

Pre-Marital Counseling

Name: _____ Name: _____

Phone: _____ Phone: _____

Email: _____ Email: _____

Date of First Meeting: _____

4-5 Subsequent Dates:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

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Requirements:

1. One person needs to be baptized
2. If one is divorced, I need permission from the Bishop. They will need to write letter – What went wrong? What have they learned? How will they apply what they have learned to this new marriage?
 - a. I will need to see a copy of the Dissolution or Death Certificate
3. Need to sign application – give a copy to church secretary and date when I give it to her.
4. Need to sign Declaration of Intent 30 days before – to keep in my own file
5. Give them the wedding booklet with signatures on the day of the wedding.
6. They will give me the license as soon as possible – it will be signed on the day of the wedding.
7. I will get the registration page from Hilary before the wedding to be signed after the wedding.
8. I will take responsibility to mail the license to the county. (It may or may not get in the paper.)
9. I will give them a copy of the homily using cardstock that matches their wedding colors with a nice card as a gift to them.
10. Discuss my charges – 15-16 hours of counseling, the wedding and the rehearsal - \$400 if I do the counseling, \$150 if I only do the wedding and they get the counseling done in another Episcopal Diocese.
11. Charges for music - \$200; clean up - \$50; and use of the church - \$1000 – may be waived if they are members of the parish.
12. Special desires i.e. Unity candle, communion, and size of party; will men and women come in together? Are there children, parents, and relatives? Music? Flowers? – Nothing can be on altar. Wedding coordinator? – I am completely in charge of the service. They do reception and lining up people.

This is about building a relationship between them and me. This is one of the most precious days of their life. Before this service they are not married. When they leave, if they are open to it, something will happen to them. This is a sacrament and we expect God's blessing.

Have a prayer book for each of them. I want them to thoroughly understand the vows they are going to make to each other. They are not just words, but that you know in the history of marriage (BCP 423), declaration of consent (BCP 424) and in the vows – including the rings (BCP 427), and the pronouncement (BCP 428) that they absolutely know what they are saying.

I will challenge them and push them because I want them to have a chance to discuss as much as possible about each other in order to discover things about one another. I am the neutral party. I will not take sides with either one because I will care for them both.

I will be looking for red flags so that I can stand to support them both. We will pause and take time to look at areas that concern them or me. The more they are open in their responses to each other and with me, the more opportunity we have to build a positive relationship.

I want them to address these questions seriously. Take the assignment one day at a time. Give them two weeks for the first assignment. They are not to share with each other. We have a limited amount of time to do this. Please contact me if you get stuck. Get contact information.

At the end of every session, I will leave them in the room to say, "I love you because..." (A new reason each time), before they say goodbye.

Be sure they have my contact info:

Name: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

How to use this file:

#1 Assignment (given at the first meeting): Read the book, (see separate file) chapter by chapter, Marriage in the Christian Church by Herbert O'Driscoll to each other and discuss each chapter. Write down your "wows". Bring their comments to the 2nd session.

#2 Assignment (have them complete this assignment separately and bring to the second session. They should not have read what the other has written.) This is often material that you will use in the homily.

1. List 5 things you love about him/her.
2. Who is God to you?
3. How is God present in your relationship and how will God be present in your relationship in the future?
4. How are you two better together than as one?

#3 Assignment

- Fill out Declaration of Intention – sign first page then tear it out for me to keep. They keep the booklet. They need to look at it and choose at least one scripture. They may choose a poem, special reading that is appropriate, etc. but I'd like to see it first. The service ends on page 17 and I can't go on to the communion. (I will do the Peace first)
- Fill out the Application

Check in each time we meet

- What did they not get done?
- What was good about what they did?
- What did they discover?
- If they don't complete the work - just call and postpone.
- How's the wedding coming?
- Are there any concerns or questions about the wedding?

ARTICLES they can read along the way and talk with each other included in the Appendix.

- What Makes Matrimony Holy? By Thom and Rochet Blair from The New Harmony Journal, Vol. 20, Number 3, December 2004;
- Rules for Fair Fighting
- Overworked Couples Have Little Time for Romance by Cindy Goodman, Knight Riddler News, The Source, September 26, 2005
- The Marriage Map by Michele Weiner-Davis MSW on Feb. 18, 2009, in Divorce Busting
- 15 Financial Mistakes Couples Make by Leslie Cunningham
- How to Talk About Money in Your Marriage by Leslie Cunningham
- A Conversation You Can't Put Off by Lynn Brenner on August 13, 2006, Parade

Begin with lesson one. Work your way through the lessons, spending more or less time on each one based on the needs of the couple. Usually these lessons can be completed in five or six 3 hour sessions.

