Preparing for Marriage

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Dennis Rainey, general editor, Preparing for Marriage
Contents

part one: preparing the groundwork

Introduction by Dennis Rainey ................................................................. 7
How to Use This Workbook ..................................................................... 13
Worksheet 1: Understanding Your Personal History ......................... 19
Worksheet 2: Great Expectations .......................................................... 38

part two: laying the foundation

Chapter 1: Why Marriage? ................................................................. 59
Chapter 2: God’s Equation for Marriage: When One Plus One
Equals One .............................................................................................. 81

part three: making the decision

Chapter 3: Evaluating Your Relationship .......................................... 115
Chapter 4: A Decision-Making Guide ................................................ 129

part four: building oneness

Chapter 5: Authentic Communication ............................................... 147
Chapter 6: Roles and Responsibilities ............................................... 165
Chapter 7: Money, Money, Money ..................................................... 185
Chapter 8: Intimacy: Sexual Communication in Marriage ............ 209

Where Do We Go from Here? .............................................................. 227

Appendix A: Bonus: Parental Wisdom Questionnaire ..................... 231
Appendix B: Bonus: Couple Interview ............................................... 241
Appendix C: Our Problems, God’s Answers ..................................... 245
About the Writers .................................................................................. 255
part one

preparing the groundwork
Introduction
by Dennis Rainey

Not long after I graduated from the University of Arkansas, one of my good friends came to me for counsel. She was dating a young man who happened to be my best friend, and I knew what was happening in that relationship. She wanted to marry him, but he was hot and cold, uncertain of whether he was willing to commit himself to her.

For some reason, I had doubts about whether they should marry. So when she asked me for advice, I told her a parable I had recently heard:

A little boy named Johnny was playing marbles in his front yard. His uncle drove up and decided to play with the boy for a few minutes. Then the uncle reached into his pocket and pulled out a dime and a dollar. “Johnny,” he asked, “would you like a dime today or a dollar next week?”

Johnny’s boyish eyes bounced back and forth between the shiny dime and the crisp greenback. He thought, I could buy a bag of potato chips today, or I could wait until next week and buy a rubber ball. He felt some hunger pangs, so he grabbed the dime, bought some chips and wolfed them down. They were delicious.

A week passed, and when Johnny went out to play one afternoon, he noticed that every other boy in his neighborhood had a rubber ball. He wanted one real bad, so he rode his bicycle over to his uncle’s house. “Hey, Uncle, how about that dollar you promised me?” Johnny asked. But his uncle looked down and said, “Johnny, last week I promised you a dime today or a dollar next week, and you made your choice. You can’t have the dollar now.”
When I finished that story, I asked the young lady, “Do you believe that God is big enough to give you someone else later on that you could love more that this guy?” She thought for a moment and nodded her head yes.

“Perhaps,” I said, “God in His sovereignty knows that this young man you are dating is a dime, and He has a dollar for you later on.”

Well, perhaps you’ve guessed the end of my story. That young lady, Barbara Petersen, decided not to marry my best friend. In fact, just over a year later, she became my wife. To this day, people find it hard to believe that I really had no mixed motives when she and I talked that day!

Once in a while, Barbara and I pull out our old wedding pictures and gaze in wonder at those youthful faces. There we are, posing with our families. Reciting our vows. Cutting the cake.

I remember the sense of relief I felt. We did it! Finally it was over! Physically, mentally and emotionally, we felt like we had completed something, and we had—a six-week engagement filled with so much activity that we hardly had time to rest.

Did we truly realize what we had just done? Did we have any idea what type of commitment we had just made and what it would mean?

In reality, our wedding was not the completion of engagement but the beginning of a new life. Yet we scarcely knew what that life would involve. There’s so much we didn’t know about this thing called marriage.

We started our life together with the same youthful idealism and ignorance typical of so many other couples. I suppose we believed we really wouldn’t face many problems. We learned the hard way that building a solid marriage requires commitment, sacrifice and work.

