

# Marriage Ministry

## LEVEL 1: PRIORITIZE YOUR OWN MARRIAGE

The elder and deacon lists in 1 Timothy 3 and Titus 1 share five things in common, and two of them pertain to the home (“husband of one wife” and “manage his household well”). Revitalizing a church will rarely occur or be sustained if a pastor and/or church leaders have not prioritized their own marriage.

### **Pray for and with your spouse**

One of the most important things you can do for and with your spouse is to pray for them and with them. Consistently ask how you can pray for your spouse. If you need some creative ways to pray for your spouse, then check out the “31 Day Prayer Challenge” apps ([www.31dayprayerchallenge.com](http://www.31dayprayerchallenge.com)):

Pray for Your Wife: 31 Day Challenge

Pray for Your Husband: 31 Day Challenge

Pray with Your Spouse: 31 Day Challenge

### **Learn key Bible passages on marriage**

Discover what the Bible says about marriage. Some key biblical texts related to marriage are Genesis 2:4-25; Genesis 3:1-24; Ephesians 5:21-33; Colossians 3:18-21; 1 Peter 3:1-7. Consider reading and studying these texts on your own or along with your spouse. Memorize some key verses related to marriage as you read through several of these key passages. Reading and studying these key texts will help you develop a biblical theology of marriage and solidify your views about marriage.

Examine the “One Another” passages in Scripture. These passages provide healthy relationship principles that believing spouses should be utilizing in the way they relate to each other. A list of these passages can be found on page 19.

Examine the three different household code passages in Scripture related to marriage (Ephesians 5, Colossians 3, and 1 Peter 3) to discover God’s design for the way husband and wife should relate to one another. A chart is provided on page 20 to help you compare the key Scriptures in the household codes.

There are a variety of key passages related to marriage and relationships. Additional texts are also included on page 20 of the design guide.

### **Guard time with your spouse**

One of the challenges in ministry is protecting family time, especially with your spouse. Know and develop your own family rhythm and guard your time with spouse so that you maintain proper balance. Unfortunately, many pastors and staff struggle with the tyranny of the urgent, rushing from one ministry responsibility or crisis to another while their marriage suffers. A minister must schedule time to accomplish priorities through a day and a week. Schedule marriage time and events and utilize your flexibility to get your work done but without interfering with marriage commitments. One of the ways to guard your time is to schedule appointments with your spouse. When an outside conflict arises, share that you have a previously

scheduled appointment and suggest another possible time to meet. Consider utilizing the weekly schedule handout on page 18 to help you schedule specific times you will spend with your spouse each week.

### **Read a book about marriage**

Most ministers read books on church and ministry. Be intentional about reading books related to your own marriage that will encourage you to nurture a healthier relationship with your spouse. Reading a book about marriage is good for the health of your marriage. Reading a book about marriage together with your spouse and discussing the book chapter-by-chapter is even better. If you have never engaged in reading a book with your spouse, plan to read a chapter a week. Write out a schedule and set an appointment to discuss the chapter together. Here are some suggested books to get you started engaging your spouse:

*You and Me Forever* by Francis Chan  
*The Mingling of Souls* by Matt Chandler  
*Fun Loving You* by Ted Cunningham  
*Love and Respect* by Emerson Eggerich  
*The Meaning of Marriage* by Tim Keller  
*This Momentary Marriage* by John Piper  
*Visionary Marriage* by Rob Rienow  
*Sacred Marriage* by Gary Thomas

A list of suggested books listed by topic is included on page 27.

### **Plan special times with your spouse**

Prioritizing your own marriage and experiencing some fruit from time investing in your own home will enable you to lead and speak more authoritatively because you are applying what you are encouraging other couples to learn and apply. One of the key times to emphasize in your marriage is eating regularly together at home with all media turned off so that you engage in undistracted conversations with your spouse and family. Studies show that families who eat consistently together around the table have children with reduced rates of abuse, addictions, and other kinds of aberrant behaviors. Many couples include a weekly or consistent date night where they intentionally invest in their marriage together. This can be as simple and cheap as taking a walk together or can entail going out to eat together.

### **Assess your current marriage relationship**

We all go or should go to the doctor regularly for a checkup to make sure our body is functioning in a healthy way. The Couple Checkup ([www.couplecheckup.com](http://www.couplecheckup.com)) is a great inventory tool to help you assess the health of your marriage relationship. It features a specific inventory for dating couples, engaged couples, and married couples. After answering a series of questions you will receive a 19-page diagnosis report on your relationship along with a 32-page discussion guide as a prescription to help you work on the health of your relationship.

Below are some of the key areas all couples need to continually work on and the Couple Checkup helps keep your relationship in check through the following areas:

- **Communication** – Communication is the key to relationships. Learn how to practice assertiveness and active listening.
- **Conflict Resolution** – Conflict is inevitable in relationships with other sinful people. Learn a ten-step process for dealing with conflict.

- Financial Management – Finances are challenging for most families. Learn how to budget and make wise financial decisions.
- Leisure Activities – Couples who play together stay together. Discover some ways you and your spouse can spend more leisure time together growing your relationship.
- Sexual Relationship – Couples may not talk about it much yet it is an important part of your relationship. Learn how to have healthy discussion on this sensitive topic.
- Family and Friends – No healthy couple is an island in themselves. Learn how to grow in healthy relationships with family and friends.
- Spiritual Beliefs – Spiritual beliefs form the core of who you are. Learn to dialogue about your spiritual beliefs and grow in your relationship with God.
- Roles and Responsibilities – Men and women have different views about their roles. Learn some healthy ways to discuss and develop your roles.
- Children and Parenting – Children are truly a blessing but can be a strain on a marriage relationship. Learn how to develop a strategy for parenting your children.
- Personality Differences – Men and women experience gender differences and see the gap widen with personality differences. Learn how to better understand and appreciate your spouse for whom God created them to be.

The [Couple Checkup](#) can be used by individual couples or even in a group setting like a Sunday School or marriage retreat and will improve the health of every couple who participates.

### **Counseling for couples**

Sometimes life circumstances puts an extreme amount of stress on marriages where they need some outside counseling to help work through life's challenges. The Arkansas Baptist State Convention in partnership with the Arkansas Baptist Children's Home provides free counseling to ministers and their immediate family. Please call the toll free number 800-838-2272 and ask to be connected to the Evangelism and Church Health Team to discuss free counseling for a minister's family.

# LEVEL 2: PREACH AND TEACH ON MARRIAGE

## **Preach a series on marriage.**

One way for a pastor to implement marriage ministry in the church is to preach a series on marriage and family. Many pastors utilize the time from Mothers' Day to Father's day to preach such a series. A list of key marriage texts is included on page 20. Preaching and teaching through key texts related to marriage will not only strengthen your marriage but it will also help instill a better theology of relationships in the church.

## **Teach a marriage series during Sunday School or Discipleship Training.**

Another approach is for churches to provide a short study on marriage and relationships during Sunday School or Discipleship Training or another night of the week at the church or in someone's home. Many churches utilize video driven teaching resources that provide solid biblical content. Following the video, the leader of the group facilitates questions to help process and apply what was taught during the video. There are a variety of resources easily available for you and your church.

**Right Now Media** ([www.rightnowmedia.org](http://www.rightnowmedia.org)) provides a variety of great teaching series on family and parenting.

