



Know Myself
Know My Spouse
Know God's Family
Glorify God

What is 'FIRST YEAR'?

Marriage Building begins with the laying of a biblical foundation for marriage at Marriage Prep Weekend (MPW).¹Building on this foundation, we continue the work of Marriage Building through our **First Year** program. It is a 6-months plus 6-months program where our couples continue to meet¹ for 12 months post-wedding (in group of 5 couples). In the first 6 months, Marriage Builders will meet with their assigned 4 couples altogether for 5 sessions to go through a set material over a meal or tea. In the next 6 months, the 4 couples will continue to meet on their own to stay in touch and encourage one another. The couples take turn to organise and the host. A simple guide will be given to organising couple to include ice-breaker, sharing and praying components. Marriage Builders may join the couples in these subsequent meetings.



First Year's GOALS & COMPONENTS

First Year aims primarily to provide a structured platform to connect couples to one another, and to an older couple to provide marital encouragement and support. The First Year sessions are relaxed, informal and only 60-90minutes long. They are intentionally not content heavy so that couples have ample interpersonal ministry time. There isn't a 'point and purpose' to nail! A successful session is one which has fostered a safe space where couples can be real and vulnerable as married believers who still sin, and looking to God for wisdom and grace. There are 5 components built into each session with specific goals:

1. Pre-Session Reflection - To cultivate good self-reflection in spouses
2. In-Session Ice-breaker - To build friendship between couples
3. In-Session Couple Time - To cultivate godly habits between spouses
4. In-Session Group Time - To build godly partnership between couples
5. Post-Session Homework - To put things learnt into practice

TOPICS

The 5 sessions revolve around the theme of Knowing - Knowing Myself, My Spouse and My Peers. We don't pursue self-understanding and intimate knowledge of our spouse just for a good marriage's sake. Rather we want to grow in knowing ourself, our spouse and our peers in order to love and serve them well in Christ. Various topics touched on include: self-awareness, conflict style, impact of our family of origin, differences in marriage, love language, marriage as sanctification, church community, confession & forgiveness, role of CG, sex & intimacy. The materials are not meant to provide in depth reflection on these topics. The aim is to nurture a safe gospel-shaped space for these topics to be raised. If a specific topic is of immediate relevance to a couple and they would like to pursue further, Marriage Builders along with Kenneth will share and recommend resources accordingly.

TIPS

- Tip 1: Don't rush into making conclusions about your spouse or your peers. Take time to know them.
- Tip 2: Don't be pedantic with covering the content. Use the content to cultivate gospel-friendships.
- Tip 3: Make prayer second nature. Small prayers, short prayers, long prayers - just pray.

¹MPW is a pre-requisite for First Year given the biblical foundations that MPW lays.

²First Year's small group may not be in the same as the couples' MPW small group.

Session One: Know Myself. Know My Spouse.

Introduction

In this first session, we'll begin the journey of growing in *self-awareness*, and we also want to germinate the habit of *studying our spouse*. Our heart loves, our will chooses, our mind justifies. And out of the abundance of the heart, the mouth speaks (Mt. 12:34). Because our heart is the control centre of our being, growing to know our own heart will help us love well in marriage. And we want to be growing in knowing our spouse intimately, not just to enjoy the relationship God has given, but also to encourage, support and serve our spouse well.

BEFORE SESSION ONE

Set aside 20 minutes before Session 1 to complete this exercise on your own. Do not discuss with your spouse. Do not try to guess the answer your spouse wants you to say! Answer the questions honestly.

Q1. Answer for yourself and your spouse.

	Me	My Spouse	(D.A.C)
What food best describe your personality?			
What gesture / touch best says 'I love you' to you?			
What is your most important personal value?			
What is your idea of a perfect day?			
What do you worry most about your future?			
Who is your role model in life?			
What would you do if money is not an issue?			

Q2. Indicate your needs with a circle (O), and your spouse's needs with a triangle (Δ).

	Not Important		→	V. Important		(D.A.C)
Commitment	1	2	3	4	5	
Companionship	1	2	3	4	5	
Respect	1	2	3	4	5	
Personal Space	1	2	3	4	5	
Affection	1	2	3	4	5	
Security	1	2	3	4	5	
Admiration	1	2	3	4	5	

Q3. Name three circumstances that trigger a bad mood for you e.g. uncleared trash, interruption in conversations. For each trigger, what's going on e.g. 'I've so little time left to spare with life being so busy'

Your Circumstances	What's going on in you?	Spouse's Circumstances	(D.A.C)

Q4. Indicate who handled these areas, and who do you expect to handle them now?

