

## **Your Dating Plan**

Write in when you are going to have each date!

Date One: Sharing Hopes, Dreams, and Expectations is scheduled for

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Two: Appreciating Your Differences is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Date Three: Communicating and Connecting is scheduled for

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Four: Solving Problems as a Couple is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Date Five: Managing Your Money is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Date Six: Leaving and Cleaving is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Date Seven: Celebrating Intimacy, Love, and Romance is scheduled for

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Eight: Realizing Roles and Planning for Family is scheduled for

\_\_\_\_\_

Date Nine: Developing Spiritual Intimacy is scheduled for \_\_\_\_\_

Date Ten: Choosing an Intentional Marriage is scheduled for

\_\_\_\_\_

## Your Dating Ground Rules

To get the most out of each date we make the following suggestions:

- *Read the corresponding chapter and/or the chapter summary.* If you have not filled out the exercise, do so before you begin your discussion.
- *Stay positive!* This is not the time to tell the other what he or she has done wrong.
- *Be future focused.* Focus on what you want your relationship to be like in the future. Don't concentrate on past failures. (It's okay to remember past successes.)
- *Talk about your relationship.* Do not talk about your job, future in-laws, or wedding details unless it's part of the topic of the date. Now is the time to plan your life together.
- *Give a gift of love.* Some topics will excite you more than others. On the less exciting ones, give a gift of love. Participate enthusiastically!
- *Don't force it.* If you get on a negative track, stop that discussion. Move on to another topic that you both feel good about.
- *If you get stuck, ask for help.* If during your dates an issue comes up that you can't handle together, talk to your pastor, mentor couple, or counselor.
- *Use good communication skills.* Be prepared for some surprises and new insights about each other. They can open new opportunities for growth and intimacy in your relationship. Following are several tips for sharing your answers:
  1. Be honest, yet never unkind.
  2. Remember to start your sentences with "I" and let them reflect back on you.
  3. Resist attacking the other or defending yourself.
  4. Try to use the feelings formula.

5. Be specific and positive.

- *Have fun!* Remember why you are considering getting married in the first place. Also think about why you are dating. It is to enrich your relationship as you prepare for the future.
- *After each date, take the post-date application tips seriously!* Remember you are developing healthy habits that will enrich your life together long after your *10 Great Dates* are completed.

## *Date One*

### **Sharing Hopes, Dreams, and Expectations**

*Date One will help you look at your expectations and consider which ones are realistic.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 1, “Sharing Hopes, Dreams, and Expectations.”
- Read through the Date One Exercise and take notes. Looking over the exercise before your date gives time for reflection. Also, if one of you is more verbal than the other, making a few notes will give you time to formulate your thoughts.
- Make reservations at a favorite restaurant. (The one making the reservations may want to let the place be a surprise for the other.)
- If applicable, make arrangements for child care.
- Think about what you will wear. Choose an outfit you think the other would like. Remember, this is a date!

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Plan to use the whole evening. Don’t think about rushing home to watch your favorite TV program. If there is something you want to watch, use your VCR and record it for another evening.
- During a leisurely dinner, talk through the dating exercises. Part 1 will help you look at your expectations and compare them with your partner’s.
- Parts 1 and 2 will help you focus on your hopes, dreams, and expectations for the future.
- Before you start, review communication tips in the Dating Ground Rules, Chapter 23.

## CHAPTER SUMMARY

If you are engaged or seriously considering marriage, this date will help you look at your hopes, dreams, and expectations. Do you expect your partner to change some of his/her ways after you marry? Too many who are planning marriage believe this. The value of these dates and other marriage preparation resources is having the opportunity to reexamine and reconfirm your decision to marry. You can start that process by looking realistically at your expectations. In our national survey of long-term marriages, we found three common strands in those marriages that are alive and healthy: (1) They put their relationship first, (2) both spouses are committed to growing together, and (3) they work at staying close. As you enjoy your memories and look at your relationship as it is now, you will be better equipped to share your expectations for the future. Enjoy your first great date!

