

# Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

## Formation

This Outline and Mentality is designed to give the newly encountered couples continued formation in the use of the five tools as promised in the Living Our Covenant Talk on Sunday afternoon of the Marriage Encounter (assuming a Friday-Sunday format). Presenting couples are strongly encouraged to use the entire Outline as it expands upon the concepts presented in Living our Covenant, specifically re-evaluation.

**The following sections of this talk must be presented at every Renewal:**

- **VI A. "A brief review of the 5 tools for keeping our relationship a priority"**
- **VI B. "Share a specific area in your life which you have recently re-evaluated"**

It is ideal if the entire Presenting team for the recent Marriage Encounter attends the Renewal; WWME Community is also encouraged to attend. The presence of a loving and supportive Community is essential to the dynamics of the Renewal. The Community couples add to the sharing and should give credibility to the ongoing use of re-evaluation.

The creation of a warm, relaxed atmosphere at the Renewal begins with a welcoming attitude in the hearts of the Presenters and Community couples. Imagine the early disciples welcoming new members into their Community. Each couple is a gift placed there by God.

The Renewal is a continuation of the Marriage Encounter experience. The couples have an opportunity to explore the ongoing experience of transformation in their relationship. The transition into Community began during the last presentation - this is an extension of that. This Talk should be motivational, but the main elements of this time are the couples' working together as a couple and the open sharing. They continue to explore their hopes and dreams and begin to flesh out their goals so they become a reality.

## Objective

- To renew the couples' enthusiasm for working on their relationship
- To identify their goals as a couple
- To remind them about the positive effects of utilizing the five tools to keep their relationship a priority
- To welcome them into the WWME Community

## Goals of this talk

### To know

- The five tools shared in Living our Covenant can keep their love vibrant and growing and can have a positive, tangible impact on their daily lives.
- Sharing feelings in dialogue creates a safe atmosphere that allows them to set goals for their relationship(s).
- The WWME Community is a welcoming source of support and encouragement as they continue this journey together.
- They can keep the Dream alive by being open to sharing their love and becoming involved with the local WWME Community.

# Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

## **To do**

- Identify their goals as individuals and to formulate goals for their relationship(s)
- Begin a process of re-evaluation so that they can achieve their goals
- Learn more about the activities and needs of the local WWME Community

## **To experience**

- A growth in their trust and love for each other as they begin to re-evaluate their lives to live more intimately and responsibly
- Confidence in their ability to make changes based upon re-evaluation
- The support of a loving Community

## **Flow of the Talk**

The Facilitators begin with a warm welcome and an opening prayer, followed by introductions. The presentation begins with a sharing of dreams and goals for continuing an intimate relationship. The couples complete an exercise in which they translate their hopes and dreams into concrete goals. The Presenting couple/s give current everyday examples of using the five tools to live their marriage covenant. They demonstrate how to use the tool of re-evaluation to work towards accomplishing a specific goal in their relationship. The couples complete another exercise in which they formulate a plan to work towards meeting one of the specific goals they identified earlier. The Presenting couple/s share how they experience joy and intimacy as a result of using these tools and encourages the couples to do the same. They invite them to continue this growth with the support of others who are on the same journey. The Renewal concludes with dialogue, open sharing, and a wrap-up specific to the hosting Community.

## **Connection with other talks**

This talk is a continuation of Living Our Covenant. It builds upon the skills that the couples learned in sharing their feelings in dialogue and active listening with their hearts. They will have had time to recognize the modern world's pull to make choices to live a married singles lifestyle. Hopefully, they will have experienced the joy that comes from making daily decisions to love and grow even more in their ability to risk and trust in their dialogue. This talk capitalizes on their ongoing experience of living intimately and responsibly. They are invited to specifically re-evaluate their lives to accomplish specific goals they have chosen for themselves. It expands upon the five tools and encourages them to use them in their ongoing journey. They learn more about the WWME Community as yet another way to share their love and to experience the joy and support of couples who have chosen to live a similar lifestyle.

## **Notes**

- A Facilitator couple and either a Lay or Clergy Presenting couple (or both) may share this Outline. All timings and suggested allocations refer to lay, but be shared as desired.
- The Facilitators should be enthusiastic, warm and welcoming, members of the local Community, and knowledgeable about the local WWME activities. They will introduce the session and provide details about the Community and ongoing follow-up at the end.

## Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

- It is recommended that the actual talk be given by one of the Presenters from the recent Marriage Encounter experience; however, it is best if the Presenters who shared the five tools on the recent event do NOT give this talk, so that couples can experience the use of the tools from a different perspective. If the same team DOES present this, they should ensure that each spouse focuses on different tools and/or examples than what they shared before.
- An experienced Community couple could also present this talk. It is essential, however, that the couple giving this talk is modeling their current use of the five tools for keeping their relationship a priority.
- This talk must be written and workshopped. It is ideal if the Presenting couple is so familiar with using the five tools in their own lives that they can maintain good eye contact as they share their experiences.

### **I. Warm welcome and opening prayer (2:00)**

*(Led by Facilitators or one of the Presenting couples from the recent Marriage Encounter experience.)*

### **II. Introductions (10:00-15:00)**

*(Led by Facilitators or one of the Presenting couples from the recent Marriage Encounter experience.)*

#### **II A. Briefly introduce yourself**

*(Name, Marriage Encounter date, years married, children, church, local Community/city, etc)*

#### **II B. Ask the couples to briefly introduce themselves in a similar manner**

#### **II C. Introduce the Presenters**

### **III. Briefly share your experience of your Marriage Encounter (LH & LW: 3:00)**

*(Together, LH and LW should cover all of the points listed below, but avoid repetition. It is not necessary for H and W to both cover each point.)*

#### **III A. Share why you attended your Marriage Encounter**

- What was going on in your life when you did?
- Who invited you to do it?
- What did you hope to gain from it?

#### **III B. Share your experience of your Marriage Encounter**

- What effect did it have on you?
- What effect did it have on your relationship?

# Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

## III C. Share what you wanted for your relationship afterwards

- What were your specific hopes and dreams for your relationship?
- What were your feelings about your relationship after your Marriage Encounter experience?
- Briefly expand on how you BEGAN to breathe life into your dreams, to make them concrete and achievable.

## IV. Where do we go from here?

### Suggested Wording:

*Many couples ask us how they can take what they learned on their Marriage Encounter experience and use it to help deal with the day-to-day issues that confront most married couples. In this presentation, we introduce one way you can build on the intimacy you rediscovered on your Marriage Encounter experience by setting goals together. This is a pro-active way of dealing with issues - but it also works when you both agree there is an area of your relationship that needs to be re-evaluated.*

## V. Couple Exercise #1 (LH or LW: 3:00-5:00, including exercise)

Briefly introduce the exercise, distribute Exercise #1 handouts, and give instructions.

### V A. Part 1: (one handout per person)

- As individuals, make a list of the goals that each of you believe are important for your relationship. (*Point out the list of Potential Goals on the handout to give them some ideas, but assure them they do not need to restrict themselves to that list.*)
- Share you list with your spouse when you are both finished.

### V B. Part 2: (one handout per couple)

- As a couple, create a combined list of common goals on which you both agree.
- As a couple, select 3 goals from that list that you are willing to make a priority in your lives right now. Put a checkmark beside these 3 goals.
- Give 3-5 minutes to complete this exercise and discuss it as a couple.

## VI. Five tools for keeping our relationship a priority (LH & LW: 5:00)

### VI A. Briefly review the five tools for keeping our relationship a priority

LH and LW together cover all five Tools. Do not just talk about the tool itself; focus on how you use the tool in your life to be more intimate and responsible in your relationship. Be sure to include how some of these tools have enabled you to achieve your hopes and dreams for your relationship. It is helpful (and could also enable you to keep within the 5:00 time frame) if you focus on a specific example of how you use each tool.

# Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

## **VI A 1. Attention to our communication in and out of dialogue**

Consider specific examples of one or more of the following:

- How sharing feelings in dialogue affects how you communicate with each other throughout the day
- How experiencing your spouse's feelings allows you to see an entirely different aspect of him/her
- How becoming more aware of your non-verbal communication allows you to be more sincere and loving
- How sharing feelings in dialogue gifts you with a greater understanding and unity in your relationship
- You may include that your dialogue is not always perfect, but you must also include 1 or 2 additional bullets from above

## **VI A 2. Couple prayer**

Consider specific examples of one or more of the following:

- Your journey in couple prayer since your Marriage Encounter experience
- How you use couple prayer in your daily lives
- How couple prayer allowed you to experience or approach a situation differently
- How couple prayer encourages your growth as a couple and allows you to see your spouse differently
- How the trust in your relationship enables you to listen to God more openly

## **VI A 3. Attention to our sexual relationship**

Consider specific examples of one or more of the following:

- The impact of your Marriage Encounter experience on your sexual relationship. Are you more tender, gentle, loving, and passionate with each other?
- A recent example where you romanced your spouse and the effect on your relationship
- The changes you have made since your Marriage Encounter experience to prioritize your love-making and the effect on your relationship
- How your communication in dialogue affects your communication in your sexual relationship. Are you more open, honest, tender, trusting?

