Knowing Me, Knowing You SESSION THREE





We thank you Father for the gift of our families, and for the love we have received from them.

Give us a grateful and gentle heart as we explore how our formation impacts our relationship.

Help us to grow in intimacy and unity as we learn how to love each other better. We ask this through Jesus, our Lord, Amen.



Reflect: your family home

- · Use the work space to draw a rough floor plan of your family home.
- Where in your family home would you most likely find each family member?
- What are your main memories of:
 - your mother
 - your father
 - your parents together
- What positive messages from your family of origin do you bring to your relationship?



What was the most significant marital role model during your growing up?

Who was the most significant father figure?

Who was the most significant mother figure?

Keep these relationships in mind as you examine your formation for marriage in the inventories.





Activity: **FORMATION**

- 1. Thinking about your most significant marital role model and most significant parent figures, make a note of what you perceived to be true. Whether you know the true situation or whether you judge the percieved behaviour to be good or bad is not important. The goal is to free you from influences of unconscious beliefs. For example, if you perceived your mother as overly submissive to your father or dominated by him, you may put undue emphasis on getting your opinion respected. Conversely, if as a boy, your mother seemed to control your father, you may guard your independence fiercely and have trouble being open to the influence of the women in your life.
- If this is your second marriage, please note what effect your formation had on your behaviour in your first marriage and what you took away from that experience before reflecting on its impact in your present relationship.

Roles & responsibility

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	entral figure, or the pur family of origin Father	ne more dominant n? (tick) Both/equal	
What impact di mother?	i d it have on your a	attitude to your	
respect protective anger other	compassion dismissive love	pity disgust confusion	
What impact di father?	id it have on your a	attitude to your	
•	compassion dismissive love	attitude to your pity disgust confusion	
father? respect protective anger other	compassion dismissive love	pity disgust confusion at you know you	

Please indicate who took the lead or	made most of the decisions in the
following areas of responsibility by m	narking 'M' for Mother, 'F' for 'Father
or 'B' for 'Both', 'O' for other (e.g. gr	andparent, aunt etc).
Hospitality	Cleaning / Laundry
Money / Budgeting / Tax	Yard work / Gardening
returns	Family health care / Sickness
Gift giving	Grocery shopping
Organising family activities	Clothes shopping for children
Vacation planning	Children's activities and
Career decisions	sports
Car maintenance	Children's education
Home decorating	Faith and religious practice

Meal planning / Cooking
For the way these responsibilities were handled Do you find yourself taking a lead or wanting to make decisions in the areas that your parent of the same sex did? Yes No. If yes, in what ways?
In which areas (if any) do you tend to act in the opposite way to the behaviour of your parent of the same sex?
In which areas do you tend to be, or anticipate being, un-involved and expect your fiancé to take responsibility?
Which areas do you consider the most important for sharing responsibility with your future spouse?

SECTION 2:

Was she respectful towards him?

you bring into your relationship.

Did she look to him to father her, like she was an helpless child? Underline any attitude above (good, bad, or neutral) that you think

General attitudes and behaviour patterns in marriage

What was your father's attitude toward his wife	Investment in the marriage
(or women in general?) Tick all that apply.	Your Parents: In terms of how much time, energy,
Was she his boss?	money and attention given, rank in order (1-7) the
Was she like a warden who kept him from having fun?	following:
Was he afraid to get her angry?	•
Was she mysterious, impossible to understand?	Mother Father
Was he always trying to please her?	Marriage relationship
Was she a helpless maiden to be protected?	Career/work
Was she just like 'one of the guys'?	Parenting
Did he patronise or 'father' her?	Church/community/'cause'
Was he protective towards her?	Hobby/sport
Was he disrespectful, rude or violent?	Home making/maintenance
Did he see her as a trusted friend?	Friends/social
Did he criticise or tease her?	Who do you believe overall gave more love in your
Did he look to her to take care of him, like a mother?	parent's relationship?
Was she his 'one true love'?	
Did he see her as irresponsible and untrustworthy?	Your Relationship: In terms of how much time, energy,
Did he see her as controlling or restricting him?	money and attention given, rank in order (1-8) the
Did he see her as beautiful but stupid or unreliable?	following:
	•
What was your mother's attitude toward her husband	Me Fiancé
(or men in general)?	Marriage
Was he the boss?	Career/work
Did she fear him?	Parenting (if applicable)
Was he like a big kid who broke her rules?	Church/community/'cause'
Was he charming but irrelevant?	Hobby/sport
Did she look to him to provide for her or protect her?	Home making/maintenance
Did she 'mother' him or nag him?	Friends/social
Did she criticise, tease or put him down?	Wedding
Could he do nothing right in her eyes?	Who do you believe overall gives more love in
Was he her best friend?	your relationship?
Did she just tolerate him?	☐ Me ☐ Fiancé ☐ Both/equal
Was he her 'one true love'?	
Was she always trying to please him?	
Did she see him as irresponsible and untrustworthy?	
Did she see him as controlling her or restricting her?	



