

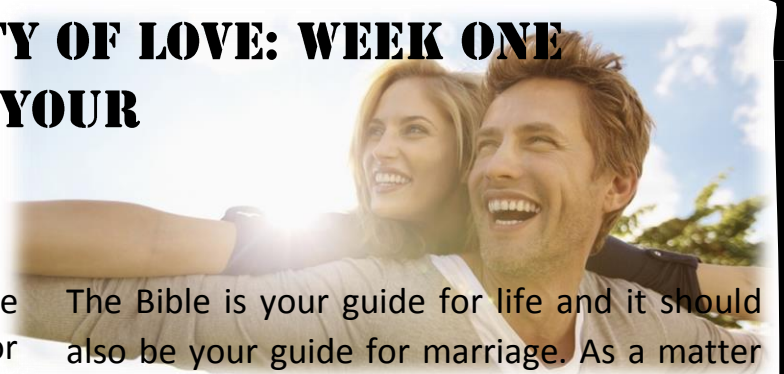
THE
TRINITY
OF LOVE

YOU.
YOUR SPOUSE.
GOD.

HAVING A SUCCESSFUL MARRIAGE TAKES THREE



THE TRINITY OF LOVE: WEEK ONE ASSESSING YOUR MARRIAGE



It sounds a little taboo, doesn't it? A love triangle. Yet that is exactly what you need for your marriage to work. You need to bring a new love into your marriage relationship. No, I don't mean having an illicit affair or bringing somebody else into your bedroom. I mean bringing God into your marriage relationship.

You may say that you already have a personal relationship with the Lord. That's wonderful, but is your relationship with the Lord part of your marriage relationship? That's the key. That's the focus of this marriage study.

Over the next few weeks we will learn what it takes to have the marriage that you've always wanted, that God has always wanted for you, and that your spouse has been longing for.

Dr. H. Norman Wright, Christian counselor and author of over 65 books on the subject writes, *"Your marriage is a lifelong adventure. Every journey has its highs, lows and detours. And every journey is unique. Many experience marriage without giving it much thought, while others constantly take their marriage temperature. Some underrate marriage and only see the problems and what isn't there. Others view marriage with blinders on and are oblivious to issues that eat away at the core of marriage. Which of these descriptions do you connect with?"*

The Bible is your guide for life and it should also be your guide for marriage. As a matter of fact, the scriptures talk a lot about marriage and relationships. The Lord instituted marriage for our benefit. It was His divine plan for our lives. And, like most everything else that He gives to us, we tend to mess it up. However, if we can get back to the plan that God has laid out for us, we can have the marital relationship that we've always dreamed of, in every aspect of our marriage: communication, romance, finances, love and respect, even sex. Many people are surprised that the Bible speaks about sex, but it's an integral part of marriage. All you husbands will be happy that we'll talk about sex too.

We'll be studying many different passages of scripture on marriage from Genesis to the Revelation. We will look at key verses that tell us timeless truths of how to make your marriage work, such as Ephesians 5:33 *"Nevertheless let every one of you in particular so love his wife even as himself; and the wife see that she reverence her husband."*

Remember that one. We will be studying it closely.

Today we're going to take a marriage checkup to see where you stand in your current level of satisfaction with your marriage. Answer honestly. You and your spouse will take it individually.

MARITAL SATISFACTION INVENTORY

Use an X to indicate your level of satisfaction, with 0 meaning no satisfaction, 5 average, and 10 super, fantastic, the best. Use a circle to indicate what you think your spouse's level of satisfaction is at the present time.