**Lifeway** ([www.lifeway.com](http://www.lifeway.com))

Other churches prefer to use a book to read and talk about the practical needs of marriages from a biblical perspective. There are an endless supply of marriage books available. It will be much easier to lead the group if the group leader has read the book beforehand. This will enable to leader to lead with more confidence. A list of suggested books by topics is included on page 27.

Sometimes it can be beneficial to bring a person in from outside your church to offer some training on marriage topics. Contact the Arkansas Baptist State Convention Evangelism and Church Healthy Team office at 800-838-2272 for help in finding a speaker to provide specific marriage training.

Discover additional helps and ideas on family and relationships in the Family Ministry Design Guide.

## **Offer a Home Group study on marriage.**

One pastor in Arkansas developed an effective ministry to young couples because he consistently offered marriage-related studies during Sunday School, Discipleship Training, and even alternate nights in his home. With the right teacher/facilitator, offering good studies related to marriage provides a great opportunity to build relationships with couples. Providing a study in someone's home encourages couples to connect and be more transparent. This is also a prime opportunity to invite a couple that is not connected to the church to grow in relationship with others from the church in a neutral site.

## **Provide books and resources on marriage and relationships.**

There are many great Christian books related to marriage. Provide a book on marriage to all the deacons and encourage them to read through it according to a schedule you establish. Enlist different deacons to share something they learned about a specific chapter. You can take this same approach with a church council or with Sunday school leaders. Emphasize that you appreciate all the time they invest in the church and that you want to invest in their marriage by giving them a free book on marriage. Do not take for granted that all your leaders have healthy marriages. There are probably several leaders in your church who are struggling in

different ways in your church. Investing in their marriage relationship will strengthen their marriage and encourage relational health and stability among your leadership.

**Blog and post about issues related to marriage.**

If you or your church has a Facebook page, then consider posting encouragement related to marriage. It can be as simple as sharing verses and quotes related to marriage or sharing links to different online articles regarding marriage topics to encourage members or those who follow you to read them. Take the time to actually read an article in its entirety if you are going to post it.

If you or your church has a blog, then take the opportunity to write some posts related to marriage, or invite members or trusted bloggers to guest post on your blog.



# LEVEL 3: PLAN FOR MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

## **Attend a marriage enrichment event.**

If you are a key leader in your church, then it is important that you also invest in your own marriage. It will be easier for you to encourage others to attend a marriage enrichment event if you have attended one and benefited from the experience.

[Family Life Weekend to Remember Marriage Retreats](#)

[Galatians 6:6 Marriage Retreats](#)

## **Plan regular marriage events at your church.**

If you have never planned a marriage event at your church, start small. Once couples see that you provide a quality marriage enrichment experience, they will be more open to attending a longer, more comprehensive event. See the guide for planning a marriage enrichment event on page 21 of this guide.

Date Night: Consider starting with a date night experience, which features an evening meal on site at the church followed by 1-2 hours of marriage enrichment.

Marriage Retreat at Church: After a date night experience at your church, consider hosting a marriage enrichment experience on site at your church featuring a Friday evening session and a Saturday morning session. This is the easiest and least expensive option for couples. The church can provide childcare for families.

Marriage Retreat away from the Church: After you have hosted an on-site marriage enrichment experience at your church, consider providing a marriage enrichment experience at a retreat center away from the church. (Before deciding on a venue, ask two or three ladies to approve the accommodations.)

Some churches will budget for the off-site marriage retreat over a couple of years to defer some of the expenses for couples making it more affordable for them to attend by alternating an on-site marriage retreat one year followed by an off-site marriage retreat the next year.

## **Improve your ability to help couples through Prepare-Enrich training.**

Several times a year the Arkansas Baptist State Convention provides Prepare-Enrich facilitator training for pastors and staff. This is an assessment tool to help pastors and staff lead more personalized premarital and marriage counseling. There are other trainings, tools, and assessments pastors and staff can participate in to enhance their ability to strengthen couple relationships. Take the opportunity to gather several quality tools and resources to help you and your church leadership become more effective in preparing the next generation for marriage.

## **Provide premarital counseling for couples.**

It is wise to provide and even require couples getting married in your church to participate in premarital counseling. This does not solve all their problems, but it helps prepare them for the challenges they will face in marriage. It also provides couples with an idea of what it might feel like to attend a marriage counseling session so that if couples do have problems in the future they will be more likely to ask for help and participate in counseling. Premarital counseling can set the young couple on a trajectory of living a disciplined

Christian life that results in a healthy and flourishing lifelong marriage relationship. Here are some creative ideas to help you equip couples. The disciplines and routines that couples establish within their first year of marriage will often shape their entire marriage.

- If you have been trained in Prepare-Enrich, utilize the Prepare-Enrich assessment with couples.
- If you have not been trained with Prepare-Enrich then utilize the [www.couplecheckup.com](http://www.couplecheckup.com) assessment with couples and ask them to provide a copy of the results to you so that you can help them think through key areas they need to work on in their relationship.
- Encourage couples to pray together between each premarital counseling session. If they need some help and creative ideas, then encourage them to utilize the “31 Day Prayer Challenge” apps:
  - See [www.31dayprayerchallenge.com](http://www.31dayprayerchallenge.com)
  - Pray for Your Wife: 31 Day Challenge
  - Pray for Your Husband: 31 Day Challenge
  - Pray with Your Spouse: 31 Day Challenge
- Expose couples to doing regular Bible study together by asking them to study a passage related to marriage in between each session.
- Expose couples to the discipline of Scripture memory by encouraging them to memorize a key verse related to marriage or family between each session.
- Help young couples connect with older couples in your congregation by encouraging them to spend a couple of hours with an older couple, asking them to share some wisdom and stories about the successes and struggles in their married life and how they have remained faithful for so many years.
- Help couples learn to read and grow in their understanding of marriage by asking them to read a good article on marriage between each session. Send them a link to an online marriage article that you would like them to read.
- Help couples see how their marriage is a reflection of the gospel in Ephesians 5:22-33.

#### **Develop marriage policies for your church.**

Work through the normal systems in your church to develop a wedding policy in your church. This will protect the pastor from having to make difficult decisions on his own. It will only allow him to conduct weddings where couples follow the church marriage policy. Some things to consider in the policy:

- Require premarital counseling for any couple using the church for a wedding ceremony.
- Require couples getting married in the church to enter into a covenant marriage.
- Describe what a biblical marriage is.
- Define biblical parameters for remarriage following divorce.

#### **Arkansas Covenant Marriage Act 2001 ([click here](#))**

Arkansas is a covenant marriage state, which means couples can begin their marriage with a covenant marriage, and they can also convert their marriage license to a covenant marriage. Essentially, a covenant marriage in Arkansas is a way to slow down the divorce process for a couple if they have problems in the future. It will limit what they can get a divorce for and will require them to receive counseling in hopes of reconciliation before they get a divorce.

# LEVEL 4: PRESCRIBE HELP FOR STRUGGLING MARRIAGES

## **Plan to refer struggling couples to a trusted Christian counselor.**

Most churches have couples struggling with life issues that need help to work through the challenges they are facing. Many pastors lack the experience and time to help couples in extreme crises. It is important to recognize your abilities and time constraints. Referring couples to a Christian counselor can be the best help for a struggling couple in the long run.

## **Budget to help struggling couples with marriage counseling costs.**

Consider budgeting to providing some initial help for couples when marriage counseling is needed. Many health insurance plans provide coverage for counseling.

