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Guidelines for the Group Program

We want to thank you for your interest in using the PREPARE/ENRICH Group Program. This program is designed to be flexible, affordable, convenient, and relevant for couples at every stage of their relationship.

The online PREPARE/ENRICH inventory will automatically customize itself to meet the stage (dating, engaged, or married) and structure (cohabiting, children, stepfamilies, older couples) of each couple in your group. This program is designed to:

- Help couples celebrate their strengths and identify their growth areas.
- Encourage couples to dialogue about their relationship in meaningful and productive ways.
- Increase practical relationship skills in Communication, Conflict Resolution, Closeness, Flexibility, and Financial Management.
- Increase understanding of relationship issues in such areas as Personality, Affection & Sex, and Family of Origin.

The process starts with each individual taking the online assessment. After both partners have completed the inventory, the Couple’s Report - Group Edition - can be downloaded by the facilitator as a PDF, which can be viewed, saved, printed, or emailed to the couple. Instructors also have the option to print a copy of the detailed Facilitator’s Report for their own use. The Facilitator’s Report should not be given to a couple due to copyrights and protected items from the inventory.

PREPARE/ENRICH is the Foundation for the Group Program

Over 3 million couples have taken the highly effective PREPARE/ENRICH Program. The goal of the program is to build stronger couple relationships and marriages. It has been used by over 100,000 counselors, clergy, chaplains, and mentors in their outreach to premarital and married couples. National studies have demonstrated that the program is highly effective in helping couples develop their strengths and overcome ongoing issues.
Getting Started

1. A group leader, certified as a PREPARE/ENRICH facilitator, should register couples to take their inventory online.
   a. Leaders enter couple’s first names and email addresses as they are registered.
   b. Leaders select the standard administration or a faith-based option.
   c. Leaders can have couples pay online or use a pre-paid scoring from their account.

2. After they are registered, couples will receive an email with their login information. Once both partners are finished, the leader will be notified that reports are ready to view and print.

Materials Needed for Instructor and Couples

1. Instructor’s Guide: As the instructor, make sure you bring a copy of this Group Program Instructor’s Guide. This will provide you with an outline of each session along with ice breakers, discussion questions, and exercises. It is a good idea to review each session ahead of time and make notes on specific teaching points you want to make and/or illustrations you plan to use.
   • A PowerPoint presentation for the PREPARE/ENRICH Program is included as part of your Instructor’s Guide. It includes the outline for each session and is an option for presenters who prefer that format.
   • There are ten sessions in the program, but you may choose fewer topics (5-8) if you prefer a shorter program.

2. Couple’s Report – Group Edition: The instructor (PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitator) can print a copy of each Couple’s Report – Group Edition and bring these to the group session. Consider passing out only the pages relevant for each night’s topic. This avoids the issues of couples reading ahead and becoming distracted, losing their report, or forgetting to bring it to a future meeting.

   The Group Edition of the Couple’s Report will be available for you to print when you log in to the Manage Couple’s section of the website. The Group Edition reports have more detail than typical Couple’s Reports when it comes to specific items on which couples agreed, disagreed, were indecisive, or shared mutual concern (Special Focus). The Group Edition reports include only the topics covered in the PREPARE/ENRICH Group Program.

* If a couple is Conflicted or Devitalized, group leaders should consider meeting with them separately to make sure a group setting will be appropriate for their needs. Print a copy of the more detailed Facilitator’s Report to learn more about the issues facing the couple. You may consider making a referral to a professional counselor/therapist.
3. **Couple’s Workbook**: The exercises couples will be asked to complete during the Group Program are taken from the Couple’s Workbook. Each person attending your group should have a copy of the workbook exercises you will cover in a given session. The easiest and most attractive option is to order printed color copies of the workbook from our online bookstore at: [www.prepare-enrich.com](http://www.prepare-enrich.com) *(facilitators must sign in at the bookstore to order PREPARE/ENRICH Couple’s Workbooks)*. The workbook can also be downloaded as a PDF file from the PREPARE/ENRICH website. You can make copies of the entire workbook, or simply print the exercise(s) you’ll need for each session. The workbook is available in both a standard version and a version with Biblical references.

**Design & Flow of each session**

Each session in the Group Program can be covered in gatherings lasting 60-90 minutes.

**Welcome**: Make sure your meeting room is clearly marked with signs directing people to the correct location. Greet group members as they arrive. Help them find name tags, refreshments, and their seats. Identify restrooms and give directions to group.

**Ice Breaker**: These questions are designed to be a fun way for group members to get to know one another and gear up for sharing their thoughts about the session topics. You can ask each person to respond, or make it optional. Don’t hesitate to start the ice breaker questions on time. Those arriving late won’t miss core content, but those who arrived on time will feel good about getting started on schedule.