1. Our daily involvement with each other

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

2. Our affectionate, romantic interaction

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

3. Our sexual relationship

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

4. The frequency of our sexual contact

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

5. My trust in my spouse

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

6. My spouse's trust in me

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

7. The depth of our communication together

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

8. How well we speak one another's love language

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

9. How we divide chores

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

10. The way we make decisions

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

11. How we manage conflict

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

12. Adjustment to one another's differences

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

13. Amount of free time spent together

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

14. Quality of free time spent together

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

15. Amount of free time spent apart

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

16. Our interaction with friends as a couple

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

The way we support each other in rough times

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

18. How we support each other's careers

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

19. Our spiritual interaction

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

20. Our church involvement

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

21. The level of our financial security

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

22. How we manage money

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

23. My spouse's relationship with my relatives

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

24. My relationship with my spouse's relatives

0 1 2 3 4 5 6 7 8 9 10

SCORING KEY FOR YOUR CURRENT LEVEL OF SATISFACTION

To determine your score, add the numbers you made an X through for each statement. The sum reflects your score. To determine your spouse's score, add the numbers you circled for each statement. The sum reflects your spouse's score.

Your score _____

Your spouse's score _____

192 – 240

Your relationship is doing very well

144–191

Your relationship has some major strengths

121–143

Your relationship reflects both strengths and weaknesses (Any satisfaction level under 6 would benefit from some work)

73 – 120

Definite improvement needed

72 and below

Major assistance needed as soon as possible

Chart your Marital Satisfaction over the Years

To obtain a visual picture of your marital satisfaction, number the years you've been married across the bottom line. For example, if you've been married 6 years, number 1 to 6 with 3 at the halfway mark and 6 at present day. Draw a line below, charting your satisfaction at the time. Your line will start

over the first year on the horizontal axis; your satisfaction at the time will determine where the line starts on the vertical axis (1 – low satisfaction; 10 – high satisfaction). Your line should reveal a continuum from your satisfaction level when you first got married to your satisfaction level now.



Here are some statistics from the Barna group that you might find interesting:

Most Americans get married at some point in their life: just one out of five adults (22%) has never been married.

In addition to finding that four out of every five adults (78%) have been married at least once, the Barna study revealed that an even higher proportion of born again Christians (84%) tie the knot. That eclipses the proportion among people aligned with non-Christian faiths (74%) and among atheists and agnostics (65%).

Among adults who have been married, the study discovered that one-third (33%) have experienced at least one divorce. That means that among all Americans 18 years of age or older, whether they have been married or not, 25% have gone through a marital split.

The study showed that the percentage of adults who have been married and divorced varies from segment to segment. For instance, the groups with the most prolific experience of marriage ending in divorce are downscale adults (39%), Baby Boomers (38%), those aligned with a non-Christian faith (38%), African-Americans (36%), and people who consider themselves to be liberal on social and political matters (37%).

Among the population segments with the lowest likelihood of having been divorced subsequent to marriage are Catholics (28%), evangelicals (26%), upscale adults (22%), Asians (20%) and those who deem themselves to be conservative on social and political matters (28%).

Born again Christians who are not evangelical were indistinguishable from the national average on the matter of divorce: 33% have been married and divorced. The survey did not determine if the divorce occurred before or after the person had become born again. However, previous research by Barna has shown that less than two out of every ten people who accept Christ as their savior do so after their first marriage.

In fact, when evangelicals and non-evangelical born again Christians are combined into an aggregate class of born again adults, their divorce figure is statistically identical to that of non-born again adults: 32% versus 33%, respectively.

67% of second marriages, and 73% of third marriages end in divorce. About 60 percent of all marriages that eventually end in divorce do so within the first 10 years, researchers say.

**Divorce Among Adults Who Have Been Married
(Base: 3792 adults)**

Population Segment	Have Been Divorced	No. of Interviews
All adults	33%	3792
Evangelical Christians	26%	339
Non-evangelical born again Christians	33%	1373
Notional Christians	33%	1488
Associated with non-Christian faith	38%	197
Atheist or agnostic	30%	269
All born again Christians	32%	1712
All non born-again Christians	33%	2080
Protestant	34%	1997
Catholic	28%	875
Upscale	22%	450
Downscale	39%	367
White	32%	2641
African-American	36%	464
Hispanic	31%	458
Asian	20%	128
Conservative	28%	1343
Moderate	33%	1720
Liberal	37%	474

George Barna, who directed the study, noted that Americans have grown comfortable with divorce as a natural part of life.

