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# LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER

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LOVE ONE ANOTHER, AS I HAVE LOVED YOU

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JOHN 15:12

NAME \_\_\_\_\_ ROOM NUMBER \_\_\_\_\_

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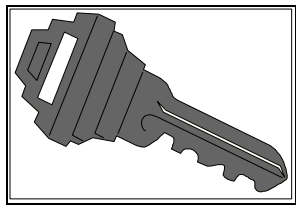
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## INTRODUCTION AND WELCOME

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*Key: A warm welcome to our friends.*

### EXERCISE

A. What is my spouse's most endearing quality?

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B. Share with your spouse what you wrote.

### DEFINITION

**A Marriage Encounter Weekend is an experience designed to help married couples communicate more intimately with each other in order to deepen and enrich their relationship.**

## **FLOW OF THE WEEKEND**

### 1. Presentation

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### 2. Written Reflection

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### 3. Dialogue

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## **IMPORTANCE OF WRITING**

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## **WAYS TO FREE YOURSELF TO EXPERIENCE THE WEEKEND**

- Focus on the two of you, not on your problems.
- Give each other the gift of time by making this a timeless weekend.
- Work on your own relationship and respect the other couples' opportunity to do the same.
- Trust that everything back home is fine, and avoid using telephones and pagers.
- Don't let TVs or computers be a distraction for the two of you.
- Be open to the experience, and don't let expectations get in the way.

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**FREEING YOURSELF FROM DISTRACTIONS THAT WILL INTERFERE WITH THE EXPERIENCE**

**EXERCISE**

What obstacles and worries do I have to put aside in order to participate fully in this weekend?

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# QUESTIONS

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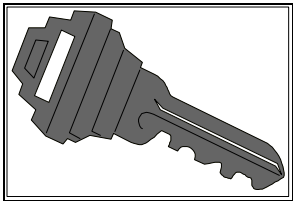
- 1. Why did I come here this weekend?*
- 2. What do I hope to gain?*



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## COMMUNICATING OUR FEELINGS

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*Key: Feelings are the foundation of intimate communication.*

### DEFINITION

A feeling is a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation.



## EXERCISE

1. Recall a situation when you have had a strong feeling, an inner reaction. In one or two sentences describe the situation in writing

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2. Name the feeling about the situation.

“I felt...\_\_\_\_\_”

3. Read what your spouse has written.

## DEFINITION AND IDENTIFYING A FEELING

**A feeling is a spontaneous inner reaction to a person, place or situation.**

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They have no morality attached to them. Morality only enters in when the feeling is acted upon.

I THINK vs. I FEEL RULE:

**If you can substitute “I am” for “I feel,” you have expressed a feeling.**

*Example: I feel satisfied. I am satisfied. The substitution works; therefore this is a feeling.*

**If you can substitute “I think” for “I feel,” you have expressed a thought or judgment.**

*Example: I feel you are upset. I think you are upset. This substitution works; therefore it is a judgment or thought, not a feeling.*

## EXERCISE

1. Describe this room.

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2. Using feeling words, describe how the room affects you.

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3. Read what your spouse has written.

## COMMON MISUNDERSTANDINGS (AND CLARIFICATIONS) ABOUT FEELINGS

- |                                           |                                                                                        |
|-------------------------------------------|----------------------------------------------------------------------------------------|
| 1. Feelings are unimportant.              | (They <u>are</u> important.)                                                           |
| 2. “Real men” don’t have tender feelings. | (“Real men” <u>do</u> have tender feelings.)                                           |
| 3. Some feelings are wrong or bad.        | (Feelings are <u>not</u> wrong or bad; it is the behavior that can be right or wrong.) |
| 4. Others are to blame for my feelings.   | ( <u>No one</u> is to blame for my feelings; they are my spontaneous inner reactions.) |

## **DIALOGUE TECHNIQUE**

1. We will give you a question about you or your relationship.
2. You will separate to write your answers.
3. First answer the question in two or three sentences, sharing your thoughts. Then, reflecting on your answer, get in touch with your feeling(s) about the question.
4. Name your feeling(s) and write it/them down.
5. Describe your feeling(s) in writing.
6. Exchange your workbooks in the privacy of your room and read twice what your spouse wrote for you.
7. Pick the strongest feeling from the two reflections. While the one describes the feeling further, the other tries to listen well. In this way we will understand each other better.

## **DIALOGUE PITFALLS TO AVOID**

- Getting hung up on grammar or spelling
- “Garbage dumping”
- Giving “You” messages instead of “I” messages
- Blaming, i.e., “you made me feel. . .” or “you didn’t . . .”
- Measuring how much your spouse wrote
- Making critical judgments
- Interrupting while your spouse is talking
- Expecting your spouse to change because you shared your feelings
- Short-changing the time in your room together by not spending the full time talking about and continuing to draw out and explore the feeling about which you have written

## Feeling Words

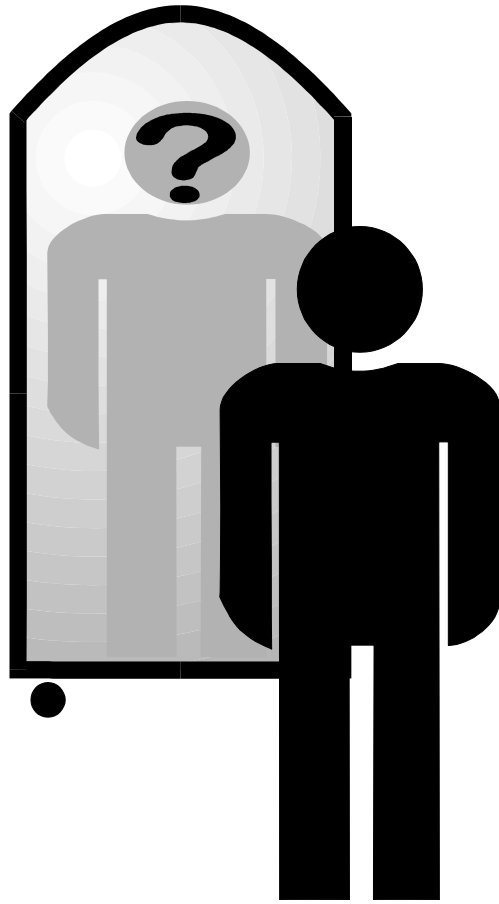
<b>Happy</b>	<b>Sad</b>	<b>Angry</b>	<b>Interested</b>
airy animated blissful bright brisk buoyant cheerful cheery comfortable complacent content debonair ecstatic elated enthusiastic exhilarated exultant festive free & easy frisky gay genial glad gleeful high-spirited hilarious inspired jaunty jolly jovial joyful joyous jubilant lighthearted lively merry mirthful peaceful playful pleased rapturous satisfied saucy serene sparkling spirited sunny tranquil transported vivacious	cheerless clouded crestfallen dark dejected depressed despondent disconsolate discontented discouraged disheartened dismal downcast downhearted dreadful dreary dull flat frowning gloomy glum heavy-hearted ill at ease in the dumps joyless low low-spirited melancholy moody moping mournful out of sorts somber sorrowful spiritless unhappy weebegone woeful	acrimonious annoyed bitter boiling churning enraged furious in a huff in a stew incensed indignant inflamed infuriated irate irritated offended resentful sully sullen up in arms virulent worked up wrathful wrought up	absorbed affected concerned curious engrossed excited fascinated inquiring inquisitive intrigued nosy snoop
	<b>Eager</b> anxious ardent avid desirous earnest enthusiastic hot-headed intent keen zealous	<b>Hurt</b> aching agonized crushed distressed grieved hapless heartbroken in despair in pain injured mournful offended piteous rueful suffering woeful worried	<b>Fearless</b> audacious bold brave certain confident courageous daring dauntless determined encouraged enterprising gallant hardy heroic reassured resolute secure self-reliant spirited stouthearted
			<b>Afraid</b> aghast alarmed anxious appalled apprehensive awed chicken cowardly diffident dismayed doubtful fainthearted fearful fidgety frightened hesitant horrified hysterical in fear insecure irresolute menaced misgiving nervous panicked petrified quaking restless scared shaky shocked suspicious terrified threatened timid trembling tremulous worried yellow
			<b>Doubtful</b> distrustful dubious hesitant indecisive perplexed questioning skeptical suspicious unbelieving uncertain wavering