	My dad	My mom	What's your expectation in this area?	(D.A.C)
Bills & Finances				
Tidying & Cleaning				
Laundry				
Making the bed				
Planning holidays				
Cooking				
Making decisions				

DURING SESSION ONE

Ice-breaker [15min]

Take turn in your group to share the story of how you and your spouse met, dated, proposed and got married! What attracted you to each other? And what do you expect from this First Year Program? Say a short prayer for each couple to thank God for their union and ask God to protect and flourish their marriage for His glory.

Couple Time [15min]

Go through your homework Questions 1-4 as a couple. For each of the sub-question, put 'D' if your spouse Disagree with you, 'A' if your spouse Agree, and 'C' if it's Contentious! Share with your spouse one new thing that you learned about yourself, and one thing you learned about your spouse. Choose an area that you would like to grow in, and ask your spouse to pray for you. Close your couple time in prayer for each other.

I learn that I'm...

--

I learn that you're...

--

Could you pray for me...

--

Group Time [30min]

Activity 1. In our marriages, *love and humility* is the key posture we want to grow in. After expounding the gospel, Paul exhorted the believers to 'walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, *with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love*'. Read Les & Leslie Parrott's post '[Why Self-Awareness Leads to Better Love](http://www.symbis.com/blog/why-self-awareness-leads-to-better-love/)' (www.symbis.com/blog/why-self-awareness-leads-to-better-love/). Consider together how self-awareness can help us live out Ephesians 4:2 in our marriages. Reflect on and share with the group how your current lack of self-awareness plays out in your marriage.

Increasing self-awareness leads to me...

- Cultivate empathy
- Slow reactivity
- Allow for rapid course correction
- Help to know your own needs

My current lack of self-awareness means...

Activity 2. God saved us into a church family, with Christ as our head. He designed that we love and serve, and grow in community - not on our own. As we await Christ's return, God gave us one another to walk side by side to support and encourage one another spiritually. Close Session One with a sharing of prayer points (concerning your marriage) with one another. Commit to praying for another till Session Two!

Names of Couple

Their Prayer Points

Names of Couple	Their Prayer Points

AFTER SESSION ONE

Assignment. Write a note or send a text to your spouse, expressing your thankfulness for how you've noticed he/she has responded in 'humility, gentleness, patience, and bearing with' your idiosyncrasy.

Journal & Prayer. This week when you get triggered or irritated, take note what is it that bothered you and why it is so. Journal the episode and what do you learn about yourself upon reflection.

Memory Verse. Eph.4:1-2. 'In humility & gentleness, I'll seek to know myself & my spouse, to love him/her well.'

Session Two:

Know in order to Rejoice & Build-up, Not Change.

Introduction

We'll continue to learn more about *ourselves* and *our spouses*. More specifically, we'll learn how we are different! In our marriages, we want to grow in rejoicing in differences. Our sinful tendency is to not embrace differences. Instead we seek to change our spouse to be like us, into our own image! With God's help, we want to grow in being quick to spot and call ourselves out whenever we do that. As we get to know our spouses and discover how differently God made them, we want to respond to these differences with appreciation and grace.

BEFORE SESSION TWO

Set aside 20 minutes before Session 2 to complete this exercise on your own. Do not discuss with your spouse.

Q1. Answer for yourself and your spouse.

	Me	Spouse
Introvert or Extrovert?		
Tidy or Organised Mess?		
Early bird or Night Owl?		
Quick or Slow to Decide?		
Talk it Out or Think about it?		
Frugal or Generous?		
Live to Eat or Eat to Live?		
Deep or Brainless Movies?		
Steak or Tze-Char? Indoor or Outdoor?		
Planner or Free-spirit (spontaneous)?		
Half-Empty or Half-Full?		
What do you do when you are upset?		
What 'family of origin 'norms/quirks' do you hold?		
How do you unwind/relax/rest?		
How would you like to resolve conflict?		

Q2. Tick (✓) the statement that best describe you.