#1 SO YOU ARE GOING TO GET MARRIED?

FIDELITY

1. Do either of you have any concerns about the other's fidelity? If so, describe them.
2. What would you do if you learned he/she had an affair?

FORGIVENESS - no payback, no revenge (Tutu); grant pardon or cancel debt; Giving up all hope for a better past

1. Speak about a time you have had to forgive the other. How was that for you?
2. How has forgiveness played a role in your relationship?
3. Is there anything you need to forgive yourself for? (as in baggage about yourself)
Does your partner know about this?

DRINKING AND CHEMICAL ABUSE CHALLENGES

1. How many days of the week do you drink alcohol? (Level of concern: Men ≥ 10 ; Women ≥ 7)
2. On a typical day when you drink alcohol, how many standard drinks do you have?

3. How many times per month do you drink more than 3-4 drinks on a single occasion?
4. What do you think about your drinking?
5. What do family/friends think about your drinking?
6. Have you ever done something you regret while drinking?
7. Do either of you have concerns about the other's drinking/chemical abuse? If yes, describe those concerns.

PHYSICAL AND EMOTIONAL ABUSE

1. Is there any history of physical and/or emotional abuse in your relationship with each other?
2. Your growing up years?
3. If yes to either, please describe.

OPPOSITE SEX ATTENTIVENESS

1. Any issues here? If yes, please describe.

PRE-NUPTIAL AGREEMENT

1. Do you have a need for one? Why?
2. Have you discussed this with one another?
3. What conclusions have you come to regarding this agreement?
4. Are you in full agreement on the 'agreement' or does there remain some unresolved issues about it?
5. If so, how do you plan to resolve them?

DESCRIBE YOUR GOALS FOR YOUR MARRIAGE

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.

ADD MORE IF YOU WISH.....

#2 WHO'S IN CHARGE? (“to honor...”)

1. List your individual strengths.
2. List his/her strengths.
3. How do your respective strengths compliment each other?
4. Do not compliment each other? POTENTIAL BUMPS?
5. When would you be willing to 'back down' for 'back down' sake?

#3 OH THAT MONEY!!!!!!!

How to Talk About Money in Your Marriage by Leslie Cunningham - Balance - September 13, 2011

15 Financial Mistakes Couples Make by Leslie Cunningham - Balance - February 24, 2009

1. What were the issues surrounding money in your family when you were growing up?
2. How have those influenced how you feel about money/how you handle money today?
3. What issues about money have arisen since you began your relationship? How have you resolved/are you resolving those issues together?
4. Do you have a budget? Who does a better job of sticking to it? Any issues about who is sticking and who is not sticking to the budget? Resolved? Unresolved? Briefly explain.

5. Who pays the bills? What bills are paid by whom? Do you/will you have separate checking/savings accounts, joint or some combination of both? Explain WHY for each of these questions.
6. How will you handle debts brought into the marriage? Savings brought in?
7. What steps have you taken to date towards creating a financial plan for your future needs in life together?
8. Any OTHER issues revolving around money? Management of finances?

#4 HOW I SEE THINGS AND HOW I THINK YOU SEE THEM

Often people see things very differently because they are looking from different stand-points or perspectives. There are many things that lie behind these points of view, not the least of which are the differences between male and female (either real or cultural). This exercise will help you look at your own feelings, and how you perceive his/her feelings.

In the 2nd column put down your own feelings:

	My Feelings
1. You love me because....	
2. My strongest quality is...	
3. My greatest weakness is...	
4. The quality I want the most in our relationship is...	

5. My favorite way of avoiding conflict is...	
6. The thing about you that bothers me most is...	
7. The thing about me that bothers you most is....	
8. The issue about which I'm most extremely concerned is...	
9. The thing that scares me most is...	
10. The thing I find most difficult to talk about is...	

11. In your relationship with my family I wish that...	
12. You refuse to take me seriously when...	
13. My wildest dream is to...	
14. My fondest hope for you is...	