# QUESTIONS

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- 1. What do I appreciate most about you? What are my feelings as I write this to you? Describe the feelings in full detail.*
- 2. What do I appreciate most about us? What are my feelings as I write this to you? Describe the feelings in full detail.*

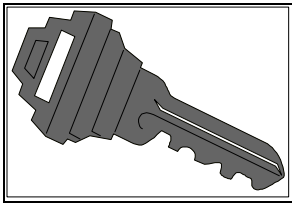
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## ENCOUNTER WITH SELF

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*Key: Understanding who I am and what I do and how these affect my relationships*

## PERSONALITY STYLES ASSESSMENT

Each of us has a dominant personality style that reflects our individual values and principles and affects our relationship with others. There are four basic personality styles that we use in Marriage Encounter to describe who we are. Most of us have some aspects of each style; however, one style is usually dominant. Knowing which personality style is dominant can be helpful in developing empathy, understanding, acceptance and trust in any relationship.

In this exercise we ask that you rank the categories by assigning 4, 3, 2 or 1 to each of the boxes: 4 is most like you, 1 is least like you.

**NOTE: MARK THE BOXES IN TERMS OF WHO YOU ARE, NOT WHO YOU WOULD LIKE TO BE OR WHO YOU THINK YOU SHOULD BE.**

### For Example:

1. THE PERSONAL QUALITIES I AM MORE AWARE OF IN MYSELF ARE ...	gentleness & warmth	4	strength & capability	2	consistency & clarity	3	Spontaneity & creativity	1
2. THE STRONGEST VALUE (PRINCIPLE) FOR ME IS ...	relationship	2	responsibility	3	being correct	1	Freedom	4
3. I AM ATTRACTED TO PEOPLE WHO ...	are cooperative and easy to get along with	3	are responsible and get things done	4	are thorough and think things through	2	are fun and unique	1
4. ... Etc.		4		2		3		1
TOTALS ...	<b>H</b>	<b>13</b>	<b>O</b>	<b>11</b>	<b>T</b>	<b>9</b>	<b>C</b>	<b>7</b>

Complete the Personality Styles Assessment on the following page:

*The personality styles assessment was developed by volunteer professionals for Worldwide Marriage Encounter.*

## PERSONALITY STYLES ASSESSMENT WORKSHEET

1. THE PERSONAL QUALITIES I AM MORE AWARE OF IN MYSELF ARE ...	gentleness & warmth		strength & capability		consistency & clarity		spontaneity & creativity	
2. THE STRONGEST VALUE (PRINCIPLE) FOR ME IS ...	relationship		responsibility		being correct		Freedom	
3. I AM ATTRACTED TO PEOPLE WHO ...	are cooperative and easy to get along with		are responsible and get things done		are thorough and think things through		are fun and unique	
4. I TEND TO MAKE DECISIONS BY ...	trusting my intuition		following the rules		careful analysis and consideration		my gut reaction	
5. I GET PEOPLE TO COOPERATE BY ...	creating friendship and harmony with them		persuasion and direction		influence, discussion and a logical approach		motivation and an out-going, creative style	
6. I FEEL BEST ABOUT MYSELF WHEN I AM ...	helping people feel good about themselves		getting things done		advising people & helping them work things through		causing things to happen	
7. I WANT OTHERS TO SEE ME AS ...	warm and personable		reliable and effective		confident and logical		skillful and unique	
8. WHEN SOMEONE CRITICIZES ME, IT'S LIKELY THAT I WILL ...	withdraw & not deal with it		deal with it and defend myself		analyze the situation and others' motives		ignore it and move on	
9. WHEN I AM REALLY DOWN ON MYSELF, THEN I SEE MYSELF AS ...	having very little to offer		incapable of doing what is needed		confused & out of control		a loser	
10. WHEN I AM UNDER STRESS I TEND TO ...	withdraw & compromise		redouble my efforts		discuss & analyze		challenge & confront	
TOTALS ...	<b>H</b>		<b>O</b>		<b>T</b>		<b>C</b>	



## DESCRIPTION OF PERSONALITY STYLES

**H**ELPER: Helpers value being in relationship with others. Helpers are people who need people and love to be involved with others. Generally they try to get in touch with others' feelings and are empathetic and intuitive. In relationships they are peacemakers and work to obtain cooperation, belonging and harmony. It is very important to helpers to be seen as genuine and caring. Helpers generally tend to see the positive in situations. They are loyal, trusting, supportive and more concerned with what could be than with what is.

**O**RGANIZER: Organizers get things done. They tend to be very responsible, are almost always prepared and follow the rules. They tend to make lists so they know when the job is done. If things are disorganized and lack structure they need to get them structured and organized. They are usually reliable, stable and sensible. In general they do not enjoy lots of change, preferring things to be predictable and orderly. They tend to look to the past for the basis of decisions, valuing how something has been done before (tradition). Among their major gifts are their sense of order and follow-through. They will almost always do the work first and, if there is time, consider pleasure or play.

**T**HINKER: Thinkers enjoy ideas and want to understand. They enjoy analyzing situations, tending to be the quiet observers. In general, thinkers are independent and are more involved with thoughts and ideas than with emotions. They will follow the rules if the rules make sense and are logical. Thinkers need to be competent and to accumulate knowledge. They enjoy debate and discussion of ideas. Usually thinkers tend to be perfectionists and have difficulty dealing with their own mistakes. They are great planners, because they will work to consider all the options.

**C**ATALYST: Catalysts enjoy being free, spontaneous and playful. Catalysts are generally bold in their actions, enjoy being the center of attention and are risk-takers. They are action-oriented and like to be involved with the here and now. They like making things happen. They enjoy competition and like variety. They get bored rather easily and will seek change just to make things interesting and exciting. They enjoy a challenge and tend to do things their way, often being seen as impulsive. They find rules and structure confining and are looked up to for their spontaneity and out-going nature.

THESE ARE GENERAL DESCRIPTIONS AND MAY NOT DESCRIBE YOU FULLY; AND YOU MAY HAVE OTHER CHARACTERISTICS THAT ARE IN STYLES OTHER THAN YOUR DOMINANT PERSONALITY STYLE.

**DEFINITION OF A PERSONALITY STYLE**

My personality style is the essence of who I am and how I appear to other people. It reflects my identity, becoming more apparent from childhood through adulthood. It is reflected in the things I say and in my reactions to the way I perceive and respond to persons, places and events around me. It embodies my personal beliefs, goals, expectations, hopes and fears.

**DEFINITION OF BEHAVIOR**

My behavior is a learned and adaptable manner of presenting myself to win approval, gain respect or accomplish another end. My behaviors may be different depending on whether the setting is work, home or play. My behaviors also have been learned over a lifetime, but as opposed to my personality style, they are much more subject to adaptation and change. Behaviors can be learned as well as unlearned.