A Late-Night Discussion

During our first year of marriage, for example, we lived in Boulder, Colorado, where the winters are cold and electric...
blankets are standard equipment for survival. I can recall how both of us enjoyed sliding into those toasty-warm sheets after the electric blanket had done its duty. For some strange reason, however, neither of us could remember to turn out all the lights. We would snuggle in, and Barbara would say, “Sweetheart, did you remember to turn out all the lights?”

So I would hop out of our comfy bed and run barefoot through the 55-degree apartment, turning off light after light (that Barbara had turned on). It didn’t happen that often, so I didn’t mind—until one night when I dropped into bed totally exhausted. Just as I slipped into the third stage of anesthesia, Barbara gave me a little poke and said, “Sweetheart, aren’t you going to turn out the lights?”

I groaned, “Honey, why don’t you turn out the lights tonight?”

Barbara replied, “I thought you would, because my dad always turned out the lights.”

Suddenly, I was wide awake. It dawned on me why I had been suffering occasional minor frostbite for the past few months. And I shot back, “But I’m not your dad!”

Well, we stayed up a long time that night discussing expectations—what Barbara expected me to do (because her father had always done it), and what I expected her to do (no matter who had always done it!).

That was a relatively simple conflict to resolve. But I remember a more serious problem that arose during that same year as the starry-eyed excitement of our honeymoon slowly wore off and we began to awaken to the reality of our lifetime commitment.

Barbara was not quiet when we spent time together; in fact, she talked more than I did. But when we went to any type of party or large group function, I was the “life of the party” while she followed me around the room and hardly said a thing.

I remember feeling trapped. She seemed like an appendage attached to my side. One of the reasons I was originally attracted to Barbara was because she seemed strong in areas where I was
weak, and vice versa. We made a good team. But somehow those things that once attracted me didn’t feel the same anymore. We were just so different.

Meanwhile, Barbara was feeling trapped as well. But we weren’t single anymore. We both lived in the same home. At one point, Barbara went into the bathroom and locked herself in, thinking, *What in the world am I going to do? I can’t get away from this.*

This was an important fork in the road for our marriage. Each of us had to decide before God if we would accept each other in spite of our differences and imperfections.

We had made that commitment standing before a pastor on September 2, 1972, but now the implications of that commitment were staring us in the face.

Fortunately, we made the right decision—to accept each other by faith, knowing that God had called us together. For though we were not well prepared for marriage, one all-important truth governed our relationship from the beginning: We were both committed to walking with God and knowing His will for our lives. And that has made all the difference for us.

### Preparing for a Marriage, Not a Wedding

Now you are thinking of beginning that same journey. You are either engaged or seriously contemplating marriage, and you’re excited about the possibility of spending the rest of your life with this special person. Yet, if you’re honest with yourself, you probably feel a tinge of apprehension as well.

No other human relationship can approach the potential for intimacy and oneness than that which can be found within the context of the marriage commitment. And no other relationship can bring with it as many adjustments, difficulties and even hurts.

There’s no way you can avoid these difficulties; each couple’s journey is unique. But there is much you can do to prepare for that journey.
In simple terms, the goal of Preparing for Marriage is to help you make the most thorough, comprehensive and in-depth preparations possible. In fact, it includes the type of material that Barbara and I wish we had known before our wedding. Like any journey with the potential for great reward, there are difficulties and obstacles to overcome along the way. This workbook is designed to guide you and prepare you to move through those challenges.

Here is what you can expect from going through this workbook:

♥ You will discover the joy of knowing your fiancé(e) and also being known by your fiancé(e) at levels you never imagined.
♥ You will talk about things you never dreamed you would but always knew you should.
♥ You will know, apply and experience God’s Word as it relates to engagement and marriage.
♥ You will be confident, certain and secure in your decision to marry (or even not to marry).
♥ You will practice and apply foundational skills you will need to build your marriage.
♥ You will acquire essential communication skills.
♥ You will understand the critical nature of core roles in marriage.
♥ You will learn about God’s design for true sexual intimacy and “total message” communication.
♥ You will, hopefully, connect with a mentor couple who can assist and counsel you as you prepare to begin your journey.

Because we are committed to your success, we have not chosen the easy road in developing this workbook. You will be asked some tough questions, and you’ll be given some tough advice. Your preconceptions about engagement, marriage, God and His
Word will be tested. And in the process, you will be challenged to peel back the curtain and let who you really are shine through.