SECTION 3:

Expressions of love

How did your mother express her love for her husband? If she was a single mother, how did she show her love for the men in her life, her father, brothers, sons? Did she try to spare him the hassles of family life? Did she take care of the home, bills or yard for him? Did she offer words of admiration or praise? Did she dress to please him? Did she cook his favourite foods? Did she offer touch, hugs, back rubs? Did she flirt with him, smile or kiss him affectionately? Was she compassionate and nurturing toward him? Did she give him gifts or surprises? Did she encourage him to pursue his interests and develop his abilities?	WHO INITIATED ROMANCE? Answer with: Yes/No or Mother/Father/Both Who primarily initiated romance? Who initiated touch or other expressions of affection? Who planned for dates, gave gifts or set a special atmosphere to create romance? If you had to guess, who would you say primarily initiated lovemaking? If you had to guess, do you think either would have had to ask for sex? In what ways were physical, outward demonstrations of affection present in your parents' relationship? Hugs Sitting together Kisses Touching Hand-holding Other
How did your father show his love for his wife? If he was a single father, how did he demonstrate his love for the women in his life: his mother, sisters, daughters? Did he take on the hardest or most unpleasant physical work? Did he like to provide financially? Did he like to give gifts, surprises, or great vacations? Did he like to solve her problems? Did he encourage her in her own interests and abilities? Did he flatter or affirm her? Was he a good listener? Did he flirt with her? Did he give her affection? Your Relationship: Go over your lists again and underline how you express love for your fiancé, and how you expect your fiancé to demonstrate their love for you.	How did your mother react when he touched her: responded warmly rejected his touch ginored him stiffened encouraged his touch never saw him touch her How comfortable was your father being hugged or touched by her: affectionate and responsive ginored it distant and aloof tolerated it with good humour became angry and resentful never saw her touch him How emotionally open were they with each other? (tick for yes) Do you think they allowed their emotions to show? Mother Father Did they talk about their emotions, hopes, dreams, disappointments? Mother Father Do you think they felt safe to share their inner life with each other? Mother Father Did they keep secrets from each other? Mother Father Did they have a separate life, hobbies or interests from which the other was excluded? Mother Father Was either secretive about how and with whom they spent their time apart? Mother Father Your relationship: which of these patterns of romance, affection and openness have you adopted? Which have you rejected?

SECTION 4: Managing conflict What was your father's predominant approach to conflict? Withdraw Confront What was your mother's dominant pattern in conflict? Withdraw Confront During conflict in your relationship, do you tend to... Withdraw or Confront Were either of your parents afraid to start an argument? Yes, Mother Yes, Father If you percieved one parent was afraid to risk the other's disapproval or anger, you may have seen one parent as too weak or the other as overbearing. What effect did that have on you? If you ticked both 'Mother' and 'Father': it may be that you never actually witnessed any hurt or disagreement between your parents. What effect do you think that has had on the way you behave in your relationship? If your parents argued or hurt each other's emotions, did they also model how to reconcile? Yes No How did they fight? Answer with: Yes/No or Mother/Father Were there cold wars or silent treatments? Did they argue loudly? Did they argue often? Who do you think said "I'm sorry" first, most often? Did they stew over things? Did they make up quickly? Was either physically violent or aggressive? Was either emotionally abusive? Were they affectionate when they made up? Did either of them cry when they fought? Did either have angry outbursts or temper tantrums? Did they leave hurts unresolved or have touchy subjects? Was either controlling or manipulative? **IN YOUR RELATIONSHIP** Go over the list again. Underline any behaviour that you have ever used in your relationship.

