4-7; Lev 18v22 & 20v13)

**Gen 19v4-8. Sodom and Gomorrah**

*Before they had gone to bed, all the men (even the men – KJV) from every part of the city of Sodom--both young and old--surrounded the house. They called to Lot, “Where are the men who came to you tonight? Bring them out to us so that we can have sex with them.” Lot went outside to meet them and shut the door behind him and said, “No, my friends. Don't do this wicked thing. Look, I have two daughters who have never slept with a man. Let me bring them out to you, and you can do what you like with them. But don't do anything to these men, for they have come under the protection of my roof.” (Gen 19v4-8)*

A tricky passage, I know. But my read is that Lot, when confronted with an impossible mob situation, chose the lesser of two evils and opted for giving his girls, because at least that would be ‘natural’ sexual immorality. 14

But whatever your interpretation, this passage speaks of homosexuality as ‘wicked’, and homosexual sin was part of the reason for the dramatic judgment of God on these two cities.

**Lev 18v22 & 20v13**

“Do not lie with a man as one lies with a woman; it is detestable” (Lev 18v22)

If a man lies with a man as one lies with a woman, both of them have done what is detestable. They must be put to death; their blood will be on their own heads. (Lev 20v13)

**The Gospels**

Homosexuality is only referred to indirectly where Jesus unholds the Genesis principle of heterosexual marriage.9

**Romans 1v18-32**

The wrath of God is being revealed from heaven against all the godlessness and wickedness of men who suppress the truth by their wickedness, since what may be known about God is plain to them, because God has made it plain to them. For since the creation of the world God’s invisible qualities—his eternal power and divine nature—have been clearly seen, being understood from what has been made, so
that men are without excuse. For although they knew God, they neither glorified him as God nor gave thanks to him, but their thinking became futile and their foolish hearts were darkened. Although they claimed to be wise, they became fools and exchanged the glory of the immortal God for images made to look like mortal man and birds and animals and reptiles. Therefore God gave them over in the sinful desires of their hearts to sexual impurity for the degrading of their bodies with one another.

They exchanged the truth of God for a lie, and worshiped and served created things rather than the Creator—who is forever praised. Amen.

Because of this, God gave them over to shameful lusts. Even their women exchanged natural relations for unnatural ones. In the same way the men also abandoned natural relations with women and were inflamed with lust for one another. Men committed indecent acts with other men, and received in themselves the due penalty for their perversion. Furthermore, since they did not think it worthwhile to retain the knowledge of God, he gave them over to a depraved mind, to do what ought not to be done (Rms 1v18-31) 9 Mk 10

The key things to note from this passage are:
(a) Homosexuality is a deception. It is based on a lie. I have Christian friends who are practicing homosexuals and their inability to see the plain truth in scripture plainly evidences this deception to me.
(b) Homosexuality is unnatural. It is worse than adultery and fornication because at least those sins are not violating the natural laws of creation.
(c) It is the practice of homosexuality that is condemned, not the inclination.

But aren’t homosexuals born that way?
The question that usually underlies this question is, “if this is the case, is it not then a God-given orientation, and therefore OK?” Well, without getting into any nature / nurture debate, we are certain that homosexuality is not okay, because the bible says it is not. And the bible is God’s word.

But let’s pursue this a little further: even if I was born with homosexual inclination that does not legitimize homosexuality. Sadly, in this imperfect age that we live in, people do get born with diseases and conditions, but that does not mean that this is God’s design.

Also, the fact that we ‘feel’ something does not legitimize the feeling. A mass-murderer might say in court, “Well, Judge, the thing is that as long as I can remember I have got angry and hence violent with people. But these are my feelings so they can’t be wrong.” Just because we think or feel something is right, it does not mean that it is right! The bible is clear on this: “There is a way that seems right to a man but in the end it leads to death”10, and “The heart is deceitful above all things. Who can understand it?”11

So is it ‘learned’ behaviour?
This nature / nurture question has been argued long and hard, and will be in the future I am sure. All that I will say at this point is that there is no compelling evidence that one is born with a homosexual bias, and there is plenty of evidence that it is state that is learned and developed. I refer you to a summary of the nature/nurture debate written by my father that is at the end of this chapter.

10 Prov 14v12
11 Jer 17v9

How do we relate to a person who is living in a homosexual situation?
1. We pray against the spirit of deception that is holding them in bondage. It is clearly wrong from scripture. It is clearly wrong from nature. It clearly bears bad fruit – gay
society does not work. Do not entertain liberal ‘theology’ that tries to justify their position. Remember, it starts with the lie that it is okay, and then they just build on that, but however good the argument may sound remember that it is built on a lie.

2. We show them love and acceptance following the principle of loving the sinner but not condoning the sin.

3. We speak the truth to them in love. Try to persuade them and get them to the place where they acknowledge it as sin and are willing to fight it. Then help them and work with them.

**How should the church behave?**

We must not ‘gay-bash’. Preachers should avoid going for cheap laughs such as ‘Adam and Eve not Adam and Steve’. We must teach and preach into this arena at least once a year in order to keep the church clear on these issues. Encourage Christians to befriend homosexuals because Christian friendships play a vital role in modeling godly sexuality and helping people get free from homosexuality. However, it is not possible to accept a practicing homosexual into membership.12 Those Christians who struggle with the inclination need to be supported as they walk the heroic road of avoiding temptation.

**Here is an action plan for a practicing gay person:**

- **Admit that it is sin, & repent.** Repentance is always a pre-requisite to healing and restoration.
- **Take action in keeping with repentance.**13 Ruthlessly & totally break all homosexual relationships. Destroy all pornography, letters, mementos etc. If applicable, get rid of all effeminate/masculine clothes & mannerisms and speech.
- **Get accountable.** Much of the power of sin lies in secrecy. Confess your sin to one another.14 Meet regularly with a mature believer to talk and pray. Read appropriate books to strengthen you.

12 1 Cor 5
13 Mt 3v8. Mt 12v33.
14 James 5
17

- **Be prepared for a long road.** Sometimes God ‘heals’ a person miraculously and immediately and all the inclination disappears. But for others it is conquered by daily discipline and living a sanctified life. You will need to daily draw on God for patience and determination. Over come disappointments. Keep your eyes on the goal, which is to become more like Jesus!

If you would describe yourself as a person with a homosexual inclination (but who does not practice) then whilst the inclination is not sin, the rest of above-mentioned action plan would apply to you also.

**Summing Up the Nature/Nurture Debate (By John Smyth Q.C.)**

I am of course not qualified in any way as an expert in these matters. But as a lawyer I spent 20 years in practice as an advocate and 6 years as a part-time judge. Analysing evidence, distilling it, and presenting a summary to a jury in digestible form was part of the job.