Completing this workbook requires commitment—a commitment to make it a priority and schedule the time required; to complete the work, with integrity and honesty. Most importantly, it will require a commitment to see the process through when difficulties challenge you to bail out.

If this is your intention, take a moment now and sign the “Our Commitment” box. It will serve as a tangible reminder to you and your fiancé(e) that you believe your future marriage is worth your very best effort in premarital counseling now.

Discovery, risk, challenge, intimacy, commitment, truth—all of these and more are what make marriage the most incredible journey you could ever imagine. Get ready to laugh. Get ready to cry. Get ready to learn. And get ready to experience the joy of a relationship like you’ve never experienced before.

Dennis Rainey  
President, FamilyLife

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**O U R C O M M I T M E N T**

I commit to completing this premarriage workbook thoroughly and honestly. I will do my best to complete the assignments. I will make certain that this process remains at the top of my priority list and schedule. And when the process is difficult, I will press on.

I undertake this pledge as a reflection of my commitment to my fiancé(e) and to our future marriage.

_____________________________________________ Date _____________

_____________________________________________ Date _____________

Dennis Rainey, general editor. Preparing for Marriage  
How to Use
This Workbook

Preparation for Marriage includes the following components:

1. Opening Worksheets
   The workbook begins with two worksheets designed to help you learn more about each other and about what you expect from marriage:

   ▼ “Great Expectations” helps you understand the way you picture marriage and what you expect from your fiancé(e).

   ▼ The “Understanding Your Personal History” worksheet (page 19) includes dozens of questions designed to help you understand your past and share it with your fiancé(e).

2. The Main Chapters
   The eight chapters in this workbook are divided into three sections:

   ▼ “Laying the Foundation” provides an overview of God’s purposes and plan for marriage.

   ▼ “Making the Decision” guides you through a process of evaluating your relationship and then understanding how to make a biblical decision about marriage.
“Building Oneness” covers some basic “how-to” information on four critical areas of marriage: communication, roles and responsibilities, finances and sexual intimacy.

Here’s what you will find in each chapter:

True North is a statement of the biblical truth related to the topic you are covering.

Get the Picture introduces the topic, providing opportunities to answer questions and complete exercises that allow you to grasp the topic and understand why it is important for you.

Get the Truth examines biblical truths on God’s principles about different aspects of marriage.

Navigating by True North: Truths to Chart Your Course is a list of summary statements of the key principles from each chapter.

Couple’s Project is the interaction portion of the chapter. Each project includes the following sections:

Get Real: Questions to guide your discussion.

Get to the Heart of Your Marriage: An opportunity to pray together and experience a spiritual discipline that will be one of the keys to your growing marriage in the years to come.
how to use this workbook

Get Deeper: Optional assignments for the highly motivated—those who want to go where no engaged couple has gone before!

Special Questions for Those Who Were Previously Married: This additional material should help you discuss some important topics and, perhaps, uncover some issues to be resolved before your new marriage.

3. Bonus Projects
In the appendix you will find two optional questionnaires that will significantly enhance the value of this workbook:

- The “Parental Wisdom Questionnaire” is a valuable opportunity to receive encouragement and wisdom from your parents and in-laws.

- The “Couple Interview” helps you get some advice from a couple with a good track record in marriage.

Two other notes regarding format: First, in order to receive the most benefit from this notebook, we strongly recommend that each person obtain a workbook. Second, the word “fiancé(e)” has been chosen to represent both the man or woman, as in “meet with your fiancé(e) to discuss your answers.” We realize this word may feel a bit strange, but we figure you’ll be able to overlook that awkwardness as you work through this study.

The Value of a Mentor
Completing this workbook together as a premarried couple will be a rich experience. But there’s an even better alternative: The value of this workbook will increase exponentially

Dennis Rainey, general editor, Preparing for Marriage
when it is completed under the guidance of a mentor. This could be a pastor, a counselor, a layperson or even a lay couple. In fact, we’ve written a separate Leader’s Guide that gives them the instruction they need to guide you through your premarital counseling.