<input type="checkbox"/> A. I like to receive notes of affirmation from you. <input type="checkbox"/> E. I like it when you hug me.	<p>Gary Chapman's Five Love Languages suggests that different people with different personalities give and receive love in different ways:</p> <p>A: Words of Affirmation B: Quality Time C: Receiving Gifts D: Acts of Service E: Physical Touch</p> <p>Your Total</p> <table border="1" style="margin-left: auto; margin-right: auto; border-collapse: collapse;"> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">A</td><td style="width: 40px;"></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">B</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">C</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">D</td><td></td></tr> <tr><td style="padding: 2px;">E</td><td></td></tr> </table>	A		B		C		D		E	
A											
B											
C											
D											
E											
<input type="checkbox"/> B. I enjoy extended trips with someone who is special to me. <input type="checkbox"/> D. I like knowing loved ones cared enough to help me with daily tasks.											
<input type="checkbox"/> C. I like it when you give me gifts. <input type="checkbox"/> B. I like taking long walks with you.											
<input type="checkbox"/> D. I feel loved when you do things to help me. <input type="checkbox"/> C. I feel loved when you shop for little gifts for me.											
<input type="checkbox"/> C. I like the thoughtful gifts given to me. <input type="checkbox"/> A. I like the kind words you say to me.											
<input type="checkbox"/> B. I like to go places with you. <input type="checkbox"/> E. I like to hold hands with you.											
<input type="checkbox"/> D. I feel loved when my loved ones willingly does the task I requested. <input type="checkbox"/> E. I feel loved when my loved ones gives me a firm shoulder hug.											
<input type="checkbox"/> B. I feel close when we are talking or doing something. <input type="checkbox"/> E. I feel closer to you when you touch me.											
<input type="checkbox"/> A. I value your praise and try to avoid your criticism. <input type="checkbox"/> C. Several inexpensive gifts mean more to me than one expensive one.											
<input type="checkbox"/> A. I like you to compliment my achievements. <input type="checkbox"/> D. I know you love me when you do things for me that you don't enjoy.											

DURING SESSION TWO

Ice-breaker [15min]

Every single marriage has differences. It can't be any other way when marriage is bringing 2 very different people together; different background, ways of seeing and doing things, upbringing etc. And these differences show up everywhere any time; when you're having fun, cooking, driving, chatting etc. Take turn to share the similarities and differences between you and your spouse. How has the differences played out in your marriage in small and big and funny ways?!

Couple Time [15min]

Compare your answers and reflect on how similar and different the two of you are. (i) Identify the differences that you both rejoice in & differences that often become points of conflict (ii) Consider how you can complement and supplement your spouse, knowing how God has wired him/her differently from you.

I learn that I'm...	
I learn that you're...	
I'm rejoice that...	
Can you pray for me...	

Group Time [30min]

Activity 1 (Men- Women) 'They are no longer two but one flesh. Therefore what God has joined together, let no one separate' (Mark 10:8-9). The sovereign God who knitted each spouse together in each mother's womb, and who is acquainted with each personality and idiosyncrasy - is the One who joins couples together in marriage! Instead of rejoicing in our differences, we often dislike and seek to eliminate differences. Confess to the group (bluntly!):

I don't like that God made _____ to be...	
I'd prefer, I wish, if only...	

Activity 2. Differences in marriage can often lead couples to end up in win-lose situations in marriage. It need not be. Help another couple to consider how their differences can complement in their marriage. Consider how the spouse can support and build up the other in view of their differences. Close Session Two converting these ideas into prayer points. Commit to praying for another till Session Four!

Names of Couple	Their Differences	How they can complement/support
<i>Danny & Helen</i>	<i>thinks aloud/think then speaks slow/quick to warm up in morning</i>	<i>appreciate articulated ideas + thoughtfulness 'go as fast as slowest person' + 'I'm not mad'</i>

AFTER SESSION TWO

Assignment. Identify a difference between you and your spouse. Write a note or send a text to your spouse, expressing your thankfulness for how you complement each other.

Journal & Prayer. This week, when you catch yourself thinking 'I wish, why can't he/she, if only', pause and consider how the differences can be opportunity for you to learn something about yourself i.e. 'I am not like that, because I'm like this!'. Journal your reflection and findings.

Memory Verse. Mark 10:8-9. 'It's God who put us 2 individuals together, knowing full well our differences.'

Session Three: Know in order to Change Myself, Not My Spouse.