**NOTE:** It is important to realize that we normally gravitate toward behaviors that are compatible with our dominant personality style; however, we should never excuse bad behavior by saying, “That is who I am.” We cannot change who we are (personality style) but we CAN change what we do (behavior). Personality styles, like feelings, are neither right nor wrong, but our behavior can be.

Notes

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## HOW SELF-DOUBTS LIMIT ME AND MY RELATIONSHIPS

### THE PRINCE AND THE ROSE

Long years ago, in a far away land, lived a prince. He had everything that most people long for: wealth to get anything he wanted, power to do whatever he wished, and the freedom to live each day as he pleased. Yet the prince was not happy. He longed to share his life with someone. But he listened to a small voice within that would from time to time whisper words of self-doubt, criticism and judgment. The prince kept these secret thoughts and feelings locked up in his heart; but outwardly he covered up his self-doubts with unkind and offensive behaviors. Because of this, those who were closest to him often found him to be proud, vain and even arrogant. Gradually fewer and fewer people had anything to do with the prince. He grew sad and lonely, and he began more and more to believe those words whispered quietly from within.

While walking in his beautiful garden, he noticed a rosebush. He observed both the bud that would soon bloom and also the sharp threatening thorns and thought, "How can any beautiful flower come from a plant burdened with so many sharp thorns?" Because of his doubts, he neglected to water it, and before he could see the beauty of the rose, it died.

The prince lived his life alone, trapping himself within his own despair. The prince failed to understand the mystery of the rose. *The mystery is this: to truly love another, one must discover God's beauty and goodness within oneself.* The prince, doubting the beauty within himself, could not believe that anyone could love him. And so he hid himself within the castle, turning people away. He grew more and more lonely, saddened and isolated. The prince lived his life in isolation and hopelessness, trapped in his own self-doubts.

**Not all of us see ourselves as proud, vain and arrogant, but each of us has a part of ourselves that we see as unlovable. Deep within every soul there is a rose, the good qualities God planted in us at birth. It grows amid the thorns of our weaknesses and faults. Many of us look at ourselves and see only the thorns, the ugliness. We despair, thinking that nothing good can possibly come from us. The prince couldn't understand how anyone could possibly see past the ugly part that he saw in himself, let alone love him. Our relationships with our spouses are also affected by the way we see ourselves. When we doubt ourselves, we limit our ability to give love to or receive the love of our spouses.**

## HOW WE SEE OURSELVES

Self-doubts

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Superiority

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Compliments

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Double standard

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## GOD SEES ME AS PRECIOUS AND HONORED

**Isaiah 43:1-4: But now thus says the Lord, he who created you, O Jacob, and he who formed you, O Israel: Do not fear, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine. When you pass through the waters, I will be with you; and through the rivers, they shall not overwhelm you; when you walk through fire you shall not be burned, and the flame shall not consume you. For I am the Lord your God, the Holy One of Israel, your savior. I give Egypt as your ransom, Ethiopia and Seba in exchange for you. Because you are precious in my sight, and honored, and I love you, I give people in return for you, nations in exchange for your life.**

*The Scripture quotations contained herein are from the New Revised Standard Version Bible, copyright, 1989, by the Division of Christian Education of the National Council of the Churches of Christ in the U.S.A. Used by permission. All rights reserved.*

# QUESTIONS

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- 1. What do I like most about myself?*
- 2. What do I like least about myself?*
- 3. What is the way I try to present myself to others? Describe it briefly.  
How does it limit my relationships?*
- 4. What are my feelings about what I have written? Describe fully.*

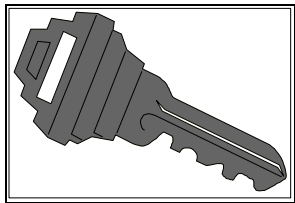
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## MARRIAGE IN TODAY'S WORLD

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*Key: Breaking the downward spiral of the "Married Singles Lifestyle" by making a "Decision to Love"*

## TYPICAL STAGES OF RELATIONSHIP: ROMANCE AND DISILLUSIONMENT

### DEFINITION

Romance is a stage in which I mostly see your good points.

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Exercise: What attracted me to you?

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### DEFINITION

The married singles lifestyle is thinking and acting in my marriage as if I were a single person. Living the married singles lifestyle inevitably leads to progressively deeper disillusionment.

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### DEFINITION

Disillusionment is a stage in which I mostly see your flaws.

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## **TO LOVE IS A DECISION**

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### **DEFINITION**

**The stage of Joy is the mutual awareness that we are loved, cherished, honored and respected for who we are, even with our flaws and imperfections.**

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## WRITING A LOVE LETTER

From now on during the weekend, we are asking you to write your responses to the questions at the end of each presentation in the form of a love letter rather than as a reflection.

- You may want to start your letter with Dear or Dearest.
- Use endearments if you normally use them when you talk to each other.  
Think back to how you started and ended letters when you were dating. Did you end your letter with “love” or did you say “sincerely yours” or “with warmest regards”? You are writing this letter to your lover and your friend.
- Write in a conversational tone as if you were talking to your spouse.  
Don’t get caught up with making sure that your grammar is perfect or that you use just the right word. It is far more important to reveal yourself to your spouse, and to describe your feelings as completely and as fully as you can.
- Focus on your feelings, and try to describe them as completely as you can.
- Use the feeling words on page 9 and description sheets located in the Appendix on page 63.
- Don’t try to justify how you feel or assign blame — that is not what we are asking of you.
- For those of you who tend to intellectualize and need to rationalize or explain everything that happens to you, try to avoid the temptation.
- Don’t write a report of what has happened or what you don’t like about your spouse. Instead, use this precious writing time to reveal your innermost self to the person with whom you have chosen to live your life.
- As you write, keep your spouse uppermost in your mind.  
When you focus on your spouse it is easy to let your love come through. Trust in your spouse and in your love for each other enough to give as fully as you can in this love letter.

## SYMPTOMS OF DISILLUSIONMENT

### Instructions:

1. Review the list below, and check all the symptoms of disillusionment that in any way ever applied to your marriage.
2. In your notebook, write the symptom from which you experience the strongest feelings.
3. Write your love letter, focusing on your feelings. Describe your feelings as fully as you can. The love letter you write is about you and your feelings and not about the symptom.

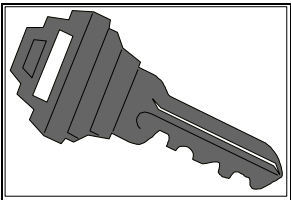
- Check all that apply
- Moodiness in our marriage
- Feelings of disillusionment, boredom, emptiness or loneliness in our relationship
- Indifference to each other's problems, interests or jobs
- Not enough affection and small courtesies between us
- Feelings of insecurity or jealousy
- A sense of being better understood by others than by my spouse
- Nagging
- Lack of planning things together
- Sense of being used
- More interest in position and money than in me
- Taking each other for granted
- No excitement in our relationship
- Frequent quarrels
- Insults, rudeness, sarcasm or criticism
- Continuous escapes, together or alone, such as TV, sports, socializing, liquor, hypochondria, etc.
- A desire to be right all the time
- Possessiveness of my checkbook, my kitchen, my children, my body, my taste in the house, my friends or my time
- Overly sensitive
- Irresponsibility around the house, with the children, with money or with commitments
- Acting independently
- Closed to having (more) children
- Distance in our sexual relationship
- Too controlling
- The way we spend our money
- The way we spend our time



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## LISTENING

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*Key: Listening involves all of me.*

## THE WAYS WE LIMIT OUR LISTENING

Listening for facts

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Preparing my answer

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Problem solving

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Motor running

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Pacifying

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Impatience

---

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I've heard all this before

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Hanging onto words only

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Personal past history

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Other

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## THE WAYS I LIMIT MY LISTENING

### Instructions:

Check off the ways you limit your listening in your relationship.