"There no longer seems to be much of a stigma attached to divorce; it is now seen as an unavoidable rite of passage," the researcher indicated. "Interviews with young adults suggest that they want their initial marriage to last, but are not particularly optimistic about that possibility. There is also evidence that many young people are moving toward embracing the idea of serial marriage, in which a person gets married two or three times, seeking a different partner for each phase of their adult life."

Here are ten things I've learned about marriage and relationships along the way.

1. **Marriage is worth the investment.** Yes, it is and investment. I know that it is not always easy, but it is always worth it.
2. **You have to invest in a marriage for it to be worth the investment.** It sounds strange, but it's true-- it takes continual investment on the investment. I've seen "perfect" couples—like some we knew in high school and college—get married, drift apart, and end up divorced. We did not. It's not because we are perfect, it's because we work hard.
3. **Choosing your marriage partner is one of the most important decisions you will ever make.** I've seen many, many miserable marriages. And a big part of that relates to bad marriage choices. My wife was/is beautiful, but that's a really bad foundation upon which to build a marriage.
4. **Most fights are over stupid things that don't matter.** When I was younger, I always wanted to prove my point. It's more important to prove your love. You do that by not arguing over stupid things. Note: most arguments are from stupid things.
5. **Most arguments are resolved when both people are more concerned with being in a relationship than with being right.** I'm amazed at how many times I thought I was right. I had to be right. I had to show her I was right. And, let me say, that's just wrong. It's dumb. And it does not work.
6. **Sex is essential to a marriage relationship.** It's not everything, but when you value and prioritize it, your intimacy impacts your relationship. Yet sex does not just happen. It, too, is something you work at. It's fun to do the work, though!
7. **Practices (like date nights, long conversations, and trips together) make your marriage stronger.** Some of these are essential—you need a regular date night if you are married. If you can't afford dinner, you can walk in a park. You won't have a strong marriage if you don't act like you are married.
8. **Kids are awesome, but stress your marriage.** I love my kids. I spend time with them. They are a treasure. But they also add stress and complications to your marriage relationship. Kids should know that your marriage is your first priority. One of the most important things you can pass on to your children might be not be what you give them, but the marriage you show them.
9. **Never go to bed angry.** Yes, that's true for everyone according to Ephesians 4:26, but stretching an argument into two days usually leads to stretching it longer. Then bitterness sets in. However, you can't really settle most arguments if you are not willing to just say, "Well, we can't agree, but we can forgive and move on." (See number 5.)
10. **You need Jesus.** When you put Jesus at the center of your marriage, everything else revolves around Him as well. The closer you are to the Lord, the closer you will be to your spouse. A successful marriage takes three: you, your spouse and God.

CURRENT LEVEL OF COMMUNICATION

Use an X to indicate your level of communication, with 1 meaning almost never, 2 meaning rarely 3 meaning sometimes, 4 meaning often and 5 meaning almost always. Use a circle to indicate what you think your spouse's level of communication is at the present time.