Introduction

In this session, we want to grow in seeing our marriages as *laboratories* to practice and cultivate love and godliness. God's good purpose for each spouse is that we be conformed into the image of His Son (Romans 8:28-29). And if you're married, your marriage is a key laboratory where God is doing His sanctification work in you. He uses differences between you and your spouse as a tool to refine and sanctify you, to shape our character and growing our maturity. Differences in marriage highlight you to yourself, so that *you can change* and grow!

BEFORE SESSION THREE

Set aside 20 minutes before Session 3 to complete this exercise on your own. Do not discuss with your spouse. Do not try to guess the answer your spouse wants you to say! Answer the questions honestly.

Q1. Every spouse has his/her own unspoken '10 Commandments'. List yours here. When a conflict arise in your marriage this week, pause and consider which of your commandments your spouse broke!

1 st Commandment (For Bathroom!) Thou Shall Not...	2 nd Commandment (For Dinner Table!) Thou Shall...	3 rd Commandment (For Time-Keeping!) Thou Shall Not...	4 th Commandment (For Finances!) Thou Shall...	5 th Commandment (For Vacation!) Thou...
6 th Commandment (For Church!) Thou...	7 th Commandment (For Mornings!) Thou...	8 th Commandment (For _____) Thou...	9 th Commandment (For _____) Thou...	10 th Commandment (For _____) Thou...

Q2. List five of your spouse's unspoken Ten Commandment you are aware of.

1 st Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall Not...	2 nd Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall...	3 rd Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall Not...	4 th Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall...	5 th Commandment (For _____) Thou...
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Q3. Our personal growth and sanctification is not an individualistic endeavour. Change is community project. God works through our church family to support and encourage us through our process of change. But this flows strongly against our culture that says 'You clean up your own mess'. How much does your life currently allow you to develop relationships that are deep enough to help you change and grow?

Tick (✓) the statement(s) that best describe you.

- I'm usually so busy with life that my relationships are distant and casual.
- I typically avoid close relationships as tiring, scary and messy.
- I can manage a formal commitment to church activities but no strong connection with people.
- I usually immerse into friendships that are activity.
- My relationships are one-way, ministry-driven where I minister to others, not other way round.
- I grew up keeping my Christian life private, independent, 'just me and God' approach.
- I lean towards putting theology as a replacement for relationship i.e. I make knowing God as a life of study, rather than the pursuit of God and His people.

DURING SESSION THREE

Ice-breaker [15min]

Take turn to share with the group some of the 'House Rules' you grew up with!

Couple Time [15min]

Take turn to go through your 10 Commandments. Perhaps begin with something like: 'Dear, I realized that I have been laying down these personal rules on you. Sometimes I go so far as to demand that you obey them or I'll punish you for it. I basically replaced God on His throne! I'm sorry. I want to change. Thank you for bearing with me in the meantime!'

With the help of your spouse, rank your Top 3 Most Precious Commandments.

1 st Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall Not...	2 nd Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall...	3 rd Commandment (For _____) Thou Shall Not...
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I get irritated when...

I learn that I value dearly...

I'm sorry that when I don't get it...

Group Time [30min]

Activity 1. Identifying & putting to death the different ways we've dethrone God in our marriage is a spirit-filled community project, not a solo flight. Read together the testimony (insert) of a couple's experience of community. How do you find the experience described? Attractive, Intimidating, idealistic? Share with the group your tendencies as identified in Q3.

At The Crossing Church, our primary support community is our CG. Our CG members are those we do life on life with weekly. What has been your experience of sharing marital struggles with your CG? How has this First Year group functioned differently to encourage you? Moving forward, how can we healthily keep both?

Activity 2. Share your couple time findings with the group. Take turn for each spouse to share his/her #1 Commandment. What lies are you believing e.g. With 'Thou Shall Not Be Late', I believe that my life is ruined and my image tainted when I run late. Take note of what your buddies share. Commit to praying for your buddies till Session 4!

Names of Spouse	Prayer Points

AFTER SESSION THREE

Assignment. When you feel irritated that one of your Commandments has been violated by your spouse, slow down and consider what are you instinctively reacting to, and why. Text your buddy to share the episode.

Journaling & Prayer. In the midst of marital struggle, it's common to think 'Did I marry the right person?' But if we are serious about pursuing spiritual growth through our marriages, we must block off the question. It's God who joined us together once our vows are made! Write out a prayer pleading for God's help to see God's good sanctifying work for you through the marriage. Confess where you've been resistant and even bitter over marital struggles you faced. Pray for patience and strength as you learn to see marital struggles as a gift.