## **Enlist a couple to lead a Divorce Care class for the church and community.**

Divorce Care is a proven discipleship class for individuals who have experienced divorce. It helps individuals wrestle with their past and prepare for their future ahead. Someone who has been divorced and is in a mature place to help others work through their divorce experience best leads this class. Prayerfully identify a godly couple in your church that has experienced divorce and remarriage that could lead the class effectively.

Divorce Care for Kids is another great resource to provide for children who have experienced divorce. This can be offered concurrently for children while their parent is in the Divorce Care class.

Enlist couples who have been through a divorce and sufficiently healed their relationships to lead a Divorce Care ministry and provide Divorce Care for kids. If your church cannot offer this type of group, check the Divorce Care website to discover if any churches in your area offer a group to the public ([www.divorcecare.org](http://www.divorcecare.org)).

## **Develop policies for counseling couples.**

Most pastors and staff engage in counseling couples in crisis. Couples in crisis need hope in the midst of their struggles. Recognize the limits of your expertise and time. Working with couples in crisis can be time consuming and challenging. The rewards can be great when a couple reconciles and gets back on the right path.

Discover ways to help couples that are struggling at home. Develop a relationship with a Christian counselor nearby to whom you can confidently refer families for additional help. The Arkansas Baptist Children's Home provides a list of suggested Christian counselors around the state ([click here](#)).

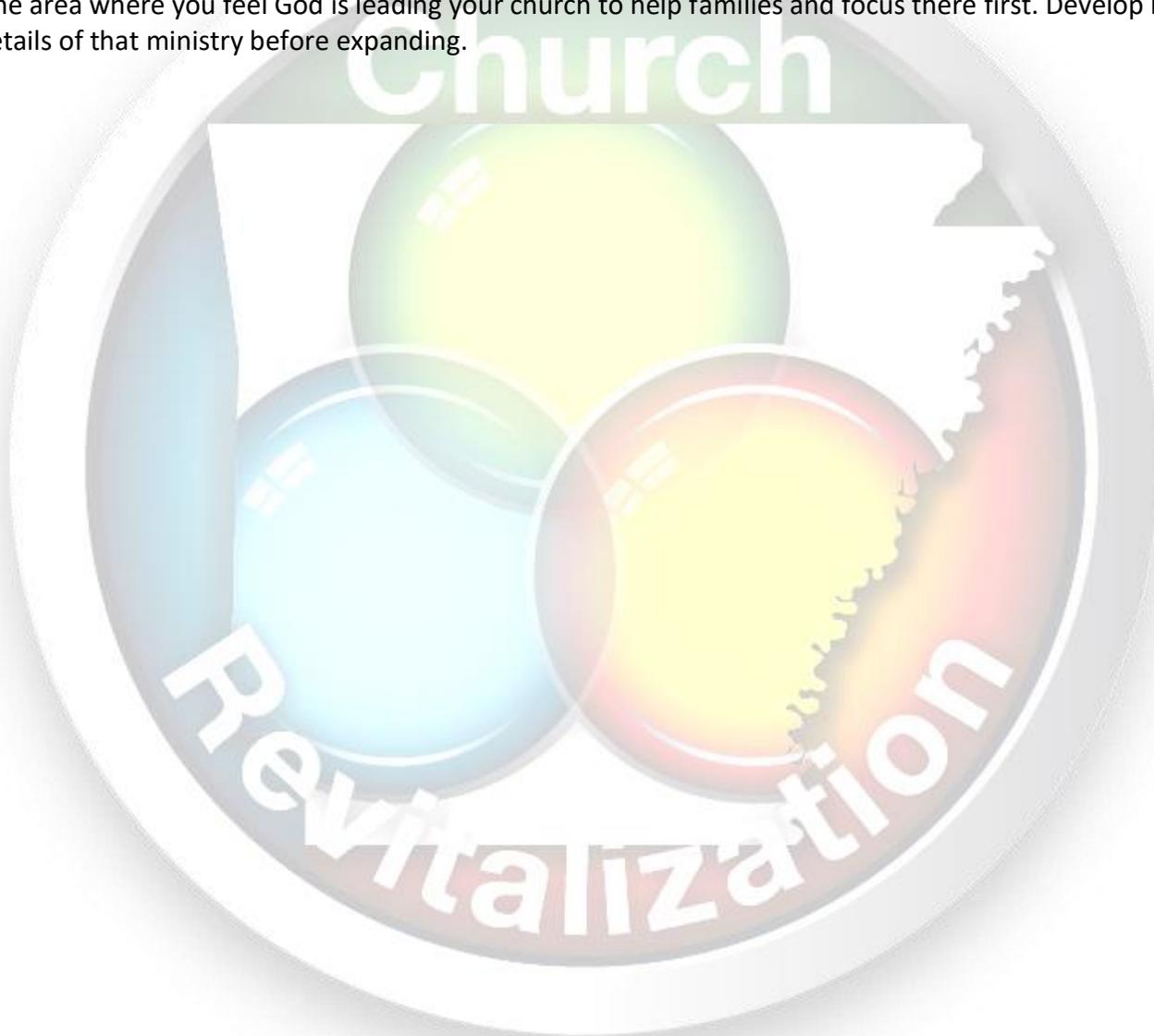
If the relationship involves abuse or addictions of any kind, it is wise to refer a couple to a professionally trained counselor who has some significant time and training to help them work through their issues. (Familiarize yourself with mandatory reporting laws so that you are protected from liability.)

## **Provide re-marriage resources for couples.**

All families have struggles, and some need outside help, time, and resources to foster healing and growth through the difficult circumstances they are facing. Helping struggling families will not only bring health to their relationships, it also provides an opportunity to reveal how the gospel provides ultimate hope and healing in our earthly struggles.

Enlist a couple that has stepchildren and has sufficiently worked through the challenges of blending their family together. Utilize this couple to lead a study through Ron Deal's book, *The Smart Step-Family*. (Ron Deal at Family Life provides a wealth of resources and ideas for stepfamily ministry at [www.familylife.com/familylifeblended](http://www.familylife.com/familylifeblended).)

Identify the specific needs members in your church and community express and then discover the resources and people you have that can help provide strategic leadership to minister to people. Many times there are people in your church who have gone through similar struggles, and God has brought healing and hope in such a way that they can their struggles and how God helped them through the rough times in their life. Identify that one area where you feel God is leading your church to help families and focus there first. Develop leaders and details of that ministry before expanding.



## LEVEL 5: PREPARE MARRIAGE MENTORS

God designed the church to be a multigenerational body, and in most churches there are a variety of people of different ages. Churches can utilize these relational resources to connect the generations together to strengthen one another. This creates an opportunity to disciple and train older generations to disciple and mentor younger generations.

Training mentors is essentially training people how to make disciples. The pastor, church staff members, or another mature leader in the church will probably provide mentor training.

Reflect on your life experience. How have you benefited from someone older mentoring you regarding family life? What are some ways you wish someone older had mentored you to grow and mature in your marriage?

- Clarify your vision of how you would like to see more mature couples mentor younger couples.
- Identify what mentoring relationships should look like. Couples mentor couples, men mentor men, and women mentor women.
- Prayerfully identify up to four mature couples who have proven their maturity in the church.

### LEADER/MENTOR COUPLE TRAINING SCHEDULE

Mentor couples meet for seven consecutive weeks for training with three follow-up meetings to gain feedback on how the mentoring process is going. The purpose of these meetings is for the pastor or church leader to train and equip mentor couples who will eventually mentor other couples once they have gone through the training.