**Group Discussion**: Each session begins with a question to engage the participants to begin discussing some aspect of the session topic. These opening questions are designed to elicit thoughts and opinions on the topic, without being overly personal or intrusive. Depending on the size of your group, you can pose the question to the whole group, or invite couples to discuss the question with one or two couples next to them.

**Teaching Points**: Review the teaching points in the Instructor’s Guide for each session. It is also a good idea to share a bit of your own personal story on the topic.
- What have you learned in your own relationship?
- What did you notice in your family growing up?
- Do you have a humorous story about the topic?

Appropriate self-disclosure can help the couples in your group feel more comfortable and increase their own willingness to disclose.

**Couple Exercise**: Encourage couples to have their discussions apart from the rest of the group. Allow them to move to different areas of the room or building to give them more privacy. First, they will review their results in the PREPARE/ENRICH Couple’s Report - group edition.
Next they will complete the exercise from the workbook.

- Give each couple their report page(s) so they can see their own results. Explain how the page is laid out and how they can interpret the results.
- Hand out a copy of the workbook exercise to each person and explain the directions.
- Because there are multiple versions of the Couple's Workbook, pages numbers for exercises are not listed in this guide.
- Give couples 15-20 minutes to discuss their results and complete each exercise. Leaders can remain available to answer questions and provide encouragement as needed during this time.

**Group Wrap-Up:** Bring couples back together for some closing group discussion. At this point, couples will have a chance to share their reactions to the concepts and exercise presented in the session. Personal reflections and insights should be welcomed.

**Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions:** Instructors can pass along several suggestions for further practice, homework, and additional reading on these topics. Some sessions may not have bonus material or suggestions.

**Role of Instructor as Facilitator**
The goal of the group leader should be to facilitate the learning process for each couple in the group. To accomplish this, leaders will want to do the following:

- Provide caring, attentive leadership.
- Provide clear descriptions of the program guidelines.
- Keep the group focused and on schedule.
- Provide illustrations of program topics.
- Facilitate couple learning through the various exercises.
- Facilitate group learning through group sharing and discussion.
- Share personal experiences, as appropriate.
Tips for Running a Successful Program

• Greet each couple individually before the session, and welcome them to the workshop.
• Provide name tags for all participants at each session.
• It is a nice touch to provide refreshments (water, soda, coffee, and/or other snacks).
• Provide a clean and comfortable environment.
• Consider offering child-care to help increase attendance.
• Take time for introductions.
• Review the Ground Rules for the group; found on next page.
• Stay organized and keep the group on topic.
• Start on time and stick to the schedule; this promotes mutual respect.
• Encourage participants to ask questions. In responding, be sure to restate each question so others may hear and keep answers concise and relevant.
• Exercise good group facilitation skills. Give everyone a chance to speak; no individual or participant couple should dominate.
• Encourage participants to take breaks as needed (e.g., visit the rest rooms). In the case of weekend programs, plan breaks for meals and time for stretching.
• Allow time at the end of each session for participants to briefly share their reactions to the session.
• At the conclusion of the program, be sure to have participants complete program evaluation.
Suggested Ground Rules for Sessions

1. **Everything shared in the group is confidential.**
   Confidentiality means not sharing or discussing any information learned in the group with anyone other than your partner.

2. **All sharing with other couples in the group is voluntary.**
   There are opportunities for discussion with other couples in the group. *(This is a gradual process that will increase as the level of trust improves.)* Individuals and couples should never feel forced to share with the group.

3. **When sharing in the group, speak for yourself and not for your partner.**
   One way to remember this idea is to make “I” statements rather than “we” statements. For example, it is acceptable to say “I feel” or “I think” but not “We believe”.

4. **Before sharing about your couple relationship, first “check it out” with your partner.** Persons should specifically ask their partner before sharing something personal about their relationship.

5. **The goal of the group is to learn and to have fun together.**
   The group experience with other couples is designed for you to learn from each other and to also have fun together. Because much of the information is personal, it will create some positive tension that can facilitate humorous situations. This sharing and learning together can help build a sense of community.
1. Sharing Strength & Growth Areas

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook, *Sharing Strength and Growth Areas* (one copy per person)

Welcome
• As the leader(s), start by introducing yourself to the group.
• Next, invite couples to introduce themselves to the group.