Check all that apply

- Listening for facts: I listen for my own purposes and information, ignoring everything else (not concerned with the feelings that accompany the facts).
- Preparing my answer: I form my answer in my head while the speaker is talking.
- Problem-solving: I listen with the intent to get enough information to fix the problem. (When the intent is only on providing a solution, you may miss the whole point the other is trying to communicate.)
- Motor running: I can do other things and still listen
- Pacifying: I try to bring peace and calm to a tough situation without listening to the feelings being expressed.
- Impatience: I give the impression that I am very busy and leave my spouse thinking what he/she has to say is not important (anxious to get on to something else).
- I've heard all this before: I assume I know what my spouse is going to say and I stop listening, preferring to think there is nothing new being communicated.
- Hanging onto words only: I take all the words at face value and literally, zeroing in on words only instead of the other forms of communication being used.
- Personal past history: I allow things that I have experienced in my past before our marriage to preclude me from listening to any other position on the issue. This experience could be derived from parents, church, school, etc. (e.g., My dad only gave a dollar during the collection. My parents taught me to save for a rainy day. In school, I learned that ... )
- Other. Describe:  
\_\_\_\_\_

## LISTENING WITH THE HEART

### DEFINITION

Listening with the heart means that I will make room in my heart beyond my feelings and beyond what I understand with my head. Listening with the heart is other-centered. I put my own thoughts and feelings aside and try to take in the thoughts and feelings of my spouse. I go beyond the words to meet the real person who is trying to say something about him/herself.

### ELEMENTS OF LISTENING WITH THE HEART

1. I show an attitude of openness in listening.
2. I make a decision to listen.
3. I involve my whole person.
4. I am present to the speaker: he/she knows that he/she is listened to.
5. I give feedback (check out the message).
6. I go beyond words and am aware of feelings.
7. I am aware of the person behind the words.
8. I recognize non-verbal communications.
9. I listen for the sake of the other.

### Notes

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PARABLE OF THE SOWER: MATTHEW 13:3-9, 13-15:

And he told them many things in parables, saying: “Listen! A sower went out to sow. And as he sowed, some seeds fell on the path, and the birds came and ate them up. Other seeds fell on rocky ground, where they did not have much soil, and they sprang up quickly, since they had no depth of soil. But when the sun rose, they were scorched; and since they had no root, they withered away. Other seeds fell among thorns, and the thorns grew up and choked them. Other seeds fell on good soil and brought forth grain, some a hundred-fold, some sixty, some thirty. Let anyone with ears listen!”

“The reason I speak to them in parables is that ‘seeing they do not perceive, and hearing they do not listen, nor do they understand.’ With them indeed is fulfilled the prophecy of Isaiah that says: ‘You will indeed listen, but never understand, and you will indeed look, but never perceive. For this people’s heart has grown dull, and their ears are hard of hearing, and they have shut their eyes; so that they might not look with their eyes, and listen with their ears, and understand with their heart and turn — and I would heal them.’ ”

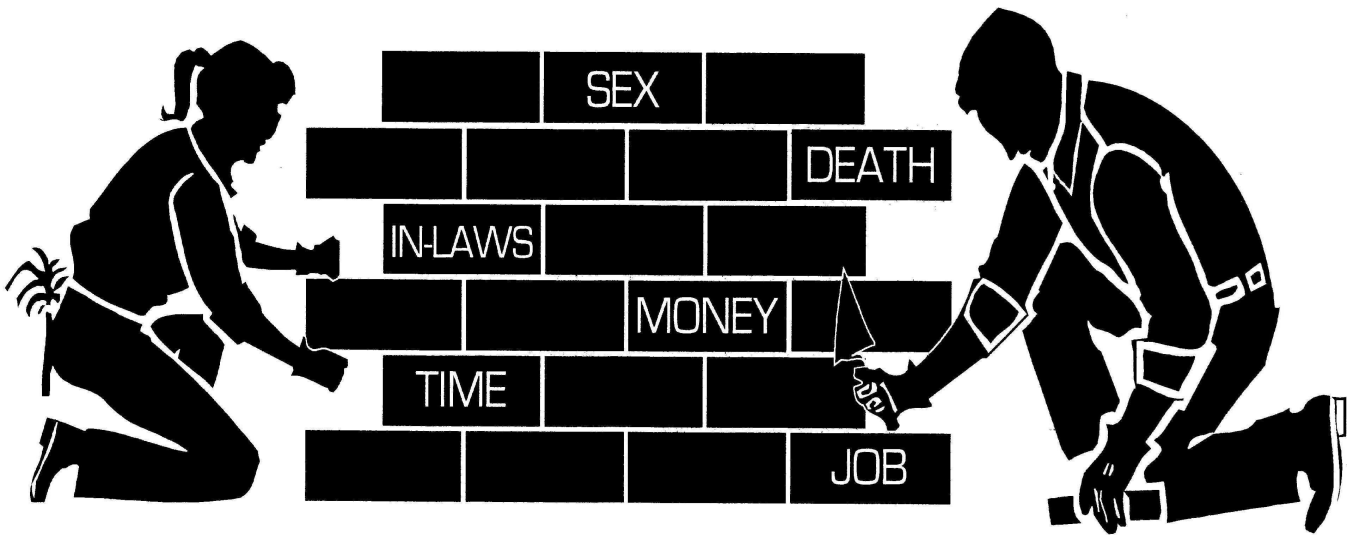
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# QUESTION

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*In what area do I find it most difficult to listen to you? What are my feelings about this?*

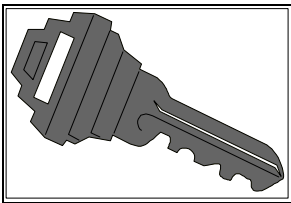




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## AREAS FOR REACHING OUT TO EACH OTHER

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*Key: We all avoid communicating in sensitive areas.*

## THREE TYPICAL WAYS WE MIGHT REACT TO EACH OTHER'S FEELINGS

Rejection

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Toleration

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Acceptance

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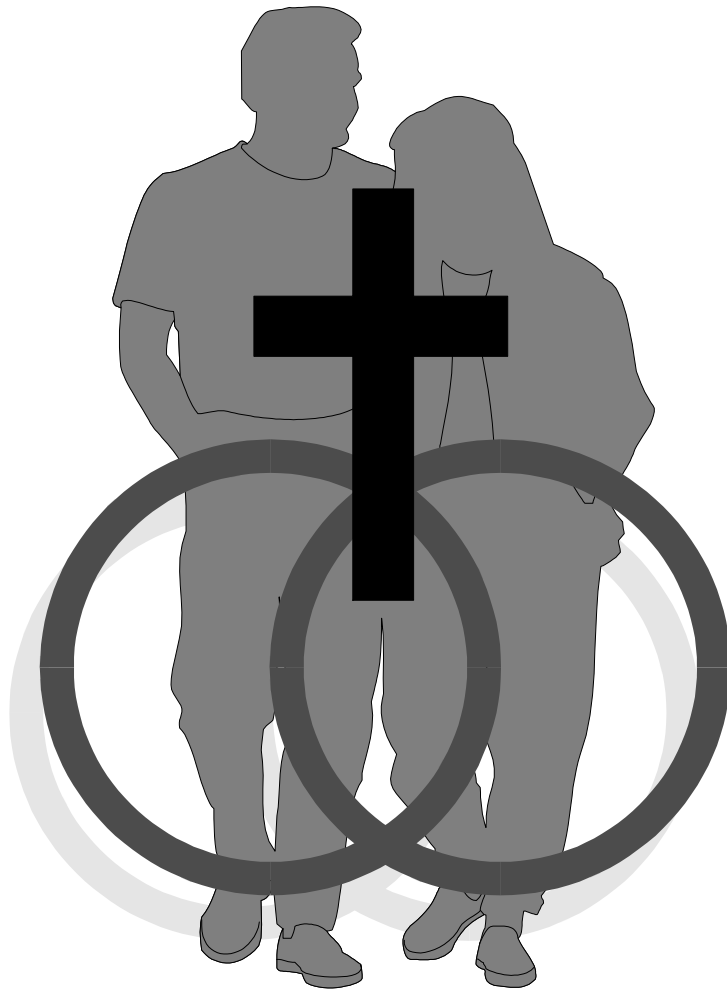
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## AREAS FOR REACHING OUT TO EACH OTHER