Each MENTOR meeting should involve the following elements:

- **Mine Scripture** for practical truths for families
  - Mining Scripture involves studying God's Word together and learning how to apply its truths to daily living.
- **Eat Together** in a home setting
  - Eating together with other couples provides a relaxed relational environment for sharing and deepening relationships.
- **Nurture Relationships** by practicing the one another's in Scripture (see page 19)
  - It's important to build strong and transparent relationships by regularly practicing the one another's in the context of Christian relationships.
- **Tell stories** of success and struggles in family life
  - Younger couples will gain wisdom when they hear older couples share a variety of experiences regarding their struggles and successes in their marriage journey.
- **Openly pray** with one another sharing needs and requests
  - Praying together for and with the younger couple is valuable in helping to grow spiritually together as a couple.
- **Rehearse Scripture** memory verses

- Memorize Scripture together by continually rehearsing and reviewing Scripture verses that you are memorizing together.

**Week 1:** Plan a time to invite up to four mentor couples to your home for a meal and a mentor training time. This meeting will involve casting vision and getting to know one another.

- **Mine Scripture:** Psalm 71:17-18 (Read and discuss the text)
- **Eat Together:** The leader couple will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share a story about someone who has invested relationally in your marriage.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Memorize Psalm 71:17-18 for next week.

**Week 2:** Plan to meet at your house again with a meal for the purpose of demonstrating what a mentoring time with another family might look like. You are modeling how to practice hospitality and discipleship in your home. During this meeting facilitate a discussion of Genesis 2:4-25 and what the application of this verse might look like in a home.

- **Mine Scripture:** Genesis 2:4-24 (Read and discuss the text)
- **Eat Together:** The leader couple will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share a story about some successes and struggles in marriage.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Begin praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Psalm 71:17-18 and memorize Genesis 2:24 for next week.

**Week 3:** Enlist mentor couple one to host the next meeting in their home with a meal. Ask them to facilitate a discussion on Genesis 3:1-24 similar to how you modeled it when discussing the passage in Genesis 2. Follow up with mentor couple one during the week discuss and process how they felt the time went. What did they learn? What would they do differently?

- **Mine Scripture:** Genesis 3:1-24 (Mentor couple one will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple one will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share about your parents' marriages (how they succeeded or struggled).
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger families. Continue praying for specific families God might use mentor couples to invest in.

- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Genesis 2:24 and memorize Genesis 3:15 for next week.

**Week 4:** Enlist mentor couple two to host the next meeting in their home with a meal. Ask them to facilitate a discussion on Psalm 128:1-6 similar to how you modeled it when discussing the passage in Genesis 2. Follow up with mentor couple two during the week discuss and process how they felt the time went. What did they learn? What would they do differently?

- **Mine Scripture:** Psalm 128:1-6 (Mentor couple two will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple two will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share about your marriage, your commitment to local church involvement, and the importance of that in the spiritual development of marriages.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Continue praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Genesis 3:15 and memorize Psalm 128:1 for next week.

**Week 5:** Enlist mentor couple three to host the next meeting in their home with a meal. Ask them to facilitate a discussion on Matthew 19:1-12 similar to how you modeled it when discussing the passage in Genesis 2. Follow up with mentor couple three during the week discuss and process how they felt the time went. What did they learn? What would they do differently?

- **Mine Scripture:** Matthew 19:1-12 (Mentor couple three will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple three will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share your salvation testimonies and discuss ways to share the gospel at home.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Continue praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Psalm 128:1 and memorize Matthew 19:6 for next week.

**Week 6:** Enlist mentor couple four to host the next meeting in their home with a meal. Ask them to facilitate a discussion on Ephesians 5:21-33 similar to how you modeled it when discussing the passage in Deuteronomy 6. Follow up with mentor couple four during the week discuss and process how they felt the time went. What did they learn? What would they do differently?

- **Mine Scripture:** Ephesians 5:21-33 (Mentor couple four will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple four will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)

- **Tell Stories:** Share your salvation testimonies and discuss ways to share the gospel at home.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Continue praying for specific families God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Matthew 19:6 and memorize Ephesians 5:33 for next week.

**Week 7:** Host mentor couples back at the leader home and affirm them for their commitment to be involved in mentoring and discipling younger families. Discuss Matthew 28:19-20 and the implications of making disciples who make disciples. Each couple shares a couple they believe God is leading them to mentor. Encourage them to host the couple in their home at least once a month and cover a marriage related Scripture each time they meet the couple. Mentor couples continue this process for six months investing in younger couples.

- **Mine Scripture:** Matthew 28:19-20 (Lead couple will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Lead couple will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share how you have grown through this discipleship process. Share what you would like to see happen in the younger couples you mentor.
- **Openly Pray:** Pray specifically for the couple God is leading you to mentor.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Ephesians 5:33 and memorize Matthew 28:19-20 for the next meeting.

NOTE: After meeting 7, your mentor couples will begin meeting with younger couples to take them through the process you just modeled for them. Your next three meetings with mentors will be to encourage them in the process of meeting with their couples.

**Reunion Meeting 1:** Host a mentor couple reunion meeting in six weeks to discuss how their first mentor gatherings went. This meeting will provide some accountability, encouragement, and wisdom as the mentors move forward with the family they are mentoring.

**Reunion Meeting 2:** Host a mentor couple reunion meeting after three months to discuss progress, challenges, and share stories to learn from one another. Begin to identify the younger couples who have been mentored who could turn around and mentor another couple. Older mentor couples begin praying about what family God may be leading them to next.

**Reunion Meeting 3:** Host a mentor couple reunion meeting after five months to discuss next steps in the mentoring process. Give couples an opportunity to continue investing in another couple or take a six-month break. Make it a goal to enlist at least one new couple who has been the beneficiary of this mentoring to turn around and mentor others. Set a time frame for when you will begin the next six-month mentoring process and the follow up meetings along the way.

## MENTOR/MENTEE COUPLE MEETING SCHEDULE

The following schedule is suggested for mentors meeting with mentee families over the course of six months:

Each MENTOR meeting should involve the following elements each month:

- **Mine Scripture** for practical truths for families.
- **Eat Together** in a home setting.
- **Nurture Relationships** by practicing the one another's in Scripture (see page 19).
- **Tell stories** of success and struggles in family life.
- **Openly pray** with one another sharing needs and requests.
- **Rehearse Scripture** memory verses.

Each MENTOR Couple will contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with family weekly at church.

**Month 1** – Meet in Mentor Couple home and discuss Genesis 2:4-25.

- **Mine Scripture:** Genesis 2:4-25 (Read and discuss the text)
- **Eat Together:** The leader couple will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share a story about some successes and struggles in your marriage.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Begin praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Memorize Genesis 2:24 for next week.

Mentors contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with couple weekly at church.

**Month 2** – Meet in Mentor Couple home and discuss Genesis 3:1-24.

- **Mine Scripture:** Genesis 3:1-24
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple one will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share about your parent's marriages (how did their marriage succeed or struggle?).
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how couples can be used to invest in younger couples. Continue praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.

- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Genesis 2:24 and memorize Genesis 3:15 for next week.

Mentors contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with couple weekly at church.