1. Listens when the other person is talking

1 2 3 4 5

2. Appears to understand spouse when he or she shares

1 2 3 4 5

3. Tends to amplify and say too much

1 2 3 4 5

4. Tends to condense and say too little

1 2 3 4 5

5. Tends to keep feelings to oneself

1 2 3 4 5

6. Tends to be critical or nag

1 2 3 4 5

7. Encourages spouse

1 2 3 4 5

8. Tends to withdraw when confronted

1 2 3 4 5

9. Holds in hurts and becomes resentful

1 2 3 4 5

10. Lets spouse have say without interrupting

1 2 3 4 5

11. Remains silent for long periods of time when the other is angry

1 2 3 4 5

12. Fears expressing disagreement if the other becomes angry

1 2 3 4 5

13. Expresses appreciation for what is done most of the time

1 2 3 4 5

14. Complains that the other person doesn't understand him or her

1 2 3 4 5

15. Can disagree without losing his or her temper

1 2 3 4 5

16. Tends to monopolize the conversation

1 2 3 4 5

17. Feels free to discuss sex openly with spouse

1 2 3 4 5

18. Gives compliments and says nice comments to spouse

1 2 3 4 5

19. Feels misunderstood by spouse

1 2 3 4 5

20. Tends to avoid discussions of feelings

1 2 3 4 5

21. Avoids discussing topics or issues that are problems

1 2 3 4 5

Scoring Key for Your Current Level of Communication

Statements 1,2,7,10,13,15,17 and 18

To determine your score, add the numbers you make an X through for each of these eight statements. The sum reflects your score. To determine your spouse's score, add the numbers you circled for each of these eight statements. The sum reflects your spouse's score.

Your score _____

Your spouse's score _____

33-40 You're doing very well

25-32 You're doing well

17-24 Some areas need improvement

9-16 Definite improvement needed

0-8 The relationship needs major assistance

Any statement having a communication level of 3 or lower would benefit from some work. Any statements with a level of 1 may need outside assistance.

Statements 3,4,5,6,8,9,11,12,14,16,19,20 and 21

To determine your score, add the numbers you make an X through for each of these 13 statements. The sum reflects your score. To determine your spouse's score, add the numbers you circled for each of these 13 statements. The sum reflects your spouse's score.

Your score _____

Your spouse's score _____

53-65 The relationship needs major assistance

40-52 Definite improvement needed

27-39 Some areas need improvement

14-26 You're going well

8-13 You're doing very well

Any statement having a communication level of 3 or higher would benefit from some work. Any statements with a level of 5 may need outside assistance.

SHARING RESPONSES

Make a date to share your responses with your spouse. Be sure to follow these positive communication guidelines when sharing responses:

1. Set a time and select a place where there are no interruptions for people, phones, etc.
2. Hold your spouse's hand. (This helps keep a lid on emotions)
3. Begin by sharing how you scored yourself. If any statement in the first set had a score of 3 or lower, or any statement in the second set had a score of 3 or higher, state your intentions for improving this area.
4. After you've both shared your scores, continue to hold your spouse's hand and share the scores that reflect how you see one another. Don't say "You do this" or "You don't do this" but, rather, "This is my perspective" or "This is the way I see the situation." Say, "Here is something I'd like you to think about." Or "I would appreciate it if you would work on this."
5. When your spouse shares how he or she sees you and makes a request, do not be defensive, point out an exception or blame the other. Just say, "Thank you for sharing your perspective. I'd like to think about that." You're not agreeing with your spouse or admitting he or she is correct. You're just considering his or her view.

The Trinity of Love: You, Your Spouse, and God!

SEMINAR NOTES:

1. You must keep _____ at the center of your marriage.

2. Your _____ and _____ for one another must be _____.

3. Marriage is worth the investment, but you must _____
in the marriage to make it work.

4. It is possible to learn to _____ and _____
between the sexes.

Your homework assignments this week:

Monday: Say absolutely nothing negative to your spouse. Do one unexpected gesture as an act of kindness.

Tuesday: Along with saying nothing negative, buy your spouse a gift that says, "I was thinking of you today."

Wednesday: Contact your spouse during the day. Have no agenda other than asking how he or she is doing and if there is anything you could do for them.

Thursday: Ask your spouse to tell you three things that cause him or her to be uncomfortable or irritated with you. You must do so without attacking them or justifying your behavior. Don't speak a negative word, and if your spouse criticizes you, allow it without comment.

Friday: Act with love and not irritation toward your spouse. Prioritize some quality time to spend together doing something you know *your spouse* loves to do.

Saturday: Write a list of all the positive things you can think of about your spouse. Write all the reasons you fell in love with him or her. Share it with them when you are finished.

Sunday: Determine to pray together before church. Each of you select a passage of scripture to read to each other.