## **VI A 4. Being involved with the Marriage Encounter Community**

Begin with a general statement about your experience of Community and then consider specific examples of one or more of the following:

- How the Community encouraged you in your dialogue and the impact that had on your relationship

## Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

- How the Community called or invited you to grow in your relationship. Be specific about the change you experienced.
- How the Community encouraged you to be more open in sharing your love as a couple

### **VI A 5. Re-evaluation**

- Share re-evaluation as the fifth and final tool we offer them.
- Re-evaluation involves focusing on our attitudes, behaviors, and goals.
- Re-evaluation empowers them to make changes in their lives to live more intimately and responsibly, as God desires.
- All the other four tools are useful in the process of re-evaluation

### **VI B. Share a specific area in your life that you have recently re-evaluated (or are in the process of) re-evaluating.** (LH & LW: 5:00)

- Identify and share the area in your relationship you needed to re-evaluate as a couple.
- Share what was happening in your relationship that prompted you to re-evaluate. What role did dialogue have in this re-evaluation?
- What change or goal did you hope to accomplish to be more intimate and responsible in your relationship?
- What attitude and behavior did you each have to focus on in order to achieve your goal? What attitude did you have to focus upon to be more affirming and/or supportive?
- Share what you did to accomplish your goal. Be specific. Point out which tools helped you to accomplish your goal.
- How does being involved with Community inspire and encourage you to re-evaluate and to continue working towards meeting your goals?
- Did you periodically re-evaluate how you were doing with regard to meeting your goals? Emphasize the need for on-going re-evaluation as an essential tool to keep your relationship on track.

### **VI C. Couple Exercise #2** (LH or LW: 3:00, including exercise)

Briefly introduce the exercise, distribute Exercise #2 handout (one per couple), and give instructions:

- Select one of the three goals they chose earlier to begin to focus on today.
- Decide what actions to take to accomplish their goal, both as individuals and as a couple.
- Decide on the attitude and/or behavior on which they need to focus, both as individuals and as a couple. (*Point out sample attitudes to consider.*)
- Give them approximately 3:00 to work on this exercise as a couple.

# Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

## **VI D. Motivation** (LH or LW: 2:00)

Consider one or more of the following:

- Share that unless you have goals, you can simply drift through life.
- Remind them that the only person you can change is yourself.
- Being involved with and encouraged by other couples helps you to be “accountable” for your relationship.
- Conclude by sharing the joy and intimacy you experience when you work together to accomplish goals.

## **VII. Dialogue Question: HDIFA setting goals together?** (10:00 & 10:00)

## **VIII. Open Sharing**

### **VIII A. Introduce Guidelines for sharing** (1:00)

### **VIII B. Sharing Question couples may choose from the following:**

- Share a re-evaluation that you have already made in your lives since the Marriage Encounter experience. How do you feel about that?
- Share one of the goals you identified as a couple in the earlier exercise. What are you willing to do to begin to achieve that goal? How do you feel about that?
- Share how dialogue has affected your life or your relationship since your Marriage Encounter experience. How do you feel about that?

## **IX. Wrap-up Specific to Local Area** (LH & LW: 5:00-10:00)

*(Led by Facilitators or local Community couple)*

- Discuss the details for plans to welcome couples into the WWME Community (Personalize by using terms appropriate for your Area)
- Introduce WWME Community Leaders, if present
- Community Activities, Inviting Activities, Local News
- WWME Events (Enrichments, Conventions, World Marriage Day, etc.)
- Encourage daily dialogue; ask if there are any questions about dialogue
- Other