**Month 3** – Meet in Mentor Couple home and discuss Psalm 128:1-6.

- **Mine Scripture:** Psalm 128:1-6
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple two will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share about your marriage, your commitment to local church involvement, and the importance of that in the spiritual development of families.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger couples. Continue praying for specific couples God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Genesis 3:15 and memorize Psalm 128:1 for next week.

Mentors contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with couples weekly at church.

**Month 4** – Meet in Mentor Couple home and discuss Matthew 19:1-12.

- **Mine Scripture:** Matthew 19:1-12
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple three will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share your salvation testimonies and discuss ways to share the gospel at home.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger families. Continue praying through specific families God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Psalm 128:1 and memorize Matthew 19:6 for next week.

Mentors contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with family weekly at church.

**Month 5** – Meet in Mentee home and discuss Ephesians 5:21-33.

The purpose of meeting in the mentee's home is to begin helping them think through and experience what it is like to practice hospitality by hosting another couple in their home for discipleship and mentoring. Begin to cast the vision with the younger family about becoming involved as a mentor. Discernment will be needed to determine whether this family has sufficient maturity to lead as mentors.

- **Mine Scripture:** Ephesians 5:21-33
- **Eat Together:** Mentor couple four will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share your salvation testimonies and discuss ways to share the gospel at home.
- **Openly Pray:** Discuss and pray how mentors can be used to invest in younger families. Continue praying through specific families God might use mentor couples to invest in.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Matthew 19:6 and memorize Ephesians 5:33 for next week.

Mentors contact mentees once a week by phone, text, or email outside of church and make personal contact with family weekly at church.

### **Month 6** – Meet in Mentor’s home and discuss Matthew 28:19-20

This meeting would conclude the formal time of mentoring a family. The relationship will likely continue on in a meaningful way. Mentors will begin the process with another younger couple. The family that was just mentored may begin the process with another family depending upon their maturity level.

- **Mine Scripture:** Matthew 28:19-20 (Lead couple will read and facilitate discussion)
- **Eat Together:** Lead couple will provide the meal.
- **Nurture Relationships:** Share a High/Low point of your week as you eat. (Romans 12:15)
- **Tell Stories:** Share how you have grown through this discipleship process. Share what you would like to see happen in the younger families you mentor.
- **Openly Pray:** Pray specifically for the family God is leading you to mentor.
- **Rehearse Scripture:** Quote Ephesians 5:33 and memorize Matthew 28:19-20 to put into practice in their home.

Check out some additional resources to help you learn more about mentoring couples and families.

Family Life Mentor Training ([www.familylife.com/ementoring](http://www.familylife.com/ementoring))

The Complete Guide to Marriage Mentoring by Les and Leslie Parrott

### **Identify Next Steps**

Marriage ministry in churches looks different and has different emphases depending on the needs of the church and the community. *Evaluating Marriage Ministry in Your Church* on page 23 for help to narrow the focus of where you believe God is leading your church to invest in marriage ministry. It is better to begin by focusing on one area and developing a ministry with excellence than to try and do too many emphases at

once. This guide will help you consider three different approaches in your church: 1) Prepare couples for marriage, 2) Enrich couples who are already married, 3) Help couples who are in crisis.

Reading through this design guide has provided you with several ideas to develop marriage ministry in your church. You cannot do it all at once. Start small. Identify the top three ideas you would consider implementing for each three areas (preparing, enrichment, crisis help). Then narrow your ideas down to one particular ministry you can accomplish in the next year for each three areas (preparing, enrichment, crisis help). Finally, identify the one thing you will strive to accomplish in marriage ministry this next year. Begin the journey of marriage ministry in your church and strategically grow your marriage ministry over the course of time to grow a church that is full of healthy couples who are growing in their marriage and reflecting the gospel to a lost world around them.



# Prioritizing My Time for My Marriage

Psalm 31:14-15 *"But I trust in you, O LORD; I say, 'You are my God.'"* <sup>15</sup> My times are in your hand;

Name: \_\_\_\_\_

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

Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Time
5:00am								5:00am
6:00am								6:00am
7:00am								7:00am
8:00am								8:00am
9:00am								9:00am
10:00am								10:00am
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4:00pm								4:00pm
5:00pm								5:00pm
6:00pm								6:00pm
7:00pm								7:00pm
8:00pm								8:00pm
9:00pm								9:00pm
10:00pm								10:00pm
11:00pm								11:00pm
Time	Sunday	Monday	Tuesday	Wednesday	Thursday	Friday	Saturday	Time

## ONE ANOTHER COMMANDS IN SCRIPTURE

**Accept one another:** *Accept one another, then, just as Christ accepted you, in order to bring praise to God. (Romans 15:7)*

**Admonish one another:** *Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly as you teach and admonish one another with all wisdom, and as you sing psalms, hymns and spiritual songs with gratitude in your hearts to God. (Colossians 3:16)*

**Bear one another's burdens:** *Carry each other's burdens, and in this way you will fulfill the law of Christ. (Galatians 6:2)*

**Bear with one another:** *Be completely humble and gentle; be patient, bearing with one another in love. (Ephesians 4:2)*

**Build up one another:** *Let us therefore make every effort to do what leads to peace and to mutual "edification" (original=build up one another). (Romans 14:19)*

**Care and concern for one another:** *but that its parts should have equal concern for each other. (1 Corinthians 12:25)*

**Comfort one another:** *so that we may be able to comfort those who are in any affliction. (2 Corinthians 1:3-7)*

**Confess faults to one another:** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. (James 5:16)*

**Be devoted to one another:** *Be devoted to one another in brotherly love. (Romans 12:10a)*

**Encourage one another:** *Therefore encourage one another and build each other up. (1 Thess. 5:11; Heb. 3:13)*

**Forgive one another:** *forgiving each other, just as in Christ God forgave you. (Ephesians 4:32)*

**Greet one another:** *Greet one another with a holy kiss. (Rom. 16:16; 1 Cor. 16:20; 2 Cor. 13:12; 1 Thess. 5:26)*

**Honest with one another:** *Do not lie to each other, since you have taken off your old self with its practices . . . (Col. 3:9)*

**Honor one another:** *Honor one another above yourselves. (Romans 12:10b)*

**Be hospitable to one another:** *Offer hospitality to one another without grumbling. (1 Peter. 4:9; Romans 12:13)*

**Be kind to one another:** *Be kind and compassionate to one another. (Ephesians 4:32)*

**Love one another:** *Let no debt remain outstanding, except the continuing debt to love one another . . . (Romans 13:8)*

**Pray for one another:** *Therefore confess your sins to each other and pray for each other. (James 5:16)*

**Be the Same Mind with one another:** *May the God who gives endurance and encouragement give you a spirit of unity among yourselves as you follow Christ (Romans 15:5)*

**Serve one another:** *serve one another in love. (Galatians 5:13)*

**Spur one another on:** *And let us consider how we may spur one another on toward love and good deeds. (Hebrews 10:24)*