Based on your own present behaviour, do you think that you:

accepted or rejected ...what was modelled for you?



Marital Breakdown:

DIVORCE IS A TRAGEDY FOR ANY FAMILY

Its impact on children lasts for decades and can undermine their confidence in their adult relationships. Even if your own parents did not divorce, the divorce

LVC	This your own parents did not divorce, the divorce
of c	lose family or friends can still affect you. Tick any
stat	ement that is true, or partly true, for you.
	I am worried about my ability to form a lasting
_	marriage
	I'm not sure that I deserve a happy marriage
Ħ	I don't believe that it's possible for marriage to last
ш	a lifetime in this day and age
	It's unrealistic to expect a couple to be happy with
ш	each other for their whole lives
	Being happy is more important than staying in a
	dissatisfying marriage even if there are children
	involved
	I am bitter about my parents' divorce
Ħ	I am afraid of conflict in case it causes a divorce
Ħ	I am worried that my fiancé may be phsycially
Ш	violent towards me
	I am concerned that I might lose control and be
ш	violent towards my fiancé
	I am nervous about having children because I
Ш	don't want them to go through what I did if we
	diverse

I sometimes wonder if one day my future spouse

might walk out on me

SECTION 5:

Attitudes to fidelity and sex

-	you believe that either of your parents had many/any sexual partners		
	ore marriage? Yes		
Do y	ou believe that your parents were sexually faithful to each		
othe	er throughout their marriage?		
	Yes No		
-	ou believe that either parent used pornography either vidually or together?		
	Yes No		
Wer	e you exposed to pornography as a child?		
	Yes No		
Fror	m whom (or what) did you learn about sex?		
Wha	at messages about fidelity and sex did you take away from your		
	eriences? Tick all that apply.		
	Being sexually exclusive to one's spouse is an important part of		
	marriage		
	Infidelity is okay as long as both parties agree		
=	Sexual fidelity for one's entire life is unrealistic		
	Infidelity in marriage is wrong and can harm the marriage		
	If a spouse is unfaithful, the marriage is over, it's unforgivable		
	Having other sexual partners adds interest to a couple's sex life		
	Virginity is a great gift to a marriage and the other spouse		
	Waiting until marriage for sex is unrealistic		
	It's okay to start having sex together as long as it's a committed		
	relationship		
	Sexual abstinence is unhealthy and can damage a person psychologically		
	It's better to have some sexual experience before you get married		
=	Sexual abstinece before marriage helps one develop self-control		
=	Premarital sex is expected of men		
=	Premarital sex is normal and healthy		
	Sex is a special and sacred act for marriage		
	It's foolish to marry before you've had sex together and proven you		
	are 'compatible'		
	Having sex before marriage makes the wedding night less special		
	Pornography can help spice up a couple's sex life		
=	Masturbation is harmless and normal		
=	Pornography is damaging to a person and their relationships		
	Pornography undermines the meaning of sex as an expression of		
	committed love		
=	Good wives/husbands tolerate the other's sexual infidelity		
Ш	Pornography use is a form of infidelity		

NB: The topic of sex and fidelity will be explored more deeply in future sessions.

SECTION 6:

Decision Making

What decision making strategies did you perceive your parents using? Tick all that apply. **Delegation:** Did they have separate roles or separate areas of decision making? Compromise: Did they meet in the middle? Strongest emotion: Did they go with whoever felt most strongly about the issue? Win/Lose: Did they take turns to have their way? Values Based: Did they make decisions based on their values? **Dominance:** Did one or the other dominate the decision making process? Avoidance: Did they procrastinate until the decision was made for them or the issue passed? Confidence: Were decisions made purposely and confidently? Deferrence: Did they defer to a third party (e.g. a strong-willed parent or a demanding child)? Indecision: Did they labour excessively over their Analytical: Did they do extensive research and analysis, way up the pros and cons?

Underline any pattern that you have you repeated or reacted against.