## **X. Closing Prayer**

Refreshments/Pot Luck as per your WWME Community tradition

## Marriage Encounter Renewal Common Protestant Outline

### **Guidelines for Open Sharing**

- Sharing is a gift of myself – who I am, how I feel, my attitudes, joys, hopes, struggles. Sharing is not a time to speak for my spouse.
- We are all on a journey to make our relationships stronger. We all have ups and downs. I share my joys to give strength to those who are struggling. I share my struggles to let others know that they are not alone. My sharing may give others the strength to share.
- Sharing is a time to speak from the heart and to listen with the heart. To listen deeply to the sharing of others, it is important not to interrupt, comment on, or react to anyone else's sharing. This is not a time to teach, judge, problem solve, or heal someone, no matter how loving our intentions. Just as in dialogue, our goal is acceptance.
- Sharing is voluntary. It is not necessary for one spouse to share just because the other has shared. Both spouses do not need to share at the same time. No one will be judged if they choose not to share.
- There will undoubtedly be periods of silence during the sharing time. Use the silent time to reflect or gather your thoughts. You are accepted with love.
- Sharing is a time to build a sense of family. Therefore, everything that is shared should be shared with trust and confidence in one another. Nothing shared within this circle should be shared outside this circle.





**Exercise #1:** Part 1 (*one handout per person*)

As individuals, make a list of your personal goals for your relationship. You do not need to restrict yourself to the list below, but it may help to give you ideas.

## MY GOALS FOR OUR MARRIAGE

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Potential Goals** (*this list is NOT all-inclusive*)

- spend more quality time together
- listen with an open mind and heart
- be more constructive in our confrontations
- become more effective in solving problems
- become more passionate in our sexual relationship
- develop friendships with couples with similar goals
- go to church together
- engage in activities where we could share our love together
- learn to play together
- learn to pray together as a couple
- be open to new life
- dialogue daily and improve our communication
- be quicker to forgive and slower to judge
- be less critical
- be more tender and trusting in our relationship
- share affection more freely as a couple
- learn to live within our means
- parent more effectively as a couple
- be more open to sharing our relationship with others (family, friends, church, community)
- create a more peaceful and loving atmosphere in our home
- treat each other as equals in our relationship

❖ **When you have both finished, share your list with your spouse.**



**Exercise #1**, Part 2 (*one handout per couple*)

Together, create a revised list of your common goals as a couple.

**OUR GOALS FOR OUR MARRIAGE**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

- ❖ When you have finished, decide together on the three goals you want to make a priority in your lives right now. Put a checkmark beside these three goals.



**Exercise #2:** *(one handout per couple)*

Select one of your three goals to begin to focus on today. Write your goal below:

---

❖ What actions can I/we take to accomplish our goal?

Husband:

---

---

---

Wife:

---

---

---

As a couple:

---

---

---



❖ What is the attitude and behavior on which I need to focus?  
(See examples of attitudes that follow)

Husband:

---

---

---

Wife:

---

---

---

### Examples of Attitudes

Busyness	There are just too many things on my plate right now.
Carefree	There's nothing to worry about.
Competitive	I need to get ahead in my job.
Complacent	But I've always done it this way.
Entitlement	I did all of this; therefore I deserve it. It's my right.
Impulsive	I couldn't pass up such a great deal!
Controlling	I know what's best - for the children - the budget, etc
Independent	My focus is <u>my</u> job, <u>my</u> children, <u>my</u> activities, <u>my</u> home, <u>my</u> way, etc.
Indifferent	Let someone else do it.
Inferior	What have I got to offer?
Keeping score	I'm always the one to take care of the car - the kids - the bills, etc.
Logical	It makes more sense to do it this way.
Me-first	I deserve my time to relax - to play a game - to watch TV, etc.
Obligation	If I don't take care of this, who will?
Peace at any price	Fine - it's not worth arguing about!
Perfectionist	I can't stop until I get this right.
Pessimist	That didn't work before. What's the use of trying again?
Practical	If they need me, they'll ask.
Pride	I'm not going to let anyone see me confused, scared, vulnerable, etc.
Self-protective	What will people think of me if I _____?
Self-righteous	I have every right to be angry, jealous, hurt, resentful etc.
Stubborn	Because I said so!
Superior	No one can do this as well as I can.
Work-before-play	As soon as I - finish the laundry, mow the lawn, send this email, etc.



**Dialogue Question: How do I feel about setting goals as a couple?**

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

---

**Sharing Question(s):** (Choose from one of the following)

- Share a re-evaluation that you have already made in your lives since the Marriage Encounter event. How do you feel about that?
- Share one of the goals you identified as a couple in the earlier exercise. What are you are willing to do to begin to achieve that goal? How do you feel about that?
- Share how dialogue has affected your life or your relationship since the Marriage Encounter experience. How do you feel about that?