



Marriage Check-Up

Use the following as prompts for your discussion. It's likely you won't get through all of them, and it may be best not to try all in one go. If the conversation begins to hone in on something specific, allow yourselves to talk at length about it and trust the Spirit to guide your conversation to areas of concern or encouragement.

Begin by praying for the Spirit to guide your talk as a couple. And then jump in!

1. How are you investing in your Marriage relationship? (intentionality)

Time—Do you have a regular investment of time with each other to connect?

Physical—Do you feel like you have a healthy sexual relationship?

2. A Gospel-Saturated Atmosphere

The character traits listed in Ephesians 4:1-3 are examples of gospel-saturated attitudes that lead to an inviting, Christlike atmosphere in relationships.

"I therefore, ...urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace" (Eph. 4:1-3). The opposites of these beautiful character traits ruin marriages. How well does your marriage display these traits:

Gentleness—Do you most often respond to your spouse harshly or with gentleness? Harshness can destroy relationships.

Patience—Are you most often irritable with your spouse and family or are you gracious and patient?

Bearing with one another—Do you easily overlook small offenses and would your spouse and family say that you are a joy to be around?
Ask the Lord to help you to be like Him—a patient, gentle person who bears with the weaknesses of others.

3. Have a Clear Conflict Resolution Procedure

Based on Philippians 2:3-5, the PAUSE principle from Ken Sande's outstanding book, *Peacemaking for Families*, gives structure and procedure for living out those beautiful verses with your spouse. At the heart of this procedure is "understanding interests." The art of good communication is much more than getting my opinion across; it is making sure I understand my spouse's concerns and fears. It is wise to ask, "help me understand your concerns." **Do you often seek to understand the concerns and heart of your spouse or are you argumentative?**

Ask the Lord to help you to be more invested in the interests of others than your own.

4. Be Heart-Aware

How heart aware are you of yourself and your spouse? The heart in Scripture has to do with our desires, which can easily become idolatrous (Prov. 4:23). We each have an active "inner person" that can be sinfully thirsty to have its wants met (Heb. 4:12; James 4:1-2). Our own desires for things like "comfort," "control," and "approval" shape the way we interact with one another and explain the emotional responses to certain issues.

Understanding each other's propensities to each of these desires leads to an attitude of, "I love you for who you are, and I love you in spite of who you are."

5. Teammate Approach to Life

A good description of a reliable person is someone "you can ride the river with." This is vivid imagery -- Everyone must be reliable and do his or her part when paddling the whitewater of life. How well do you, as husband and wife, complement each other and seek to serve the Lord in your marriage? Ask the Lord to help you view your spouse as your ally, not your enemy.

6. Parenting

Our children are entrusted to us to be brought up into the fear and paideia of the Lord. Our purpose in their lives is to prepare them to give Jesus their love and allegiance and to walk with faith and wisdom.

- If your kids were asked to say what is your priority in their lives, what do you expect they would say? Christ? Career? Safety?
- How might you leverage time and place to encourage growth in the faith? How might you gather your family for worship? How might you mark time by the acts of God rather than national holidays and consumer habits? In other words, would it work for your family to use the church calendar to more effect (Advent, Lent, Easter, etc.)?
- How is discipline in your home? Is it loving? Is it gracious? Is it consistent?
- Do you reliably have ways of checking in with your children's progress in the faith? Are your children responding to God in proportion to their knowledge?

- Identify obstacles in the lives of your children. How might you help move the ball forward one small step with each one?

7. Complementarity

- Take inventory of each of your interests, talents, skills, and spiritual gifts (some are listed in 1 Corinthians 12 and Romans 12). Where do you overlap? Where do you diverge? In what ways might God intend to use your differences for the sake of each other, your family as a whole, your church, and your community? In what ways might your commonalities work to the same ends?
- Take a moment to encourage each other. Husbands, how have your wives been competent, trustworthy helpers? Wives, where have you seen your husbands rise to the challenge of representing and leading your household with grace and wisdom? Be honest about challenges you may still be facing. Be honest about confusion you may still have about this dynamic. But wherever there is something to encourage, let that have the last word.

8. Productive household

The Christian home does not terminate on itself, but exists for something greater than itself. Recreation and emotional connection is hugely important, but should not stand alone. Take a moment to identify how God has uniquely positioned you as a couple to be productive together and with your children. This could include any of the below and more:

- Hospitality
- Helping the needy
- Discipling others
- Bringing joy to your neighborhood
- Taking part in your community through non profits or local institutions
- Or something outside the box! (Projects, in your household or others; side hustles, meaning ways of diversifying income as a family; whatever else!)

9. Encouragement

- What are some of your favorite features of your husband or wife's appearance?
- What about them brings you joy?
- What do they do that makes you feel loved or respected?
- What do you love most about their faith?
- What virtues do they excel at?
- When do they shine with the children?
- Where do you see Christ in them?
- What are they good at?
- What do you appreciate about their friendships?
- Where are they excelling in the home?

Now never let them forget it.

10. Pray for each other