SECTION 7:

Relationship with your parents/Experience of being parented

MOTHER/MOTHER FIGURE	FATHER/FATHER FIGURE
How did you regard your mother (or significant mother figure)? Tick all that apply. I felt accepted by her I felt close to her and could trust her I respected her She was proud of me She gave me sufficient time and attention She was affectionate with me She comforted me when I needed it She affirmed me and encouraged me She protected me She challenged me to grow How open were you to her influence At age 18 Not at all Somewhat A lot Now Not at all Somewhat A lot How did you behave to get her attention?	How did you regard your father (or significant father figure)? Tick all that apply. I felt accepted by him I felt close to him and could trust him I respected him He was proud of me He gave me sufficient time and attention He was affectionate with me He comforted me when I needed it He affirmed me and encouraged me He protected me He challenged me to grow How open were you to his influence At age 18 Not at all Somewhat A lot Now Not at all Somewhat A lot
What did you do to try to please her or to get your way?	What did you do to try to please him or to get your way?
What expressions of affection were normal for you?	What expressions of affection were normal for you?
Did you share confidences or keep secrets together? (If yes, about what?)	Did you share confidences or keep secrets together? (If yes, about what?)
In what ways did you feel inadequately loved by your mother?	In what ways did you feel inadequately loved by your father?

SECTION 8:

Childhood Wounds

No parent is perfect and almost all children grow up with an emotional

wound of some kind from their childhood. In addition, addictions (such as alcohol, gambling, drugs, medications, pornography etc.) and mental disorders reduce a person's ability to parent effectively. Chronic physical illness, premature death or abandonment can also have a long lasting impact. Facing our wounds can help us to process them. In what ways were you wounded as a child (tick all that apply): My parent was unreliable I was embarrassed by my parent My home life was very unpredictable I had to grow up before I was ready I did not get sufficient love and nurturing I had difficulty forming friendships	relationship?
I was afraid of my parent I was hurt physically by a parent I had to look after myself a lot Sometimes I didn't get good nutrition, hygiene or medical care We often couldn't afford basic things I had difficulty keeping up at school I witnessed my parent hurting themself I witnessed my parents hurt each other I witnessed my sibling(s) being hurt I was hurt physically/sexually as a child My parent failed to protect me from others I had to protect my parent from the other parent I had to protect my siblings My parent's friends and/or partners hurt me My parent abandoned me My parent was just not avaliable to me I feel guilty about how I reacted to my parent I resent my upbringing and feel cheated I felt ignored or irrelevant to my parent I was very lonely as a child	What potentially problematic aspects of your relationship with either parent or your siblings do you bring to your relationship?
SIBLING RIVALRY/ABUSE	
One of the most common places of bullying is the family where jealousy, teasing, and exclusion by siblings or cousins can cause lasting harm. I was excluded by my siblings I was sexually/physically abused by my siblings I was a bully towards one of my siblings I felt controlled by one of my siblings	
Underline any experience above that you think continues to affect you negatively (e.g. makes you reactive, over-sensitive, fearful, chronically angry or afraid, unable to cope etc).	

RELEVANCE FOR YOUR MARRIAGE:

What positive aspects of your relationship with either parent or your siblings do you bring to your

Discuss: **share your answers**

1.	Affirm your fiancé: What do I most appreciate about you today?
2.	Discuss your notes with your fiancé and record any important insights: a) How are your mothers similar? How are they different? For the man: How is your future wife similar or different from your mother?
	b) How are your fathers similar? How are they different? For the woman: How is your future husband similar or different from your father?
	c) What possible difficulties may arise from the way you have adopted or rejected the modelling of your mother or father?
	adopted or rejected the modelling of your mother or father?
	adopted or rejected the modelling of your mother or father?
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	adopted or rejected the modelling of your mother or father?

Think about it

- 1. Are you choosing to marry someone like your father or mother, or just the opposite?
- 2. What do you see as normal in husband/wife relationships? That will be your comfort zone unless you decide differently.
- 3. Is your comfort zone in the best interest of the marriage?
- 4. What did you look to your father or mother to provide? What did you count on them for?
- 5. How does your relationship with your mother or father set your expectations for your fiancé? Are you determined to fill a need that was unmet there?
- 6. Do you have any hot buttons or defences that come from your relationship with your mother or father?