### Instructions:

1. Review the list below and check all the areas where you think that you and your spouse have difficulty communicating.
2. Choose an area in which you have strong feelings.
3. Write a love letter mentioning the area, but focusing on your feelings. Describe your feelings as fully as you can. Remember, the love letter is about you and your feelings and not about the area.

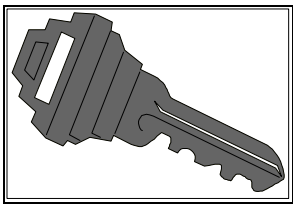
- Check all that apply
- Money
- Health
- Time
- Job(s)
- Rest
- Sex
- Our communication with each other
- Children (step-children)
- Relatives
- Relationship to God
- Atmosphere in our home
- Relationship with our adult children
- Retirement
- In-laws
- Death
- Other \_\_\_\_\_



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## GOD'S DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE

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*Key: Responsibility and intimacy will lead to unity.*

## LIVING INTIMATELY AND RESPONSIBLY LEADS TO UNITY

### DEFINITIONS

1. Unity: The true happiness that comes from the intimacy God calls us to in our relationship
2. Responsible: Living out the decision to love in our daily lives
3. Intimate: Being open to love and to be loved

### GOD'S DESIRE FOR MARRIAGE IS UNITY.

#### Genesis 2:24-25:

Therefore a man leaves his father and his mother and clings to his wife, and they become one flesh. And the man and his wife were both naked, and were not ashamed.

#### Genesis 1:26-27:

Then God said, "Let us make humankind in our image, according to our likeness; and let them have dominion over the fish of the sea, and over the birds of the air, and over the cattle, and over all the wild animals of the earth, and over every creeping thing that creeps upon the earth." So God created humankind in his image, in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them.

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### Notes

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# QUESTION

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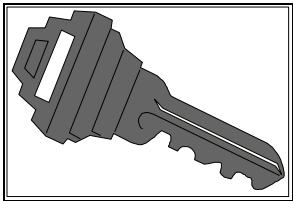
*Name a time when I experienced intimacy with you.  
What are my feelings as I recall that time now?*



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## RISKING TO TRUST IN DIALOGUE

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*Key: Leave your fears behind and trust in your spouse's goodness.*



## TRUST AND RISK IN DIALOGUE

### DEFINITIONS

1. **Trust:** Having confidence in my spouse's love for me
2. **Risk:** Deciding to go beyond my obstacles and fears and make myself vulnerable to my spouse  
*Trust is a state of mind; risk is an action.*

### WHEN WE RISK IN DIALOGUE WE ARE NOT

1. **Garbage dumping:** blaming and bringing up old stuff.
2. **Manipulating:** sharing things so that my spouse will change or see things only my way.
3. **Sharing confessional material:** sharing about adultery, theft, abortion, etc.
4. **Sharing in a blunt/cruel manner.**
5. **Sharing negative things** about my spouse, such as weaknesses, handicaps, appearance, poor taste, etc.
6. **Trying to solve our problems.**

### Notes

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## THE TRANSFORMATION

*Let's go back and revisit our story of the Prince and the Rose. As we left the prince in the castle, he was filled with lonely isolation and hopelessness. Now let's listen as we continue our story.*

One day a sensitive woman came to his castle. Despite his proud, vain and arrogant behavior, she could see beauty within the prince. She saw through the negative behaviors and attitudes and saw the rose that dwelt within him. She visited him often, treating him with love, kindness and respect. He began to see himself differently as he accepted her loving behavior and unconditional love. He was transformed!

The prince slowly grew into the person that the woman saw in him, and he came to understand the mystery of the rose. He began to see the beauty within himself and to let go of his self-doubts. The prince began to love himself again, and this enabled him to love others.

**Being loved can come as a surprise. The love of another thrills and excites us. Being loved by our spouses supports us and enables us to value ourselves. Our lives are significantly affected by loving and being loved.**

*When we choose to love one another with God's love through us, we experience transformation.*

Some people do not see the rose within themselves. Someone must show it to them. One of the greatest gifts a person can possess is to be able to reach past the thorns and find the rose within others. This is the characteristic of love, to look at a person and, knowing their faults, recognize the nobility in their souls and their worth before God, and help them to see they can get beyond their faults. The beauty of the rose can overcome the thorns. When we believe in our own goodness and beauty, we blossom.

The challenge for each of us is to show our spouses the beauty of the rose within them. By concentrating on the rose and not the thorns, we allow our spouses to see themselves as God sees them, valued and lovable. That frees them to become the person God wants them to be.

## THE ROSE

Some say love, it is a river that drowns the tender reed.  
Some say love, it is a razor that leaves your soul to bleed.  
Some say love, it is a hunger, an endless, aching need.  
I say love, it is a flower, and you its only seed.

It's the heart, afraid of breaking, that never learns to dance.  
It's the dream, afraid of waking, that never takes the chance.  
It's the one who won't be taken, who cannot seem to give,  
And the soul, afraid of dying, that never learns to live.

When the night has been too lonely, and the road has been too long,  
And you think that love is only for the lucky and the strong,  
Just remember in the winter, far beneath the bitter snows,  
Lies the seed that with the sun's love in the spring becomes the rose.

Produced and Arranged by Paul A Rothchild  
Associate Producer, Bill Gazecki  
Sung by Bette Midler  
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# QUESTION

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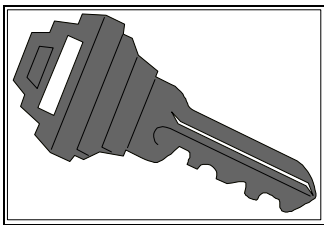
*What feeling do I have that is most difficult for me to share with you because sharing it makes me vulnerable? Describe that feeling in full and loving detail.*



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## IMPACT OF DIALOGUE IN OUR DAILY LIVES

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*Key: Dialogue is the key to communication.*

# W.E.D.S.

## WRITE

Write your love letter to an already chosen question for 10 minutes. You can write side by side or separate to write. You might say a brief prayer to clear minds and hearts of distraction and for God's guidance. As you write, keep in mind the person to whom you are writing, your spouse. Write for the full 10 minutes. Use the hot pen method. Write your feelings honestly, openly and sincerely. Try not to blame anyone for how you are feeling. Try not to justify why you feel the way you do. Try not to change each other. Simply reveal more of yourself. This is not a time to solve problems or reach a decision. Describe your feelings in a way that will be relatable to your spouse.

