



GRACE-

14 TOOLS

BASED

FOR COUNSELORS

COUNSELING



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TOOL #1

Motivational Profile

Proverbs 22:6 instructs parents to “train up a child in the way he should go.” The word *train* in the Hebrew means to teach according to the “psychological bent” of the child. Likewise, a counselor ought to counsel a person according to his or her bent.

The motivational profile helps the counselor or pastor know the “givens” of a person so that they can gear or funnel counseling through that grid. For example, if a counselor (whose main hobby is music) is talking to an athlete, that counselor would not use music examples to get his or her points across. Rather, the counselor would tap into the bent of the individual and use examples from the athletic arena.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

The Motivational Profile is a good tool to use at the end of the first session. The counselor can say to the person, “Just so I can better help you, I need to know the ‘givens’ of your personality. We can then go over it the next time I see you.”

Another use for this profile is when the counselor is trying to help individuals resolve conflicts. Each person in the conflict should take the assessment and the counselor can reveal the results to the individuals involved. One’s “bent” often determines how someone will view a situation. It is important that the counselor point out these differences. For example, consider a husband and wife involved in an argument. The counselor can say to the husband, “As the assessment indicates, your wife thinks and responds better to affirmation than when you are short and to the point, so how could you restate your position in a way that would help her accept your constructive criticism?”

Motivational Profile

Instructions:

From the list of four words in each row, going across, put a “2” in front of the word or phrase which best describes you. Then put a “1” next to the word or phrase that next best describes you. As a result, two words or phrases will remain blank.

I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> trusting	<input type="checkbox"/> committed	<input type="checkbox"/> not a quitter	<input type="checkbox"/> usually busy & goal based
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> friendly	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes puzzles	<input type="checkbox"/> careful	<input type="checkbox"/> emotionally strong
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> open	<input type="checkbox"/> one who needs to know “why”	<input type="checkbox"/> not willing to hurry into making a decision	<input type="checkbox"/> sure of myself
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> a feeler	<input type="checkbox"/> a thinker	<input type="checkbox"/> one who sticks to the big things	<input type="checkbox"/> full of energy
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> a helper	<input type="checkbox"/> a dreamer	<input type="checkbox"/> a loner	<input type="checkbox"/> a leader
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> a giver	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to watch the world around me	<input type="checkbox"/> often not a participator	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes a challenge
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> one who enjoys explaining things to others	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to think deeply	<input type="checkbox"/> independent	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to say what I think
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> outgoing	<input type="checkbox"/> analytical	<input type="checkbox"/> a planner	<input type="checkbox"/> task driven
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> the life of the party	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to do things perfectly	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes routines	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to run the show
I am...	<input type="checkbox"/> one who believes relationships are more important than getting things done	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to share project possibilities	<input type="checkbox"/> one who likes to gather the facts before starting a project	<input type="checkbox"/> impatient with project delays
	Total: _____	Total: _____	Total: _____	Total: _____

Motivational Profile Key

This assessment may be used in an initial counseling session in order to help the counselor better understand how to work with the counselee. This tool is also useful when working with couples in marriage counseling. Have each spouse take the assessment individually. Then have them complete it again as if they were their partner. Compare the similarities and differences between the assessments.

When you have received the assessment back:

1. Add up the numbers in each vertical column.
2. Look at the highest score and look at the profile from the **One-Column Dominance** section to get a general overview of the profile.
3. To further define the profile, if you have two, three, or four high columns*, evaluate the profile from the appropriate section listed below.

***One-column dominance:** The total summation of one column is significantly higher than the other three columns.

Two-column dominance: Two of the four columns are fairly equal and are significantly higher than the other two columns.

Three-column dominance: Three of the four columns are relatively equal, leaving the fourth column with little or no recorded responses.

Four-column dominance: All four columns are fairly equal (no spikes).

One-Column Dominance

Column 1—“Actor”: You are more people oriented than task oriented. You are more motivated by people and they generally like you. In running a race, you will look in the stands to see who is there, and you will want to win in order to receive affirmation from the audience.

Column 2—“Analytical”: You are motivated by ideas more than by people or tasks. You are good at brainstorming and tend to be perfectionistic, but sometimes solutions get delayed because of this approach. In the race, you’ll get hung up in the starting blocks by making excessive plans about which foot to start with, how far to lean forward, etc. You can also become negative about a situation or person fairly easily and may hold a grudge against those who you believe have hurt you.

Column 3—“Predictable”: You are a consistent, dependable person on whom many people rely. You’re like the turtle in the race; you’ll plod along and cross the finish line at a predictable, predetermined time. If plans are not in place, you will become frustrated and will have the tendency to withdraw and show passive aggressive behavior.

