

Half-day Seminar Notes

Suggested Saturday morning schedule:

9:00 – 10:00 am	Session 1 – “Do You Think You’re Ready?”
10:00 – 10:15 am	Break
10:15 – 11:15 am	Session 2 – “Do You Make A Good Couple?”
11:15 – 11:30 am	Break
11:30 – 12:30 pm	Session 3 – “Do You Have A Green Light?”

Session One

DO YOU THINK YOU’RE READY?

Opening question:

How did you as a couple meet and what was your first date like?

A dating or engagement relationship, or ultimately a marriage, is only as healthy as the individuals in it.

- Relational health is vitally connected to individual health. It begins with you.
- That’s why you need to first ask “Would you marry you?” before you pop the “Would you marry me?” question.

“If you try to find intimacy with another person before achieving a sense of identity on your own, all your relationships become an attempt to complete yourself... Most of us tell ourselves, ‘If I find the right person, my life will be complete’... The truth is, the **cause of our emptiness** is not a case of missing persons in our lives, but a **case of incompleteness** in our soul. In order to build healthy relationships, you must be well on your way to becoming whole or complete.” Les and Leslie Parrott, *Relationships 101*, pages 20-21

1. Would You Marry You? (Chapter 1)

Neil Clark Warren and Les Parrott in their excellent book, *Love the Life You Live*, said personal health and wholeness have three hallmarks:

1. A right relationship with God – your purpose for living and the power to change is grounded in God’s unconditional love.
2. A right relationship with others – you sacrificially love others by willingly meeting their needs.
3. A right relationship with yourself – you know who you are and live in congruence with your personality and God-given talents.

Of course Jesus boiled the essence of personal and relational health down to these same three relationships:

*Mark 12:30-31 – “Love the Lord your **God** with all your heart and with all your soul and with all your mind and with all your strength. The second is this: Love your **neighbor** as **yourself**. There is no commandment greater than these.”*

Personal and relational health is vitally connected to the health of our relationships with God, others, and ourselves.

Three readiness considerations:

- **The Vertical Dimension**

Key question: Is your relationship with God healthy?

Key measure: Surrender (Romans 12:1-2)

- **The Horizontal Dimension**

Key question: Is your relationship with others healthy?

Key measure: Sacrifice (Romans 12:9-21)

- **The Personal Dimension**

Key question: Is your relationship with yourself healthy?

Key measure: Stability (Romans 12:3)

1. Is your worth grounded in your value to God (Eph. 2:10; Prov. 23:7a)
2. Are your emotions in check? Do you see signs of balance in your life? (Gal. 5:22-23)
3. Are your thoughts constructive or destructive? Do you process your thoughts through a biblical grid? (2 Cor. 10:5)

Key Idea: Are you growing in Christ? I like to say, “Readiness for marriage isn’t measured by perfection, but by direction.” Is your life intentionally moving in the right direction?

2. Are you ALL Dated Out? (Chapter 2)

If you get married before you’re done dating, you will be susceptible to past and future dating dangers. You can be burned by an old flame or fall into a new fling. If you’re not done with dating, you’re not ready to get engaged or married.

- Are you ready to make a “one-man” or “one-woman” commitment?

Genesis 29:17b-18 - Rachel was lovely in form, and beautiful. ¹⁸Jacob was in love with Rachel and said, “I’ll work for you seven years in return for your younger daughter Rachel.”

- Are you ready to give up the possibility of a relationship with someone you might meet in the future?

*1 Tim. 3:2 - But there are preconditions: A leader must be well-thought-of, **committed to his wife**, cool and collected, accessible, and hospitable. He must know what he’s talking about. (MSG)*

- When you see a woman you are physically or emotionally attracted to, what do you do? Do you entertain the thought of being with her, or do you react as if your heart is already taken?

Key Idea: Marriage is meant to be a one-man-one-woman “till death do us part” unconditional commitment – for life! If you are a person who still enjoys the whole meeting...flirting... dating scene, you may need to examine your motives and reasons for dating. You could be trapped in the two most common dating dangers: First, the view that dating is all about me. To gratify my desires. To fulfill my wants. My needs. Without a dating focus shift from *me* to *you*, you can fall into a second dating danger – endless spousal shopping. Stuck in the belief that somewhere out there is a perfect person who will satisfy *you*, you keep on shopping. If that’s what you want, you’re not ready to pop the question. Anyone who is truly done dating is ready to make a selfless commitment to one person for life.

3. How Does “Till Death Do Us Part” Sound? (Chapter 3)

Marriage is intended to be a lifelong unconditional commitment. This covenant commitment is clearly defined in a wedding ceremony when the couple looks lovingly into each other’s eyes and promises to be faithful for life. *For better or worse, for richer or poorer, in sickness and in health, to love and to cherish, till death do us part.* Now that’s about as serious as commitments come!