## POST-DATE APPLICATION

- Look for ways to compliment each other between now and the next date. Give at least one honest compliment each day—in person or by phone or email.
- Continue to share your hopes and dreams (Part 2).

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Bonus Date: Go to a Parade of Homes or other open houses and discuss your likes and dislikes and dream about your future home together.

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## *Date One Exercise*

### **PART 1: EXPECTATION SURVEY<sup>1</sup>**

What are your expectations? As you consider marriage, what is most important to you and your partner? Rate these eight areas on a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not so important and 5 being very important). Now rate them as you think your partner would rate them. Compare your lists and discuss.

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 1. *Commitment and Security*—The knowledge of permanence and dedication in the relationship; financial and material well-being.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 2. *Companionship and Friendship*—Having a friend who goes through all the joys and sorrows of life with you, a soul partner; having common areas of interest.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 3. *Sexuality and Sensuality*—Experiencing physical intimacy, romance, and love in marriage; the pleasure of a growing love relationship.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 4. *Affection and Tenderness*—Experiencing regularly the touch, the kiss, the winks across the room that say, “I love you,” “I care,” and “I’m thinking of you.”
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 5. *Encouragement*—Having verbal support and appreciation of your work and efforts in your profession, in your home, and so on.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 6. *Intellectual Closeness*—Discussing and growing together in common areas of intellectual thought.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 7. *Mutual Activity*—Doing things together such as politics, sports, church work, and hobbies.
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ 8. *Building a Family*—Having a family and parenting together.

Which of the above could I never live without?

Which would I be okay without?

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## **PART 2: SHARING HOPES, DREAMS, AND EXPECTATIONS**

Pick two or three topics you would like to talk about and have fun sharing your hopes, dreams, and expectations!

- Where you would like to live
- Your ideal home
- Career plans and goals
- Finances
- Family traditions and holiday celebrations
- Your dream getaway
- Spirituality
- Your future family
- Short-term and long-term goals
- Other

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## *Date Two*

### **Appreciating Your Differences**

*The purpose of this date is to give you the opportunity to consider how you can benefit from each other's strengths and how you can complement each other in the ways you are different.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 2, "Appreciating Your Differences."
- Preview the Date Two Exercise.
- Plan to go to your favorite hangout. Choose a place where you can talk privately.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- While discussing "Balancing Your Seesaws," concentrate on each other's strengths.
- Making a list of your couple strengths will help you appreciate how you fill each other's gaps.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Have you heard the old adage, "Opposites attract"? If this is true in your experience and if you want to have a great relationship, you will need to learn how to appreciate your differences. On this date you will look at seven continuums that illustrate some human polarities. As you look at each continuum, think about your relationship. Both sides of each continuum have strengths and weaknesses. Which side you are on is less important than understanding that people are different. To build a strong marriage you will need to learn how to benefit from the ways you are alike and the ways you are different. Your different strengths can help you balance each other—especially if you appreciate those differences and don't feel threatened by

them. In areas where you have similar strengths, you may need to look for ways to work together harmoniously.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Look for ways you are different that complement each other.
- In ways that you are alike, look for ways you can compensate.
- Affirm your partner's positive characteristics.

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***Bonus date: go to a video store, separate, and each pick a movie of your choice. How different are the movies?***

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## *Date Two Exercise*

### **BALANCING YOUR SEESAWS**

Place yourself and your partner on each continuum.

Feelings-Oriented

Private

Spontaneous

Live-Wire

Night Owl

Time-Oriented

Saver

Facts-Oriented

Public

Planner

Laid-Back

Day Lark

Not Time-Oriented

Spender

In looking at each seesaw discuss the following questions:

1. If you are opposites, how can you complement each other?
2. If you are alike, how can you compensate?
3. List other ways in which you are alike or opposite.
4. Make a list of your combined strengths. These are the strengths of your potential marriage partnership!