You may have already arranged to meet with a pastor, counselor or married couple who will serve as mentors for this course. By giving you access to their lives, allowing you to ask questions, they can provide a model for how a satisfying marriage relationship can work. This mentoring relationship may have a greater impact than anything else you learn in this course.

If you have been planning to complete this workbook on your own, we encourage you to think of a godly couple who you respect and who have been married at least five years. Take the initiative to ask them to mentor you through your premarital counseling. Give them a copy of the Leader’s Guide and ask them to invest in your future marriage by sharing theirs with you and your fiancé(e).

Time Required
To receive the maximum benefit from the workbook, we strongly suggest the following:

- Plan on beginning the course so that the last chapter is completed a minimum of four weeks prior to the wedding date.

- Set aside two weeks to complete the two opening worksheets, and then two weeks for each chapter. This will give you time to complete your assignments, meet together to discuss the material and process what you are learning and discovering. It will also give you time to make needed decisions and resolve any significant issues between chapters.
We estimate that most chapters should take about two hours to complete: an hour for each of you to complete “Get the Picture” and “Get the Truth” and another hour to complete the Couple’s Project. Some chapters may take a bit longer.

Set aside plenty of time to complete the Special Couple’s Projects. These are a key part of the workbook and are worth the effort! They also will give you plenty of topics for discussion.

Charting a Course for True North

Did you know that when you hold up a compass and the arrow points north, it’s not really pointing to the North Pole?

The North Pole is the geographic top of the earth. It’s a fixed position that never changes. That’s why it is called “true north.” And it is from this fixed position that mapmakers draw their maps.

Your compass, on the other hand, does not point to True North. Rather, it points to a magnetic field that is roughly 1,300 miles away from the North Pole. This is called “Magnetic North.”

Here is the point: Every pilot and every sea captain must make constant adjustments from what a compass says is north and what the map says is true north. Failing to make this adjustment of even a few degrees early in the journey could mean missing the destination by hundreds of miles.

For someone searching for truth in today’s world, true north is the truth of God’s Word. It is fixed, certain and absolute. It is to life and marriage what the geographic North Pole is to a map of the earth.

Magnetic north, on the other hand, can be deceiving. The arrow on the compass is pointing to what the compass says is north. It feels right. It looks right. Yet it will not direct you to your desired destination.

In the world you will find many ideas of how to build a strong marriage, but most of those ideas cannot be trusted. In creating this workbook, our desire is to provide you a glimpse
of what God’s Word says about building a strong marriage. By navigating according to True North, you can look at the map, consider your destination, talk about the alternatives and decide how you want to navigate your journey.
Worksheet 1

Understanding Your Personal History

One of the riskiest, but most rewarding benefits of a marriage relationship is the exhilarating experience of knowing and being known, of revealing and having another person reveal himself or herself to you. However, dating and even engagement can work against this process. On one hand, you want to know everything about this person. On the other hand, you think if this person knew everything about you, he or she might lose interest!

You may think you know your fiancé(e) better than anyone else on earth. But we want to help you deepen that knowledge, beginning with this worksheet that guides you through a discussion about your past and how it affects you today.

The past shapes all of us in ways we rarely understand. Your past influences your behavior, your personality, your emotions, your opinions and convictions. You and your fiancé(e) have probably not attempted to conceal your background from each other. But you may not have taken the time needed to adequately examine how your past influences your future.

For example, when most couples marry today, they assume that their marriage is between two people who want to become one. In reality, it is two people and two families that are coming together to form a new merger. Your family’s impact on your new family must not be minimized, but rather, understood, and planned for.
We estimate this project will take at least two hours to complete, but you will find the effort well worth it. As you complete this project, you’ll uncover some treasures along the way that will enrich your current relationship. You’ll also locate a few old rusty nails that if not properly handled could create wounds that will infect your future marriage.

Take your time and answer each question as thoroughly as possible. You will give a copy of this project to your pastor, counselor or mentor couple.