Let me for a moment put on my wig and gown again and attempt to do that with this issue. I suggest the evidence shows:

1. No scientific research has come anywhere near proving even on a balance of probabilities that homosexuality is caused by ‘brain architecture’, or biological genetic traits.
2. Such research as there has been suggests that environmental factors are of much greater significance.
3. All reputable scientists agree that homosexuality is multifactorial, and many scientists consider it better to speak of ‘homosexualities’, rather than using the term in the singular.

4. It is vital to remember that correlation does not imply causation, so that a genetic correlation may have developed primarily as a result of the practice of a life-style rather than being the cause of the lifestyle. A person born with a combination of height and athleticism is not genetically programmed to become a basketball player. But if he chooses to make that choice, we may say ‘that choice clearly has a genetic component.’ What is more, the more he plays basketball, the more he will develop an athleticism that is genetically appropriate for a basketball player. But in no way was he ever forced to play basketball.

Alcoholism is generally thought to have a genetic component, but nobody ever contends that an alcoholic has no choice as to whether he drinks. (Alcoholism is estimated to be between 50% and 60% inheritable.)

5. Very few people are created with one hundred percent heterosexual inclinations. Most have genes that place them somewhere along a fairly broad spectrum; many have some homosexual inclinations that may surface at some stage in life, if only for a short time in adolescence. Sometimes environmental or social factors, such as child-abuse or a mismatch relationship with one or both parents, will increase the tendency for these inclinations to surface.

6. However, experience tells us that very few people will indulge in homosexual behaviour unless their inclination or appetite is aroused at some stage by an external human agency; it may be a group of peers at school, or some older man or woman either in the teens or even middle-age. In other words, although some people have a greater inclination than others, an appetite for homosexuality is almost always caught, not inherited.

7. Some people have a greater susceptibility to certain diseases than others. This is part of genetic make-up. But there will be no manifestation of the disease without infection from someone else. So it is with the practice of homosexuality; there may be inclination, even orientation, but the practice or behaviour does not begin without a human catalyst. That is the story I have heard over and over again for forty years both in the criminal courts and during my Christian ministry with teenagers and students. Hence there is always an opportunity to make a choice and exercise the God-given gift of free-will.

Let me conclude with one final ‘jury’ point that I believe to be devastating. Since homosexuals, as a matter of practice and common sense, procreate to only a very limited degree, if homosexuality were significantly genetic or hereditary, its presence in the population would progressively fall. Indeed unless it were continuously ‘redeveloped’ by environmental causes it would eventually disappear. Gay-activists stress, rightly, that the incidence of homosexuality in the population is not declining, and this argument in itself is an argument against homosexuality being directly genetically determined.

CHAPTER 2 PORNOGRAPHY

Pornography is another primary weapon of the devil to pervert sexuality and marriage. Because porn degrades sexuality and marriage, those involved with it find it virtually impossible to live a healthy and joyful life in the realm of sexuality and marriage.

The worst case scenario…. 
Some years ago I watched a gripping video interview that James Dobson was privileged to do with the infamous rapist and serial killer, Ted Bundy. Ted had got born again in prison and wanted a chance to speak out some truth before going to the electric chair. Ted told how he was a normal guy with good friends, living a normal life….except in this one area: pornography. Ted said, “Pornography can reach in and snatch any kid, Christian or not!” It was porn that got Ted on the road to rape and murder.

If you are involved with porn, the worst case scenario is that you become a Ted Bundy. However, because the percentage of people who jump from watching to doing is small, it will be more likely that you will merely end up with a messed-up personal life and marriage.

**Main scripture: Mt 5v27-30**

> You have heard that it was said, ‘Do not commit adultery.’ But I tell you that anyone who looks at a woman lustfully has already committed adultery with her in his heart. If your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell. And if your right hand causes you to sin, cut it off and throw it away. It is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to go into hell.

This verse from Jesus does three things:

- It defines pornography
- It emphasizes the seriousness of pornography
- It offers instruction on how to get free

We will now use these three points as our headings:

1. **Defining pornography - What is it?**

*Pornography is the attempt to insult sex, to do dirt on it* (DH Lawrence 1885-1930) *Writings, pictures, films etc designed to stimulate sexual excitement* (The Collins Dictionary)

*It is adultery.* From the teaching of Jesus in Mt 5v27 we understand that looking at lust-inducing images is akin to fornication and adultery. When you combine your senses (usually eyes, ears and your mind) with naked bodies on a screen or paper or telephone, then you get, says Jesus, the equivalent of adultery (sexual action outside marriage). In God’s view sex is much more than the physical act of intercourse, so involvement with porn to God is the same as intercourse. Serious stuff.

*It attacks everyone.* It can attack Christians & Non-Christians. It can attack boys and girls and men and women of all ages.

*It is addictive & progressive.* It can be more addictive than drugs. Like any addiction, to start with a little bit goes a long way, but you soon get bored and need more to maintain the excitement level, hence the progression from magazines to movies to internet and worse.

2. **Pornography is very, very serious**

A common defence of being involved with pornography is “but what harm can it do me – it isn’t real life”. Let us allow several scriptures of God’s Word to set the record straight:

*Jesus said that it is better for you to lose one part of your body than for your whole body to be thrown into hell (Mt 5v27f).* Like any sin, pornography can have serious consequences.

*Paul wrote, “…do not be deceived: God cannot be mocked. A man reaps what he sows. The one who sows to please his sinful nature, from that nature will
reap destruction; the one who sows to please the Spirit, from the Spirit will reap eternal life (Gal 6v6-7). God would be mocked if we were able to dabble in sin and not get burnt. This verse is telling us that if you sow ungodly stuff into your life, you will experience ungodly fruit in your life. 21 When tempted, no one should say, "God is tempting me." For God cannot be tempted by evil, nor does he tempt anyone; but each one is tempted when, by his own evil desire, he is dragged away and enticed. Then, after desire has conceived, it gives birth to sin; and sin, when it is full-grown, gives birth to death (Jms 1v13-15). The American writer Susan Sontag correctly wrote, “What pornography is really about, ultimately, isn't sex but death”.

In what areas might you reap ‘death’?
A. In your relationship with yourself. Exposure to pornography will mess-up your inner peace and thought life. Guilt and shame will reign.
B. In your marriage and sex life. Saying ‘I do’ at the marriage altar does not remove bad stuff from the past. You take into marriage who you are before you got married. And porn will not help spice-up your marriage, it will just create tension and disappointment. You will pressurize her. She will not want that. You will feel rejected and frustrated. Sex is all about unselfishness. Porn is all about lust. Pornography trains you to be selfish and lusting. Porn does not increase desire, it decreases it. “Pomographers subvert this last, vital privacy; they do our imagining for us. They take away the words that were of the night and shout them over the roof tops, making them hollow” (George Steiner, American Scholar & critic).
C. In your relationship with the opposite sex. The British writer Angela Carter wrote, “Pornographers are the enemies of women…” True. Porn will help you see the opposite sex as sexual objects rather than precious creations of God.
D. In your relationship with God. Although God loves you the same, your relationship with him will be constantly strained with feelings of guilt and shame that you will inevitably feel.