Ice Breaker
• Tell us how you met each other. *(If your group is small enough, you can have everyone share. If you have more than 5 or 6 couples, have couples pair up with one or two other couples to share their stories).*

Group Discussion
• As we begin this program, what is one goal you have for yourself or your relationship? *(Leaders may want to keep notes on what couples say. You can then refer back to their goals in the final wrap up meeting).*

Teaching Points
• Introduce PREPARE/ENRICH
  1. Each couple will be taking the PREPARE/ENRICH inventory as part of this group experience. PREPARE/ENRICH is based on over 35 years of research and refinement, and has been used all over the world.
  2. It is not a “test” you can pass or fail. It is an inventory which summarizes how you both feel about various aspects of your relationship.
  3. Work separately and be honest.
  4. I’ll need your first names and email addresses in order to register each of you to take the inventory. *(Pass around a list if you don’t already have this information).*

• Ground rules for group *(Instructor may refer to list on previous page).*
  1. Everything shared in the group is confidential.
  2. All sharing with other couples in the group is voluntary.
  3. When sharing in the group, speak for yourself and not your partner.
  4. Before sharing something personal about your couple relationship, first “check it out” with your partner.
  5. The goal of the group is to learn and to have fun together.
Couple Exercise * (handout workbook pages)

- All couples have some “Relationship Strengths,” areas they feel positive about.
- Couples also have areas where they struggle; we call these “Growth Areas” because they can grow and improve by learning new skills and working on the relationship. *(Offer a personal story or illustration if you have one).*
- Relationships require care and attention to remain healthy. Research shows relationships can improve or diminish over time based on a couple's investment, as well as their relational knowledge and skills.
- You will be completing the *Sharing Strength and Growth Areas* exercise. You should each have your own copy of the exercise.
  o First, complete the exercise on your own without talking to your partner about it. This should take no longer than 5 minutes.
  o Once you have both filled out your worksheet, you can begin sharing and comparing your responses with your partner. If you need to move and find space to talk privately, feel free to do so. We’ll regroup in about 15 minutes.

Group Wrap-Up

- What did you think of the exercise? Did you discover anything new?
- Sometimes couples struggle with an issue for many years. Do you believe Growth Areas can be improved and overcome? What do you think is required to turn a Growth Area into a Relationship Strength?

Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions

- You will receive an email from PREPARE/ENRICH with login directions. Please complete the assessment by *(insert date)*. *(Leaders should give themselves enough time to review and print couple's results prior to the next meeting).*
- Remember to be honest and work alone as you complete the inventory.
2. Personality

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: SCOPE Out Your Personality (one copy per person)
Couple’s Report: SCOPE Personality Scales

Ice Breaker
• What personality traits were you most attracted to when you first met your significant other? (If your group is very large, have them break into groups of 2 or 3 couples for the ice breaker).

Group Discussion
• When it comes to personality, do you think “opposites attract” or do “birds of a feather flock together”?
• Can you change someone’s personality? What happens when you try?

Teaching Points
• Personality can be defined as the characteristics of a person that lead to a consistent pattern of feeling, thinking, and behaving. Research shows personality traits remain quite stable over one’s lifetime. You might think your personality has changed over the years, but consider other factors that affect your behavior such as maturity, self-confidence, and changes in your social surroundings.
• For couples, there are advantages and disadvantages to being similar or different on any given trait. (Share a personal example).
Couple Exercise *(handout report and workbook pages)*

- (Explain the SCOPE acronym)
  
  **S** = Social: extroversion vs. introversion; preference for and behavior in social situations
  
  **C** = Change: open vs. conventional; openness to change, flexibility, and interest in new experiences
  
  **O** = Organized: conscientious vs. less organized; how organized and persistent in daily life and pursuit of goals
  
  **P** = Pleasing: agreeable vs. forceful; how considerate and cooperative in interactions with others
  
  **E** = Emotionally Steady: calm vs. reactive; tendency to stay relaxed and calm even when faced with stress vs. those who are more emotionally reactive
  
- “High” “average” or “low” SCOPE scores can be positive. A high score is not preferred over a low score, it means a person has many of the personality characteristics associated with a given trait. A low score is also not preferred, it simply means a person has fewer of the characteristics associated with a given trait.
- Research shows two thirds of the time people marry someone who scores in a different range (high, average, or low) on any given SCOPE scale.
- You are going to have some time to complete the *SCOPE Out Your Personality* exercise from the Couple’s Workbook.
  - First, review your Personality SCOPE results from the Couple’s Report. You’ll see there are individual and couple results for each trait.
  - Next, take a few moments to talk about the discussion questions in the exercise. If you need to find some space to talk privately, feel free to do so. We’ll regroup in about 15 minutes.

Group Wrap-Up

- What insights did you gain into your relationship as you discussed your personality results?
- In what situations are your personality differences most highlighted?
- How does your personality align with the roles you fulfill in your relationship?

Closing Suggestions

- Next time we are going to explore the topic of Stress.
3. Personal Stress Profile

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: Identifying Most Critical Issues (one copy per person)
Couple’s Report: Personal Stress Profile

Ice Breaker
- What was your first (or funniest) job? (If your group is very large, have them break into groups of 2 or 3 couples for the ice breaker).