#5 HOLIDAYS

1. How does your family celebrate Thanksgiving, Christmas, birthdays?
2. What have you disliked about those celebrations? Explain why.
3. What, if anything, in your new family would you continue regarding holiday celebrations? Briefly why.
4. Where will you spend Thanksgiving and Christmas? How will you deal with in-laws at holiday? What discussions have you had regarding staying home to establish your own holiday traditions?
5. What are your values regarding religious celebrations, gift giving, special meals?

#6 FAMILY

1. Define family for you.
2. What issues exist for you regarding your families? How are you, together, dealing with those issues? If issues arise in years to come, how do you envision you, together, will resolve them?
3. How will your family be the same as and different from the family you have been raised in?
4. POTENTIAL BUMPS?

#7 WORK

1. How will you use your work/profession to build up your marital/nuclear family relationships?
2. How might your work be detrimental to building up your marital/nuclear family relationships?
3. What work boundaries might you set together in order to insure family time is a priority?
4. What discussions have you had about one partner staying home to manage child/home responsibilities? What have you agreed upon?
5. Whose job will you follow and why?
6. POTENTIAL BUMPS?

#8 CHILDREN

1. Are you planning to have children or if you have them already, expanding your family? How many children do you want?
2. [optional] If you are joining families, what role are you playing/will you play in parenting the step-children?
3. [optional] Tell me about the relationship you have established with your step-children.
4. What will be your role and approach to discipline?
5. What are your fears/concerns in this area? Explain.

6. What difficulties do you anticipate in raising your children? Explain.
7. How will you share time with your spouse and children separately?
8. Tell me about your plan for “dates” as parents. What is the importance of this to you?
9. What resources do you have for assisting you in dealing with parenting issues?
10. With respect to the children: Who will be the primary person dealing with medical things in the family? Household maintenance? Meals? Appointments for the children? Getting children to and from activities? Shopping? Laundry? Other?

#9 SPIRIT AND SOUL

1. What do you need for your spirit/soul?
2. How are you nurturing this part of your being?
3. How will you support each other spiritually?
4. If there are children, how will spirituality fit into your family life? What do you want to teach your children about God?

5. Do you have a faith community that you plan to be a part of? What attracts you to it?

6. Any spiritual issues exist in your relationship? If yes, explain. How are you working together to resolve them?

#10 PLAY

1. How do you like to play together? How do you envision playing with your children together/separately?
2. How important is play in your everyday life? What does that look like?
3. Have you put play in your budget? Explain why/why not.
4. Do you like to do things alone or together? How will the other know which is which?
5. Do you share a similar sense of humor? Explain. Do you laugh a lot together?

#11 WHERE WILL YOU GO WHEN YOU HAVE TROUBLED TIMES IN YOUR MARRIAGE

1.

#12 VALUES

Values are a very important part of life. In fact, more conflicts and disappointments will arise in marriage over values than over almost any other area. It is important that you know each other's values, because you're going to be living with these for a long time. Experts in conflict resolution say that value conflicts are rarely every resolved.

Please do this exercise individual. Afterwards you can compare and discuss your responses.

	Strongly Agree	Agree	Some-what Agree	Doesn't matter to me	Some-what Dis-agree	Dis-agree	Strongly Dis-agree
We should own our own home.							
Saving for the future is important.							
It's better to enjoy now than to save.							
We should buy only what we can pay for.							
We should have the things we want now even if we have to use credit.							
We should maintain separate checking accounts.							
It's irresponsible to have a large family.							
It's selfish for a couple to have no children.							
College education is necessary today For self For spouse For children							
Children should be firmly disciplined.							
It is more important to love children than to discipline them.							
Time alone is essential for every person.							
A couple should do as much as possible together.							
Family activities should be carefully planned.							
It is best for a couple to remain settled in one place.							

A home should always be kept neat.							
It is best for a couple to remain settled in one place.							
It is important to be near families.							
Couples should know about each other's work.							
Husband and wife should have separate social lives.							
Toothpaste should always be squeezed from the bottom.							
Steak is best done medium.							
It is important to raise successful children.							
Classical music is something everyone should like.							
It is very important to read good books.							
Watching T.V. is a waste of time.							
The environment should be preserved at all costs.							
An individual should strongly oppose pornography.							
The government has a responsibility to provide welfare.							
Handguns should be strictly controlled.							
A woman has a right o abortion on demand.							
My tax dollars should not go to military spending.							
A family needs to worship together.							
It is important for a couple to belong to the same church even if one has to give up theirs.							
Children should be brought up in a particular faith.							
It is a Christian duty to contribute financially to							

the church.							
A Christian should take an active part in social issues.							
A person can be a Christian without belonging to a church.							