Memory Verse. Rom.8:28. 'God uses *all things*, including my marriage for my sanctification, my good. And God's is to conform my spouse into His image, not my image!'

Session Four: Know in order to Love, Not Hurt.

Introduction

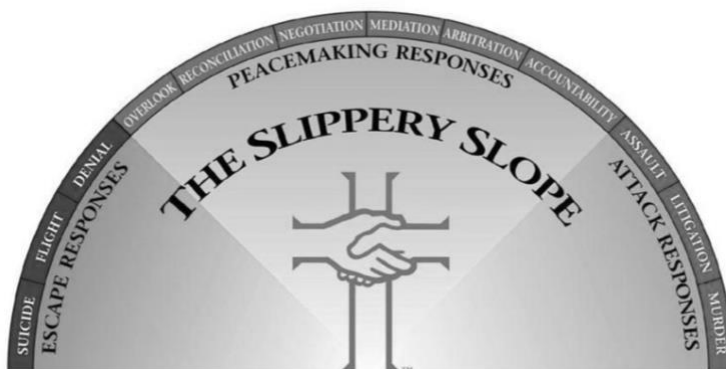
The fourth session continues to lead us to grow in knowing ourselves and knowing our spouse by focusing on each other's family of origin and our adopted conflict style. In competitive sports, we study our opponents in order to defeat them. In war, we analyse our enemies in order to destroy them. Certainly not so in marriage! We study our spouses to know them intimately *not in order to hurt, but to love and serve them*. Humility leads us to take ownership of our destructive style, and fuels a desire to grow in being quick to confess and pray (1John1:8-9).

BEFORE SESSION FOUR

Set aside 20 minutes before Session 2 to complete this exercise on your own. Do not discuss with your spouse. Do not try to guess the answer your spouse wants you to say! Answer the questions honestly.

Q1. Identifying Your Conflict Style

The slippery slope of conflict illustrates several key dynamics of conflict and helps us to evaluate our personal inclinations and habits for responding to conflict. Our good desires can evolve into controlling demands or idols that can lead us to judge others and then avoid or punish them until we get what we want. This progression often starts with minor differences, but before we know it we're sliding down a slippery slope of conflict that can drop off in two directions. What's your tendency?



(From Ken Sande's 'The Peacemaker')

Q2. Indicate with (✓) the boxes that describes you.

I tend to like...	I tend to fear...	I tend to feel...	For MBs
<input type="checkbox"/> Attention & Approval	<input type="checkbox"/> Rejection & not being recognized or affirmed	<input type="checkbox"/> Anxious & needy	
<input type="checkbox"/> To be right & In control	<input type="checkbox"/> Being seen as wrong, being dependent	<input type="checkbox"/> Angry	
<input type="checkbox"/> Independence & Time alone	<input type="checkbox"/> The dependence and neediness of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Cold & distant	
<input type="checkbox"/> Being right in the eyes of others	<input type="checkbox"/> Being wrong, guilty, or condemned	<input type="checkbox"/> Aggressive & argumentative	
<input type="checkbox"/> Pleasure (my determine)	<input type="checkbox"/> Others interfering with my personal pleasure	<input type="checkbox"/> Controlling, demanding & dissatisfied	
<input type="checkbox"/> A platform for one's own opinion	<input type="checkbox"/> Being told what to think, say and do	<input type="checkbox"/> Opinionated & domineering	

Q3. Consider your family growing up:

How did your family manage conflict & resolve problems?	
How did you normally communicate?	
What was dinner conversation like?	
Were there taboo topics - things you've known you can't share?	
What was the mood at home - relaxing or walking on eggshells?	
Have you witnessed forgiveness sought or granted?	
Was your family loud or quiet?	
Were people motivated positively or with threats and guilt?	
Which values of your family have become your values?	
Which struggles of your family have become your struggles?	

DURING SESSION FOUR

Ice-breaker [15min]

Every couple fights! And most of the time, over the smallest thing! It's true! Take turn to share with the group what you and your spouse typically fight over. Or share an episode of conflict you remember and can laugh about now! Say a short prayer for each couple, thanking God for the gospel of forgiveness they've come to know. Ask God to guard them against pride and fill them with the joy of receiving God's grace.