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## *Date Three*

### **Communicating and Connecting**

*This date will help you connect through sharing your feelings with one another and by talking about your family of origin's communication style.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 3, “Communicating and Connecting.”
- Review the Date Three Exercise.
- Choose a location that will allow you to talk quietly—perhaps a picnic in a park or a bookstore with a coffee shop.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Discuss your exercise, alternating who goes first.
- Be prepared for some new insights into your partner. Review communication tips in Dating Ground Rules, Chapter 23.
- **IMPORTANT:** Stay positive. If conflicts arise in the conversation, note them and save them for later; don't discuss them now!

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

On Date Three you will have the opportunity to work on your communication skills. Your relationship will only be as intimate as the conversations you have with each other. Words can help to build a deeper relationship, or they can damage it. Understanding three patterns of communication—chatting, confronting, and connecting—will help you choose more helpful patterns for the future. Chatting refers to surface conversations. The confronting pattern is the attacking style of communication. With the connecting pattern of communication you can deepen your relationship, become intimate, close companions, and even

resolve differences. A simple grid (feelings formula) will help you share your deepest feelings without confronting your partner or defending yourself. Date Three will help you begin to develop the habit of using the connecting pattern of communication. It takes determination and practice, but you will be rewarded with a deeper, more meaningful relationship.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Keep looking for ways to compliment each other between now and the next date.
- Try to identify when you get into the confronting pattern of communication and stop before it escalates.
- See how much you can use the connecting pattern.
- Practice using the feelings formula.

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***Bonus date: Take ballroom or line dancing lessons, learn a new sport, or go canoeing together.***

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*Date Three Exercise*

**PART 1: FAMILY TALK**

What was the communication style in your family of origin? Check your response. Then compare your list with your partner's list.

In my family:

- We openly shared our feelings, both negative and positive.
- We were always polite and never said what we really thought—peace at any price.
- We were a family of great debaters—a meal without a debate was boring.
- We rarely talked about anything significant.
- Other

**PART 2: SHARING FEELINGS**

1. What are our favorite topics to talk about (things about which we usually agree and promote good interaction)?
2. What are our less favorite topics (things we tend to debate about)?
3. Make a list of “feelings” words that you would feel comfortable using with each other.
4. Take turns answering the following questions:

How do I feel when

- you express appreciation for something I did?



- you smile at me?
- you make a sacrifice for me?
- you reach out and touch me?
- you tell me you love me?
- you tell me you are proud of me?

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## *Date Four*

### **Solving Problems as a Couple**

*Date Four is crafted to help you learn ways to resolve honest conflict by working through problems together.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 4, “Solving Problems as a Couple.”
- Complete the Date Four Exercise.
- Choose a location that will allow you to talk quietly—maybe a coffee shop or a library. Even your local zoo might be fun for this date.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Continue to look for new insights about each other. This exercise can open new opportunities for growth and intimacy in your relationship.
- Review the communication tips in the Dating Ground Rules on page 154 with your partner before you begin discussing the exercise.
- If conflicts arise in your conversations, write them down and save for later; don’t try to deal with them on this date.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

How do you solve problems as a couple? Do you attack the problem, or do you attack each other? Most couples from time to time struggle to stay positive and resist attacking the other. Which animal do you identify most with? (pages 56–57). Do you withdraw like the turtle or attack like the skunk? How would you like to be able to respond when you are angry? We believe the key to resolving conflict isn’t the issue you are arguing about.

Instead, the key is developing a way to look at that issue from the same side. The hard part of solving problems as a couple is discussing the problem in a civil way, and you will learn how to do that on this date by using the Speaker/Listener Technique. Actually, many of the issues we argue about aren't solvable or don't actually need a resolution, but we do need to be able to talk about them and understand each other's perspective. Once feelings are expressed and understood, the issue is fully discussed, and you've both agreed on what the issue is and that you want a solution, you can move on to resolving the issues with four simple steps. In most cases, if you are willing to pull together, attack the problem and not each other, and do the hard work of problem discussion and problem solving, you will find a workable solution.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Look for ways to work together as a team to attack a problem and not each other.
- Practice the Speaker/Listener Technique so you fully understand each other's feelings. Do this before moving to problem solving.
- For problem solving, remember to use the four steps. And have fun while brainstorming.
- If on the date you wrote down any areas of conflicts, you may want to schedule a time to discuss these using the Speaker/Listener Technique. If you still have difficulty with them, ask your pastor, mentor couple, or counselor to help you work through them.

