

Knowing Me, Knowing You

SESSION THREE



Prayer

*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?



Reflect: FAMILY OF ORIGIN

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.

FORMATION Inventory



Activity: FORMATION

- 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 perceived 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.

Please indicate who took the lead or made most of the decisions in the following areas of responsibility by marking 'M' for Mother, 'F' for 'Father' or 'B' for 'Both', 'O' for other (e.g. grandparent, aunt etc).

- | | |
|---------------------------------------|--|
| Hospitality | Cleaning / Laundry |
| Money / Budgeting / Tax returns | Yard work / Gardening |
| Gift giving | Family health care / Sickness |
| Organising family activities | Grocery shopping |
| Vacation planning | Clothes shopping for children |
| Career decisions | Children's activities and 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?

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In which areas (if any) do you tend to act in the **opposite** way to the behaviour of your parent of the same sex?

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In which areas do you tend to be, or anticipate being, un-involved and expect your fiancé to take responsibility?

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Which areas do you consider the most important for sharing responsibility with your future spouse?

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SECTION 1:

Roles & responsibility

Who was the central figure, or the more dominant presence, in your family of origin? (tick)

- Mother Father Both/equal

What impact did it have on your attitude to your mother?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> respect | <input type="checkbox"/> compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protective | <input type="checkbox"/> dismissive | <input type="checkbox"/> disgust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> love | <input type="checkbox"/> confusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other | | |

What impact did it have on your attitude to your father?

- | | | |
|--------------------------------------|-------------------------------------|------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> respect | <input type="checkbox"/> compassion | <input type="checkbox"/> pity |
| <input type="checkbox"/> protective | <input type="checkbox"/> dismissive | <input type="checkbox"/> disgust |
| <input type="checkbox"/> anger | <input type="checkbox"/> love | <input type="checkbox"/> confusion |
| <input type="checkbox"/> other | | |

Are there any family dynamics that you know you would not want repeated in your own marriage?

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SECTION 2:

General attitudes and behaviour patterns in marriage

What was your father's attitude toward his wife

(or women in general?) Tick all that apply.

- Was she his boss?
- Was she like a warden who kept him from having fun?
- Was he afraid to get her angry?
- Was she mysterious, impossible to understand?
- Was he always trying to please her?
- Was she a helpless maiden to be protected?
- Was she just like 'one of the guys'?
- Did he patronise or 'father' her?
- Was he protective towards her?
- Was he disrespectful, rude or violent?
- Did he see her as a trusted friend?
- Did he criticise or tease her?
- Did he look to her to take care of him, like a mother?
- Was she his 'one true love'?
- Did he see her as irresponsible and untrustworthy?
- Did he see her as controlling or restricting him?
- Did he see her as beautiful but stupid or unreliable?

What was your mother's attitude toward her husband

(or men in general)?

- Was he the boss?
- Did she fear him?
- Was he like a big kid who broke her rules?
- Was he charming but irrelevant?
- Did she look to him to provide for her or protect her?
- Did she 'mother' him or nag him?
- Did she criticise, tease or put him down?
- Could he do nothing right in her eyes?
- Was he her best friend?
- Did she just tolerate him?
- 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?
- Was she respectful towards him?
- 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 you bring into your relationship.

Investment in the marriage

Your Parents: In terms of how much time, energy, money and attention given, rank in order (1-7) the following:

Mother Father

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|--------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Marriage relationship |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Career/work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parenting |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Church/community/'cause' |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hobby/sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Home making/maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends/social |

Who do you believe overall gave more love in your parent's relationship?

- Mother Father Both/equal

Your Relationship: In terms of how much time, energy, money and attention given, rank in order (1-8) the following:

Me

Fiancé

- | | | |
|--------------------------|--------------------------|---------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Marriage |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Career/work |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Parenting (if applicable) |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Church/community/'cause' |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Hobby/sport |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Home making/maintenance |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Friends/social |
| <input type="checkbox"/> | <input type="checkbox"/> | Wedding |

Who do you believe overall gives more love in your relationship?

- Me Fiancé Both/equal



SECTION 4:

Managing conflict

What was your father's predominant approach to conflict?

Withdraw or Confront

What was your mother's dominant pattern in conflict?

Withdraw or 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 perceived 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?

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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?