Group Time [30min]

Activity 1. "You cannot have a sinner married to another sinner in a fallen world and not have confession and forgiveness as a normal part of that relationship and have that relationship work. It won't work" (Paul D. Tripp). What do you think of Tripp's statement? (c.f. 1John1:8-9) Why is it important for spouses to always be mindful of our identity in Christ, as forgiven sinners?

Activity 2. In MPW, we talked about some unloving ways we relate to our spouse. This includes harsh start-ups, emotional flooding, and hint dropping. Four particular destructive ways are Criticism, Contempt, Defensiveness, and Stonewalling. Watch '[The Four Horsemen](https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o30Ps-8is)' video together to revise these four ways (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=1o30Ps-8is>). Revise MPW Session 5 with Horsemen Antidotes given!

Because of the gospel, we now live in the culture of grace. We don't have to hide our marital sins from one another. We're in company of sinners, who have been crucified with Christ, forgiven. Take turn to share with the group how do you tend to sin against your spouse in your marriage (i.e. which Horseman). Ask to be prayed for with regard to what you've shared. Commit to praying for one another till Session Five!

Names of Couple

Their Prayer Points

Names of Couple	Their Prayer Points

Couple Time [15min]

Go through your homework Questions 1-3 as a couple. Be gentle. And don't be a hypocrite! (Matthew 7:3-5) Treat each other as fellow sinners who have been forgiven by God (Colossians 3:13). You are opening up yourself and entrusting to each other some very personal insight about yourself, including your weaknesses. Remember that we seek to know our spouses intimately in order to love, and not hurt them.

I learn that I'm...

I learn that you're...

I'm sorry & I confess that...

Would you forgive me for...

Could you pray for me...

AFTER SESSION FOUR

Assignment. We often assume we can accurately read our spouse's mind, 'I knew exactly what you're thinking!' This is unhealthy and often causes conflicts. This week's assignment helps challenge your assumptions. This week, when you sense that your spouse is upset with you, pause and say, 'Ok. Let me read your mind. Tell me how accurate am I' e.g. 'I think you're upset that I didn't clear the trash last night'. Your spouse is then to give you a score out of 10 for how accurate you are.

Journal & Prayer. This week, reflect and journal - how comfortable you are at confessing sin, asking and giving forgiveness in your marriage? How accepting are you of your spouse confronting you with sin or weakness?

Memory Verse. 1Jn1:8-9 'With our indwelling sin, gospel & forgiveness must be front & centre in our marriage.'

Session Five: Know in order to Serve

Introduction

What do people think about but don't talk about in marriage? Sex! Apostle Paul did not shy away from the topic. He boldly (in essence) said - 'Now concerning sex'. These sessions have been about growing in *knowing yourself and knowing your spouse*. In this session on Sex & Intimacy, we want to grow in knowing ourselves and our spouse in this area, and the purpose is so that we can love and serve them well in Christ. Not only are we wired differently sexually, we also come into the marriage having been shaped differently by the world's view of sex.

BEFORE SESSION FIVE

Set aside 10 minutes before Session 5 to complete this exercise on your own. Do not discuss with your spouse.

Q1. Indicate your answers with a circle (O), and your spouse's with a triangle (Δ):

1. When I think about my sex life, I feel...

- a. It's good enough but I don't have time to worry about it too much
- b. I'm not happy with the sex in my relationship but I can't express that
- c. Overwhelmed and stressed with the difficulties we are facing
- d. I don't have sex very often and that works for both of us most of the time
- e. I have a satisfying sex life that works for me and my partner

2. When I think about ways of boosting the intimacy in our relationship...

- a. I don't think it's possible – our sex life is what it is
- b. I don't know how to talk to my partner about it
- c. I'd appreciate some tips and techniques but I'm not sure where to start
- d. I try to talk to my partner about what I'd like but sometimes I get a bit embarrassed
- e. We enjoy coming up with new things to try

3. When it comes to sex, my partner...

- a. Isn't interested and won't talk to me about it
- b. Gets annoyed and has sex reluctantly
- c. Is too busy and there are too many pressures on our time to make it a priority
- d. Is usually happy to have sex
- e. Makes time for us to be intimate

4. When we have sex, I feel...

- a. Bored and disconnected from my partner
- b. It's more for my partner than for me
- c. Under pressure to perform and tend to just go through the motions
- d. It's enjoyable but I want to try new things
- e. Emotionally connected to my partner and we have fun