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***Bonus date: Have a "blue road" date. See what you can discover in a fifty mile radius without going on roads you are familiar with.***

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*Date Four Exercise*

**PART 1: YOU AND YOUR FRIENDS AT THE ZOO**

Before your date, rate yourself. Then on your date compare your lists and rankings.

What animal do you identify with the most in handling conflict? Rank from the most often used (1) to least often used (6).

- \_\_\_ Turtle—The Withdrawer
- \_\_\_ Skunk—The Attacker
- \_\_\_ Gorilla—The Winner
- \_\_\_ Other
- \_\_\_ Chameleon—The Yielder
- \_\_\_ Owl—The Intellectualizer
- \_\_\_ Beaver—The Avoider

**PART 2: PRACTICE THE SPEAKER/LISTENER TECHNIQUE**

Choose topics from Date Three under “less favorite topics” (the ones you tend to debate) and write them here:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Compare your list of topics with your partner’s list. Together choose one area (preferably the one that is the least emotional for both of you) that you think would be the easiest to talk about. Remember to use the feelings formula as you discuss this topic using the Speaker/Listener Technique.

*NOTE: If you get into a negative pattern and have difficulty at this point, skip to Part 4. Later you can choose a time to repeat Part 2 and tackle Part 3.*

### **PART 3: PRACTICE PROBLEM SOLVING**

From Part 2, write out the chosen issue.  
The issue we wish to resolve is

Now go through the following four steps:

Step 1: Define the problem.

Step 2: Identify who has the need.

Step 3: Brainstorm possible solutions.

Step 4: Select a plan of action.

*A question to ponder: If after trying to solve the problem you still needed help, who would you most likely consult? Your pastor? Mentor? Friend? Counselor? Other?*

### **PART 4: HAVE SOME FUN!**

Enough work for one date! After all, dating is supposed to be fun. Visit your favorite ice-cream or yogurt shop and get your favorite dessert. Celebrate progress you have made in being able to talk about touchy subjects. And if during the rest of your date, you discover some touchy subjects, don't discuss them now. Instead affirm that you are in the process of developing a communication system that really works and you're learning how to solve problems as a couple.

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## *Date Five*

### **Managing Your Money**

*Date Five will help you to talk about your expectations and consider how you might want to handle your finances after marriage.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 5, “Managing Your Money.”
- Fill out the Date Five Exercise.
- Choose a location that will allow you to talk. Allow plenty of time to talk about this important issue.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Discuss your exercise, one point at a time.
- Money is a difficult subject for many people to discuss. Be extra sensitive to your partner’s feelings.
- Even on a tough topic such as money, you can still have fun talking about financial planning and your financial dreams.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

How to handle finances is a huge issue, and you may be greatly influenced by how your parents handled family finances. Also in the past many couples married in their early twenties, and most didn’t have a financial identity until after marriage. Today, couples are marrying later and may have already established a financial identity. They often have jobs, savings, 401k accounts, credit cards (often with accompanying debt), and college loans—all in their individual names—and they are used to controlling and managing their own money. If you are marrying later in life or if this is a second marriage, you may be bringing valuable assets into the marriage. It’s critical to talk about finances *before* marriage so you have a

complete understanding of what each is bringing into the relationship. To help you do that, we offer four practical steps for managing your money: evaluate your present debt, define your financial goals, develop a workable financial plan, and manage and monitor your money. By being proactive, you can overcome the odds of financial conflict by working together on your financial plan before you say “I do.”

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Track your spending for the next few weeks.
- Continue to discuss your thoughts and feelings about money with your partner.
- Think of ways to reduce credit card debt.
- Express interest in your partner’s work.