3. Instruction on how to get free….and stay free
This is vitally important. I refer you to Appendix A, “12 defenses for victory over temptation” which expounds 12 excellent ways to get free and stay free from any kind of sin.

CHAPTER 3 MISERABLE MARRIAGE, ADULTERY & EVEN DIVORCE
I suppose that miserable marriages, adultery and ultimately divorce are the most obvious counter-attacks of the devil against marriage. He loves nothing more than to bring such despair and pain to the beautiful creation of marriage, has to end in tears. Or, the marriage carries on…..but in misery.

How does the devil try mess-up a marriage?
He has several options. He can sometimes find a foothold in some of the big sexuality issues that we are addressing in this book, such as:
▪ homosexual tendencies, or
▪ pornography, or
▪ unbroken soul-ties from previous relationships.
Or he can use capitalize on less glamorous but equally deadly weaknesses such as:
▪ Boredom
▪ Selfishness

Premarital preparation course
CHAPTER 4 HOW CAN A MARRIAGE RESIST HIS ATTACKS AND GROW STRONGER AND STRONGER?

Here are my top 10 tips to a strong marriage:

1. **Take great courage because God is on your side.** God is for you! You are not swimming upstream. He is faithful to see your marriage a great success. Remember those 4 wonderful reasons why God loves marriage that were listed in Chapter 1? God adore marriage! But may I say this to you: if you are not a Christian, if you do not know the power of God in your life, then you are at a severe disadvantage when it comes to marriage! I urge you to commit your life to Christ and join a local church that will help you get established and growing in your new relationship with God. And then a wonderful by-product will be that you have access to God’s supernatural love with which you can love your spouse.

2. **Realize that a great marriage involves hard work**
   A young boy had a passion for gardening. He soon turned the front lawn into a place of beauty. A man walks by and says “Who grew these flowers, son?” “I did” the boy says. “No, it was not you, son. God made this garden beautiful”, replied the man. The boy replied, “Yes, that's true, but you should have seen this place when God had it all to Himself!” Marriage is team work between you, your spouse and God. The more you put in, the more you get out.

3. **Pay attention to pace of life**
   Busy lives and demanding work schedules inevitably puts pressure on a marriage. There is no solution to this other than to take a firm grip on your life! Stop blaming other people and situations and make a plan! Your life is not going to get less busy in the future. Act now. Change jobs if necessary. Take a salary cut if necessary, but make sure that the pace of life does not corrode your marriage.

4. **Pay attention to finances**
   Finances can place significant strain on a marriage. Usually it is financial lack that brings the most strain, although too much money can lead to other types of strain (‘bring it on’ I can hear some of you say!). If you are under financial strain, you have two options: (1) Decrease expenditure, and / or (2) Increase income. In my experience, the way out of financial strain is to make immediate and radical slashes to expenditure to get back within budget. This may mean a drop in your standard of living but living within your means is always less stressful than living beyond your means. Then, you can gradually work to increase income over the coming months and years.

5. **Pay attention to sex**
   There is an old saying that the devil does everything possible to get you into bed before you are married and everything possible to keep you out of it once you are married. Keep working at it. Keep being unselfish. Keep enjoying.

6. **Pay attention to communication**
   Many conversations today are the dialogues of the deaf, merely about setting forth our viewpoint, rather than a deliberate attempt to understand the other. We have 2 ears 1 mouth. You can close your mouth not your ears….take the hint! Even when
Ashleigh and I are going through a tricky patch, if we are taking time to talk things through then we remain feeling safe and in love.

7. Do regular marriage enrichments events
We try and go on at least one marriage enrichment event per year, usually run by our church. Prevention is better than cure.

8. Be part of a church
Be part of a lively church that has an excellent culture of strong marriages that will be a positive influence on your marriage.

9. Husbands love and lead, and wives submit (Eph 5v22f)
In my experience this is the key piece of biblical advice to couples. He must not be a passive wimp – he must lead loving and strong. And she must not be controlling and domineering. This is how God has made us to function. He must lead in a sympathetic, understanding and considerate way….but lead he must. And she must know that she is 100% equal in worth but that her role in the marriage is not that of ultimate headship.

10. Be expert forgivers
The best example of forgiveness is a 50th wedding anniversary. Forgiveness is giving love when there is no reason to. Jesus said: ‘Love one another as I have loved you’. Stop for a moment and think about how God loves you…….wow……..imitate that kind of love with your spouse.

CHAPTER 5 ATTACK IN THE PRE-MARRIED YEARS
Probably the most devious and effective counter-attack that the devil has is attacking a marriage long before it even begins. God has a progression to prepare us for marriage, and the devil assaults this progression….

How does God intend to prepare me for marriage?
“At the beginning of creation, God made them male and female. For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and cleave to his wife, and the two will become one flesh, so they are no longer two but one. Therefore, what God has joined together let man not separate” (Mk 10v7).
These verses present 3 stages in a godly progression to marriage, and note that the order of these stages is critical in order to have a godly preparation for marriage:

Stage 1 - Leaving: It is simple. Jesus is saying that you must not start to cleave (get emotionally and romantically involved with someone) until you are ready to leave your father and mother. This means that you will be emotionally, spiritually, practically and financially ready for marriage before you start getting involved with someone. You need to be mature enough in every way to live as an adult who can cope without all the assists that your parents have given. So, what age can I have my first boyfriend / girlfriend? You do the math!

Stage 2 - Cleaving: Cleaving means getting entwined with and joined to another person - you know, emotionally and romantically involved. We have already established that you must not cleave until you are ready to leave, but Jesus is also teaching that you should only cleave to your future spouse. He doesn’t say “a man shall cleave around until he finds a potential wife and then really cleave to her”. He says that a man shall cleave to his wife.
Two questions now spring to mind: (a) how do I find out if she will be my wife without any cleaving at all? And, (b) what is involved with cleaving i.e. how far can I go? Both questions will be answered in the following chapters. But for now, it is enough to simply acknowledge what Jesus is teaching, even if we can't yet fully understand the complete wisdom of it.

Stage 3 – Becoming one flesh: This is biblical language for having sex, which in addition to being a lot of fun, represents the complete joining of a man and a woman in marriage. This refers to the marriage day and marriage night. This is not rocket science - sex is reserved only for you and your spouse. So that is God’s progression into marriage: *you don’t cleave until you are leaving or have left your Mum and Dad, and you try to only cleave with your future wife / husband, and you don’t one flesh until you are married.*

How does the devil attack the foundation progression into marriage?