Group Discussion
- What do you think are the greatest sources of stress in our lives and culture today?
- “Stress either begins or ends up in the relationship” (Dr. David Olson)
  - Do you agree? Do you have any examples of an external stressor that has affected your relationship?

Teaching Points
- A sample of 20,000 married couples was analyzed. The top 5 stressors were:
  - Your spouse
  - Your job
  - Feeling emotionally upset
  - Inadequate income
  - Too much to do around the home
- No matter the source, stress will affect your relationship. (Share a personal story to highlight this point).
- Stress can be positive or negative, but some stress is normal and good. Life would be boring without some challenges.
- Too much stress can cause emotional, physical, and relational problems. Since there will always be stress in life, it is important to explore the causes of your stress and how you are managing stress individually and as a couple.
- Communication, Conflict Resolution, Flexibility, and Faith are important coping resources.

Couple Exercise (hand out report and workbook pages)
- You will have about 20 minutes to complete the Identifying Most Critical Issues exercise.
  - First, as a couple you will review your Personal Stress Profile results from the Couple’s Report.
    - The Personal Stress Profile examines each individual’s personal stress level over the last year. Stress levels are based on responses to 25 common sources of personal stress, including 10 wedding planning issues for engaged couples.
3. Stress

- The report shows both individual’s stress results, ranging from “very low” to “very high.” Percentages are based on comparisons with the norm group of over 50,000.
- Top 10 stressors for each individual are also listed. Fewer if they did not indicate 10 things were at least “sometimes” stressful.

Next, complete the exercise, *Identifying Most Critical Issues*. This exercise will help you focus on the high priority issues that can actually be changed, versus those things that are unimportant or beyond your control.

Bonus Idea: If you finish early, practice your Active Listening skills by taking a current stressor and talking about your thoughts and feelings related to the issue. Take turns being the speaker and listener.

* Remember, active listeners don’t need to solve the stressor; just listen, understand and care.

**Group Wrap-Up**

- What insights did you have as you completed the exercise?
- Does a typical couple have stress levels that are similar or different? What variables influence an individual’s stress level?
- How do you cope with stressors that are difficult to change? What methods have you found to be most effective?
- How can communicating about stressors help you both individually and as a couple?

**Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions**

- Couple’s Workbook Exercise – “Balancing Your Priorities”
- Couple’s Workbook Exercise – “Wedding Stress” (for engaged couples)
4. Communication

4. Communication: Assertiveness & Active Listening

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: Creating a Wish List (one copy per person)
Couple’s Report: Relationship Dynamics, Communication

Ice Breaker
• Tell us about your most memorable date as a couple. (If your group is very large, have them break into groups of 2 or 3 couples for the ice breaker).

Group Discussion (Leaders may want to write their answers on a white board or sheet of paper).
• Let’s discuss the ingredients of healthy communication.
  o What does it take to be a good communicator?
  o What does it take to be a good listener?
• How do you feel when healthy communication has occurred?
• How do you feel when healthy communication has not occurred?

Teaching Points
• “It takes two to speak the truth . . . one to speak and another to hear.” (Henry David Thoreau)
• Research has repeatedly demonstrated that relationships thrive when communication is healthy and suffer when communication is unhealthy. A PREPARE/ENRICH study with 50,000 couples found Communication was the number one predictor of marital happiness.
• There are two important communication skills we will review in this session. One is a speaking skill called Assertiveness. The other is a listening skill called Active Listening.
  o **Assertiveness** is the ability to express your feelings and ask for what you want in the relationship. You don’t need to be aggressive to be assertive. Assertive individuals express their feelings and take responsibility for their messages by using “I” statements. (Give some examples of assertive communication. You can refer to Assertiveness and Active Listening in the Couple’s Workbook if needed).
  o **Active Listening** is the ability to let your partner know you understand them by restating their message. Listen attentively, without interrupting, and restate both the content and the feelings communicated by the speaker. (Share a personal example, or consider doing a role play of Assertiveness and Active Listening).
Couple Exercise *(handout report and workbook pages)*

- You are going to have about 20 minutes to complete the *Creating a Wish List* exercise from the Couple’s Workbook. This is a fun exercise that requires both Assertiveness and Active Listening.

  o First, review results from your Couple’s Report: Relationship Dynamics and Communication.
    