Column 4—“Power”: You are motivated by task and by winning. Competitive and focused, you demonstrate leadership qualities. You’ll probably win the race (since winning is very important to you) and your success will most likely not be affected by the environment around you.

Two-Column Dominance

Columns 1, 4 high—“Persuader”: You tend to have good persuasive skills and the ability to stay focused on a target. Being both people- and task-driven, those with your profile can usually handle a lot of stress.

Columns 1, 3 high—“Adaptable”: You have an intuitive personality with a practical bent. People with your profile enjoy working with others, yet may find task deadlines difficult to keep.

Columns 1, 2 high—“Creator”: You are a creative, verbal individual with a practical bent. For example, if you develop or create something (a thought, a relationship, or a physical item), you want to make sure others use or appreciate it.

Columns 2, 4 high—“Driver”: You are most likely a driven person. Due to a high need for order and quality work in everything you do, you will probably be viewed as one who has a need to be in control. Also, as a driven person, you will find it difficult to relax.

Columns 2, 3 high—“The Micro-Manager”: You probably prefer working alone, unless the team is competent. Also, interpersonal relationships are difficult for you to achieve because of your arm’s-length policy.

Columns 2, 1 high—“Intuitive”: With a need to combine analytical thinking and people skills, you are able to influence others. In your relationships, you will probably be cordial yet will find it difficult to get really close to others.

Columns 3, 4 high—“Enforcer”: You can only relax if tight boundaries exist. People with your style usually like rules to be enforced and you become frustrated if put under too much stress.

Columns 3, 2 high—“Reflective”: You are a reflective person with perfectionistic tendencies. People with your style like to please others. You will avoid conflict at all costs and retreat if pressured.

Columns 3, 1 high—“Dependable”: You are one who can be counted on to do what you have promised, and so are soft spoken and affectionate. In addition, you are energized by others.

Columns 4, 3 high—“Tenacious”: You are marked by a persevering spirit. You are very dependable, yet completing a task with a dogged determination may interfere with your interpersonal relationships.

Columns 4, 2 high—“Perfectionistic”: You tend to be a stickler for order. Your desire for control is not due to a need for power, but rather stems from a desire to produce quality results in a timely fashion.

Columns 4, 1 high—“Leader”: You are a natural born leader. You possess the drive and determination to be successful as well as to make those around you feel good about themselves. You may have a tendency, however, to become a workaholic.

Three-Column Dominance

(Note: The three numbers can be in any order.)

Columns 2, 3, 4 high—“Industrious”: You tend to be one who completes tasks, finding creative ways to get the project done. You are intense, dependable, and highly motivated. As a result, however, others may be intimidated by you.

Columns 1, 3, 4 high—“Integrated”: You tend to live an integrated life between being sensitive to others and having the ability to bounce back after a disappointment. As a result, others are relaxed in your presence.

Columns 1, 2, 3 high—“Inspiring”: You fulfill the role of the inspirer. Undoubtedly, you have the unique ability to influence others in a healthy way.

Columns 1, 2, 4 high—“Creative/Intuitive”: You have a balance between being creative and being intuitive. People with your profile have a “sixth sense” when it comes to solving problems.

Four-Column Dominance

Columns 1, 2, 3, 4 high—“Jack of all Trades”: You tend to be a multifaceted individual. With equal strength in all four motivational patterns, you have the ability to make a decision by drawing from each dimension. However, the old saying, “A jack of all trades and a master of few,” may cause you to be frustrated from time to time.

TOOL #2

Premarital Inventory

The Premarital Inventory is designed to help counselors and pastors put structure into their sessions. Although premarital counseling should be relaxed and enjoyable, there will be hot spots that the couple will need to talk about, such as, “What if you two find out that pregnancy can’t become a reality without medical intervention—how far financially are you willing to go to have a child? Or would you consider adoption?”

We also suggest that a couple take the data compiled from this inventory and develop a marriage mission statement from it (tool #4 in this toolbox).

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

Each individual should complete this assessment without allowing the future spouse to see how he or she answered. Then as the counselor explores each question, he or she can first ask each to guess how their future spouse would answer. This portion of the counseling is to expose any false assumptions the couple may have about each other.

Premarital Inventory

This inventory is to be completed separately by each potential spouse. This tool will open a myriad of issues that can be discussed.