When I lived in Harare in Zimbabwe, close to our flat was the most enormous hole in the ground about the size of half a football field, and at least 40 meters deep. It was the foundation for a huge sky-scraper office block. The bizarre thing was that during the pause in the work between digging the hole and starting to build, the site was totally unguarded for a few weeks. If I had the desire I could have got down into the bottom of the hole without much difficulty. Why were there no guards? Because there was nothing to protect, of course! But let’s imagine that for some reason I wanted to destroy the building. Rather than take a wrecking ball to it once it was up, I would be cunning to sneak down into the unguarded foundation, dig a couple of grave-size holes, lay some explosives that I set on three year fuse, cover them over, climb out, walk away and relax for three years! And the beauty of it would be that they would probably never suspect that it was me!

The foundation of your marriage is your pre-marriage years. If Satan can sneak in and mess you up during those foundational years, then he is well on the way to destroying your marriage in the future.

The master stroke of Satanic genius is to make you believe that marriage only begins when you say “I do”. Have you ever wondered why there is such pressure to sleep around etc during pre-married years? It is because pre-married years might even be a more ferocious battleground than married years!

2 main ways that he attacks your foundation

1. **He tries to mix up God’s order of leave then cleave then one flesh.**
   His first prize is to get you one-fleshing before even cleaving let alone leaving! So a one-night-stand is his bulls eye. And he uses arguments like, “Well, it is best to check up front whether or not you are sexually compatible”. His second prize would be to get you cleaving as many times as possible with as many people as possible before you are ready to leave. His top arguments to legitimize this are: “But it is all good experience, and anyway, how can you find your life-partner without looking around? And also, it is good to sow your wild oats so that you get it all out of your system so that you can settle down when the time is right”. Yuck! What a load of lies! Do you see how the worldly dating model is designed to facilitate the reversal of God’s order?

2. **Cleaving here and there weakens your bonding power:** God has created you with a soul that is like Velcro. Velcro is that material that sticks to itself and is often used for watch straps and shoes and sometimes pockets. This is good news! God
has given you equipment to love and keep loving your wife or husband all of your days. But your soul can't distinguish between who is the future marriage partner and who is just a delicious person! It will stick to whoever you allow it to! Furthermore, the more that Velcro is ‘sticked and ripped’, the weaker it actually bonds.

When I was at university, I bought a ball game where a tennis ball sticks to a Velcro target, but after a week off intensive use I had to chuck the whole thing away because the ball and target’s stick-ability had weakened to the point where the ball just bounced off! The more you bond and break-up, the more practiced you are getting at cleaving to someone then breaking up. You are getting in some excellent practice for relationships of conditional love that don’t last. Soon you will be an expert at minidivorces!

And listen to me, when you say ‘I do’ at the altar, all those bad habits and soul-ties with others do not miraculously disappear. Your last decade or more of experience is not that easily washed away! Your soul is in the habit of making up then breaking up …..let’s face it, if you are the devil, this is pretty good preparation for a tricky marriage and hopefully even divorce.
APPENDIX G A GODLY ROUTE TO MARRIAGE

CHAPTER 1 CHOOSING RIGHT: PRINCIPLES FROM GEN 24

Tiny & Titanic decisions
I wonder how many decisions we make every day. What clothes shall I wear? What shall I have for breakfast? What time shall I leave the house? And on it goes all day. I reckon we make close to a thousand decisions every day. But some decisions are bigger than others – think of the person who gets paid a huge salary just to make the right decision every now and again for the future of the corporation, because one decision can win or lose a million dollars. And here’s the punch line: choosing a marriage partner is a massive decision that can make or break a life.

Marriage is forever…
….which is why choosing a marriage partner is such a titanic decision. Marriage is for life. It affects every day emotions and happiness, your career, and your children and their children. Are you getting it? The stakes of marriage are really, really high. And if you choose wrong, divorce is not an option. You have got to live with the mistake.

Is it possible to choose right?
Yes. I am sure that it is. I believe that we should look to God to alert us to the right person, but in the end we still make the choice, not God, if you see what I mean? I feel that it is right and responsible for us to try to get educated in God as to the kind of spouse that we should be looking for. In some cultures the parents are mostly responsible for choosing a spouse for their son or daughter, and the same principles would apply to them also.

“Therefore do not be vague and thoughtless and foolish, but understand and firmly grasp what the will of the Lord is” (Eph 5v17 Amplified version)

Principles from Genesis 24 – Isaac and Rebekah
I would ask the reader to now read Genesis 24. I am now going to draw some principles from this story:

- Principles from V1-9
  The timing will be right. Remember that God’s order is leave, cleave, one flesh. Abraham felt that Isaac was ready (at age 40 I would hope he jolly well was!).
  He/she will be a Believer (V3-9). Abraham would only consider a wife for his son of the same religion. He made his servant swear not to choose a wife for his son who was not spiritually compatible with him. The application for you is that if you are a Christian then only consider marrying a Christian. Missionary dating seldom works. If you don’t marry someone who is spiritually compatible with you, at best you will have an unfulfilled marriage and stunted ministry, and at worst your marriage will be a nightmare. Just don’t do it. Like Abraham, settle this one up front and stick to it. One of most wonderful benefits of marrying someone who is a serious believer is that they will have a love for, and a fear of God, which means that they will be motivated to be faithful to you not just by their commitment to you, but also by their commitment to God. Also, as a believer they have access to the supernatural agape love of God with which to love you.
  There will be a sense that God is joining together (V7). Abraham was confident of God’s direct leading in choosing a wife, believing that God would send an angel to pave the way. Jesus reiterated this belief when he said "What God has joined let man not separate" (Mk 10v9). There are three great marriage stories in the bible (Adam and Eve, Isaac and...
Rebekah, and Jesus and the Church) and in all three God brings the couples together in a miraculous and sovereign way. Interestingly, in Proverbs 18v22 it says, “He who finds a wife finds a good thing”, the word find means to happen upon along the way. So, we need to rest in God confident that he is at work in bringing us together.

You will both be keen (V8). Although God is sovereignly involved, he will never usurp your decision. Don't be pressured or deceived by a Christian saying to you, “But God has told me that I will marry you.” If you don’t want to, then don’t!

- **Principles from V10-14**
  
  **Prayer is vital (V12).** The first step is prayer, and then keep the process bathed in prayer.

  **Character is the thing to look for (V13-14).** ‘Courtship’ means “to test” or to ‘take to court’. As you are looking for a marriage partner, you mostly want to test his/her character. The servant of Abraham wanted a girl who would offer to water all the camels. He wanted a girl that had a servant heart. This was a character test. It is important to see him/her in real life in testing circumstances in order to assess their character. Proverbs 31 is commending a woman of character not physical beauty. It is about character!

- **Principles from V15 onwards**

  **V15:** Remember that you are marrying into a family!
  
  **V20:** She was seeking God's Kingdom! She was just being faithful, not dressed to kill and out flirting. Do not try and attract a marriage partner based on your good looks...because your looks will not last, and there will always be someone better looking than you. Just as bricks not paint hold up a wall, so character and not looks hold up a marriage.
  