    - Relationship Dynamics will give you a snapshot of your assertiveness level, along with 3 other dimensions. Understanding these dynamics will help you improve your communication. *(Take a moment to explain how the Relationship Dynamics report page is laid out. If you have time you can also talk about the positive cycle of Assertiveness and Self Confidence, and the negative cycle of Avoidance and Partner Dominance.)*
    
    - The Communication page contains:
      * A graph of Individual Satisfaction scores
      * A graph of your Couple Agreement level
      * A breakdown of the category items
        - **Couple Agreement** – You agreed with one another on the statement
        - **Disagreement Item** – You disagreed with one another on the statement
        - **Indecision Item** – One or both of you were undecided about the issue
        - **Special Focus** – You both expressed concern about this issue
    
  o Next, complete the *Creating a Wish List* exercise. Start by taking 2-3 minutes as an individual and make a list of “three things you would like more or less of in your relationship”. After you’ve both finished your list, you’ll take turns sharing your wishes as you practice assertiveness and active listening.
    
    - When you are sharing a wish, you are the speaker. Make sure you speak for yourself using “I” statements and describe how you would feel if your wish came true.
    
    - The listener will use the active listening technique as they summarize what they’ve heard, including the feelings the speaker is sharing.

Group Wrap-Up

- What was it like to focus on being an active listener?
- How did it feel to be listened to in this way?
- What did this session provide that might strengthen your relationship?

Bonus Material and Suggestions

- Keep practicing Assertiveness and Active Listening as described in the Couple’s Workbook.
- Try the *Daily Dialogue and Daily Compliments* exercise from the Couple’s Workbook.
5. CONFLICT RESOLUTION

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict (one copy per person)
Couple’s Report: Conflict Resolution

Ice Breaker
• What is something most people don’t know about you?

Group Discussion
• A majority of couples (78%) report they go out of their way to avoid conflict in their relationship. What do you think of this strategy? What are the pros and cons of this approach?
• It is not uncommon to talk about winning or losing an argument, but why is there no such thing as a win/lose outcome in relational conflict? (Answer: if either partner feels like they’ve lost, the whole relationship has lost).

Teaching Points
• All couples have differences and disagreements. Studies show marital happiness is more related to how conflict is handled, and not the number of disagreements experienced by a couple. “Happiness is not the absence of conflict, but flows from the ability to cope with it.” (Share a personal example if you have one).
• Conflict can be an opportunity in disguise. When handled well, it can increase understanding, intimacy and trust. What does “handling conflict well” look like?
  o Use good communication skills – listening and speaking.
  o Avoid “mind-reading” which assumes you know your partner’s thoughts, feelings, or motives.
  o Focus on the issue or behavior, not on the other person.
  o Take your partner seriously. Don’t dismiss them or their feelings.
  o Stay specific and in the present. Overgeneralizations (“always and never”) or piling on past issues makes it tough to move forward.
  o Stay calm, even if that means you need to take a time-out to calm down.
  o Find a resolution that feels like a “win” for both partners.
  o Use the Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict to help put these principles into practice.
5. Conflict Resolution

**Couple Exercise** *(handout report and workbook pages)*

- We are going to take about 20 minutes for you to review your Conflict Resolution results and then go through the workbook exercise, *Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict.*
  - First, review your Conflict Resolution results in the Couple’s Report.
  - Next, begin to work through the *Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict.* *(Instructors may want to quickly review and explain each step).*
    - Pick an issue in your life that needs resolution and begin using the Ten Steps. For most couples, it will not be difficult to find an issue that needs resolution. If you are struggling to find an issue to talk about, consider the following:
      - Is there a decision that needs to be made and you have strong differences of opinion?
      - Is there an ongoing issue or stressor that needs resolution?
      - What was your last argument about? Did you reach a point of resolution?
      - Are there any big differences in your personalities or families that could cause future issues? If so, use the Ten Steps to anticipate how you might handle these differences.

**Group Wrap-Up**

- How do the Relationship Dynamics *(Assertiveness, Avoidance, Self Confidence and Partner Dominance)* impact Conflict Resolution?
- Which of the *Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict* do you think is most important?
- How can these steps lead to a win/win outcome?

**Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions**

- If you started the *Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict* and didn’t have time to finish, keep working through the process this week.
- Review the *How to Take a Time-Out* exercise in the Couple’s Workbook.
- Review the *Seeking and Granting Forgiveness* exercise in the Couple’s Workbook.
- Tape a copy of the *Ten Steps for Resolving Conflict* exercise to your refrigerator, and use it when needed!
6. Finance

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: *Importance of Financial Goals, The Meaning of Money, and the Budget Worksheet (one copy per person)*
Couple’s Report: *Financial Management*

Ice Breaker
• If someone surprised you with a gift of $5,000 today, what would you do with it?

Group Discussion
• Some people are natural savers, while others love to spend money. Because of this, a couple might be matched as two savers, two spenders, or a saver and a spender. (*Poll your group to see how many of each combination you have*). What are some advantages and disadvantages of each match?
• Do you think a married couple should have joint or separate accounts?