Note: For questions 9–13, look for key words or phrases. Also consider the following:

- How this question was answered may reflect how this person acted while in the early stages of dating.
- If this couple gets married, the phrases or words this person wrote down may indicate his or her tendencies after the honeymoon.
- The written response to this question may be an indicator as to what goals this person may desire in a marriage.
- The written response to this question may indicate how a person wants to feel if goals are met.
- The written response to this question may indicate how a person may sabotage his or her goals once the “happy mask” comes off.

Premarital Inventory

Name: _____

Age: _____

Address: _____

Phone: _____

Email: _____

1. Have you previously been married?

Y N

If yes, how many marriages have you had?

2. If you have previously been married, briefly describe the history of each relationship and what factors contributed to the breakup of the marriage.

3. Do you have any children?

Y N

If yes, what are their ages?

4. Have you had any previous counseling?

Y N

If yes, please provide approximate date(s) and what issues were discussed.

5. Circle the highest level of education you have completed:

High School Technical School College Graduate School

If applicable, what was your major?

What is your occupation (or career goals)?

6. Circle which word best describes your childhood (birth to 18 years old).

Traumatic Somewhat Painful Uneventful Enjoyable

7. What was your father like?

8. What was your mother like?

9. List the positive characteristics of your early childhood caregiver/role models (e.g., loving, fun, humorous, creative).

10. List the negative characteristics of your early caregivers (e.g., angry, preoccupied, depressed, critical).

11. Write what you wanted and needed most as a child (e.g., love, praise, normalcy, to feel visible).

12. Recall positive memories from childhood and how you felt (e.g., happy, safe, confident, competent, free).

13. Recall frustrations of childhood and how you responded (e.g., tried harder, withdrew, lied, got angry).

14. In analyzing the relationship with your soon-to-be spouse:

a. List what it was that attracted you to him or her.

b. Outline what quirks or idiosyncrasies may cause marital problems down the road.

15. Most couples will make the vow “until death do us part,” yet more than 50 percent of marriages still end in divorce. What agreement(s) do you have with your soon-to-be spouse that will ensure a lifetime relationship?
16. What is your philosophy of a prenuptial agreement?
17. From the list below, *going across*, put a “2” in front of the word or phrase that *best* describes you. Then put a “1” in front of the word or phrase that *next best* describes you. (Two words or phrases will remain blank.)

___ outgoing	___ analytical	___ very cautious	___ dominant
___ life of the party	___ very reflective	___ practical	___ energetic
___ prone to mood swings	___ very methodical	___ tend to be a loner	___ task-driven
___ not well organized	___ too many options make it hard to arrive at a decision	___ planner	___ like challenges
___ relationships are more important than getting a project done	___ like to be called upon to share ideas	___ like to gather facts before starting a project	___ impatient with delays

A healthy marriage becomes a reality when the couple learns to identify and blend the cultural differences between them. The following list of categories are areas that need to be explored to achieve this goal.

18. Recreation:

What did you do for fun prior to meeting your spouse-to-be?

Once you get married, what recreational activities do you feel the two of you can enjoy doing together?

Are there any concerns you have about this dimension of your married life? If so, share your concern.

19. Friendships:

What type of involvement do you desire to have with others once you get married (e.g., frequency of engagements, interaction with former friends, plans to obtain new couple friends)?

Do you enjoy “drop-in” visits?

Y N

Would you prefer to entertain others at home or would you rather meet friends at a gathering place such as a restaurant? Describe your philosophy for social interaction.

Any concerns for this area?

20. Religion:

Describe your spiritual history.

What role, if any, will the spiritual or church involvement play in your marriage?

How often do you plan on attending church or a religious gathering per month?

Any concerns in this area?

21. Children:

How many, if any, children do you want in this marriage?

If you have children, what would you want your spouse to know about your philosophy of discipline?

If there are stepchildren in the new relationship, what role do you want your spouse to play in regard to involvement, discipline, etc.?

If you need extensive medical intervention to have children, are you willing to go through the emotional/physical stress and financial commitment it will take in order to have children?

Y N

If there are children under 6 years of age in the home, what is your opinion about the wife working outside the home?

Any concerns in this area?

22. Work:

What do you want your spouse to know about your philosophy of work?

If you were to conclude that someone is “lazy,” what criteria would you use to come to that conclusion?

For you to feel secure, do you prefer a salary position instead of a sales commission position?

Y N No preference

In regard to domestic work:

What are your expectations for your spouse?

What are your expectations for yourself?

Any concern in this area?

23. Use of Time:

How much time together do you feel is realistic to spend with your spouse in a meaningful one-on-one encounter:

On a weekday?

On a weekend?

How much personal time (exercising by yourself, meditating, pursuing hobbies, having coffee with friends, etc.) do you feel you need apart from your spouse:

On a weekday?