  **V21:** Don't shoot your mouth off. Test and test again. Courtship is about slow and steady testing. Confer with God.
  
  **V23:** He wasn't scared of the potential in-laws. He was up-front and open.
  
  **V28:** What fun! Lots of excited girl-talk.
  
  **V33:** He declares his intentions. He is up-front and open rather than drawing her aside into the shadows.
  
  **V49-50:** Involving others: here we have the principle of courtship again. He takes the matter to a council of witnesses. He takes the evidence that he has accumulated so far and takes it to court saying, “please help me judge whether God is bringing these two young people together”. What safety! What wisdom!
  
  **V53:** This dowry was proof of his serious intentions. Only proceed if you are really serious.
  
  **V57-58:** Notice that once her parents had consented, it was ultimately her decision, and she was obviously bursting with excitement and had the witness of the Spirit, confirmation by her parents and friends, and said "I will go". The scriptures don't record much of Rebekah's end of things, but God had obviously prepared her for this incredible series of events.
  
  **V60:** Notice that they spoke life into her marriage. They did not say she was too young. And notice the multi-generational vision. "May you, through your home, conquer the gates of hell". Wonderful!

**CHAPTER 2 MODERN DAY APPLICATION**

God works uniquely in each situation, but I thought that it might be helpful if I shared a 7 step process that I have seen help many couples stay safe on the exciting
journey towards marriage. I stress that this is not a formula! Also, I am going to write it from the position of the guy:

**Stage 1: Is this the one?**
She gets your attention by character or perfume or nice legs – whatever, but you find yourself wondering, just wondering, could this be the one? At this moment you must understand that the courtship has begun. The time of testing has begun. You are trying to get to know her to see if she is the ‘one’, but you are careful to cleave as little as possible until you are sure. This way you are protecting herself and yourself.

**Action:** Only pray. Commit to God. Pray for protection. Thy will be done.

**Guidance:** It is probably too early for counsel from others, but be open for the inner witness of peace from God’s spirit, and be open to guidance via the bible and prophecy.

**Stage 2: The Stake-out**
Unless you got a red light in Stage 1, then move into stake-out mode. This is a time of general observation, but you want to stay largely undetected so that (a) she acts herself, and (b) so that you can sneak away unnoticed if you find that she is not the ‘one’.

**Action:** Observe the person in the stresses of inter-personal relationships and observe them as they really are. You will see the real ‘them’ because there is no pressure, no make-up, and they don’t know that you are even keen! What is her temper like? Is she kind to annoying people? Does she really love God?

**Guidance:** Probably still too early for counsel of others, but stay open for guidance from the bible and through prophecy, and of course the witness of God inside you.

**Stage 3: Closer but not cleaved**
Unless you got a red light in Stage 2, then move into this stage.

**Action:** Form friendship with the person. Check her out close-up. You need to see if you click. Test the waters for a reciprocal response. Guys take a hint!

N.B. Do all that you can to avoid a romantic soul tie. You are still testing and this is not the time to get cleaved.

**Guidance:** During this stage, whilst you must stay alert to all signposts of guidance, it is high time that you share the situation with selected others so they can pray and support and protect and listen to God with you. Also, be alert to common sense: i.e. are you compatible?

**Stage 4: Declare intentions**
Anything from now on will form an emotional attachment. Don’t take it past the stage of FRIENDS without declaring intentions. Protect yourselves! Say something like “I would love to see more of you, if that would be ok, and I am excited to see if God might have more for us”.

If you & your council both feel the peace of God, then you need to move into this stage in a prayerful manner.

**Guidance:** Now that you have stepped out in faith, God will give you either a peaceful or awkward feeling inside. If he/she ‘blocks’ you then whilst you may feel a sense of rejection, you have protected the other completely. If you both have the witness of the spirit, then proceed to the next stage.

**Stage 5: Up-close-and personal and PEC** (pre-engagement counselling) Assuming you both have the peace of God, and assuming that signposts continue to line-up, then you need to move quickly into PEC. PEC is the final piece of confirmation. God will use it to ASSURE you that you have made the right choice, or show you otherwise. God will use PEC to give you one of 3 answers; YES, NO, or NOT YET.

Arrange to do PEC confidentially with your Pastor. Tell no one else except those who are in your small circle of advisors. Remember, three people can keep a secret if two
of them are dead! Also, if you decide that marriage is not an option, you are able to part company without the embarrassment of everyone else knowing.

**Stage 6: Going Public**
PEC usually takes 4-6 weeks, but usually after the first 3 or 4 weeks you will know and can either break up quietly and peaceably, or you can get engaged, and tell people, or keep it all quiet for a bit longer depending on your timetable. After the public announcement and move towards the wedding day, cleaving **but without eros**. Even during the courtship period it is not legal to arouse passions. On the day you get married it is! Oh boy it is!

**Stage 7: Getting Married**
Hallelujah!
APPENDIX H  12 DEFENSES FOR VICTORY OVER TEMPTATION

1. Take radical action
Jesus said that if your right eye causes you to sin, gouge it out and throw it away (Mt 5v27f). Imagine the aggression required to gouge your own eye out! Jesus is telling you to take radical action. To get desperate. To get on the attack against this sin. You can do this by doing the following:

2. You must really want to be free
“Hate what is evil, cling to what is good” (Rms 12v9). If you are not convinced that it is serious sin which God hates, then I don’t bother to read on.

3. Be self-controlled
“Be self-controlled and alert. Your enemy the devil prowls around like a roaring lion looking for someone to devour” (1 Peter 5v8-9)

Self-control is vital. You see, although Satan can tempt you to sin, for temptation to be converted to actual sin, it needs to borrow a part of your body. For example, when you are tempted to think jealous or proud or lustful or angry thoughts, sin can only actually happen if you surrender the instrument of your mind to sin to use. Also, don’t let sin borrow your eyes to look at things that you shouldn’t. Don’t do that! Be self-controlled! Look what Paul wrote to the church in Rome:

“Do not offer the parts of your body to sin as instruments of wickedness … but rather offer the parts of your body to God as instruments of righteousness” (Rms 6v13)

So, if you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don’t fall! No temptation has seized you except what is common to man. And God is faithful; he will not let you be tempted beyond what you can bear. But when you are tempted, he will also provide a way out so that you can stand up under it (2 Cor 10v12). It is therefore never an excuse to say, ‘But I couldn’t help myself’. You could have. Just stop it.