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***Bonus date: go grocery shopping with \$20 and see how far you can stretch it!***

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*Date Five Exercise*

**PART 1: YOUR FINANCIAL PAST**

1. How did your family manage money as you were growing up? (Check all that apply.)

- Pinched every penny
- Borrowed money
- Saved for a rainy day
- Spent money like it grew on trees
- Invested wisely
- Donated to good causes
- Other

2. What things would you do the same as your family?
3. What would you do differently?

**PART 2: YOUR FINANCIAL FUTURE**

1. Discuss the debt that each of you might be bringing into your marriage. Is the total amount of debt tolerable to both of you?
2. What are the major categories you need in a future financial plan? Do you agree?
3. How do you think you might want to manage your money?

\_\_\_ One pot—joint account

\_\_\_ Two pots—separate accounts

\_\_\_ Three pots—joint and separate accounts

4. Do you feel comfortable with your own and your partner's spending habits? If not, what changes would make you feel more comfortable?
5. If you received \$5,000 as a wedding present, what would you do with the money?

### **PART 3: BALANCING CAREERS**

1. What are your personal career goals?
2. How will you handle future career decisions? For example, if one had the opportunity for a promotion that required relocation, travel, or extended time commitment, what sacrifices would you be willing to make to advance your partner's career?

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*Date Five Exercise*

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## *Date Six*

### **Leaving and Cleaving**

*Date Six will help you better understand your families of origin, your expectations for future involvement with your families and your friends, and how to build your own friendship after marriage.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 6, “Leaving and Cleaving.”
- Review the Date Six Exercise.
- Choose a location that will allow you to talk. This might be a good date to combine with an activity you both like to do, such as hiking, golfing, going on a picnic, or playing tennis.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Discuss your exercise, one point at a time.
- Be sensitive as you talk about your families of origin.
- Enjoy thinking about ways you can have fun together.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

How much do you know about each other’s growing-up years? Many times couples assume that they know each other quite well and expect no surprises, yet each brings habit patterns to the marriage that the other may not be aware of. We also bring different friendship circles. On this date we look at three important principles: leaving our family of origin, blending our friendships, and cleaving to each other. While we naturally think of physically leaving our parents’ home, it’s more than that—it’s also an attitude of reprioritizing our allegiance from our parents to our partner. Our friends must also realize that our loved one is a higher priority. Do you have any couple friendships that you both enjoy? If not, how can you develop

some? Cleaving to each other means becoming best friends and soul mates. It means being that one person the other can always count on, sharing life on the deepest, most intimate level. Fun is also important in a marriage relationship, so you will want to keep on doing fun things together.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Look for ways to make your loved one a higher priority.
- Be creative and continue to think of fun things to do together.

---

***Bonus date: Try a new activity that neither of you has done before, like bowling, horseback riding, or water skiing.***

---

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*Date Six Exercise*

**PART 1: LEAVING YOUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN**

1. Look over “Questions to Ask Before the Wedding” beginning on page 80. Choose three or four you want to discuss with your partner.
2. What do you want to repeat or not repeat from your family of origin?
3. How can you love and respect your family and at the same time “leave” them for your future spouse?

**PART 2: BLENDING FRIENDSHIPS AND MARRIAGE**

1. Which mutual friends do you both enjoy?
2. If you have few mutual friends, do you want to build some couple friendships? How do you plan to go about this?
3. How do you think your individual friendships will affect your relationship after you are married?

**PART 3: CLEAVING TO EACH OTHER**

1. What kinds of things do you enjoy doing together (hobbies, interests, and recreational activities)?
2. What kinds of things do you enjoy doing separately?
3. Make a list of things you would like to learn or pursue together.