## EXCHANGE

Exchange your love letters when you get together silently and lovingly, as this is a gift of yourselves to one another. Comments are not necessary. Do not try to influence your spouse before he/she has a chance to read your letter. Read each other's love letter twice silently. The first time read for the head. This is to get a basic understanding of the words. The second reading is for the heart. Go beyond the words and try to absorb the person and his/her feelings.

## DIALOGUE

Dialogue after you have read the letters twice. Decide which of you expressed the stronger feeling(s). Dialogue on the feeling(s) for 10 minutes. Remember that dialogue is for the sharing of feeling(s) with each other. Sit close to each other and give each other your full attention. Concentrate on asking questions that will "*pull out*" the feeling gently. Attempt to grow in awareness of one another. Once you have exhausted all the ways to describe the feeling(s) or 10 minutes is up, the dialogue should be brought to closure.

## SELECT

Select a question for the next day's dialogue now. Do not wait or it may not happen. Choose a question about things that are pertinent to your relationship. Take turns choosing questions. Use a series of questions to explore more difficult areas.

## PRIME TIME

Choose a time to write that is best for you. This time does not have to be the same time for both spouses, but it has to be a time when you are able to write for a full 10 minutes without interruption. When you dialogue, choose a time when you both have 10 uninterrupted minutes for describing and sharing your feelings.

**CANA: JOHN 2: 1-11**

On the third day there was a wedding in Cana in Galilee, and the mother of Jesus was there. Jesus and his disciples had also been invited to the wedding. When the wine gave out, the mother of Jesus said to him, "They have no wine." And Jesus said to her, "Woman, what concern is that to you and to me? My hour has not yet come." His mother said to the servants, "Do whatever he tells you." Now standing there were six stone water jars for the Jewish rites of purification, each holding twenty or thirty gallons. Jesus said to them, "Fill the jars with water." And they filled them to the brim. He said to them, "Now draw some out, and take it to the chief steward." So they took it. When the steward tasted the water that had become wine, and did not know where it came from (though the servants who had drawn the water knew), the steward called the bridegroom and said to him, "Everyone serves the good wine first, and then the inferior wine after the guests have become drunk. But you have kept the good wine until now." Jesus did this, the first of his signs, in Cana of Galilee, and revealed his glory; and his disciples believed in him.

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**SHARING QUESTIONS**

*As a result of our time together today, what do I most appreciate about you?*

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*What is something meaningful that is happening in our relationship because of our dialogue?*

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## BECAUSE YOU LOVED ME

For all those times you stood by me,  
For all the truth that you made me see,  
For all the joy you brought to my life,  
For all the wrong that you made right,  
For every dream you made come true,  
For all the love I found in you,  
I'll be forever thankful baby.  
You're the one who held me up --  
Never let me fall;  
You're the one who saw me through --  
Through it all!

You were my strength when I was weak.  
You were my voice when I couldn't speak.  
You were my eyes when I couldn't see.  
You saw the best there was in me,  
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach.  
You gave me faith 'coz you believed.  
I'm everything I am  
Because you loved me.

You gave me wings and made me fly.  
You touched my hand, I could touch the sky.  
I lost my faith, you gave it back to me.  
You said no star was out of reach.  
You stood by me and I stood tall.  
I had your love; I had it all!  
I'm grateful for each day you gave me.  
Maybe I don't know that much,  
But I know this much is true:  
I was blessed because I was loved by you.

You were my strength when I was weak.  
You were my voice when I couldn't speak.  
You were my eyes when I couldn't see.  
You saw the best there was in me,  
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach.  
You gave me faith 'coz you believed.  
I'm everything I am  
Because you loved me.

You were always there for me,  
The tender wind that carried me,  
A light in the dark shining your love into my life.  
You've been my inspiration.  
Through the lies you were the truth;  
My world is a better place because of you!

You were my strength when I was weak.  
You were my voice when I couldn't speak.  
You were my eyes when I couldn't see.  
You saw the best there was in me,  
Lifted me up when I couldn't reach.  
You gave me faith 'coz you believed.  
I'm everything I am  
Because you loved me.

Words and music by Diane Warren  
Sung by Celine Dion  
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# QUESTION

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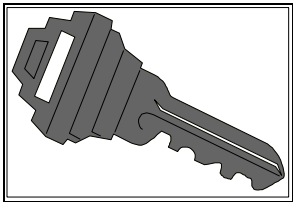
*What do we most need to dialogue about tonight to grow in our relationship? What are my feelings in this area?*



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## MARRIAGE AS COVENANT

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*Key: Marriage is a visible sign of God's love.*

## DEFINITIONS AND EXPLANATIONS

### **Covenant of Marriage:**

The marriage covenant, by which a man and a woman establish between themselves a partnership of their whole life, is by its nature ordered toward the good of the spouses and the procreation and education of offspring.

Marriage between two Christians (man and woman) who give themselves unconditionally to each other is not only a vow but also a covenant. This means that the love of the spouses for each other is a sign of a much deeper reality. This very love becomes a visible reflection or manifestation of God's boundless, unconditional love. Seeing the unconditional love of Christian spouses enables us to comprehend more clearly just what God's love is like. Spouses are also able to experience God's love for them in the love they show for each other. Being loved by one's spouse, therefore, is to experience God's love.

#### **A Covenant**

- is unconditional.
- has unlimited possibilities.
- requires 100% from each partner.
- says, "Because I love you, I will ..."
- is based on promises and vows.
- is forever.

#### **A Contract**

- is conditional: if one party doesn't perform, the other party doesn't have to perform
- has legally defined limits.
- is a 50/50 agreement.
- says, "If you will ..., then I will ..."
- is based on rights.
- can be terminated.

*It is the unconditional love that one spouse has for the other, a covenant love, that sustains a marriage.*

### **EPHESIANS 5:21, 25-33**

**Be subject to one another out of reverence for Christ.**

**Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her, in order to make her holy by cleansing her with the washing of water by the word, so as to present the church to himself in splendor, without a spot or wrinkle or any thing of the kind — yes, so that she may be holy and without blemish. In the same way, husbands should love their wives as they do their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. For no one ever hates his own body, but he nourishes and tenderly cares for it, just as Christ does for the church, because we are members of his body. "For this reason a man will leave his father and his mother and be joined to his wife, and the two will become one flesh." This is a great mystery, and I am applying it to Christ and the church. However, each one of you also must love his wife as he loves himself, and the wife must respect her husband.**

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## The Gifts of Our Covenant

1. Contagious love

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2. Life-giving love

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3. Love that is raised above the ordinary

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4. Ability to heal and be healed

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## IF TOMORROW NEVER COMES

Sometimes late at night  
I lie awake and watch her sleeping.  
She's lost in peaceful dreams  
So I turn out the lights and lay there in the  
dark;  
And a thought crosses my mind:  
If I never wake up in the morning,  
Would she ever doubt the way I feel  
About her in my heart?

If tomorrow never comes,  
Will she know how much I loved her?  
Did I try in every way to show her every day  
That she's my only one?  
And if my time on earth were through,  
And she must face this world without me,  
Is the love I gave her in the past  
Gonna be enough to last  
If tomorrow never comes?

'Cause I've lost loved ones in my life,  
Who never knew how much I loved them;  
Now I live with the regret  
That my true feelings for them never were  
revealed.  
So I made a promise to myself  
To say each day how much she means to me.  
And avoid that circumstance  
Where there's no second chance to tell her  
how I feel.

'Cause if tomorrow never comes,  
Will she know how much I loved her?  
Did I try in every way to show her every day  
That she's my only one?  
And if my time on earth were through,  
And she must face this world without me,  
Is the love I gave her in the past  
Gonna be enough to last  
If tomorrow never comes?