Teaching Points
• Focusing on accumulating more money is not what brings happiness and fulfillment. A poll from the AARP (American Association of Retired Persons) shows the most important factors defining success in life include: (1) a good marriage; (2) a good relationship with one’s children; (3) helping those in need; (4) having an interesting job; and (5) being well educated. (*Between 79-94% of survey respondents considered these five factors essential to happiness, while only 27% considered earning a lot of money necessary for happiness*).
• Research shows couples at all income levels disagree about money. It doesn’t seem to matter if couples are quite wealthy or have more modest incomes, the same percentage (about 65%) disagree about spending priorities. Happy couples agree on spending priorities, have a savings plan, and avoid burdensome debt. (*Share a personal story or illustration if you have one*).
• This session will help you (couples) explore three important concepts related to finances. These include setting financial goals, establishing a budget, and understanding the meaning of money.
  o Agreeing on short-term and long-term financial goals is a great way to avoid financial tension. Sharing common goals can increase your sense of teamwork and collaboration.
  o Budgeting puts you in control of your spending – an important issue in our culture where we are constantly enticed to spend money.
  o Money often means different things to different people: security, opportunity, independence, enjoyment, power, status, etc. Understanding your financial personality can lend great insight into one another’s decision making and priorities.
Couple Exercises (handout report and workbook pages)

- You’ll have about 25 minutes to discuss your results and complete two short exercises. 
  Importance of Financial Goals and The Meaning of Money.
  - First, review your Financial Management results in the Couple’s Report.
  - Next, complete the Importance of Financial Goals and The Meaning of Money exercises from the Couple’s Workbook.
    - Begin by working individually for about 5 minutes. Brainstorm your goals and complete The Meaning of Money quiz.
    - When you’ve both finished, take time to discuss each exercise together.

Group Wrap-Up

- What did you discover as you completed the Setting Financial Goals exercise?
- Does money mean the same thing to each of you? What else (besides status, security, enjoyment, or control) might money mean to a person?
- How many of you have a budget you currently follow? Why or why not?
- What type of financial role models were your parents?

Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions

- Homework: Couple’s Workbook Exercise – Budget Worksheet (hand out a copy to each person)
7. Spirituality

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: *Your Spiritual Journey (one copy per person)*
Couple’s Report: *Spiritual Beliefs*

Ice Breaker
- What is your favorite holiday? Why?

Group Discussion
- How does one’s faith affect their everyday decision making?
- How does your faith or spiritual life affect your relationship?

Teaching Points
- In a study of 12,000 married couples who took PREPARE/ENRICH, agreement on spiritual beliefs was strongly correlated with other aspects of a happy marriage. Couples with high spiritual agreement reported significantly higher satisfaction in Communication, Conflict Resolution, Financial Management, Sexual Relationship, Closeness and Flexibility (Olson & Larson, 2004).
- Faith informs the big questions: What is the meaning of life? What happens after death? Does prayer really change things? But it also informs the little decisions: Where should we send our children to school? How should we spend our money? In what ways should we help others?
- In a study of 50,000 marriages, the most common spiritual complaint for couples was “unresolved differences in their spiritual beliefs”, with 52% of all couples struggling with differences. *(Share an illustration or story if you have one).*

Couple Exercise *(handout report and workbook pages)*
- How much do you know about your partner’s religious history? We are going to give you the next 20 minutes to explore this topic together.
  - First, review your results for Spiritual Beliefs in the Couple’s Report.
  - Next, complete the discussion questions in the exercise, *Your Spiritual Journey*. Like politics or money, some couples avoid this topic or consider it taboo. But it is very important for couples to talk openly with one another about their values and beliefs.
Group Wrap-Up

• What insights emerged as you discussed your spiritual journeys?
• How do your individual differences (personality, background, traditions, etc.) impact the ways you experience and express your faith?
• Mother Theresa once said, “Let no one ever come to you without leaving better and happier. Be the living expression of God’s kindness: kindness in your face, kindness in your eyes, kindness in your smile.” How can one practice kindness with a partner who holds different beliefs?

Note: For many, this session on Spiritual Beliefs will be a foundational part of their church-based group experience. For others going through this program in a community-based setting, this session may not be considered an “allowable” topic because of state or federal funding sources. In such cases, this session can be omitted and couples may have the option of completing this topic at a later time should they desire.
8. Romance, Sex, & Affection

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: *The Expression of Intimacy* (one copy per person)
Couple’s Report: *Sexual Expectations* (premarital) or *Sexual Relationship* (married).

Ice Breaker
- What is the most romantic date or memory you’ve shared as a couple?