- Are you ready to make a lifelong commitment? No matter what?
- How do you feel about Jesus’ view on how long a marriage is meant to last?

Matthew 19:3-10 - Some Pharisees came to him to test him. They asked, “Is it lawful for a man to divorce his wife for any and every reason?”⁴ “Haven’t you read,” he replied, “that at the beginning the Creator ‘made them male and female,’⁵ and said, ‘For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and the two will become one flesh’?⁶ So they are no longer two, but one. Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”

- How do you feel about the disciples’ reply?

Matthew 19:10 - The disciples said to him, “If this is the situation between a husband and wife, it is better not to marry.”

- Are you ready to make...
 1. An **exclusive** commitment? *To one person...*
 2. A **lifelong** commitment? *For the rest of your life...*
 3. A **covenant** commitment? *For better or worse...till death do us part*

Key Idea: Healthy marriages are built on a lifelong unconditional commitment. Until you are ready to make that kind of commitment, you are not ready to get married.

Key question: What does a “for better, for worse” commitment mean to you?

Session Two DO YOU MAKE A GOOD COUPLE?

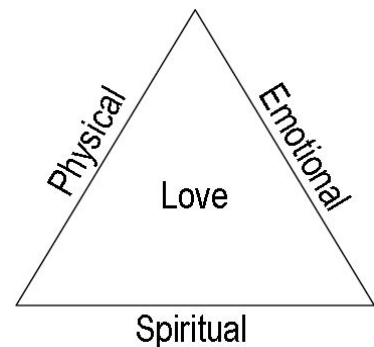
The idea of a couple marrying because they complement each other isn't an insignificant sidelight. It's an essential consideration and legitimate reason for marriage. In fact, it's at the heart of why God created a man and woman to enjoy life together.

*The LORD God said, "It is not good for the man to be alone.
I will make a helper **suitable** for him."*

Genesis 2:18

1. Are you “In Love”? (Chapter 5)

Falling in love is not enough to give you a happy marriage. If you're going to have a lasting marriage, you need three kinds of love – the love of physical attraction, the love of emotional connection, and the love of sacrificial action. Large amounts of eros, phileo, and agape will yield large amounts of relational love.



- Do you see signs of **physical** attraction?

Lover - How beautiful you are, my darling! Oh, how beautiful! Your eyes are doves.

Beloved - How handsome you are, my lover! Oh, how charming!

Song of Solomon 1:15-16a

- Do you see signs of **emotional** connection?

My lover is mine and I am his.

Song of Solomon 2:16a

- Do you see signs of **sacrificial** action?

He has taken me to the banquet hall, and his banner over me is love.

Song of Solomon 2:4

Key Idea: Love is more than a feeling. It includes physical attraction, emotional connection, and sacrificial action.

Key Question: How do you think physical attraction, emotional connection, and sacrificial action, will play out if you were to marry?

2. Do You Communicate Effectively? (Chapter 6)

Healthy communication is absolutely essential for a great marriage. Without it couples are probably headed toward a train wreck. In fact, poor communication is one of the most common causes for divorce. That's why it's so important for you to carefully consider how healthy your communication is as a couple.

When it comes to your communication style, are you more like...

- An Arrogant **Boss**?

A fool finds no pleasure in understanding but delights in airing his own opinions.
Proverbs 18:2

- A Professional **Counselor**?

Woe to those who are wise in their own eyes and clever in their own sight.
Isaiah 5:21

- An Indispensable **Teammate**?

Therefore each of you must put off falsehood and speak truthfully to his neighbor, for we are all members of one body.
Ephesians 4:25

Key Idea: Healthy communication is a two-way street. When two people can openly share their hearts with each other in constructive, not destructive, ways, relationships thrive.

Key Question: Do you share with each other the last 10%? (The stuff that needs to be said, but often isn't due to fear).

3. Are You On the Same Page? (Chapter 7)

Call them whatever you want—core values, key qualities, personal characteristics, likes and dislikes—they are essential factors in relational harmony and success. You need compatibility. It doesn't mean you have to be the same, or even agree about everything, but if you're going to spend the rest of your life with each other, you need to share the same basic values and motivations. The bottom line of what is important to both of you needs to align.

Can two walk together, unless they are agreed?
Amos 3:3

Ways We Match Up		Ways We're Mismatched	

Key Idea: Values alignment is vital for unity. You need to be on the same page. It's not that you have to have uniformity, but you do need unity.

Key Question: Have you taken time to talk about and list areas where you are alike and different? Make sure to include your feelings and desires for matters such as: financial goals, children, holidays and vacations, fitness, career choices, material possessions, time with friends, extended families, etc.