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## *Date Seven*

### **Celebrating Intimacy, Love, and Romance**

*This date will help you define what intimacy, love, and romance mean to you. You will have the opportunity to talk about the facets of a love life and how to get your differing desires and expectations in sync.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 7, “Celebrating Intimacy, Love, and Romance.”
- Review the Date Seven Exercise.
- Choose a romantic restaurant or café where you can talk privately.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- While this date is popular and fun, discussing these topics is tough for some people. Be sensitive to the other. Open up to your partner and share your feelings.
- You may want to review the communication skills in Date Three (page 43) and how to express feelings.
- Think of ways to make this date romantic—holding hands, going for a stroll in the moonlight, or walking in the rain.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

In a national survey, couples were asked what they considered to be the best aspects of their love life. While the responses varied, several themes emerged for a truly healthy love life: trust, mutuality, honesty, intimacy, affection, and sex. Trust is a basic component of any friendship and is essential in a romantic relationship. Having a mutual relationship involves a decision to choose each other above all others and to make your relationship a priority. Honesty is the ability to relate your true feelings. Are

you willing to share your true feelings? Intimacy is the intangible quality of unity, understanding, and synergy that can move a relationship to the deep level as soul mates and lovers. Couples who experience a high level of intimacy often laugh a little more, are more affectionate, and are more likely to feel understood, accepted, and loved. Affection is giving joy and comfort to each other through a touch, hug, kiss, or wink across the room. The culmination of a great love life is sex. In the beginning, God created sexuality, and his plan is that you experience a star-studded love life throughout the different seasons of your marriage. In each season you will have to work at staying lovers.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Look for ways to express affection to your partner.
- Encourage your loved one daily.
- Demonstrate your devotion to your partner (see page 105 for practical suggestions).

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***Bonus date: Plan your ultimate dream honeymoon or vacation over the Internet, but don't book it!***

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*Date Seven Exercise*

**PART 1: FACETS OF A STAR-STUDED LOVE LIFE**

Consider the following six facets. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not so important and 5 being very important) rank each as to how important each facet is to you. Now rank them as you think your partner would rank them. Compare your lists and discuss.

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Trust—Feeling safe with each other
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Mutuality—Freely choosing to love each other
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Honesty—Openly communicating your true feelings
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Intimacy—Being soul mates and feeling close
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Affection—Giving joy and comfort to each other
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Sex—Joining together physically and loving each other

**PART 2: ROMANCE AND INTIMACY**

1. What would be your top three romantic moments together?

- 
- 
- 

2. What is your idea of the best expressions of love?

**PART 3: EXPECTATIONS**

1. When I think of intimacy and closeness,

2. My idea of romance is

**PART 4: HONEYMOON PLANS (IF APPLICABLE)**

In what ways will your honeymoon plans fulfill your definition of romance and intimacy?

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## *Date Eight*

### **Realizing Roles and Planning for Family**

*This date will help you talk candidly about your expectations concerning roles in marriage, how you want to divide and share chores and life tasks, and your expectations concerning family planning.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 8, “Realizing Roles and Planning for Family.”
- Review the Date Eight Exercise.
- Choose a location where you can talk. You might want to go out for dinner so neither of you will have to cook or clean the kitchen.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- This date doesn’t have to be work. Concentrate on finding balance.
- In discussing your roles, think about your abilities.
- When talking about division of responsibilities, remember you are a team.
- Begin thinking about how children will impact your relationship.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

What happens along the way that changes pre-marriage expectations about roles and responsibilities to the reality that one ends up with more than half the work? One answer is lack of communication and lack of having a plan. Many times, couples don’t talk about roles and responsibilities before marriage. Marital research reveals that happier couples share responsibilities, so how can you make sure you will equally

share the load? You can begin by assessing your responsibilities—or those you plan to assume when you are married. Who does what is not as important as the philosophy of sharing the load together.

Another major topic for this date is talking about your future hopes and dreams concerning children. While having a baby is exciting, marriage satisfaction dips for most couples when they become parents. Because of the time pressures children bring, couples need to be reminded to keep fun and friendship in their marriage. Children can enrich your marriage, and your marriage can enrich your children. Now is the time to consider your future roles and to talk about family planning.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Think of things you could do around the house to help your partner.
- Have the mind-set that you are going to work together. It can make a big difference in your attitude and outlook in life.