On a weekend?

How much time do you feel you need to spend on the computer:

On a weekday (after 7:00 p.m.)?

On a weekend?

Any concerns in this area?

24. In-Laws, Parents, or Other Relatives:

What role will your parents/relatives play in your marriage (holiday visitation expectations, consulting/input, financial assistance, etc.)?

Do you have any concerns in this area?

25. Finance:

Have you ever lived on a strict budget?

Y N

What is your philosophy about money?

Is it difficult for you to delay gratification (can you postpone buying something until you save up for it first)?

Y N

What debt do you bring into this marriage?

Do you have any financial absolutes you will not violate (a percentage that must be put into savings, credit card philosophy, borrowing, etc.)?

If both spouses work, should a budget be based on one income or both incomes? Describe your preference.

Do you have any concerns in this area?

26. Communication:

Circle the item that best characterizes you:

- a. I usually say whatever is on my mind.
- b. I am reserved and hesitant to say what is on my mind.

- a. I like to think things through before sharing my thoughts.
- b. I can think quick on my feet.

- a. I am energized when I am talking to others.
- b. I am drained when I am talking to others.

- a. I usually have an opinion about everything.
 - b. I usually refrain from giving my input on a subject unless I am sure of what I am saying.
-
- a. I talk more than I listen.
 - b. I listen more than I talk.
-
- a. If I were part of a television network football crew, I'd be most comfortable with the role of the play-by-play announcer.
 - b. If I were part of a television network football crew, I'd be most comfortable with the color-commentary role.
-
- a. I think out loud.
 - b. I process my thoughts privately.
-
- a. Others would say I talk in a direct, blunt manner.
 - b. Others would say I talk in a soft, guarded manner.

When there is an intense conflict, how do you normally respond?

Describe your "hot buttons."

Do you have any concern in this area?

27. Showing Affection, Respect:

How would you define respect?

How would you like your spouse to show/demonstrate to you non-sexual affection?

What are your expectations of dating each other once you get married? What about once you have children?

Do you have any concerns in this area?

28. Sexuality:

How often do you feel a couple should have sex (assuming good health)?

Once a week

Twice a week

Three times a week

Other:

What is the best time of day to have sex?

Morning

Early Evening

Late evening

Spontaneously

Do you have any fears, insights, or desires about your view of sex that your spouse should know?

Is birth control an issue with you?

Y N

How long do you envision the sexual encounter to last?

To have sex, are candles, provocative outfits, and mood music necessary for you to fully enjoy the moment?

Y N

What concerns, if any, do you have in this area?

29. Physical Health:

Outline how any health issues you are currently experiencing may affect your marriage.

What medications are you currently taking?

Do you have a sleep disorder, such as sleep apnea, snoring, etc.?

Are you a morning or a night person?

Do you exercise on a regular basis?

Y N

What are your expectations/plans to maintain good health once you get married?

Describe your alcohol and/or tobacco use.

Do you have any concerns in this area?

30. Relationships with Former Mates (if applicable):

Do you have any concerns in this area?

31. Relationships with Stepchildren (if applicable):

What name would you like your stepchildren to call you?

What role do you see your spouse having in the discipline and raising of your children?

What role do you see having in the discipline and raising of your spouse's children?

If both sets of children come from different value systems, how do you plan on blending the two systems into your new family?

What values do you perceive are different?

What values are similar?

If there are differences, what is your plan to blend them?

32. What kind of relationship do you have with your child's biological father/mother?
33. Concerning holidays and prior family traditions, have you discussed how you will share this with your new stepfamily? (Families should have family meetings and openly discuss such things.) How will you share these with "the ex"?
34. In what ways are "blended" or stepfamilies different from biological families?
35. When it comes to children, do you feel your new spouse can act with you as a team player, coach, spectator, or fan? Why?
36. What do you think your children feel about your new spouse-to-be? Have you asked each one in private so they can talk about it?
37. What fears do you have about your children wanting to move in with your ex in the future? Is this an issue you have discussed with your spouse-to-be?

TOOL #3

Conceptual Comparison of Marital Roles

This tool is designed to help a couple communicate at a higher level, realizing that communication involves more than mere words. For many couples, assumptions equal reality. This exercise is to break individual paradigms apart in hopes that a clearer understanding between the spouses results.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THE ASSESSMENT

Each spouse should fill out the assessment individually. Next, each spouse completes the same assignment on how they think their mate will answer the same question. The counselor or pastor then looks for similarities and differences and notices how semantics may cause tension in a marriage conflict, when in fact the couple may actually agree on a particular point or idea.