So tell that someone that you love  
Just what you're thinking of,  
If tomorrow never comes.

Music & lyrics by Kent Blazy & Garth Brooks  
Sung by Garth Brooks  
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# QUESTION INSTRUCTIONS

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*Open the hand out to the first question and write all you can.*

*Write your thoughts, feelings and descriptions of the feelings; then move on to the next question and do the same.*

*You will probably not have the time to write on more than the first two questions.*

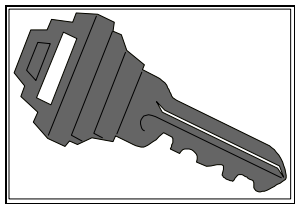
*If time allows, however, move on to another question, and so forth, until the writing time is over.*



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## KEEPING OUR RELATIONSHIP A PRIORITY

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*Key: There are five tools to keep our relationship a priority.*

## FIVE TOOLS

1. Constant attention to our communication

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2. Attention to our sexual relationship

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3. Prayer for each other, including couple prayer

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4. Journeying with others committed to similar values

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5. Re-evaluation

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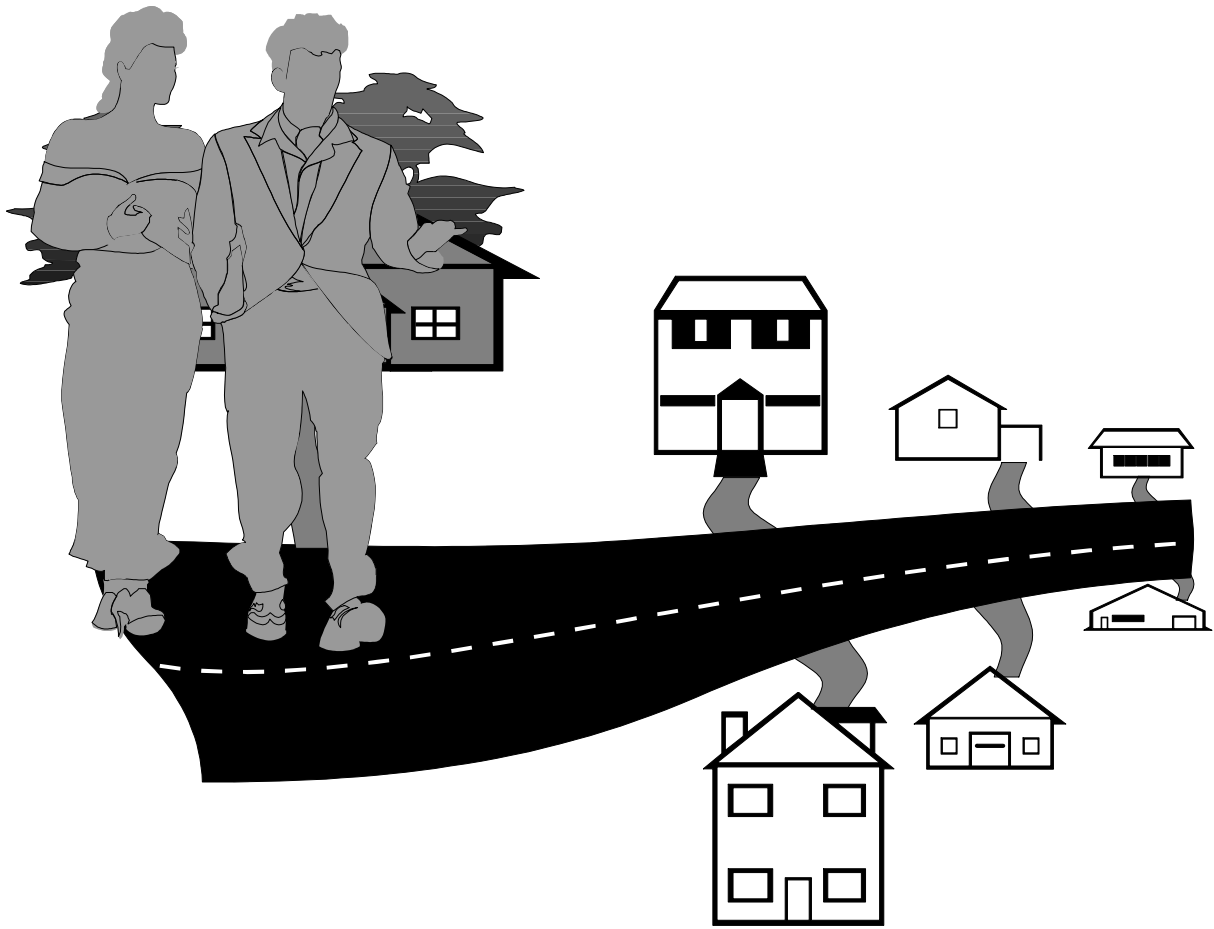
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# QUESTION

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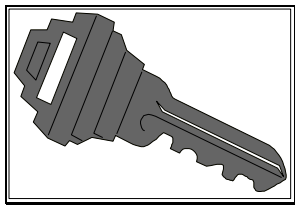
*In order to make our relationship a priority, what, specifically, am I going to do? How do I feel about my answer?*



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## SHARING IN THE DREAM

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*Key: Share the gift of the weekend by inviting your friends and supporting the dream.*

## LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER MISSION STATEMENT:

Lutheran Marriage Encounter is a ministry dedicated to assisting married couples to live intimate and responsible relationships by providing an Encounter Weekend experience as well as ongoing community support.

## LUTHERAN MARRIAGE ENCOUNTER VISION STATEMENT:

The Lutheran Church renewed and our world changed through strengthened couple relationships and stronger personal relationships with Christ.

## SOME IDEAS FOR INVITING OTHERS TO THE WEEKEND

- Give a temple talk at your church.\*
- Pre-pay a couple's registration as an anniversary, birthday or Valentine's Day gift.
- Post a Marriage Encounter information sheet on your church bulletin board. Include the Lutheran Marriage Encounter information number (800-235-1010).
- Write announcements about upcoming weekends for your church newsletter and/or bulletin.
- Sponsor a "Romantic Dinner" at your church.\*
- Invite a group to your home for a Marriage Encounter information talk.\*
- Invite a couple to dinner and tell them about Marriage Encounter.
- Most importantly: **You and your relationship** are our most important advertising !  
*\*Further information is available on the LME Website or from your presenters.*

## STARTER LIST

### Instructions:

1. Using the space below, make a starter list of couples, including clergy couples, whom you would like to invite to the weekend.
2. Take the list home and put it in a prominent place: by the telephone or on the refrigerator.


# DISCUSSION QUESTION

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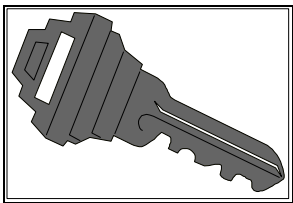
*How much are we willing to share financially so that the dream and the weekend may continue?*



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## CONTINUING OUR JOURNEY

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*Key: By sharing our love as a couple, we can change the world.*

Sharing our love as a couple with others:

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Obstacles we must overcome:

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Community support:

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**DIALOGUE QUESTION FOR MONDAY**

*How do I feel about continuing the journey we've begun through our dialogue at home? Describe your feeling(s) fully and completely.*

# OPEN SHARING QUESTIONS

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*Your most endearing quality is...*

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*Something meaningful that happened in our relationship this weekend is...*

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## APPENDIX

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SUGGESTIONS FOR DESCRIBING FEELINGS .....	Page 63
GUIDELINES FOR FIGHTING FAIR FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP .....	Page 64
FORGIVENESS .....	Page 65
EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS AND HEALING.....	Page 66
COMMUNION STATEMENT.....	Page 67
THERE'S A NEW WORLD SOMEWHERE .....	Page 68

## SUGGESTIONS FOR DESCRIBING FEELINGS

Feelings are neither right nor wrong. They have no morality attached to them. Morality only enters in when the feeling is acted upon.