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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 of close family or friends can still affect you. Tick any statement 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
 I don't believe that it's possible for marriage to last a lifetime in this day and age
 It's unrealistic to expect a couple to be happy with 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
 I am afraid of conflict in case it causes a divorce
 I am worried that my fiancé may be physically violent towards me
 I am concerned that I might lose control and be violent towards my fiancé
 I am nervous about having children because I don't want them to go through what I did if we divorce
 I sometimes wonder if one day my future spouse might walk out on me

SECTION 5:

Attitudes to fidelity and sex

Do you believe that either of your parents had many/any sexual partners before marriage?

- Yes No

Do you believe that your parents were sexually faithful to each other throughout their marriage?

- Yes No

Do you believe that either parent used pornography either individually or together?

- Yes No

Were you exposed to pornography as a child?

- Yes No

From whom (or what) did you learn about sex?

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What messages about fidelity and sex did you take away from your experiences? 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 abstinence 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
- 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?
- Deference:** Did they defer to a third party (e.g. a strong-willed parent or a demanding child)?
- Indecision:** Did they labour excessively over their decisions?
- 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

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?

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What did you do to try to please her or to get your way?

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What expressions of affection were normal for you?

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Did you share confidences or keep secrets together? (If yes, about what?)

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In what ways did you feel inadequately loved by your mother?

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FATHER/FATHER FIGURE

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
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How did you behave to get his attention?

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What expressions of affection were normal for you?

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Did you share confidences or keep secrets together? (If yes, about what?)

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In what ways did you feel inadequately loved by your father?

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Name it & TAME IT

THE POWER OF Forgiveness



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



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.

- Distancing:**
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.

Time Out 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?



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.



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?

Marriage

SABOTEURS

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 be discussed.

1. ISSUE IDENTIFICATION

Use the list below to identify any areas of concern that apply to either you or your fiancé 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 anorexia, 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 fiancé's attention such as hobbies, sports, fitness or beauty routines, work, committees.
- Gossip and disrespect for your privacy or confidentiality.
- Cruelty, habits of disrespect or superiority towards others.
- Contempt towards you, your family or others important to you.
- Hostility or bigotry towards your religion, fear of religious extremism.
- Patterns of control, irresponsibility or domination.
- Other

Choose one to discuss now.

Area of Concern:

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EXPLORE WITH L.I.F.E.

List: What are your emotions about the issue? (tick all that apply)

- | | |
|--|---------------------------------------|
| <input type="checkbox"/> sad | <input type="checkbox"/> desperate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> heartbroken | <input type="checkbox"/> jealous |
| <input type="checkbox"/> depressed | <input type="checkbox"/> envious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> abandoned | <input type="checkbox"/> resentful |
| <input type="checkbox"/> defeated | <input type="checkbox"/> suspicious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hopeless | <input type="checkbox"/> trivialised |
| <input type="checkbox"/> hurt | <input type="checkbox"/> neglected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> disappointed | <input type="checkbox"/> afraid |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unworthy | <input type="checkbox"/> anxious |
| <input type="checkbox"/> insignificant | <input type="checkbox"/> guilty |
| <input type="checkbox"/> unappreciated | <input type="checkbox"/> overwhelmed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> helpless | <input type="checkbox"/> embarrassed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> inadequate | <input type="checkbox"/> belittled |
| <input type="checkbox"/> invisible | <input type="checkbox"/> ashamed |
| <input type="checkbox"/> lonely | <input type="checkbox"/> confused |
| <input type="checkbox"/> excluded | <input type="checkbox"/> burdened |
| <input type="checkbox"/> empty | <input type="checkbox"/> disempowered |
| <input type="checkbox"/> alienated | <input type="checkbox"/> inadequate |
| <input type="checkbox"/> tired | <input type="checkbox"/> panicky |
| <input type="checkbox"/> apathetic | <input type="checkbox"/> rejected |
| <input type="checkbox"/> isolated | <input type="checkbox"/> unworthy |
| <input type="checkbox"/> angry | <input type="checkbox"/> insecure |
| <input type="checkbox"/> controlled | <input type="checkbox"/> others |
| <input type="checkbox"/> restricted | <input type="checkbox"/> worried |
| <input type="checkbox"/> furious | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> irritated | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> annoyed | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> frustrated | <input type="checkbox"/> |
| <input type="checkbox"/> repulsed | <input type="checkbox"/> |

I feel ... (identify the strongest one or two emotions)

.....

.....

when ... (name the issue)

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.....

.....

Embellish

Embellish with Intensity, Images and Impact (physical sensations, perception, reaction)

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3. MAKE A RESPECTFUL REQUEST

How would you like your fiancé to respond?

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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.
2. 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 by ...
 - I 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 helpful if we ...
 - One 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.