**Submit to one another:** *Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ. (Ephesians 5:21)*

## BIBLICAL OBSERVATIONS ON THE CONTEXTS OF THE HOUSEHOLD CODES

	EPHESIANS	COLOSSIANS	1 PETER
<b>Love</b>	Ephesians 5:1-14 (Walk in love)	Colossians 3:12-15 (Put on love)	1 Peter 2:17 (Love brotherhood)
<b>God's Word</b>	Ephesians 5:15-21 (Be filled with Spirit and God's Word)	Colossians 3:16-17	1 Peter 2:2
<b>Wife</b>	<b>Ephesians 5:22-24</b> " <u>Wives</u> , submit to your own <u>husbands</u> , as to the Lord. <sup>23</sup> For the <u>husband</u> is the head of the <u>wife</u> even as Christ is the head of the church, his body, and is himself its Savior. <sup>24</sup> Now as the church submits to Christ, so also <u>wives</u> should submit in everything to their <u>husbands</u> ."	<b>Colossians 3:18</b> " <u>Wives</u> , submit to your <u>husbands</u> , as is fitting in the Lord."	<b>1 Peter 3:1-6</b> " <u>Likewise</u> , <u>wives</u> , be subject to your own husbands, so that even if some do not obey the word, they may be won without a word by the conduct of their wives, <sup>2</sup> when they see your respectful and pure conduct. <sup>3</sup> Do not let your adorning be external—the braiding of hair and the putting on of gold jewelry, or the clothing you wear— <sup>4</sup> but let your adorning be the hidden person of the heart with the imperishable beauty of a gentle and quiet spirit, which in God's sight is very precious. <sup>5</sup> For this is how the holy women who hoped in God used to adorn themselves, by submitting to their own husbands, <sup>6</sup> as Sarah obeyed Abraham, calling him lord. And you are her children, if you do good and do not fear anything that is frightening."
<b>Husband</b>	<b>Ephesians 5:25-33</b> " <u>Husbands</u> , love your <u>wives</u> , as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, <sup>26</sup> that he might sanctify her, having cleansed her by the washing of water with the word, <sup>27</sup> so that he might present the church to himself in splendor, without spot or wrinkle or any such thing, that she might be holy and without blemish. <sup>28</sup> In the same way <u>husbands</u> should love their <u>wives</u> as their own bodies. <u>He</u> who loves his <u>wife</u> loves himself. <sup>29</sup> For no one ever hated his own flesh, but nourishes and cherishes it, just as Christ does the church, <sup>30</sup> because we are members of his body. <sup>31</sup> "Therefore a <u>man</u> shall leave his father and mother and hold fast to his <u>wife</u> , and the two shall become one flesh." <sup>32</sup> This mystery is profound, and I am saying that it refers to Christ and the church. <sup>33</sup> However, let each one of you love his <u>wife</u> as himself, and let the <u>wife</u> see that she respects her <u>husband</u> ."	<b>Colossians 3:19</b> " <u>Husbands</u> , love your <u>wives</u> , and do not be harsh with them."	<b>1 Peter 3:7</b> " <u>Likewise</u> , <u>husbands</u> , live with your <u>wives</u> in an understanding way, showing honor to the woman as the weaker vessel, since they are heirs with you of the grace of life, so that your prayers may not be hindered."
<b>Children</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:1-3</b> " <u>Children</u> , obey your <u>parents</u> in the Lord, for this is right. <sup>2</sup> "Honor your <u>father</u> and <u>mother</u> " (this is the first commandment with a promise), <sup>3</sup> "that it may go well with you and that you may live long in the land."	<b>Colossians 3:20</b> " <u>Children</u> , obey your <u>parents</u> in everything, for this pleases the Lord."	
<b>Fathers</b>	<b>Ephesians 6:4</b> " <u>Fathers</u> , do not provoke your <u>children</u> to anger, but bring them up in the discipline and instruction of the Lord."	<b>Colossians 3:21</b> " <u>Fathers</u> , do not provoke your <u>children</u> , lest they become discouraged."	
<b>Warfare</b>	Ephesians 6:10-17		1 Peter 3:8-17
<b>Prayer</b>	Ephesians 6:18-20	Colossians 4:2-4	1 Peter 3:7

# How to Plan a Marriage Enrichment Experience

Marriage is a journey with valleys and mountain top experiences. Many couples today struggle with navigating their relationship through life experiences as is seen in the skyrocketing divorce rate inside and outside the church. There are different approaches to help couples improve their relationship and enable a better survivor rate. One way many churches attempt to equip couples is through a marriage enrichment experience. If you want to plan a successful marriage enrichment time, then consider some of the following suggestions.

**Date the calendar** – Check the church calendar, school calendar, and community calendar. You will never find a date that is perfect but you can choose a date that will enable the greatest number of couples to participate. Here's a big hint on a date not to pick . . . Don't schedule a marriage enrichment experience the opening weekend of deer season.

**Determine the location** – Some churches host a marriage enrichment experience on site at their church and even provide childcare. Other churches choose to have an experience off-site at a hotel or retreat center and allow couples to find their own childcare. A camp setting with bunk beds is not an ideal retreat center for a marriage enrichment event. Choose a location that is within a one-hour drive for couples and make sure you do an on-site visit with at least a few ladies before scheduling.

**Decide on a speaker** – Bringing in a speaker like Gary Smalley is not possible for most churches. Contact the Evangelism and Church Health Team at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention for potential speakers. Most churches are able to find someone within the state to lead a quality marriage enrichment experience. Advanced planning (at least three months) will provide a greater variety of speaker options.

**Dollars and budgets** – A church doesn't have to spend a lot of money to have a great marriage enrichment experience. It is beneficial to budget some money for such an event and then charge couples for the difference. It is best to have couples pay up front before the event so that you don't have 50 couples who have signed up and 5 couples who have paid and actually show up leaving the planners over budget with too many leftovers.

**Delegate responsibility** – Pastors have plenty of hats to wear without the responsibility of planning another event. It's important to find at least one organized couple or a team who can plan the details of the event and keep the pastor in the loop through the process.

**Divulge details** – Active participation in a marriage enrichment experience will not happen unless there is adequate promotion through announcements, bulletins, flyers, and letters. A personal in-person invitation from the pastor or leaders will go a long way to enlist couples to be involved in the marriage enrichment experiences.

**Direction of the weekend** – Decide how many sessions or how long you would like the weekend to last. Some churches do an event for one evening only and others do an event that includes Friday

evening and Saturday morning. Be creative and flexible and consider additional formats to appeal to the schedules of participants. It is better to have couples to finish the weekend wishing the experience had been longer than to leave exhausted wishing it had been shorter.

**Discourse and time** – Some of the most common topics presented in marriage enrichment experiences are communication, conflict, intimacy and romance, goals, and personality types. Decide on topics that are relevant to your couples. Ask about the topics normally addressed by your scheduled speaker. Schedule sessions for about an hour with ample interaction time between husband and wife. Make sure that you schedule adequate breaks.

**Decorate the space** – Most guys struggle with creating a romantic ambiance for a marriage enrichment experience. Discover someone in your church who has a gift for decorating and enlist them to decorate the room where the event will be held. This can normally be done inexpensively and will add a special touch to the experience that will at least be remembered by all the wives who participate.

**Door prizes and desserts** – Consider giving away books, restaurant gift cards, movie gift cards and other items as a way to generate excitement and anticipation. Provide some sort of snacks, desserts, or drinks for couples throughout the weekend.

**Develop a marriage enrichment plan** – Evaluate the weekend and learn from it so that you will be able to offer additional enrichment experiences. Consider using a marriage enrichment experience as a catalyst for additional marriage enrichment experiences in your church. Some churches follow up a marriage enrichment experience with a marriage topical study in Sunday school or discipleship training. Pastors can also consider preaching a series leading up to or following a marriage enrichment experience.