Conceptual Comparison of Marital Roles

What do you believe about your role in marriage:

- 1—Strongly agree
- 2—Mildly agree
- 3—Not sure
- 4—Mildly disagree
- 5—Strongly disagree

WIFE		HUSBAND
1 2 3 4 5	The husband is the leader of the home.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife should not be employed outside the home.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife is the main/only source of income and the husband doesn't work.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband should help regularly with the dishes.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife has the greater responsibility for the children.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Money the wife earns is her money.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband should have at least one night a week out with his friends.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife should always be the one to cook.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband's responsibility is to his job and the wife's responsibility is to the home and children.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Money can best be handled through a joint checking account.	1 2 3 4 5

WIFE		HUSBAND
1 2 3 4 5	Marriage is a 50-50 proposition.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Major decisions should be made by the husband in case of an impasse.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband should babysit one night a week so the wife can get away and have a break.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	A couple should spend their recreation/leisure activities with each other.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	It is all right for the wife to initiate lovemaking with her husband.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband and wife should plan the budget and manage money matters together.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Neither the husband nor the wife should purchase an item over \$15 without consulting the other.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The father is the one responsible for disciplining the children.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	A wife who has special talent should have a career.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	It is the wife's responsibility to have the house neat and clean.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Arguments are a definite part of marriage.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband should take his wife out somewhere twice a month.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife is just as responsible for the children's discipline as the husband.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	It is the husband's job to do the yard work.	1 2 3 4 5

WIFE		HUSBAND
1 2 3 4 5	The mother should be the teacher of values to the children.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Women are more emotional than men.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Children should be allowed to help plan family activities.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Children develop better in a home with parents who are strict disciplinarians.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The wife should always obey what her husband asks her to do.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	The husband should decide which areas each should be responsible for.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Neither husband nor wife should bring their parents into the home to live.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	Quarrels are always wrong in marriage relationships.	1 2 3 4 5
1 2 3 4 5	It is better to modify the truth to avoid unpleasant situations in the family.	1 2 3 4 5

TOOL #4

Marriage Mission Statement

The Marriage Mission Statement is designed to help couples solidify what their marriage goals are. A vast majority of couples never articulate in writing the glue that will hold them together. It is ironic that in a business situation, banks often require a business mission statement prior to loaning money to a business developer, yet when it comes to the most important relationship on earth, counselors and pastors rarely require a couple to develop a mission statement for their marriage.

Our experience has been that when a counselor asks a couple to do this exercise, the process can often be stressful and complicated for them. Yet to do so will enable the couple to have a template ready to meet any situation that comes their way, moving as a team with the same motivations, priorities, and goals.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

When conducting premarital counseling, having a couple develop their marriage mission statement usually comes at the conclusion of their sessions. The couple is also encouraged to use the statement in their marriage ceremony for all to see. Many have actually framed the document and posted it on a wall in their home. This document can even serve as a foundation from which to start their constructive debate on an issue. The exercise can also be used when a married couple comes for counseling. Couples can solve many problems quickly if this document exists, for it takes the selfish pride of one or both spouses away and puts the issues at hand in a “team” context.

Three Marriage Mission Statements are included. The counselor can copy these samples so the couple can get an idea of how to construct one for themselves.

Marriage Mission Statement

Sample 1

(Note: It is helpful to explore Scripture passages that will give you insight into the vows you make.)

We choose a Christian foundation that is based on permanence as the bedrock of our marriage. Our commitment to each other will result in relational and financial security, intimacy, and unity of purpose. In order to guarantee this vow, we choose to:

1. Use Scripture as the ultimate guide for behavior and thought.
2. Give each other the gift of mutual respect.
3. Commit to open communication between us.
4. Solve our problems in a win-win framework.
5. Continually work toward, and then maintain, an upper level (emotional and cognitive) relationship with each other.
6. Seek out and nurture healthy relationships.
7. Commit to a healthy lifestyle.
8. Live within a mutually agreed-upon budget.

Our current game plan to ensure victory:

1. We will individually read Scripture for ten minutes each day and journal our insights into three categories: what God says about Himself, what God says about relationships, and what God says about me.
 - We will be active in our church, attending at least one service per week.
 - We will pray together daily as a couple.

2. We will see each other as positionally equal with each other in Christ. Based on Ephesians 5:21, we will fulfill our roles as God has intended.

Roles for the husband:

Roles for the wife:

3. We will spend thirty minutes a day in uninterrupted dialogue with each other.
 - We will agree to at least three dates per month. For the first and second dates, each spouse will be in charge of all the arrangements (one will be the total giver once and the receiver the next time); for the third date, we will plan the event together as a team.
4. We will set aside two days a week for one hour to deal with conflict issues. The plan will be as follows:
 - Each spouse can veto talking about any uncomfortable or potential no-win situation and defer until the meeting.