4. Are You Spiritually Connected? (Chapter 8)

The spiritual dimension in marriage is indispensable. It has the power to change lives and homes, especially when both husband and wife share similar spiritual beliefs and practices. It's not by mistake that when Paul wrote about selecting a prospective spouse, the one thing he chose to focus on was the spiritual connection.

2 Corinthians 6:14 - Do not be yoked together with unbelievers. For what do righteousness and wickedness have in common? Or what fellowship can light have with darkness?

Three essential considerations:

1. Spiritual beliefs

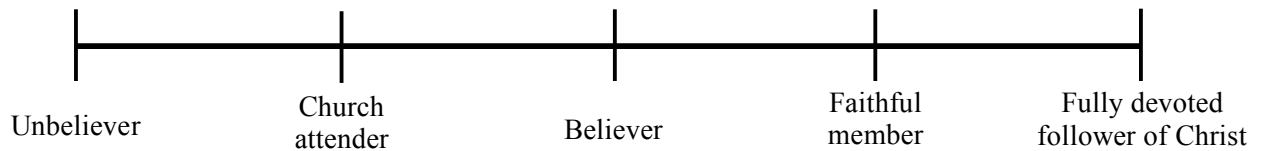
Ephesians 4:4-6a - There is one body and one Spirit--just as you were called to one hope when you were called-- one Lord, one faith, one baptism; one God and Father of all.

2. Spiritual practices

Romans 14:22 - So whatever you believe about these things keep between yourself and God. Blessed is the man who does not condemn himself by what he approves.

3. Spiritual commitments

Romans 12:1 - Therefore, I urge you, brothers, in view of God's mercy, to offer your bodies as living sacrifices, holy and pleasing to God--this is your spiritual act of worship.



Key Idea: Your spiritual beliefs are foundational for a healthy marriage. If you want the best of what marriage can offer, make sure that God is at the center of your lives and relationship.

Key Question: What importance does God have in your life now and in the future?

5. Are You Better Together Than Apart? (Chapter 9)

God created a man and woman to complement each other—in body, soul, and spirit. Man needed “a helper.” Together they can *do more* and *be more* than they will if they live life alone. Their differences and similarities will mold them each into better people.

Eccles. 4:9 - Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their work.

Ask yourself:

1. Are we **compatible**?
2. Do we **complement** each other?
3. Do we **challenge** each other?

Key Idea: Trying to cram a square peg into a round hole is relationally a dumb thing to do. Make sure you’re compatible. It will be obvious if you are or aren’t.

Key Question: How do your differences and similarities make you better together than you would be apart?

Key Diagrams: The following charts represent the four common personality types as seen through the eyes of Marriage and Family Counselor Dr. John Trent. This simplified guide can be a springboard for discussing possible strengths and challenges connected to each personality type. Circle all the character traits in the chart that could describe you.

Lion

Takes charge	Bold
Determined	Purposeful
Assertive	Decision maker
Firm	Leader
Enterprising	Goal driven
Competitive	Self-reliant
Enjoys challenges	Gets things done
“Let’s do it now!”	
Double the number circled _____	

Beaver

Deliberate	Discerning
Controlled	Detailed
Reserved	Analytical
Predictable	Inquisitive
Practical	Precise
Orderly	Persistent
Factual	Scheduled
“How was it done in the past?”	
Double the number circled _____	

Otter

Takes risks	Fun-loving
Visionary	Likes variety
Motivator	Enjoys change
Energetic	Creative
Very verbal	Group oriented
Promoter	Mixes easily
Avoids details	Optimistic
“Trust me! It’ll work out!”	
Double the number circled _____	

Retriever

Loyal	Adaptable
Non-demanding	Sympathetic
Even keel	Thoughtful
Avoids conflict	Nurturing
Enjoys routine	Patient
Dislikes change	Tolerant
Deep relationships	Good listener
“Let’s keep things the way they are.”	
Double the number circled _____	

- **Lion** – Usually task oriented. A born leader; can be domineering; driven to get things done; likes challenges and variety; expressive; jumps in quickly before thinking things through; a doer.
- **Beaver** – Usually task oriented. Likes to cross all the T’s and dot all the eyes; organized; methodical; slow and decisive; likes things organized.
- **Otter** – Usually people oriented. Likes to have fun; can be messy, unorganized, and random; expressive; needs deadlines.
- **Golden Retriever** – Loves people. Loyal and supportive; soft heart; likes consistency and direction; a strong team player.

Session Three
DO YOU THINK YOU'RE READY?

1. Do You Believe It's God's Will? (Chapter 11)

The best way to know God's *unrevealed will* (should you get married?) is found in doing God's *revealed will*. If you seek to do God's *revealed will*, your desires will be in line with His desires. At that point, you can act on your desires with full assurance that they are in line with God's will.