**Don'ts** – Don't embarrass couples. Don't ask couples to share anything that would make them uncomfortable. Don't offer a time for couples to ask questions in a group (some individuals may ask a question that is an intentional or unintentional jab at their spouse). Don't keep couples longer than the schedule stipulates. Don't pair someone up with someone who is not their spouse.

**Do** – Do contact the Evangelism and Church Health Team at the Arkansas Baptist State Convention for help in planning your marriage enrichment experience.

**Depend upon God and His Word to enrich couples (John 15:7).** Prayer is vital in planning and preparing for a life-changing marriage enrichment experience. If God is the creator of marriage, then doesn't it make sense that we approach Him in asking for direction, blessing, and transformation in the lives of couples?

# EVALUATING MARRIAGE MINISTRY IN YOUR CHURCH

The following questions are intended to help you think through how you and/or your church approach ministry to married couples. Very few churches will do all of the activities below. This evaluation will challenge you to consider what your church provides and doesn't provide to champion marriages in your context. Some of the questions are related to you as a minister and some of them are related to the overall marriage ministry in your church. After you read through the questions, then highlight the top three areas for each section you would like to work on in your church. If you would like some ideas, resources, or help then please contact the Evangelism and Church Health Team at 800-838-2272.

## SECTION 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION: PREPARING COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE

### ■ **Require Pre-marital Counseling:**

Require couples to participate in a minimum of four pre-marital counseling sessions.  
Enlist and train others in the church to provide this service in addition to church staff ministers.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you provide ongoing training for couples to grow in their marriages?  
Do you provide training for counseling couples so all counseling is consistent?  
Does your church require premarital counseling for couples getting married in your church?  
Does your church have other couples trained to do premarital counseling besides church staff?

### ■ **Preparing for Marriage Conference:**

Encourage engaged couples to attend a one-day conference covering basic marriage issues.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you have any kind of class or seminar that prepares couples for marriage, especially those who might get married outside your church?  
Do you have a course of study for young adults including relationship, courtship, marriage, roles in marriage, etc.?  
Do you teach your congregation the importance of preparing for marriage?

### ■ **Establish a Covenant Marriage Policy:**

Require all couples getting married in your church to sign a covenant marriage agreement.  
Encourage couples in your church to convert their marriage to a covenant marriage.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you teach covenant marriage principle to your congregation?  
Do you encourage all couples to enter a covenant marriage agreement?  
Do you require couples to enter a covenant marriage agreement?  
Have you entered a marriage covenant agreement?

### ■ **Improve Your Church Marriage Policy:**

Develop a marriage policy for your church to include guidelines. Run this through the proper channels so the whole church is behind this (not just the pastor).  
Nail down your beliefs about divorce and remarriage so that you make decisions on Scripture and not personal issues.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Have you developed marriage policies to set guidelines for marriage in your church?  
Do you teach these principles to your congregation?  
Do you revisit your policies on a regular basis, insuring they are current and up to date?  
Do you hold couples outside your membership to these guidelines?

### ■ **Develop a Community Marriage Agreement:**

Work through the ministerial alliance to develop a community marriage agreement among churches in the community.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Does your community have a ministerial alliance?  
Have you proposed a community marriage agreement among these pastors to present a united teaching in the community?  
Does your congregation espouse the belief in a marriage covenant to the community?  
Do you take advantage of opportunities of weddings outside your membership, to teach the need for covenant marriage?

## SECTION 2: BUILDING UPON THE FOUNDATION: MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

### ■ **Preach on Marriage:**

Preach on marriage at least once a year or do a series on marriage and family. Invite a guest speaker in to speak on marriage issues.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Do you preach biblical truths on marriage on a regular basis?
- Do you bring in guest speakers to reinforce your teaching on marriage?
- Do you develop series on different elements of marriage to strengthen your couples?
- Do you practice what you preach?

### ■ **Host a Marriage Enrichment Sunday:**

Plan an annual Marriage Enrichment Sunday in your church where couples are affirmed & challenged in their marriage and conclude with a vow renewal ceremony.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Do you have regular marriage enrichment events for your couples at the church?
- Do you enlist the talents of all your membership to provide skits, music, or drama to enhance these special Sunday events?
- Do you promote with enthusiasm and joy – teaching your congregation by your attitude toward marriage enrichment?
- Do you take advantage of marriage enrichment events outside your church to strengthen your marriage and spark ideas for your own Marriage Enrichment Sunday?

### ■ **Schedule a Marriage Date Night at the Church or a Couples Night Out:**

Provide quality childcare monthly or quarterly at your church for the purpose of encouraging couples to date their mate and enrich their relationship.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Do you provide childcare on a quarterly basis so couples can experience marriage date nights?
- Do you utilize the different ministry resources to provide children's programs to encourage parents to take a night out?
- Do you create attractive promotional items (flyers, brochures, bulletin boards) to promote parents' night out?

### ■ **Schedule a Marriage Retreat:**

Schedule a marriage retreat for your church one weekend a year. This could be on site, at a retreat center, or hotel.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Do you have an annual marriage retreat for your couples outside the church?
- Do you make couples aware of marriage enrichment opportunities sponsored by other organizations?
- Do you provide scholarships for couples in financial distress to be able to attend?
- Do you make this a highlighted event for couples to anticipate each year?
- Do you use creativity to make these events unique each year?

### ■ **Provide a Marriage Class during Sunday School:**

Have a portion during the Sunday School year where each couple's class provides a series of lessons on marriage.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Does your education program include marriage enrichment studies on a regular basis?
- Do you enlist dynamic individuals to teach these classes?
- Do you take advantage of DVD or VHS driven studies?
- Do you enhance these classes with a special event at the conclusion?

### ■ **Provide a Marriage Class during Discipleship Training:**

Offer at least one class on marriage during the year. There are studies available from six to twelve weeks in length.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

- Do you take advantage of discipleship training to reinforce Biblical marriage training?
- Do you have any small groups that are involved in marriage related topics during the year?
- Do you take advantage of DVD or VHS driven studies?
- Do you bring in a gifted teacher for these sessions?

### ■ **Enlist and Train Marriage Mentors:**

Enlist and train older couples to mentor younger couples to have healthy marriages.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Are you training older couples to strengthen marriages in your church through mentoring?  
Do you have any formal way to establish marriage mentoring relationships in your church?  
Do you actively enlist stable couples to informally mentor young couples?  
Do you plan events for multi-aged couples to interact and build mentoring relationships?

### ■ **Encourage Staff Marriage Enrichment:**

Require all church staff to participate in some type of marriage enrichment experience each year that is funded by the church (Marriage retreat; Read a book on marriage with spouse; Weekend get away).

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you strengthen your staff marriages through requiring attendance in marriage enrichment events on a regular basis?  
Do you invest in your staff couples by providing church budget funds for them to attend these events?  
Do you require your staff to read at least one book a year on marriage enrichment?  
Do you provide DVD or online resources to your staff couples to enrich their marriages at home?

### ■ **Stock up on Marriage Resources:**

Provide plenty of books and resource on marriage in your church library for couples.  
Occasionally give away books to couples to encourage their continual development as a couple.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Are you building a library of marriage resources that couples can use to strengthen their marriages and develop as couples?  
Do you recognize couples throughout the year and bless them with a free book to encourage their growth?  
Does your church library have DVD and/or video resources couples or classes can use to enrich their marriage?  
Do you spontaneously give away resources to spark interest in other marriage events?