**I THINK vs. I FEEL RULE:** If you can substitute “I am” for “I feel,” you have expressed a feeling. If you can substitute “I think” for “I feel,” you have expressed a thought or judgment. Example: I feel satisfied. I am satisfied. The substitution works; therefore this is a feeling. I feel you are upset. I think you are upset. This substitution works; therefore it is a judgment.

### SOME STEPS TO FOLLOW IN DESCRIBING YOUR FEELINGS

Name the feeling. You may want to use the feeling words on page 9.

Describe the feeling using the word “like” and any of the following categories:

Category	How to rate the feeling	Example
Intensity	Rate feeling from 1 to 10.	“It has an intensity of ‘10’.”
Taste	Sour, sweet, bitter, etc.	“It tastes bitter, like a sour lemon.”
Touch	Scratchy, soft, prickly, etc.	“It has a softness like silk.”
Color	Red, blue, etc.	“It is red hot.”
Sound	High pitched, screech, soothing, wail of a siren, crack of thunder	“It was like the singing birds on a spring morning.”
Physical reaction	Sick, chilled, giggling, etc.	“It was like an upset stomach.”
Similar past experience	Childbirth, riding a bike, etc.	“It was like the time our child took her first steps.”
Nature scene	Beautiful sunset, crashing waves, still forest	“It has all the colors of a sunset at sea.”
An image	Hitting a home run	“I feel gleeful, like a kid who hit his first home run.”

### POSSIBLE QUESTIONS FOR VERBAL DIALOGUE

*These are suggested questions to help you get started on dialogue and to make it richer and more meaningful.*

*You probably will not want to use more than a few of these during any given dialogue.*

Can you tell me more about your feeling?

Have there been other times when you felt this way?

Is it like the time when \_\_\_? *(Give a shared experience when you both felt that way.)*

Is this feeling like \_\_\_? *(Give an example of what you think the feeling might be like.)*

Are there any physical sensations you experience when you feel this way?

Is your feeling like \_\_\_? *(Give an example from nature, such as a thunderstorm or a rain shower.)*

Can you think of a time when I might have had a feeling like this one?

## **GUIDELINES FOR FIGHTING FAIR FOR OUR RELATIONSHIP**

(The term fight, as we use it, never refers to any physical or mental violence.)

1. Remember that criticism and sarcasm wound people and destroys our capacity to belong to each other. Avoid criticism.
2. Avoid name-calling and character assassination.
3. Never fight when one or both of you are under the influence of alcohol or drugs.
4. It is a waste of time placing blame. Since you can't unspill the milk, work at moving forward.
5. Avoid using absolutes, such as, "you always" or "you never" or "every time." They are not true.
6. Finish the fight. Even if there are tears, be sensitive, but do not walk away. Continue the fight for your relationship.
7. Do not bring in third parties. A parent, a friend, a person at work has no part in your confrontation. The real problem is often a miscommunication.
8. Stay physically close to each other. An affectionate touch helps each to know that there is nothing that cannot be worked out in love.
9. The issue under discussion is never as important as the two of you are. Being right is not as important as being in relationship.
10. Fight for clarification, not to win. If I "win" a fight then I'm sleeping with a loser.

## FORGIVENESS

How do you find freedom from the bitterness that pollutes lives and marriages?

One single word: forgiveness.

Forgiveness takes place when love accepts deliberately the hurts and abrasions of life and drops all charges against the other person.

Forgiveness is accepting the other when both of you know he or she has done something quite unacceptable. Forgiveness is smiling silent love for your partner when the justifications for keeping an insult or injury alive are on the tip of your tongue. You swallow the justifications, not because you have to, to keep the peace, but because you want to, to make peace.

Forgiveness rightfully expects change, but it is not acceptance given "on the condition" that the other become acceptable. Forgiveness is given freely, from the keen awareness that the forgiver also has a need for daily forgiveness. Forgiveness exercises God's strength to love and receives the other person without any assurance of complete restitution or complete amends.

Forgiveness is a relationship between equals who recognize their need for each other. Each needs the other's forgiveness. Each needs the other's acceptance. **Each needs the other.** Before God, each drops all charges, refutes all self-justification, and forgives and keeps forgiving, as Jesus said, "Seventy times seven."

Seeking forgiveness is

- knowing you have caused hurt and pain in the other person.
- having a repentant heart.
- taking responsibility for the hurt.
- working to change and, if needed, seeking help to bring change.

The Act of forgiveness means

- no longer being chained to the hurt.
- no longer using the wonderful gift of memory as a weapon.
- no longer hurting the other as we have been hurt.
- never mentioning the offense again in anger.
- making yourself vulnerable and open to being hurt again.
- learning to live a life free from lingering pain.

## EXAMPLE OF FORGIVENESS AND HEALING

We try to live as loving, caring people, and yet there are times we do or don't do things that hurt others, even our spouses. When we are hurting or hurt others we can stuff or heal the hurt. If one member has a hurt, both spouses hurt. Hurts that are stuffed never go away. We must learn to turn to one another and say, "I'm hurting or I have a hurt." The other needs only to respond, "Tell me where you are hurting." Try never to go to bed without asking this of each other so that you can truly sleep in peace. While one tells the hurt, the other listens, then asks questions (not to justify but to understand), and then finally responds, "I'm sorry; will you forgive me?" The other replies, "Yes, I forgive you." Sometimes you may be tempted to reply, "You don't have to say that." But our hearts need to hear the words, such as, "I love you," "I forgive you," "I understand," and to hear them often. After we are forgiven, we need to act like we are forgiven and be lovingly responsive.

## **COMMUNION STATEMENT**

The Sacrament of Holy Communion will be celebrated Sunday afternoon at the close of the weekend. We as Lutherans believe the Sacrament gives us the opportunity to draw together with our spouses and with one another in a close fellowship around Christ's Body and Blood. We further believe the Sacrament is Christ present for you in and with the bread and wine. Its purpose is to forgive sin, to renew life and to assure you of salvation. It is offered to those who are baptized, repentant of their sins and wrongs, who trust in Jesus Christ as their Savior and Lord, and who believe in the Presence of Christ in the Sacrament.

If you do not wish to commune, we will certainly honor your desire. However, we invite you to share in the warmth and closeness as we gather around Christ's altar.

THERE'S A NEW WORLD SOMEWHERE

There's a new world somewhere, they call the promised land;  
And I'll be there someday if you will hold my hand;  
I still need you there beside me no matter what I do,  
For I know I'll never find another you.

There is always someone for each of us, they say,  
And you'll be my someone forever and a day;  
I could search the whole world over until my life is through,  
And I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey, so stay by my side.  
If I walk through a storm, you'll be my guide, be my guide.  
If they gave me a fortune, my treasure would be small,  
I could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all;  
But if I should lose your love, dear, I don't know what I'd do,  
For I know I'll never find another you.

It's a long, long journey, so stay by our side.  
If we walk through a storm you'll be our guide, be our guide.  
If they gave us a fortune, our treasure would be small,  
We could lose it all tomorrow and never mind at all;  
But if we should lose your love, dears, we don't know what we'd do,  
For we know we'll never find another "US"!