- The spouse with the problem must bring to the table at least one win-win solution.
- In most cases, the solution should not be put in cement. We will implement the solution for a brief period and then reevaluate at a later meeting.
- We will record our progress and agenda items.
- We will never use the “D word” (*divorce*) when we are having a disagreement.
- We will not use the negatives from the past to keep score.

5. Since intimacy is marked by total trust, openness, and unconditional love, each of us will relinquish our need to be in control by:

- Taking turns planning a weekly date
- Spending one hour a week right after dinner with our spouse (leaving the dishes on the table)

6. We make this promise to each other:

I (the husband) will develop at least one male best friend. My goal will be to speak with him weekly and to get together face-to-face once a month. I choose to have this individual be my accountability partner.

I (the wife) will develop at least one female best friend. My goal will be to speak with her weekly and to get together face-to-face once a month. I choose to have this individual be my accountability partner.

In addition, we both will work to find couple friends with whom we will meet often. And we agree not to get too familiar with members of the opposite sex (e.g., lunch dates, etc.)

7. We agree to exercise together three times a week. We agree to limit desserts to twice a week.

8. We agree to a budget that will not put us in debt each month. We agree to be good stewards of the funds God has entrusted to us to manage.

Marriage Mission Statement

Sample 2

This is a Mission Statement of the marriage of _____
and _____ .

We commit to have a biblical marriage, drawing on the Holy Spirit as our foundation and compass. Our mindset for this marriage will be one of a permanent, lifelong, total commitment. We will facilitate this commitment through open communication, respect, honor, romance, and unity of purpose.

Realizing God designed marriage and intended it to be a permanent lifelong bonding of a man and a woman, we honor that and look to God and His Word for guidance. The heart of our marriage is companionship and intimacy, which we shall both promote. Our marriage relationship shall be modeled after the one Christ had with the church, with the husband as the head of the wife, loving her and giving himself up for her.

To ensure success, the following shall be a regular part of our lives:

- Daily reading and study of Scripture and prayer
- Love, respect, commitment, romance
- Open, honest communication
- Daily exercise
- Plenty of humor and fun times
- Mutual support for each of our careers and ministries
- A prudent lifestyle within a mutually agreed-upon budget
- Sensitivity and support for our emotional and intellectual needs
- Mutual problem-solving for the benefit of the marriage

Daily reading and study of Scripture and prayer

We will study and read Scripture for at least ten minutes most days, looking for application to our lives, discovering what God says about Himself, our relationships, and us as individuals. We seek to know God, understand His plan for our lives, and live every day with that purpose in mind, each developing our own personal ministry to share with each other, as well as others. We listen as God speaks to our hearts His wisdom, desire, and direction for our lives. Nothing is more important than God.

Love, respect, commitment, romance

We shall love and respect each other with a total commitment and unselfish type of love that does not expect anything in return. We shall have a continuing romance that is fueled by passion and tender moments.

Open, honest communication

We will find time every day to talk openly about our feelings, emotions, problems, concerns. We will share freely about our lives, our outside relationships, our accomplishments, and our setbacks. We will seek each other's advice on all issues. Once a year, on January 1, we will reflect on the year and discuss needs that may have changed.

Daily exercise

A healthy body promotes a clear mind and good attitude toward physical activities and life. We already have well-established routines and healthy eating habits.

Plenty of humor and fun times

We love to laugh and we love each other's sense of humor. Laughter is important to us and is both mentally and physically healthy. Making each other laugh shows a concern for the other's well-being. It is something

we can share in abundance. Tears of joy frequent our happy home.

Even though it is easy to think we don't have time, it is important to take time for special moments together, alone from others and out of the house. We are content doing simple activities together as long as it takes our minds off everyday problems so we can focus on each other. We are committed to find these times weekly.

Mutual support for each of our careers and ministries

We both work and enjoy our jobs. Our kids are grown so we can do this without neglecting them. We understand each of us has different demands and strive to support each other's career. We search our hearts daily to find ways to serve God and our ministries for furthering His kingdom. "John" is a greeter at church and meets with his men's group and loves writing songs of praise. "Jane" reflects her heart for God on all those she touches; she serves children and young parents by volunteering in the nursery.

A prudent lifestyle within a mutually agreed-upon budget

We have modest needs and will develop a budget to guide us to live prudently and safely for the future. We tithe and give to charities. "John" commits to provide for "Jane's" financial security so that she feels safe.