NAME: ____________________________ AGE: ______

FIANCÉ(È)’S NAME: ____________________ AGE: ______

Current Occupation: __________________________

Length of employment at my current job: __________
Highest level of education completed: __________
Hobbies and interests: __________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________
__________________________________________

Previously married?  ☐ No  ☐ Yes   How many times? _______

☐ Divorced  ☐ Widowed

How long have you been divorced or widowed? ___________
Section One: Your Relationship History

Your Current Relationship

1. How we met

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. What attracted me to him/her

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. How long we have been dating

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Your Friendships

4. Friendships for me have generally been (check one)

☐ Easy . . . like falling off a log
☐ So-so . . . I can take ’em or leave ’em
☐ A challenge . . . a lot of work but satisfying and rewarding
☐ Discouraging . . . more pain than I bargained for
☐ Absent . . . I’ve never really had a truly close friend
Explain why you checked the box you did:

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

5. Who are two of your closest friends, and what makes those relationships significant or special?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

How long have they been your friends?
________________________________________________________________________

6. What are three to five words these friends would use to describe you?
________________________________________________________________________

Past Dating Relationships

7. Describe a serious dating relationship from the past. Briefly state how it began, progressed and ended.
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
8. Can you identify any patterns that seem to be present in your relationships with the opposite sex? (Examples: “My tendency is to ‘fall in love’ hard and fast, then get hurt” or “I am generally the more committed person in my relationships.”)

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

For Previously Married Only

If you are divorced:

1. Why did you get a divorce? What were your reasons for divorcing?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

2. Have you sought reconciliation with your former spouse? If so, how? If not, why not?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

3. Have you discussed with your pastor or counselor whether you are free to remarry from a biblical standpoint? Write down your conclusion:
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
4. Give three reasons you may be confident you have gotten over your previous marriage and are ready to remarry:

_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
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_________________________________________________

5. If you are unsure, explain why.

_________________________________________________
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_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

Section Two: Your Family

Home Environment

1. How would you describe your childhood?

_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

What was best about your childhood?

_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

What was most difficult?

_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
2. What was your family’s socio-economic background as you were growing up? What is it now?

_________________________________________________
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3. How would you describe the emotional environment of the home you grew up in?

_________________________________________________
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4. Did you experience any type of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) as you grew up? Explain.

_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________
_________________________________________________

5. What hardships (traumatic events, financial difficulties, and so on) has your family experienced?

_________________________________________________
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6. As you look back over your family history, do you see any legacies that have been passed from one generation to the next? (For example, one family might pass on a tradition of trusting God in tough circumstances, while another
family might pass on a tendency toward turning to alcohol to alleviate problems.)

Parents

7. What words would you use to describe your parents’ marriage? Tell why you chose each word.

8. As parents, what did your dad and mom do well?

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<th>Mom</th>
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9. As parents, what do you wish they would have done differently?

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10. Describe the most significant impact your parents have had on you (positive or negative).

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11. What roles did your parents assume in the household?

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<th>Who was the leader in the marriage?</th>
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<th>Who was the leader as a parent?</th>
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<th>How did they make decisions?</th>
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12. Choose three or more words to describe your relationship with your father, and tell why you chose them.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

13. Choose three or more words to describe your relationship with your mother, and tell why you chose them.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

14. In what ways are you similar to each of your parents?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

15. In what ways are you different?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

16. Are there any unresolved issues between you and your parents? Articulate them here if you can.

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________

17. What are your parents feeling about your choice of a spouse?

____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
____________________________________________________________________
18. Rate your relationship with each of your siblings:

<table>
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<th>Sibling</th>
<th>Distant</th>
<th>Close</th>
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19. Describe any special and unique relationships you have with other relatives (grandparents, aunts, uncles, cousins).

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section Three: Your Spiritual Journey

20. What kind of religious upbringing did you have?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Dennis Rainey, general editor, Preparing for Marriage
21. What role does God play in your life today?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

23. How certain are you that you are going to heaven when you die?

☐ Absolutely certain
☐ Sort of certain
☐ Not certain at all

Why?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

24. Describe your spiritual life over the past 10 years. What were the high points?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What were the low points?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

What caused growth or prevented growth?
________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________
25. Check the areas of your life in which you find it difficult to trust God and give Him complete control:

- Sex
- Critical spirit
- Relationships
- Thought life
- Self-confidence
- My future
- Worry
- Finances
- Anger
- Career
- Decision making
- Relationship with parents
- Other ____________________________

26. How has your involvement in a local church helped you grow in your relationship with Christ and in your outreach to others?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

Section Four: Miscellaneous Topics

27. What has been your history in handling finances?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What are your strengths and weaknesses in handling money?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What type of debt do you currently have?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
28. What types of health (physical or mental) issues have you dealt with in the past?