4. Be alert
Two weeks before writing this I was visiting Johannesburg Zoo. When we were at the lion enclosure, my friend Hugh told me of how in some parts of Africa, people attach human-looking face masks to the backs of their heads as a deterrent to a lion-attack. Apparently, a lion prefers to attack an unsuspecting victim from behind, but with the mask on, the person looks alert from the front and the back! Let us be similarly vigilant knowing that Satan is ready to pounce if we let our guard down. And he never plays fair - standard military tactics are to attack the enemy between 3am and 5am, because this is when the human ‘body clock’ is in its slowest mode. Satan will almost always attack you with temptation when you are in a weak and vulnerable state.

5. Learn how to run
And although Potiphar’s wife spoke to Joseph day after day, he refused to go to bed with her or even be with her. One day he went into the house to attend to his duties, and none of the household servants were inside. She caught him by his cloak and said “Come to bed with me!” But he left his cloak in her hand and ran out of the house (Gen 39v11-12) Joseph did one thing wrong and one thing right. The right thing was that he ran away right at the start of the temptation before it got a hold of him.

When you battle temptation, unlike military warfare or sport, if you run away you win! Don’t try to be a hero, just run. If you run, in this battle you are a hero!

6. Avoid places of temptation
The wrong thing Joseph did was to foolishly go into the house alone with Potipher’s wife. Interestingly, Proverbs 7v6-9 tells a similar story of a young man who walked passed the house of a prostitute, and the writer is quick to call this young man foolish! If you are tempted to steal jewellery, don’t go near jewellery shops! The best
drivers are not the ones who show off how clever they are by driving fast near the edge of the cliff, but rather those who avoid the cliff by many metres. Don’t even hang around people or places that may tempt you to sin.

7. Starve the flesh and feed the spirit
Once a man had two dogs that he fought against each other on every Saturday in the market place. He would take bets as to whether the black dog or the brown dog would win. Each week a different dog won and the man made much money because he always seemed to know which of his dogs would win. One day a friend asked him “how do you always know which dog will win on Saturday?” The dog owner replied “The dog I feed the most during that week always wins on Saturday.”

Feed the “Spirit dog” in you by prayer, bible reading and fellowship with other Christians. Starve the “flesh dog” in you by only reading and watching things that are good for you.

8. Stay busy for God
King David was a great warrior for much of his life, but there was one year when he got lazy and instead of leading his army on a campaign, he delegated that to a general, and David stayed at home, no doubt lazy and bored around the palace. It was then that he got tempted and committed adultery with Bathsheba. What can we learn from this? That a committed lifestyle of serving God will keep you occupied (both in your time and your affections) with godly, exciting things. Righteousness will be more attractive to you than sin! Someone once said, “Some temptations attack the busy person, but all attack the idle person”.

9. Be ruthless with little sins
Oliver Cromwell once went to the circus and witnessed a tragedy: one act included a huge python which wrapped itself around a standing man, and then uncoiled itself and slithered back to it’s box. That night it all went wrong: instead of releasing the man, the snake crushed him to death in front of a shocked audience. This python had been trained from birth – when it was a small, weak baby snake, but it grew into a monster. James 1v13-15 speaks of the subtle growth of small temptations into mighty sins that can destroy you. Little, cuddly lions become big lions and big lions eat people! Ruthlessly put to death small sins in your life or else they will quickly grow to become habits that entangle you.

10. Know some key verses of the bible
When Satan tempted Jesus in the desert, it is interesting that Jesus responded to each temptation by quoting verses from the bible, saying “It is written…” The psalmist believed in the same defence strategy because he said “I have hidden your word in my heart that I might not sin against you”.

Being familiar with some of the things that the mighty word of God says about certain sins is a mighty defence against attacks of temptation. Here are a couple of my favourite anti-temptation-defense-scripture missiles:

- Against stinking thinking: “Finally brothers, whatever is true, noble, right, pure, lovely, admirable, excellent or praise-worthy, think on such things” (Phil 4v8). “Set your mind on things above and not on earthly things” (Col 3v2). “And we take captive every thought to make it obedient to Christ” (2 Cor 10v5)
- Against worrying: “My God will supply all your needs according to his glorious riches in Christ Jesus” (Phil 4v19)

11. Stay accountable to others
Paul wanted his friends in Corinth to understand that “no temptation had seized them except that which was common to man”26, and James encourages us to talk to other
suitable Christians about sins that we are struggling with. What a relief to know that others experience the same battles, and that we can confess our failings and struggles to others who can sympathise (not criticise!) and then spur us on to righteousness! It is good for each of us to have at least one other mature Christian that we can regularly chat to about our struggles.

12. When you fail run to God immediately

Here is one of my favourite scriptures: *We do not have a high priest who is unable to sympathise with our weakness, but we have one who has been tempted in every way just as we are, yet was without sin. Therefore, let us boldly approach the throne of grace to find help in our time of need (Heb 4v15).*

Jesus understands your struggles. He has been there, done that, and won through! He is qualified to help you out! So, if you give in to temptation, turn straight to Jesus and say, “Jesus, I am so sorry to have sinned. I ask now that you would forgive me and wash me of this sin. Thank you that you never stop loving me even when I mess up. Amen.”

And do not, repeat not, repeat not listen to any condemning accusations from Satan, because he always wants to use Weapon Number 1 (guilt) against you whenever you mess up. Remember that on the cross Jesus took the guilt and shame and punishment of death – he took all God’s wrath – for every sin that you have committed and that you will commit. It has all been paid for! Tell the devil, “Satan, although I sinned, I am still 100% holy before God. I am holy, without blemish and free from accusation.” You have nothing to accuse me of because Jesus was already accused for that sin I just committed.”

26 1 Cor 10v13. See also 1 Peter 5v9.

27 James 5v16

28 Col 1v22

**Stronghold sins**

The final thing to say about temptation is that the bible mentions ‘stronghold sins’.

Most Christians find that there are one or two areas of temptation that seem stronger for them than others. For some people it might be fear or jealousy, for others addictions of some sort, and maybe for others pornography. These are called “stronghold sins” simply because they seem to have an extra strong hold on you. Strongholds develop in different ways. Sometimes they develop by doing a certain sin so much for so long, or sometimes they develop simply because you seem especially weak in that area.

My experience with dealing with stronghold sins is that it is important to get one or two trusted friends to pray with you into this area. Matthew 18v18-19 tells us that prayers have special power when they are prayed in agreement with another Christian. Combined prayer is very powerful!

To overcome most sins we can pray by ourselves, but to tear down stronghold sins we need to pray with someone else. Once you have prayed together for special strength to combat this sin, you must then live a disciplined and alert lifestyle to stay free from it. And your trusted friends should keep you in their prayers, and from time to time ask you how you are doing in this area (see point 11 above).

29 2 Cor 10v4
APPENDIX I WHAT ABOUT BRIDE PRICE?

Bride Price is common in many cultures. It is when the husband has to pay cash or kind to the parents and family of the bride. In much of Africa it is called lobola.