#13 A PERSONAL STRUGGLE

1. Share a personal struggle. Describe the most serious personal struggle (one you feel you can share) you have had to contend with in your life and what you have done to overcome it.
2. How might this help you in meeting other struggles you may face with your life partner in the future?

#15 PERSONALITY INVENTORY CHART

Mark where you would place yourself between the various opposites. Do not consult with each other until you have completed this exercise.

WHERE ARE YOU ON THIS SPECTRUM?

<-----Tendency Tendency ----->

	C	B	A	D	E	F	
Works well with others							Wants to work alone
Likes opposite sex							Antagonistic toward opposite sex
Generous							Stingy
Neat and methodical							Careless
Shows affection							Undemonstrative
Calm							Emotionally tense; nervous
Interested in religion							Uninterested in religion
Strict in sex conduct							Lax in sex conduct
Usually conservative in opinions							Usually liberal in opinions
Assumes responsibility							Seeks to escape responsibility
Takes initiative							Lacks initiative
Usually happy, cheerful							Moody; easily depressed
Sociable							Unsociable
Careful with money							Spends money freely
Quietly self-assured							Lacks confidence
Tends to be practical							Impractical
Would rather be liked than though important							Wants to be thought important
Unselfish							Selfish
Good sense of humor							No sense of humor
Enjoys home life							Doesn't want to stay home
Listens to reason							Won't admit it when wrong
Truthful							Modifies truth on occasion
Takes suggestions							Won't take suggestions
Is not easily offended							Easily offended
Appreciative							Overly critical; complaining
Good listener							Talks too much
Domineering							Submissive
Suspicious							Trusting
Procrastinating							Prompt
Careful planner							Happy-go-lucky
Realist							Dreamer
Sympathetic							Indifferent
Open							Secretive
Forgiving							Revengeful
Perceptive							Unobservant
Bold							Timid

#16 ROLE EXPECTATION INVENTORY

Each of us has our own images of who should do what in a marriage, and what roles each partner should play. Usually these expectations come from our own family experiences that we assume are normal. Since your intended may have a different perspective, which he/she assumes is normal, it is helpful to explore this area. This inventory will help you to do that.

Instructions: For each partner, check the appropriate box that indicates which parent took most of the responsibility for the named activity.

Activity/Responsibility	Father	Mother	Either/Both	Neither
1. Getting children out of bed				
2. Getting children into bed				
3. Putting garbage out				
4. Helping children w/homework				
5. Preparing food				
6. Serving food				
7. Cleaning dishes				
8. Budgeting & bill paying				
9. Leading home worship				
10. Making social appointments				
11. Writing/mailling Christmas cards				
12. Doing laundry				
13. Vacuuming, dusting, general cleaning				
14. Making beds in parents' room				
15. Making children's beds				
16. Changing diapers				
17. Shopping for food				
18. Shopping for clothes				
19. Getting children home from school				
20. Planning vacations/trips				
21. Disciplining children				
22. Earning family income				
23. Showing affection to spouse				
24. Driving family car				
25. Teaching children about sexual matters				

#17 HOW DO YOU WANT TO BE LOVED?

Be very complete!!!

#18 ILL HEALTH

What will you expect of your marriage partner should you become critically and/or chronically ill?

5. What will not give you pleasure?

6. What will not give your partner pleasure?

7. How will engaging in sex with your marriage partner enhance your relationship?
What things in this part of your relationship do you think needs to improve with time?
How will you work together to make improvements happen?

8. Who will have the responsibility for birth control?

#21 VOWS

REWRITE THESE VOWS AND TELL EACH OTHER WHAT THEY MEAN, WHAT YOU ARE SIGNING ON TO.....

In the Name of God, I, N., take you, N., to be my [husband/wife],
to have and to hold from this day forward, for better for worse,
for richer for poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to
cherish, until we are parted by death. This is my solemn vow.