________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

What types of issues are you dealing with currently?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

29. What have been your biggest successes at work?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

30. What have been your biggest challenges at work?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

31. What are the most courageous things you’ve ever done?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________

32. What have been your greatest triumphs in life?
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
________________________________________________________________________
33. What have been your greatest disappointments in life?

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

________________________________________________________________________

Section Five: Your LifeMap

If you were to draw out your life from birth to this day, you would have before you a map of sorts. It would show where you started, the turns you’ve made along the way, the rivers you’ve crossed, the mountains you’ve climbed. You may even show where you drove off the road, suffered an accident or maybe had a flat tire along the way.

This project is designed to help you draw that map—for your benefit and your fiancé(e)’s. You’ll both get a bird’s-eye view of the major milestones that have shaped how you view yourselves and the world around you. The insights you gain into your own life and your fiancé(e)’s will deepen your understanding and appreciation of your unique relationship.

IMPORTANT NOTES:

1. This exercise is intended to give a summary view of your life. You will not be able to fit your whole “Life Story” into this project.

2. Complete your LifeMap privately. Do not interact with your fiancé(e) as you work on it.

3. You will not interact as a couple upon completing this LifeMap project. Keep your LifeMap confidential until chapter 4, when you will use it in a communication exercise.
Milestones
In this section you will answer questions to help you identify major milestones at different stages of your life. As you consider each period, consider things such as:

- Favorite teachers, coaches, Sunday School teachers, youth workers and others who shaped your view of yourself and the world
- Family events: vacations, traditions, tragedies, moves, secrets
- Hobbies and interests, sports, activities (Scouts, piano, tennis, and so on)
- Relationships: Close friends, sibling relationships, dating relationships
- Good and bad decisions you’ve made
- Spiritual highs and spiritual lows
- Goals accomplished and goals yet to be met
- Jobs you’ve had

Birth through elementary school
1. List at least three memories you can vividly recall about this period of your life.

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Middle school through high school
2. List at least five events, circumstances or experiences that you think shaped your life during this period of your life.

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Post-high school to the present
3. List at least five significant events, circumstances or experiences from this period of your life.

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Milestones to Mile Markers
Now you will turn these milestones in your life into mile markers on your own LifeMap. A mile marker tells you where you are, how far you’ve come and how far you have to go. Choose the milestones from the first section that you would like to plot on your LifeMap, and plot them at the appropriate spot.

Use the sample LifeMap below as a guide in developing your own. Here are the key things to remember:

♥ This is not meant to be an exhaustive life history. It should be a simple, clear overview of the major milestones in your life and how they affected you.

♥ The midline is emotional neutral. Anything above the midline indicates you found this to be a particularly enriching event/circumstance/experience. Anything below the midline indicates you found this to be particularly difficult or troubling.

♥ All of us have highs and lows in the normal ebb and flow of life. Points above and below the midline are not indicative of the value or quality of your life. They simply point out the major milestones of your life, how you view them and how they’ve influenced you.

(Try to plot at least 7, and no more than 12, mile markers.)
## Sample LifeMap

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Event</th>
<th>Lows</th>
<th>Midline</th>
<th>Highs</th>
</tr>
</thead>
<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Birth</td>
<td>-5</td>
<td>-4</td>
<td>-3</td>
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<tr>
<td>Start school</td>
<td>-2</td>
<td>+1</td>
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<tr>
<td>Liked school</td>
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<td>+3</td>
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<td>Move to new town</td>
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<td>Graduate from Elementary</td>
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<td>Hated Jr. Hi.</td>
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<td>Found a new best friend</td>
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<td>Best friend dies in accident</td>
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<td>Accepted at college</td>
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Dennis Rainey, general editor, Preparing for Marriage