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WARRIAGE PREPARATION | # 2
LOVE FOR A LIFETIME
First Floor of our House

Experience of Home

As you strive to create this new identity as a married couple you need to know who you are and how you have been formed by your own families of origin. The activity below will help you become aware of what you bring into your marriage commitment.

(Place your initial in the space indicating your response. Now go back over the survey and place your fiancé's initial in the spaces to show how you think he or she would respond.)

I'm the type of person who...

Knows the difference between a dinner fork and a salad fork.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Prefers a quiet evening talking with friends to a party with dancing and music.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Puts a hundred-and-ten percent into whatever I do.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Likes to follow conventional ways of doing things over the experimental and unconventional.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Expresses my feelings immediately when something upsets me.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Prayer for Each Other

Dear Lord Jesus,
grant that we may have a true
and understanding love for each other.

Grant that we may both
be filled with faith and trust.

Please give us the grace

to live with each other in peace and harmony,
and may we always bear
with one another's weaknesses
and grow from each other's strengths.

Help us, Lord,

to forgive one another's failings
and grant us patience, cheerfulness
and the spirit of placing

the well-being of one another before our own.

May the love that brought us together
grow and mature with each passing day
and may it bring us both ever closer to you
through our love for each other.

In our Covenant of Marriage,
let our love grow to perfection.
Amen.

giving, holidays, leaving home, leisure time, mealtime, visits to extended family, weekends.

What religious rituals did your family exercise? What is your current level of religious ritual? For example: Advent, home blessing, family prayer, couple's prayer, Friday fast, Lent, Holy Week and Easter, Rosary, prayer at mealtimes, confession, Sunday Mass.

Final Thoughts

Family Rituals serve important functions in our life as a couple or as a family. They often stand as a underutilized and unappreciated dimension of health in marriage. We generally associate the word "ritual" with more religious and formal interactions and forget about all those day-in-and-day-out interactions that give meaning to individuals and to the family as a whole.



Reflecting Together...

What are your memories of family rituals?

What were your family celebrations and family traditions?

How did your family members interact?

What would you like to take with you into your marriage and home?

Is confident most of the time.
___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Is considered by those who know me as calm and reliable.
___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Is more reserved than affectionate.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Sometimes struggles with low self-esteem.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Is competitive in most things I do.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Squeezes the toothpaste tube in the middle.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Likes to keep a tidy office or room and everything in its place.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Likes to be spontaneous when making plans.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Gets angry with myself when things go wrong.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Tries to get people to cooperate and get along.

___ Yes ___ No ___ Uncertain

Family of Origin

When two people marry they bring together two distinct personalities, ways of thinking and acting, expectations about negotiating emotional closeness, and styles of resolving conflict. Many of these factors are a result of our experiences at home with our own families. The task of a newly married couple is to blend and integrate these many factors into a style that they can call their own. Family researchers have identified certain factors that have formed us as individual family members: They influence our personalities, our personal preferences for solving conflict, and our communication styles. A couple beginning marriage faces the task of blending and integrating these factors. Some of these factors are presented below, followed by a few reflection questions that will help you identify both your family of origin's style and the personal preferences that you will bring into your marriage.

In the chart below evaluate whether your family was Low, Medium, or High in each factor.

☞ **Emotional Closeness:** The extent to which family members express closeness to each other and the degree to which family members are helpful and supportive of each other.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Expressiveness:** The extent to which family members are encouraged to express their opinions and feelings in an open manner.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

example, maintenance of the family meal schedule is very supportive. Family interaction rituals around bedtime give a needed sense of continuity and assurance to young children. On the other hand, rites of passage help facilitate change. Weddings and funerals help us let go of persons, rearrange our roles relationships as needed, and mark endings and new beginnings.

Time: Ritual serves a particular function in relation to time. Continuity with the past. Ideally, deceased members of the family are remembered on days like All Souls Day, or on their anniversary. Sunday ritual transforms time too. They can become special times, when we have a change, and can step out of time and do something different.

Communications: Rituals convey a significant amount of information regarding family rules, roles and values, information is conveyed at verbal, nonverbal and/or symbolic levels.

Healing: Rituals provide a unique opportunity for healing. The funeral service, for example, allows for a range of emotions, and then release of the deceased. The grief avoided, the mourning denied, the change or loss minimized, often draws a later emotional toll. Similarly, reconciliation rituals allow family members to name their pain, to forgive each other, and move on to the next step of life. Troubled families are unable to forgive and are bound by their past hurts.