It can be helpful when:
- It is a small amount that doesn’t put pressure on the husband-to-be.
- When the negotiations serve as a helpful mechanism for the husband to-be to interact with and get to know his bride’s family.
- When it is a symbol of serious intent and honour on the part of the husband-to-be.

It can be unhelpful when:
- It puts unreasonable financial pressure on the young couple, even causing them to delay the marriage until they have raised the funds to pay the bride price.
- It is a means of profiteering on the part of the bride’s parents.

How can the church help young couples in the grip of unreasonable bride price?

The pastors can visit the parents and try to persuade them to reduce it. Failing that, the church can club together to help pay the bride price.

Is the couple married when they have paid the bride price? If not, then when?

The bigger question here is what constitutes biblical marriage? The bible doesn’t talk about white dresses etc, but scripture does seem to present marriage as a ‘moment’ that is acknowledged by the community. For example, although Adam and Eve didn’t there were wedding feasts in the bible that everyone knew about. That signalled the beginning of the marriage. Also, because the bible so clearly prohibits sex outside marriage, then there must be a moment of actual marriage to draw the line between fornication and legal, wonderful married sex.

I believe that you are married when there is some kind of event declaring to the witnesses of heaven and earth that says ‘we are now married’. And this event can take many different valid forms. But however you play it, act in a way that upholds the biblical ideal of marriage.

You can be married in your home village, or in court, or in a church building. But I feel that the important issue is that there be a declared nature to it, so that there is no confusion and a stand is made for ‘one moment you are not married, and the next you are’.

So, if you are going to have two ceremonies, one at the time that the bride price is paid, and then another one a few months later with your church family, then either can be valid for the start of your marriage, SO LONG AS EVERYONE KNOWS WHICH ONE IS THE ONE!
APPENDIX J A WOMAN’S TEST

Here is a superb story entitled ‘A Woman’s Test’

John Blanchard stood up from the bench, straightened his Army uniform, and studied the crowd of people making their way through Grand Central Station. He looked for the girl whose heart he knew, but whose face he didn’t, the girl with the rose. His interest in her had begun thirteen months before in a Florida library. Taking a book off the shelf he found himself intrigued, not with the words of the book, but with the notes penciled in the margin. The soft handwriting reflected a thoughtful soul and insightful mind. In the front of the book, he discovered the previous owner’s name, Miss Hollis Maynell. With time and effort he located her address. She lived in New York City. He wrote her a letter introducing himself and inviting her to correspond. The next day he was shipped overseas for service in World War II. During the next year and one month the two grew to know each other through the mail. Each letter was a seed falling on a fertile heart. A romance was budding. Blanchard requested a photograph, but she refused. She felt that if he really cared, it wouldn’t matter what she looked like.

When the day finally came for him to return from Europe, they scheduled their first meeting - 7:00 PM at the Grand Central Station in New York. "You'll recognize me," she wrote, "by the red rose I’ll be wearing on my lapel". So at 7 o’clock he was in the station looking for a girl whose heart he loved, but whose face he’d never seen. I'll let Mr.Blanchard tell you what happened:

“..."A young woman was coming toward me, her figure long and slim. Her blonde hair lay back in curls from her delicate ears; her eyes were blue as flowers. Her lips and chin had a gentle firmness, and in her pale green suit she was like springtime come alive. I started toward her, entirely forgetting to notice that she was not wearing a rose. As I moved, a small, provocative smile curved her lips. "Going my way, sailor?" she murmured. Almost uncontrollably I made one step closer to her, and then I saw Hollis Maynell. She was standing almost directly behind the girl. A woman well past 40, she had graying hair tucked under a worn hat. She was more than plump, her thick-ankled feet thrust into low-heeled shoes. The girl in the green suit was walking quickly away. I felt as though I was split in two, so keen was my desire to follow her, and yet so deep was my longing for the woman whose spirit had truly companioned me and upheld my own.

And there she stood. Her pale, plump face was gentle and sensible, her gray eyes had a warm and kindly twinkle. I did not hesitate. My fingers gripped the small worn blue leather copy of the book that was to identify me to her. This would not be love, but it would be something precious, something perhaps even better than love, a friendship for which I had been and must ever be grateful. I squared my shoulders and saluted and held out the book to the woman, even though while I spoke I felt choked by the bitterness of my disappointment. "I'm Lieutenant John Blanchard, and you must be Miss Maynell. I am so glad you could meet me; may I take you to dinner?"

The woman's face broadened into a tolerant smile. "I don't know what this is about, son," she answered, "but the young lady in the green suit who just went by, she begged me to wear this rose on my coat. And she said if you were to ask me out to dinner, I should go and tell you that she is waiting for you in the big restaurant across the street. She said it was some kind of test!"
APPENDIX K A GOOD LAUGH

That First Kiss: At the end of their first date, a young man takes his favourite girl home. Emboldened by the night, he decides to try for that important first kiss. With an air of confidence, he leans with his hand against the wall and, smiling, he says to her, “Darling, how bout a goodnight kiss?” Horrified, she replies, “Are you mad? My parents will see us!” “Oh come on! Who’s gonna see us at this hour?” “No, please. Can you imagine if we get caught?” “Oh come on, there’s nobody around, they’re all sleeping!” “No way. It’s just too risky!” “Oh please, please, I like you so much!!” “No, no, and no. I like you too, but I just can’t!” “Oh yes you can!” “Please?” “No, no. I just can’t.” “Pleeeeeease?...”

Out of the blue, the porch light goes on, and the girl’s sister shows up in her pajamas, hair disheveled. In a sleepy voice the sister says: “Dad says to go ahead and give him a kiss. Or I can do it. Or if need be, he’ll come down himself and do it. But for crying out loud tell him to take his hand off the intercom button!”

What is the proper age to get married? “Eighty-four! Because at that age, you don’t have to work anymore, and you can spend all your time loving each other in your bedroom.” (Judy, 8). “Once I’m done with kindergarten, I’m going to find me a wife” (Tom, aged 5).

When is it okay to kiss someone? “You should never kiss a girl unless you have enough bucks to buy her a big ring and her own VCR, ’cause she’ll want to have videos of the wedding.” (Jim, 10). “Never kiss in front of other people. It’s a big embarrassing thing if anybody sees you. But if nobody sees you, I might be willing to try it with a handsome boy, but just for a few hours” (Kally, aged 9).

Is it better to be single or married? “It’s better for girls to be single but not for boys. Boys need somebody to clean up after them!” (Lyn, aged 9).

Why love happens between two particular people: “No one is sure why it happens, but I heard it has something to do with how you smell. That’s why perfume and deodorant are so popular” (Jan, aged 9).

On the matter of good looks: “It isn’t always just how you look. Look at me. I’m handsome like anything and I haven’t got anybody to marry me yet” (Gary, aged 7).

Why do lovers often hold hands? “They want to make sure their rings don’t fall off because they paid good money for them” (Dave, aged 8).