Sensitivity and support for our emotional and intellectual needs

We understand that each of us is different and has unique needs. We strive to better understand the other person and how we can supply specific emotional and intellectual needs, such as offering daily reassurance, allowing time to read and grow, and being there for each other no matter what problems we encounter. We shall constantly remind each other of our commitment to each other and to God, our Savior.

Mutual problem-solving for the benefit of the marriage

We are practical and understand that we are both human and will fall and fail, but we will never forsake each other. We will always be there to work together to solve our problems and move forward. We shall make decisions together that are not selfish but benefit the marriage.

Marriage Mission Statement

Sample 3

Marriage between _____ and _____

We choose to have a biblical marriage, creating a spiritual foundation. We choose to make a total commitment to each other. We will facilitate this commitment through continuing romance and open communication. Our home dynamics shall be an oasis in the middle of the desert, and we shall love and respect our extended family. We shall include tithing as the basis for our financial activities.

In order to implement the above goals, we shall accomplish the following supportive objectives:

Spiritual Foundation

We resolve:

- To have a biblical marriage that will bring glory and honor to our heavenly Father and be pleasing to Him.
- To view the Bible as the ultimate authority for all time and adhere to all of its principles.
- To incorporate the philosophy “What would Jesus do?” in our actions with each other.
- To conduct daily Bible study and prayer in our home.

Total Commitment

We shall:

- View our marriage as a permanent relationship for our earthly lives and place our relationship above any other, except our individual relationship with our Lord.

- Love and respect each other in accordance with Ephesians 5: Husbands, love your wife as Christ loved the church; wives, respect and submit to your husband.
- “Agape” each other: love each other, expecting nothing in return.
- Respect each other’s opinions.
- Refuse to use the words *separation* or *divorce* within our marriage.

Continuing Romance

We shall:

- Say and do things daily that communicate, *I love you!*
- Remember that the “little things” are important.
- Romance each other forever.
- Continue to date each other, at least weekly.

Open Communication

We shall:

- Have honest conversations.
- Resolve conflict in a supportive manner.
- Resolve our differences in private and never go to bed angry.
- Put honesty at the forefront of all interactions with each other.
- Spend quiet time together.
- Admit when we are wrong and say we are sorry.
- Encourage each other to express our feelings without fear of making the other one angry.

Home Dynamics

We shall:

- Make decisions after mutual input.
- Be “best friends” but at the same time encourage friendships with other couples and individuals.
- Have a life without sarcasm.

- Share the load together and help each other.
- “Smell the Roses”—tell and show each other that the other is important.

Extended Family

We shall:

- Love and respect the entire family on both sides.
- Love and respect children of former marriages as *our* children.
- Treat guests (both family and friends) in our home with utmost respect and courtesy.

Financial Activities

We shall:

- Discuss all financial decisions within established parameters prior to implementation.
- Tithe, save, and meet our financial obligations in that priority.
- Reach decisions using financial security for my wife as the focal issue.

TOOL #5

Marriage Relational Inventory (MRI)

When a person goes to his or her medical doctor, the physician needs to know specifics regarding where the pain is in order to help the patient. So is the case when a counselor embarks on helping a couple wade through their problems in order to find solutions. The counselor needs to know the specifics. This exercise cuts through the generalities (such as, “My husband irritates me all the time”) in order to find what exactly causes that irritation.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

When a couple comes in for marriage counseling issues, the counselor has each person complete the inventory separately at their home, not sharing what each recorded with their spouse. The counselor may then see each spouse separately for one session, in order to expand upon or clarify their inventories.

Number 3 in the directions suggests that a spouse write out possible solutions to an issue if they ranked that issue “so-so” or “poor.” The counselor can then request that for the next two weeks, their suggestion be honored. Many couples are amazed that at the conclusion of two weeks, that issue is no longer a problem!

A final note: the counselor takes each issue and works on that until that problem is resolved.

Marriage Relational Inventory

Name: _____

Age: _____

My occupation: _____

Years I have completed in school: _____

Spouse's name: _____

Spouse's age: _____

My spouse's occupation: _____

Years my spouse has completed in school: _____

How many years have you been in this marriage? _____

How many marriages have you had? _____

How many children do you have? _____

What are their ages? _____

Today's date is _____

Directions

1. Read through the following list of problems married people face and *check* those statements that reflect your *problem areas*. Some items begin, "One of . . ." Each time you check such an item, write in also whether it refers to yourself, spouse, or both.
2. By marking this list honestly and sincerely, you will help your counselor help you. Please clarify that what you check is an issue.
3. If you mark "so-so" or "poor," write down in *specific terms* what it would take (from your point of view) to bring it up to a "good." If you marked "very good" or "excellent," write down what needs to be *kept* in place so this area of your marriage does not deteriorate.