---

***Bonus date: Prepare a meal together, do some other household or lawn project together, or do nursery duty together at church.***

---

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*Date Eight Exercise*

**PART 1: HIS AND HERS HOUSEHOLD TASKS**

What things do you assume you will do around the house? What things do you assume your partner will do around the house? Mark “M” for Male, “F” for Female, “B” for Both. (You may also want to indicate who did what in your family of origin.)

- |                           |                                 |
|---------------------------|---------------------------------|
| _____ Shopping            | _____ Vacuuming                 |
| _____ Preparing for meals | _____ Taking out garbage        |
| _____ Making beds         | _____ Cleaning out closets      |
| _____ Caring for the lawn | _____ Paying the bills          |
| _____ Maintaining cars    | _____ Balancing the checkbook   |
| _____ Cleaning bathrooms  | _____ Preparing tax returns     |
| _____ Doing laundry       | _____ Doing household repairs   |
| _____ Ironing             | _____ Scheduling appointments   |
| _____ Dusting             | _____ Keeping financial records |
| _____ Buying groceries    | _____ Returning DVDs and videos |
| _____ Caring for pets     | _____ Other                     |

After you both have marked your lists, compare and discuss them. What will the two of you do to negotiate and compromise to share responsibilities?

**PART 2: PLANNING FOR FAMILY**

1. Do you both want to have children? How many? When?

2. If you were unable to have children, would you consider adoption?
3. How will role responsibilities change when you become parents?
4. How did your parents share parenting responsibilities?
5. What is your attitude toward working parents? Should one partner stay at home to raise the children?
6. If either of you are bringing children into the marriage, how will they affect your relationship?

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***Date Eight Exercise***

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- |                             |                                   |
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## *Date nine*

### **Developing Spiritual Intimacy**

*The purpose of this date is to share together where you are on your spiritual quest and to look at ways to develop spiritual intimacy.*

#### **PRE-DATE PREPARATION**

- Read chapter 9, “Developing Spiritual Intimacy.”
- Preview the Date Nine Exercise.
- Choose a location where you can quietly reflect together. You might want to go to a chapel.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- If you are at different places on your spiritual journey, be sensitive to one another.
- Talk about what you have in common.
- This is an opportunity to share your inner feelings. It is not a time to try to change your partner.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Now, as you are considering marriage, is a great time to also consider the role you want spirituality to play in your lives together. What spiritual beliefs are you bringing into your marriage? Do you both have a personal relationship with Christ? What were the religious practices and spiritual beliefs of your family of origin? Did you grow up in a Christian home? How important is the spiritual dimension of life to you as an adult? Are prayer, Bible study, and meditation important parts of your life? What about participation in a faith community and fellowship with other believers? Do you both participate in religious activities? If you are from different spiritual backgrounds, how do you plan to handle that after marriage? On

this date you will want to talk about your own spiritual values and beliefs and find the common bonds between you as a couple. Spiritual intimacy manifests itself in unconditional love and acceptance, forgiveness, prayer, and service to others.

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Together write a list of your shared core beliefs.
- Commit to growing together spiritually.
- Read a book together on a topic related to spiritual growth.
- Think about joining a fellowship group or couples Bible study.

---

***Bonus date: Choose a service project to do together, such as Habitat for Humanity, help with a church youth group, or run errands for an elderly person.***

---

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### *Date Nine Exercise*

#### **PART 1: TAKING A SPIRITUAL INTIMACY CHECK-UP**

Consider the following aspects of spirituality. On a scale of 1 to 5 (1 being not so important and 5 being very important) rate each as to how important each facet is to you. Now rate them as you think your partner would rate them. Compare your lists and discuss.

- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Attending church and worshiping together
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Participating in church activities (Bible studies, fellowships, growth groups)
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Having a personal faith in God
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Giving to the church and other charities
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Forgiving each other
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Accepting each other unconditionally
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Celebrating religious holidays
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Reading the Bible together
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Having devotions together
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Praying together
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Serving others together
- \_\_\_ \_\_\_ Other

#### **PART 2: THEN AND NOW**

1. Describe the spiritual atmosphere in your home as you were growing up.
2. Where are you on your spiritual journey?
3. What are your core beliefs?