How can couples and families work with their rituals? All couples can benefit from a regular "ritual checkup". Consider what were your experiences with rituals in our own families? What are your memories of and feelings about them? The rituals include bedtime, birthdays, Christmas, Easter, gift

Family Rituals

What are “Family Rituals”?

Family Rituals are those family routines, the consistent and predictable ways of behaving, that give special meaning to couples and families. Rituals are a highly condensed expression of family feelings, thoughts and values. Family rituals range from more formal and prescribed ways of doing things across the culture, ‘family celebrations’ (celebration days, religious days, rites of passage) to less formal, less culturally defined “family traditions” (birthdays, holidays, visits to extended family), to the most individually defined and consciously constructed “family interactions” (bedtime or mealtime routines).

How Family Rituals help couples and families?

Rituals serve multiple functions in relation to family identity, stability, change, time, communications and healing.

Identity: Rituals help establish identity at different levels.

Birthdays or namesday practices, graduations, rites of passage all contribute to identity and self-worth. Family holidays, Sunday days out, Christmas customs, a couple’s night out, regular chat when the children are in bed, all contribute to family or marital identity respectively.

Stability and Change: Rituals play a central role in maintaining both continuity and stability as well as flexibility and change. During stressful times, a family illness for

☞ **Conflict:** the extent to which conflict is dealt with directly. Also, the extent to which family members are allowed to openly express anger.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Independence:** The extent to which family members are encouraged to make their own decisions and solve their own problems?

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Achievement:** The extent to which the family encourages members to be achievement-orientated or competitive regarding school, sports, and careers.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Intellectual/Cultural:** the way the family is concerned about or engaged in wider social, educational, and cultural matters.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Recreational:** The amount of emphasis placed by the family on various members to get involved in sports and other recreational activities.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Moral/Religious:** The extent to which the family gives priority to religious expression and formation in religious and moral values.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Organization:** The importance placed on things like planning of recreation or family meetings, financial planning and responsibility, clear boundaries and responsibilities within the family.

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

☞ **Control:** How power and authority are exercised in the family. For instance, were parents clearly in charge; did they exercise authority in a firm, loving manner or rigid, sometimes authoritarian manner?

What was it like in your family? Low, Medium, or High?

Who looked after the finances?

Did both parents have a career?

How did your parents show they loved you?

What type of holidays did you take?

Did your parents argue or hide problems?

Who did the washing up?

Who cleaned the car?

How were major decisions made?

What were your parents views of marriage and divorce?

A Wedding of Stories

Becoming married is a wedding of many stories. The legacy from our families of origin is kept alive by many stories. They are the foundation for our future. Most of the stories families tell are about ordinary events like holidays or birthdays or celebrations or dinners that come to have special meaning in their remembrance.

We tell stories about the birth of a long-hoped-for child or the death of a significant family member. Some family stories are about unique personalities. Stories have been handed down from generation to generation often assume the status of legend. Whether family stories are true or not is not as significant as the meaning they have for the family's self-understanding.

Families tell stories in order to maintain their foundational beliefs, sustain unique identity, and reaffirm their common values. When two people marry, they embark on a new story that incorporates the narratives from their past. Knowing and telling our family stories is a way of claiming our particular legacy. It is also a way of bonding, because marriage is a wedding of stories.

If becoming married is a wedding of stories, then preparation for marriage must be an invitation to storytelling. Telling family stories is a critical part of the process of becoming married because it is a way for the couple to weave together

their new story while at the same time preserving the thread of each separate narrative.

It will mean the death of old claims and old loyalties for the sake of something new that God is doing. Other claims today come from commitments to friends or careers that were made before we married. Letting go of familiar roles, dependable alliances, or cherished freedom is a profound loss. Ultimately, it means letting go of the myth that everything can stay the same and accepting the inevitability of change. Be aware of the destruction that secret-keeping can cause in family living.



Reflecting Together

What is there about your family of origin that you want to be sure to include in the new family you are forming?

What is there about your family of origin that you would not like to continue in your new family?

Whenever two people marry, God is doing something new. Something new is more likely to happen if we can increase our awareness of the legacy we bring to becoming married.

“My Invisible Suitcase”

Please write your answers to the following questions in the boxes.

In your home, as you were growing up...

Did you sit down together for meals?

Who put out the rubbish bags?

Who disciplined the children?