When is it okay to kiss someone? “It’s never okay to kiss a boy. They always slobber all over you...that’s why I stopped doing it” (Jean, aged 10).

Adams suit: A little boy opened the big and old family Bible with fascination, he looked at the old pages as he turned them. Then something fell out of the Bible and he picked up and looked at it closely. It was an old leaf from a tree that has been pressed in between pages. "Momma, look what I found," the boy called out. "What have you got there, dear?" his mother asked. With astonishment in the young boy’s voice he answered: "It’s Adam’s suit!!!!!!"
APPENDIX L THINKING AHEAD TO THE WEDDING SERVICE

Advice on the Order of Service

What actually happens during the service needs to be worked out with the pastor who is taking it, but most pastors are happy for you to tailor the service to suit yourselves. Here is a fairly typical order of service:

Bridal March

Welcome and Prayer

Hymn: How Great Thou Art

Marriage Ceremony (including the vows)

- Communion &/or Candles &/or Song &/or Prayers

Reading: Eph 5v22-33

Address (5 min preach)

Signing of Register accompanied by music, song or solo

Bridal Procession
APPENDIX M FEEDBACK AND EVALUATION

Well done! You have now completed the course. Hopefully by now you will be clearer on whether marriage is the best next step for your relationship at this time, and will have grown in your love and understanding of each other.

Please provide your mentors with written or verbal answers to the following questions:

1. What were the most useful aspects of the course?

2. Are there any areas of the course that you think should be changed?

3. What were the most useful aspects of meeting with your mentor couple?

4. When will you meet again with your mentor couple? We recommend keeping in touch during the engagement, and then getting together a couple of months into the marriage to find out how everything is going.
APPENDIX O INSTRUCTIONS FOR THE MENTOR COUPLE

What is your job?

Your job is to mentor the couple through the course which will help them be clear on whether they should actually get married. It is also to help strengthen their relationship and up-skill them for the years ahead. Your job is not to take responsibility for their future marriage. Invariably you will become good friends with them and your relationship will hopefully continue into the years ahead.

Sharing testimony

One of the best ways to build trust and friendship is to share testimony (1 Thess 2v8) from your own marriage…especially about disagreements and on-going issues that you still have to work on! Do not present your marriage as perfect, firstly because it isn’t (!) and more importantly because you will set them up with an unrealistic expectation of what their marriage should be like.

The basic template of the course

The pattern is that they do homework before each session, and then their sessions with you revolve around them taking you through their answers. Your job is to encourage them, and to help them work through any major issues that emerge. These issues may emerge directly out of the homework, or they might be issues that you gradually detect through your interaction with them.

Daily or weekly?

The standard pattern is to do a session per week, as this gives them time to do homework and keep ‘doing life’ between sessions. However, the course must fit both of your schedules, and it is possible to even do one session per day if there is a time constraint. Alternatively, you could ask them to prepare two sessions at a time, but then the time you spend together will probably need to be longer.

Daytime or evening?

Again, when you meet should fit both of your schedules. Most couples immediately say that their lives are too busy to do it during the day, but they are almost always wrong about this, and if you can only do it during the day then they must find a way to wangle it at work, just as they would if they had to go and see a psychologist or doctor for an appointment each week.
Additional homework and extra sessions

As things emerge, feel free to set them additional homework for the next session e.g. ‘please talk through issue X and report back to us at the start of next week’s time together’. If a major issue emerges, it is usually best to add a special session with special home-work rather than letting that issue dominate one of the existing sessions.

Developing your own style

Be free to adjust things to suit your own style. Some mentor couples prefer to meet over meals and others in a more formal setting. Some develop their own questions that work best for them.

What if you feel out of your depth?

If you hit an issue that you are not sure on, rather than make up an answer, defer and suggest that you return to that issue next week. In the meantime you can seek advice.

What if you think that they should not get married?

As you approach the end of the course, in the unlikely but possible event of you feeling that they should either delay or not get married, you must, must, must explain this to them, giving them clear reasons. But do discuss this with one of your church pastors before taking this action, as it may be a difficult conversation and it needs to be handled in a way that protects both you and them.

On-going friendship and mentoring

Try to stay in close touch with them throughout their engagement, and it is a great idea to get together with them 1-3 months into their marriage to find out how everything is going.
Some specific tips for each session

Before the first session

- Ensure that all four of you have your own booklet.
- Make sure that you, as the mentor couple, prepare in prayer.
- Ask the couple to read the Intro chapters together, and to prepare Session 1 for the first time that you meet together.
- Set a time to meet up to do Session 1. You will need at least 1 ½ hours.

Session 1

- After making them feel at home, ask if they have any questions arising out of Intro chapters.
- Then move to Session 1. Ask each in turn to read out / tell their answers. Encourage them. Remember that there are no right and wrong answers, so the purpose of the exercise from your point of view is to get a view into where they are at regarding their understanding of marriage. It is usually quite a moving time as they hear the wonderful things that the other is saying.
- When you get to hearing about their goals, you are really on the lookout for major discrepancies that you can help them work through.
- Finally, check they understand the homework for Session 2.

Session 2

- Headship and submission is a vital area. Passive husbands and domineering wives are not what we want!
- Listen to their answers and chat as necessary.
- Set the homework for Session 3.

Session 3

- Listen to their answers and chat as necessary.
- You are especially interested in any I’s and D’s. Most areas will just need some selfless and mature comprise on both sides.
- Set homework for Session 4.

Session 4

- Listen to their answers and discuss as necessary.
- Encourage them for their positive behaviours.
- Discuss how they can improve their listening and communicating skills.
- Help them establish healthy ways of working through conflict.
Session 5

- Listen to their answers on love languages and their differences and discuss as necessary. This doesn't usually take too long.
- Share testimony from your own lives. Give illustrations of lessons you've learnt and differences you've come to appreciate in each other.

Session 6

- These are three hot topics, but hopefully by now you have a good trust relationship so that talking about them will be possible. The aim is to reveal any possible 'danger hot spots'.

- **Finance**: they may not want to share the precise details of their finances with you, which is fine. Your goal is to make sure that they can see their differences and know how to work things through together.

- **Family**: try to tease out the best and worst of their family experiences. Are there any behavioural patterns that they display already, as individuals and as a couple? Are they healthy? Help them to see the unhealthy ones and suggest positive ways to change.

- **Soul Ties**: this is a sensitive one, and the major thing to avoid is them telling each other in detail about past conquests. Please read the appendix on Soul Ties thoroughly, and take action from there.

- **HIV test**: yes, it is scary, but it is vital in this day and age. And remember, it is possible to get HIV without inappropriate sexual behaviour so they must not infer that your advice to them implies doubt as to their sexual history. And as the mentors, have a test done yourself so that you feel the fear of having it done, and so that you have a compelling testimony.