5. The biggest obstacle to our sex life is...

- a. I just can't be bothered and it's very low priority
- b. My partner makes excuses a lot of the time that she/he's not in the mood
- c. We have hardly any privacy in our home
- d. We'd like to be closer, but life worries and pressures get in the way
- e. We usually make an effort and create the space to be together

6. When it comes to broaching the subject of sex in our relationship, I...

- a. Change the subject and clam up
- b. Get irritated that my partner is bothering me with this topic again!
- c. Want to work things out, but we just end up arguing
- d. Feel that we try to make it a priority to talk to improve things, but get distracted by other worries
- e. Feel we talk a lot and it keeps us close and connected

7. When it comes to expressing other ways of being close & intimate with each other, my partner and I...

- a. Don't really do anything
- b. Have mechanical sex and that's enough
- c. Tell each other that we love each other
- d. Try to get into the habit of having regular hugs
- e. Tend to hold hands, talk, have a laugh and cuddle often

DURING SESSION FIVE

Ice-breaker

Take turn to name the most romantic movie you've ever seen- *The Notebook, Sleepless in Seattle, Titanic, or any others!* What makes this movie romantic for you? How romantic do you think you're on scale 1-10?!

Couple Time

Go through your homework together. You may also pick from these questions to talk further: What do I do that makes you feel loved and valued? What makes you feel distant and disconnected from me? When we are sexually intimate, what brings you pleasure? Is there anything we do that is not pleasurable or makes you feel uncomfortable? How can I serve you better in the bedroom and out of bedroom?

Group Time

Activity 1. Ironically in our highly sexualised world, talking about sex still seems uncomfortable, awkward, embarrassing, certainly private! Christians know that sex is God's idea. He made us sexual being, male and female, to be united in one flesh in marriage to be fruitful and multiply (Genesis 2:24-28). We want to *cultivate a safe and healthy space* where Christian couples know that we can talk about sex positively, and can certainly share our struggles. We'll practice doing that in our group today!

Below is a true and false questionnaire adopted from Les & Leslie Parrott's SYMBIS. Don't worry about the right answer. First complete it on your own. Then take turn in your group to read out the right answer from the sheet provided by your Marriage Builders.

T	F	The key to sexual fulfilment is simply to do what comes naturally. In other words, let your instincts be your guide.
T	F	Sexual dysfunction and disorder is rare among couples.
T	F	Most normal married couples have sexual intercourse about 2 to 3 times a week.
T	F	Because men typically have stronger sex drive than women, it is primarily the husband's job to initiate sex - not the wife's.
T	F	When it comes down to it, men are almost always ready and willing to have sex, and a good wife should always be available for it.
T	F	The best way for woman to have an orgasm is during intercourse.
T	F	While men have just one orgasm during sex, a woman must have multiple orgasms to be fulfilled sexually.
T	F	A man's erection is a signal that he is going to need intercourse ejaculation.
T	F	The normal position for sexual intercourse is with the man on top.
T	F	To reach ultimate sexual fulfilment, a couple should strive for simultaneous orgasms, where both the husband and wife climax at the same time.
T	F	In general, the larger the man's penis, the more pleasurable sex is for the woman.

Activity 2 (Men-Women). 'Sexual intercourse is not the only expression of intimacy. We can enjoy talking, cuddling, holding hands, kissing etc even if these don't lead to intercourse. Sex is a subset of intimacy.' Share with fellow husbands and fellow wives how they can be praying for you with regard to Sex & Intimacy in your marriage.

AFTER SESSION FIVE

Assignment. Look up these Christian books online so you be aware of what is available out there for you to pursue this topic further: (1) Closer: A Realistic Book About Intimacy for Christian Marriages by Adrian & Celia Reynolds (2) The Best Sex for Life by Patricia Weerakoon (3) One Flesh by Amelia & Greg Clarke

Journaling & Prayer. Spend some time reflecting on your sexuality, articulating to yourself your view on sex. Ask God to help you see sex and intimacy as good gifts to be enjoyed in marriage. Ask God to reveal any unhealthy behaviour or life-pattern concerning your sexuality, and that He may grant you humility and strength to repent. Commit to God the difficulties you have been facing and ask for His provision of help.

Memory Verse. Gen2:24-25. 'Given that Sex & Intimacy is created good b God for marriage, we want to cultivate a safe space where we can talk and pray about sex freely, positively, and biblically.'