Group Discussion
- How would you define romance? What are the ingredients or conditions that make something romantic? *(Leaders should keep in mind that Romance has more to do with being fascinated or captivated by who you are with, and less to do with the surroundings).*
- Affection and Intimacy don’t always mean “sex”. What are some non-sexual ways to express affection for one another? *(Have your group brainstorm at least 10 things).* Why are non-sexual expressions of affection important for a couple’s relationship?

Teaching Points
- Every family has their own comfort zone for expressing affection. Some families express affection verbally, while others are physical and more comfortable with hugs or kisses. Still other families might express affection in subtle ways, such as serving one another through acts of kindness. There is no “right” or “wrong” way to express affection, but your family will shape your expectations in this area. Expressing affection is, to a large degree, a learned skill. *(Share an illustration or story if you have one).*
- A good sexual relationship goes hand in hand with a good emotional relationship between partners. Couples who feel safe and secure with each other in most aspects of their relationship have the best physical relationship. For them, sexuality flows from emotional intimacy based on:
  - Honest communication
  - Trust in one another
  - A strong friendship
  - Healthy conflict management
  - A passionate love for one another
  - A sense of respect and relational equality
Couple Exercise (handout report and workbook pages)
- As couples, take the next 20 minutes to discuss this topic of sex and affection together.
  - First, review your results for Sexual Expectations in the Couple’s Report.
  - Next, complete the discussion questions in the exercise, The Expression of Intimacy.
    - There are questions about affection that every couple will answer.
    - There are also additional questions for premarital or married couples. Discuss those that apply to you.

Group Wrap-Up
- What insights emerged as you discussed ways affection was expressed in your families growing up?
- The media (movies, television, songs, internet, etc.) distorts our ideas about sex. How do you think these distorted messages have affected you? Your image of sex? Your expectations about sex? Or your image of yourself?
9. CLOSENESS & FLEXIBILITY

Session Materials
Couple’s Workbook: *Mapping Your Relationship (one copy per person)*
Couple’s Report: *Couple and Family Maps*

Ice Breaker
• Share a family tradition or ritual you remember and appreciate.

Group Discussion
• Every family has their own unique “normal” way of doing things. When two people get married, they face the challenge of combining two unique approaches to life into one new relationship. *(Share a personal story if you have one).*
  o What is one way your families are very different?
  o How has this impacted your relationship as a couple?

Teaching Points
• Family of origin shapes many expectations for how we want (or don’t want) to live in the present or in the future *(e.g. roles, communication styles, expressions of affection, financial management, traditions, etc.)*
• When thinking about how our families have impacted us, it is helpful to consider the dimensions of Closeness and Flexibility. These dimensions were present in your family as you grew up, and they are present now in your couple and family relationships.
• Think of both dimensions (Closeness and Flexibility) on a continuum with extremes on each end and more balanced levels in the middle. *(Instructors may want to hand out a copy of the Couple and Family Map from the Couple’s Workbook).*
  o Closeness refers to how emotionally connected you feel to your partner and/or family. The extremes range from “disconnected” to “overly connected”. Closeness looks specifically at:
    ◦ How you balance separateness and togetherness
    ◦ Independence versus dependence
    ◦ Loyalty and connection
  o Flexibility refers to how open couples and families are to change. The extremes on this dimension range from “inflexible,” which might feel rigid, to “overly flexible,” which might feel chaotic. Flexibility looks specifically at:
    ◦ Openness to change
    ◦ Flexibility in leadership
    ◦ How roles are defined and shared
    ◦ Handling discipline
• These dimensions can sometimes feel quite theoretical, but they come to life when you consider real life scenarios.
When thinking about Closeness in your family or couple relationship, consider:

◦ Celebrating a birthday or anniversary
◦ Family gatherings during a holiday
◦ Dinner/Meal time
◦ Caring for a sick family member

When thinking about Flexibility in your family or couple relationship, consider:

◦ Handling discipline in a fair and consistent manner
◦ Adjusting to a stressful change (e.g., a new baby, a move, or job transition)
◦ Taking a family vacation
◦ Defining specific roles and responsibilities (e.g., who pays the bills, or cleans the house?)

**Couple Exercise (handout report and workbook pages)**

- You will have about 20 minutes to complete the exercise. As a couple, feel free to move around and find a good space where you can talk privately.
- First, review your Couple and Family Maps in the Couple’s Report.
- Next, complete the couple exercise, *Mapping Your Relationship*. Two tips include:
  - Pick a concrete situation (e.g., celebrating a birthday, a family dinner, or discipline) to explore the closeness and flexibility in each of your families of origin.
  - Make sure you take time to answer the questions:
    - What from your family of origin would you like to repeat in your couple relationship?
    - What from your family of origin would you not like to repeat in your couple relationship?