## **SECTION 3: REPAIR THE FOUNDATION: INTERVENTION & RECOVERY**

### ■ **Provide Marriage Counseling:**

Provide initial counseling for couples in crisis.  
Refer to professional counselors as necessary.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you provide marriage counseling to couples in crisis?  
Are there a variety of couples in your church trained to do marriage counseling?  
Do you have a counselor listing for referrals?  
Do you provide financial assistance for couples in need of counseling?

### ■ **Divorce Recovery Ministry:**

Conduct a workshop for the community.  
Conduct a series of classes to help individuals deal with divorce from a biblical perspective.

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Do you provide Divorce Recovery type classes for individuals going through divorce?  
Do you provide classes to support these individuals?  
Do you teach a biblical view of divorce?  
Do you have pre-marital counseling for those who wish to re-marry?  
Do you have an avenue to minister to children whose parents have divorced?

### ■ **Crisis Intervention Ministry:**

Gather a list of qualified Christian counselors in your area for quick referrals

#### **Evaluation Questions:**

Have you taken the initiative to develop a relationship with a Christian counselor that you can confidently refer people to?  
Do you know when marriage problems are beyond your expertise and refer couples at that time?

# Improving Marriage Ministry in Your Church

## SECTION 1: LAYING THE FOUNDATION: PREPARING COUPLES FOR MARRIAGE

■ Top Three Areas Our Church Needs to Work On:

■ Our Church Can Realistically Do This:

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

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

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

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 2: BUILDING UPON THE FOUNDATION: MARRIAGE ENRICHMENT

■ Top Three Areas Our Church Needs to Work On:

■ Our Church Can Realistically Do This:

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

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

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

3. \_\_\_\_\_

## SECTION 3: REPAIR THE FOUNDATION: INTERVENTION & RECOVERY

■ Top Three Areas Our Church Needs to Work On:

■ Our Church Can Realistically Do This:

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

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

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

3. \_\_\_\_\_

**Note:** Please feel free to contact the Church Health Team office for ideas, help, and resources to equip you to improve your ministry to married couples. You may contact us at 800-838-2272.

# Marriage Resources

Websites: [www.absc.org](http://www.absc.org) [www.family.org](http://www.family.org) [www.familylife.com](http://www.familylife.com)

## Conflict

Chapman, Gary	The Five Languages of Apology
Downs, Tim and Joy	Fight Fair: Winning at conflict without losing at love
Harvey, Dave	When Sinners Say I Do
Sande, Ken	Peacemaking for Families: A Biblical guide for managing conflict at home

## Communication

Parrott, Les & Leslie	Love Talk: Speak Each Other's Love Language
Meyer, Nancy Sebastian	Talk Easy, Listen Hard: Real communication for two really different people
Rainey, Dennis & Barbara	Starting Your Marriage Right
Rosberg, Gary & Barbara	Improving Communication in Your Marriage
Wright, H. Norman	Communication: Key to Your Marriage

## Smartphone Apps

- 31 Day Prayer Challenge
- Great Date Experience
- Gloo
- The Love Dare
- Two ignite

## Dating

Arp, David and Claudia	Ten Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage
Arp, David and Claudia	52 Fantastic Dates for You and Your Mate
Rosberg, Gary	40 Unforgettable Dates with Your Mate
Wellons, Bill and Carolyn	Getting Away to Get it Together

## Devotions for Dating or Engaged Couples

Arp, David and Claudia	Ten Great Dates Before You Say I Do
Wright, H. Norman	101 Questions to Ask Before You Say I Do
Wright, H. Norman	Starting out together: A devotional for dating or engaged couples
Young, Ben	Devotions for Dating Couples

## Devotion Guides for Married Couples

Dobson, James & Shirley	Night Light: A Devotional for Couples
Kendricks, Stephen	The Love Dare
Morely, Patrick	Two-part Harmony
Rainey, Dennis & Barbara	Moments Together for Couples
Wright, H. Norman	Quiet Times for Couples

## Finances

Alcorn, Randy	The Treasure Principle
Bell, Matt	Money & Marriage: A Complete guide for engaged & newly married couples
Blue, Ron	Master Your Money
Burkett, Larry	The Financial Planning Workbook
Hunt, Mary	Debt-Proof Your Marriage

## For Men Only

Elmore, Tim	Soul Provider: Becoming a confident spiritual leader
Feldhahn, Shaunti	For Men Only: A straightforward guide to the inner lives of women
Scott, Stuart	Exemplary Husband
Stanley, Andy	Choosing to Cheat: Who wins when family and work collide?

## For Women Only

Demoss, Nancy Leigh	Becoming God's True Woman
Feldhahn, Shaunti	For Women Only: What you need to know about the inner lives of men
Lewis, Robert	The New Eve: Choosing God's best for your life
Peace, Martha	The Excellent Wife

## Forgiveness

Allender & Longman III	Forgiveness: Intimate Marriage Series
MacArthur & Mack	The Freedom & Power of Forgiveness
Rainey, Dennis	Pressure Proof Your Marriage
Rosberg, Barbara	Healing the Hurt in Your Marriage

## General Marriage/Family

Kostenberger, Andreas	God, Marriage and Family
Olson, David H.	The Couple Checkup: Find Your Relationship Strengths
Piper, John	This Momentary Marriage
Rainey, Dennis	Growing a spiritual strong family
Richards, Larry	What's in the Bible for Couples
Swhihart, Phillip, ed.	The First Five Years of Marriage: Launching a Successful Relationship

## Spiritual Intimacy

Allender, Dan	Intimate Allies
Clarke, David	A Marriage after God's Own Heart
Harley, Willard	His Needs, Her Needs
Ferguson, David	The Pursuit of Intimacy: What being in love was meant to be
Meredith, Don	2 Becoming One: God designed marriage, He can make it work
Sell, Charles	Spiritual Intimacy for Couples

## Personality Types

LaHaye, Tim	Opposites Attract: Bringing out the best in your spouse's temperament
Littauer, Florence	Personality Plus for Couples: Understanding yourself & the one you love
Malphurs, Aubrey	Maximizing Your Effectiveness
McSwain, Jay	Finding Your PLACE: Participant's Guide

## Praying Couples

Fuller, Cheri	When Couples Pray
Getz, Gene	Praying for One Another
Kopp, David	Praying the Bible for Your Marriage
Omartian, Stormie	The Power of a Praying Wife, The Power of a Praying Husband

## Relationship Roles

Burke, H. Dale	Different by Design: God's master plan for harmony
Chapell, Bryan	Each for the Other: Marriage as it's meant to be
Eggerich, Emerson	Love and Respect
Lewis, Robert	Rocking the Roles: Building a win-win marriage
MacArthur, John	Different by Design: Discovering God's will for today's man and woman
Malphurs, Aubrey	Biblical Manhood and Womanhood

## Sex and Romance

Arthur, Kay	Sex, According to God
Dillow, Linda	Simply Romantic Nights
Leman, Kevin	Sheet Music
Mahaney, C.J.	Sex, Romance and the Glory of God
Nelson, Tommy	The Book of Romance
Rainey, Dennis	Rekindling the Romance: Loving the Love of Your Life
Wheat, Ed	Intended for Pleasure

## Web Resources

Couple Checkup Inventory	<a href="http://www.couplecheckup.com">www.couplecheckup.com</a>
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Note: Listing these resources is not necessarily an endorsement of them. These are just suggestions. There is a wealth of material out there to help you grow in your marriage from a biblical perspective. Make the investment and grow!