Concept: **FORMATION**

OUR FAMILY OF ORIGIN is the major influence in the formation of our expectations for married life. Typically, we either adopt it without a lot of thought or compulsively reject it.

By learning to be intentional about the formation we wish to adopt and that which we wish to reject, we can take active control of our relationship.



Reflect: FORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES

We are constantly being formed by our experiences and interactions, sometimes for better and, at times, for worse. Other important sources of our formation include:

- 1. Siblings and other family members.
- 2. Romantic relationships these may include an ex-spouse or previous cohabitation/dating partner.
- 3. Traumatic encounters with strangers such as being a victim, witness or perpetrator of violence or abuse.
- 4. Culture attitudes about sex, sexuality, men and women, relationships, living standards, and social interaction are passed on to you through work colleagues, church, mass media, friends and family.



Torgiveness



Concept: NAME & TAME IT

Problems in formation can affect a marriage in three ways:

- Incompatible Expectations
- Compatible but Suboptimal Patterns
- Emotional Injuries

Once you identify and 'name' the problem formation, you can take steps to 'tame' it

Time Dut TO ASK 'WHY?'



Tool: time out to ask: why?

When you are reacting strongly or feeling irritated with your fiancé...

TAKE A TIME OUT AND ASK: WHY?

Why am I reacting this way? Where is this coming from?



At Home: **areas of tension**

- 1. Have you noticed any areas of tension between you that seem to revolve around different concepts of what is normal or where your expectations are different?
- 2. Take 'Time Out to Ask: Why?' Can you trace these back to what was normal or expected in your family of origin?



Symptoms of emotional injuries

Unresolved hurts can lead you to overreact Whenever anyone does or says something that sparks the memory of a past injury, you bring it back up and connect it to the new offence. If you find yourself thinking "he always" or "she never", it is often an indicator of unresolved hurt in that relationship.

The following common patterns of reacting to personal hurt or injury are typically experienced sequentially and in deepening levels of intensity until forgiveness is granted.

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You pull away from the one who hurt you

Assigning motive:

You make judgments about why they hurt you, like "He doesn't care about me."

Growing the wound:

You play the hurt over and over in your mind allowing it to intensify and loom larger and larger

Burying the hurt:

You stuff it down in order to move on but in the end you just bury it alive

☐ Becoming angry:

You become irritable, easily offended and start to overreact

☐ Taking it out on others:

You criticise, lash out or vent anger at anyone who crosses you in the least way.



Concept: FORGIVENESS

FORGIVENESS BRINGS FREEDOM

Freedom to love and to become a sincere gift of self.

Refusing to forgive allows our emotional injuries to hold us captive.



THE 'FREE WILL' TO LOVE IS AN ESSENTIAL **INGREDIENT FOR MARRIAGE**

Sometimes, despite good will on both sides, a marriage is destined to be sabotaged. 'Marriage Saboteurs' are those traits that take away a person's free will to love, such as substance abuse, gambling and sex addiction, eating disorders, emotional disorders, violence and psychological pathologies. These are all conditions that drive behaviour and interfere with a person's ability to love freely in their marriage.

Anything that compulsively interferes with your free will is an impediment and makes authentic marriage impossible. Serious disorders need to be dealt with professionally and completely resolved before a man and a woman can give themselves freely and totally to each other in marriage. It is a mistake to believe that things will be different when you get married; left unattended, these conditions tend to get worse with time, not better.

Sometimes it is easier to recognise problem behaviours in others than it is in ourselves. Still, many engaged couples are afraid to raise an issue for fear of causing hurt or embarrassment. The pressure of the approaching wedding and the expectations of family and friends make it very difficult for a couple to postpone the wedding in order to sort things out. Yet if they have serious issues they owe it to themselves to do so.

It is a greater act of love to press the pause button now than to hit eject later on!



Activity: skeletons in the closet

All engaged couples have concerns for their future. From meddling families and possessive friends, to doubts about fidelity or undisclosed secrets, there is almost always a 'skeleton in the closet'; something that needs to discussed.

1. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Use the list below to identify any areas of concern that apply to either you or your fiance that you want to explore.
Addictions or pre-addictions (i.e. patterns of behaviour that may lead to a full addiction) including drugs, alcohol, gambling, work, compulsive spending, gaming, pornography and sex.
Eating disorders and mental illness including annorexia, obsessive compulsive disorders, depression and others.
☐ Violence, uncontrolled anger, verbal abuse.
Medical or reproductive history including previous pregnancies, abortions, sterilisations, sperm/egg donations, adopted children, infertility.
Family medical history including disease risk factors, genetic disorders and mental illness.
Personal or family history including crime, divorce, abandonment, addictions, estrangement and difficult personalities.
Past relationships, sexual partners, sexually transmitted
infections, sexual infidelities, pornography use, gender confusion, paid-sex.
Financial and material assets or debts, spending habits, financial commitments.
Interfering family or friends, feeling powerless in these relationships.
Offensive personal habits such as personal hygiene, body odour, manners, swearing, laziness, tardiness.
Things that compete with you for your fiance's attention such as hobbies, sports, fitness or beauty routines, work, committees.
Gossip and disrespect for your privacy or confidentiality.
Cruelty, habits of disrepect or superiority towards others.
Contempt towards you, your family or others important to you.
Hostility or biogtry towards your religion, fear of religious extremism.
Patterns of control, irresponsibility or domination. Other
Choose one to discuss now.
Area of Concern:

EXPLORE WITH LIFE

LA	FLORE WITH LILIE.						
List: What are your emotions about the issue? (tick all							
tha	t apply)						
	sad		desperate				
	heartbroken		jealous				
	depressed		envious				
	abandoned		resentful				
	defeated		suspicious				
	hopeless		trivialised				
	hurt		neglected				
	disappointed		afraid				
	unworthy		anxious				
	insignificant		guilty				
	unappreciated		overwhelmed				
	helpless		embarassed				
	inadequate		belittled				
	invisible		ashamed				
	lonely		confused				
	excluded		burdened				
	empty		disempowered				
	alienated		inadequate				
	tired		panicky				
	apathetic		rejected				
	isolated		unworthy				
	angry		insecure				
	controlled		others				
	restricted		worried				
	furious						
	irritated						
	annoyed						
Ш	frustrated	Ш					
	repulsed						
I feel (identify the strongest one or two emotions)							
wh	en (name the issue)						
Embellish Embellish with Intensity, Images and Impact (physical sensations, perception, reaction)							

3. MAKE A RESPECTFUL R	{E(JUESI	I
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3. MAKE A RESPECTFUL REQUEST How would you like your fiancé to respond?				
At Home: write and share				
Starting the conversation about concerns that you have for your future together takes a great deal of courage. It's important to be clear, compassionate and non-judgemental.				
WRITE a love letter to your fiancé using the following format:				
1. Appreciation - express your love and admiration for your fiancé.				
 Describe your concern and your emotions about it. Remember to use 'I sentencing' and use one or more of these Sentence Starters to raise the topic before using your notes from the L.I.F.E. reflection to flesh out your answer. 				
 I really love you and I am concerned about I feel deep pain when I see you struggling with 				
I know I am struggling with and I am				
concerned that it will impact our relationship by • I have great hope and ambition for our relationship but I am				
worried about • I am looking forward to the day when our relationship will				
be free of				
I am worried that you are burdened byI am concerned that may become a bigger				
problem for us in the future and I want				
 So that we can flourish as a couple, I would like to see us address 				
In order to ensure that our relationship stays vibrant, I think it would be belief it is us.				
it would be helpful if weOne thing from my past about which I am embarrassed but				
would like to tell you is I know you don't mean it, but when you I feel				
3. Make a respectful request for how you'd like to proceed.				
SHARE Before you talk with your fiancé				
Unclutter with a hug. Breathe deeply and get in touch with each other. Ask God to be present with you during this time.				
Speaker - Share with your fiancé your concern.				
Listener - Give your full attention and concentrate on what your fiancé is trying to say in love. Try to avoid becoming defensive and instead focus on understanding his/her concerns. If you need time to process what is said before responding, ask for it, but make sure that you do come back to your fiancé with				

a response.