Delight yourself in the LORD and he will give you the desires of your heart.
Psalm 37:4

Three key factors in knowing God's will:

1. You must first delight yourself in the Lord.

- Make sure you are **Saved**

*The Lord is not slack concerning His promise, as some count slackness, but is longsuffering toward us, not **willing** that any should perish but that all should come to repentance.* *2 Peter 3:9*

- Make sure you are **Spirit-filled**

*Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what **the Lord's will** is. Do not get drunk on wine, which leads to debauchery. Instead, be filled with the Spirit.* *Ephesians 5:17-18*

- Make sure you are **Sanctified**

*It is **God's will** that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable.*

1 Thessalonians 4:3-4

2. God will put His desires in your heart.

- Your thinking will be in line with His thinking.
- Your will will be in line with His will.

3. You can act on what your heart desires.

Key Idea: Your desires are in line with God's desires when you live in line with God, His Word, and His will.

Key Question: How committed are you to doing God's will (including His teaching about sexual purity)?

3. Are Your Friends and Family Supportive? (Chapter 12)

Wise people, in contrast to fools, seek out others' input and counsel. They know they don't have all the answers or have everything all together. They know they have blind spots and need the valuable input that others can give.

Consider this...

- **You need others' input.**

As iron sharpens iron, so one man sharpens another.

Proverbs 27:17

The heartfelt counsel of a friend is as sweet as perfume and incense.

Proverbs 27:9 (NLT)

Listen, my son, to your father's instruction and do not forsake your mother's teaching.

Proverbs 1:8

- **You need to carefully weigh others' input before you act.**

A simple man believes anything, but a prudent man gives thought to his steps.

Proverbs 14:15

In the final analysis, you need to take all the counsel you receive and carefully sift it. Weigh it. Does it have merit? You need to ask yourself questions like:

- € Are they giving me a green, yellow, or red flag?
- € Do I agree with what others are saying and seeing?
- € Is there merit to what is being said?
- € What does this mean?

Key Idea: All of us have blind spots. What others see may confirm or change what you think or see. It's wise to seek out others' counsel.

Key Question: Who have you turned to so far to help you sort out the engagement decision? Do you agree with their input?

4. What Does Your Heart Say? (Chapter 10)

Peace must be the final authority in your heart. If your heart feels heavy, tense, confused, uneasy, or pressured, you need to find out what's wrong. Peace is like a relational green flag that tells you to keep on moving forward—full speed ahead. A lack of peace should be like a yellow caution flag. For safety's sake, you need to slow down and proceed with caution. A red flag could be telling you to pull over and stop before you put yourself in harm's way.

*Let the peace of Christ **rule** in your hearts, since as members of one body you were called to peace. And be thankful.*

Colossians 3:15

- When Paul used the word **rule** he had in mind an umpire in the athletic games of his day.

- To “rule” was to *act as the umpire* with the final authority.
- An umpire made the final decision when there was a dispute on the field of play.

Can you honestly say you feel peace in your heart about getting engaged?

Are there any yellow or red flags that are causing you to not have peace?

Key Idea: Peace can be a subjective indicator or objective reality. If your heart is saying no, you need to track down why.

Key Question: Is my heart at peace with popping the question?

Key Distinction: Last minute butterflies may be nothing more than the normal feelings most people have on their wedding day. Anxiety, sweaty palms, and even nausea are very common “last minute” subjective feelings. But when a lack of peace has been building over time and is directly connected to other objective factors, those feelings should not be ignored.

5. Is Now the Right Time or NOT? (Chapter 4)

They say timing is everything. That certainly applies to getting engaged. Since marriage has huge lifetime ramifications, you need to be sure you’re ready and that it’s the right time, before you start setting dates, planning the wedding, and sending out invitations.

Four important considerations:

1. Your personal maturity.

May your fountain be blessed, and may you rejoice in the wife of your youth.

Proverbs 5:18

2. Your financial capability.

If anyone does not provide for his relatives, and especially for his immediate family, he has denied the faith and is worse than an unbeliever.

1 Timothy 5:8

3. Your time limitations.

When a man takes a new wife, he is not to go out with the army or be given any business or work duties. He gets one year off simply to be at home making his wife happy. (MSG)

Deuteronomy 24:5

4. Your sexual control.

But if they cannot control themselves, they should marry, for it is better to marry than to burn with passion.

1 Corinthians 7:9

Key Idea: There is a time for every event under heaven. Even a time to get engaged. The above areas must be carefully considered when determining if the timing is right.

Key Question: Is now the right time for you to get engaged, or should you give it more time, or move on?