**Group Wrap-Up**

- What stood out to you as you compared the Closeness and Flexibility in your families?
- How can two people in the same relationship have different experiences of their Couple Closeness and Couple Flexibility? What impacts our perceptions of these dimensions?
- What makes it hard for couples to stay connected (kids, schedules, culture)?
- How does technology impact your Couple Closeness?

**Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions**

- Couple’s Workbook Exercise: *Couple and Family Maps – Closeness Exercises*
- Couple’s Workbook Exercise: *Couple and Family Maps – Flexibility Exercises*
10. Final Wrap-Up

Session Materials
Evaluation Form
Couple Exercise: *Achieving your Goals . . . Together*
(*Couple’s Workbook: Consider handing out a full copy of the workbook to each person*)

Ice Breaker
What will you do next week in place of this group meeting time?

Group Discussion
• Which session topic was your favorite and why?
  o Sharing Strength & Growth Areas
  o Personality
  o Stress
  o Communication
  o Conflict Resolution
  o Finance
  o Spirituality
  o Romance, Sex, & Affection
  o Closeness & Flexibility
• What will you take away from this group that will be most helpful to you?

Teaching Points
• Outcome studies demonstrate couples can improve their relationship skills and grow more relationship strengths by participating in the PREPARE/ENRICH Program. Keep practicing your communication (assertiveness and active listening) and conflict resolution skills. These tools really work if you know how to use them!
• We did not cover every possible topic in this group. There are many more topics and exercises you can complete on your own in the Couple’s Workbook. You are encouraged to complete one topic per week until you’ve gone through all of the exercises.
• As a leader, share some of your observations of this group. Encourage them to keep growing! Share a story about your own relationship journey.
Couple Exercise *(hand out the exercise and evaluation forms)*

- At this point, you’ll have about 20 minutes to talk alone as couples:
  - First, please fill out the Evaluation Form. Your honest feedback will help us improve the program.
  - Next, complete the exercise, *Achieving your Goals . . . Together*. Start by working alone, and then share your personal, couple and family goals with your partner.

Group Wrap-Up

- What did you discover as you looked at personal, couple, and family goals together?
- Do you remember the goal(s) you set for your relationship in our first meeting? What was one of your goals and how are things progressing in this area? *(Leaders can refer to their notes if goals from session one were documented.)*
- Do you have any final thoughts, questions, or comments for the group?
- Thank the couples for finishing the group program.

Bonus Material and Closing Suggestions

- If you ever feel stuck or need more help, please talk to us about:
  - Books and resources that might be helpful
  - Receiving individual feedback on your PREPARE/ENRICH inventory
  - Marriage mentoring
  - Retreats, classes, future opportunities
  - Counseling referrals
PREPARE/ENRICH Group Program
Couple Evaluation Form

Leader(s): ___________________ Date: __________

1. How many times did you meet for this program?
___________________ times

2. How many hours did you meet in total?
___________________ hours

3. Which scheduling format was used? (Circle one)
   a. weekly  d. weekend
   b. bi-monthly  e. other _____________
   c. monthly

4. What topics were covered in the program? (Check all that apply)
   ___ Communication               ___ Spiritual Beliefs
   ___ Personality       ___ Sexual Issues
   ___ Conflict Resolution            ___ Couple Map
   ___ Role Relationship     ___ Children & Parenting
   ___ Finances      ___ Couple Goals

5. How helpful was the Couple's Report to you?
   Not             Slightly         Somewhat       Generally          Very
   Helpful          Helpful            Helpful            Helpful           Helpful

6. How useful were the Couple Discussions with your partner?
   Not             Slightly         Somewhat       Generally          Very
   Useful       Useful             Useful             Useful            Useful

7. How helpful was it to have Group Discussions with other couples?
   Not             Slightly         Somewhat       Generally          Very
   Helpful          Helpful            Helpful            Helpful           Helpful

8. Overall, how useful was the PREPARE/ENRICH Group Program?
   Not             Slightly         Somewhat       Generally          Very
   Useful       Useful             Useful             Useful            Useful
9. As a result of this program, do you feel you are better able to communicate and resolve conflict with your partner?

   No  Slightly  Somewhat  Generally  Much
   Better  Better  Better  Better  Better

10. Overall, how would you rate the program leader(s)?

    Poor   Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent

11. Overall, how would you rate the program(s)?

    Poor   Fair  Good  Very Good  Excellent

12. Would you recommend this program to friends?  Yes ___  No ___

13. Which topics did you most enjoy from the program?

    ____________________________________________

14. What did you most dislike about the program?

    ____________________________________________

15. Do you have any other comments you would like to share with us?

    ____________________________________________  ____________________________________________

   Thank You for Completing this Evaluation.

   We wish you much success in your relationship!