4. What core beliefs do you share?

5. What could you do to serve others?

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*Date Nine Exercise*

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## *Date Ten*

### **Choosing an Intentional Marriage**

*This date will help you consider what marriage involvement style will work best for you and will encourage you to set marriage goals to help you turn your desires and dreams for your marriage into reality.*

#### **PRE-DATE APPLICATION**

- Read chapter 10, “Choosing an Intentional Marriage.”
- Fill out the Date Ten Exercise.
- Choose a location where you can have access to a table. Your local library or bookstore with a coffee shop might be a fun place for this date.

#### **DATE NIGHT TIPS**

- Take your time; don’t race through this date. You are talking about the rest of your lives.
- Set at least one goal that you both want to achieve, but don’t be overambitious. It’s better to reach one goal than to have ten that you don’t reach.

#### **CHAPTER SUMMARY**

Marriage is a big choice, and we hope we have helped you understand each other better so you can make a wise choice as you consider marriage. Can you now answer the big questions, “Can I live with this other person for a lifetime?” “Do we have the skills and attitudes we need to build a successful marriage?” Or, if you are seriously dating, “Am I ready to move forward to a deeper level of commitment?” The real value of reexamining and reconfirming your decision to marry is when you do marry, you will marry with confidence. You can say with assurance, “Yes, I have chosen

wisely.” So if you have any lingering concerns, now is the time to discuss them. Also, we encourage you to find a mentor couple. Then spend some time talking about what marriage involvement style will work for you. We hope this date will help you set realistic goals for your marriage. Few couples ever take the time to set specific objectives for their marriages, much less make a plan to accomplish them. Basically, a marriage goal is a target toward which you agree to work. As you devise an action plan, use three simple words to guide you: What? How? When? Answer these questions and you’re on your way to an intentional marriage!

## **POST-DATE APPLICATION**

- Follow the plan you have just made.
- Keep looking for the positive and complimenting each other (by now, this should be a habit).
- Continue the habit of dating (you may want to repeat these ten dates).
- Together make a list of future dates you would like to have.
- Remember that your relationship will remain alive and healthy as you nurture it.

---

***Bonus date: Have a date to plan fun dates for the next few weeks!***

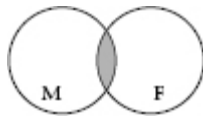
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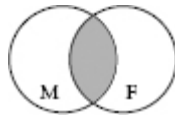
*Date Ten*

## **PART 1: CHOOSE YOUR MARRIAGE INVOLVEMENT STYLE**

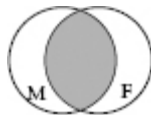
Degrees of Involvement in Marriage



**MINIMUM A**



**MODERATE B**



**MAXIMUM C**

1. What would be the ideal involvement style for your marriage?
2. What do you think will be realistic as you start your marriage?

## **PART 2: CHOOSE A MENTOR**

If you don't already have a mentor couple, make a list of older couples you could ask to be mentors to you. You may want to check with your church to see if a mentoring program is already in place.

### **PART 3: MAKE TIME FOR EACH OTHER**

Talk through the following four steps (refer to page 133):

1. Make a commitment.
2. Analyze your present time constraints.
3. Set apart time for your relationship.
4. Guard your time.

### **PART 4: SETTING GOALS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE**

What goals would you like to set for your upcoming marriage?

Answer these three questions:

1. What? (Choose one goal.)
2. How? (Consider what steps you will need to take to help accomplish your goal.)
3. When? (Note it in your Palm Pilot or calendar!)

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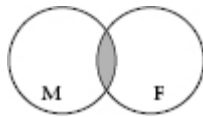
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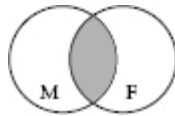
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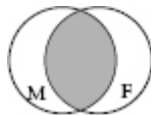
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