Marriage Relational Inventory

RECREATION	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ We spend too little time (or money) for recreation	
2. ___ We don't do enough things together	
3. ___ We take the children along too often	
4. ___ We can't think of things to do	
5. ___ One of us makes too much work out of our recreation	
6. ___ One of us doesn't take recreation seriously enough	
7. ___ One of us spends considerably more time in recreation	
8. ___ We spend too much time (or money) for recreation	
9. ___ We do too much recreation together	
10. ___ We don't take the children along often enough	
11. ___ Our tastes in recreation differ widely	
12. ___ We have other problems in recreation (explain)	

In the area of recreation, I rate our marriage as:

- Excellent
- Very Good
- So-So
- Poor

Did you remember that when an item begins with "One of us . . ." (items 5, 6, and 7) to also indicate whether it refers to self, spouse, or both?

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

FRIENDSHIP, NEIGHBORHOOD, AND COMMUNITY RELATIONS	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ We have too few friends	
2. ___ Our friends live too far away	
3. ___ We don't know our neighbors well enough	
4. ___ Some of our friends are a bad influence on our family	
5. ___ There are some of our "friends" that I'd really rather never see again	
6. ___ We are somehow too much involved in our own neighborhood	
7. ___ For some reason our neighborhood doesn't really suit us	
8. ___ We don't do enough for the good of the neighborhood	
9. ___ I feel we should do much more for the good of our city, state, nation, or world	
10. ___ We have too many friends	
11. ___ Our friends live too close to us	
12. ___ I feel we have lots of acquaintances, but few real friends	
13. ___ Other (explain)	

In dealings with our community, I rate our marriage as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

RELIGION, MORALS, AND PHILOSOPHY	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
<p>Were you raised going to church/synagogue? _____ Are you currently active? _____ If yes, what is your denominational preference or group identification? _____</p>	
<p>1. ___ One of us is much too religious</p>	
<p>2. ___ One of us does not "practice what he or she preaches"</p>	
<p>3. ___ One or more of our children is too religious</p>	
<p>4. ___ Different religious beliefs or intensity causes considerable difficulty</p>	
<p>5. ___ One of us takes religious views much too somberly, too strictly</p>	
<p>6. ___ One of us has extreme religious or moral ideas</p>	
<p>7. ___ One of us is overly conventional in terms of religious or moral ideas</p>	
<p>8. ___ One of us spends too much time or money in religious or philosophical activities</p>	
<p>9. ___ One of us neglects religious or philosophical activities</p>	
<p>10. ___ One or more of our children is not religious enough</p>	
<p>11. ___ One of us seems to use religion as an excuse to avoid other important aspects of our lives</p>	
<p>12. ___ One of us is not religious enough</p>	
<p>13. ___ Other (explain)</p>	

I rate our religious or philosophical life as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

THE CHILDREN	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ One of us wants children; the other does not	
2. ___ We do not have enough children	
3. ___ Our children are too bold, independent	
4. ___ Our children are neglected in some significant way	
5. ___ The children are too quarrelsome	
6. ___ The children work too much around the house	
7. ___ We do not have children presently at home; we both like that	
8. ___ The children are too "grown up" for their ages	
9. ___ One of us doesn't spend enough time with the children	
10. ___ The children don't work enough around the house	
11. ___ We have too many children	
12. ___ The children are too shy, fearful	
13. ___ One of us gives the children too much attention	
14. ___ Our children are not "grown up" enough	
15. ___ Our children are around too much	
16. ___ Other (explain)	

In terms of raising our children, I feel we are:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

WORK	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ One of us really works too hard	
2. ___ One of us has poor quality of work	
3. ___ The work of one of us is too dangerous	
4. ___ One of us works hard, but at the wrong things	
5. ___ One of us works too far away from home	
6. ___ One of us works too close to home	
7. ___ Employment is too unsteady	
8. ___ One of us feels our work is degrading	
9. ___ One of us is not working hard enough	
10. ___ One of us accomplishes less than the other	
11. ___ The type of work creates a problem	
12. ___ One of us makes "too big a deal" of his or her work	
13. ___ Other (explain)	

In this area of work, I rate our marriage as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

USE OF TIME	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ One of us is too busy much of the time	
2. ___ One of us is too fussy about time	
3. ___ We spend too much time together	
4. ___ One of us doesn't get going fast enough	
5. ___ My time seems to drag	
6. ___ One of us is not busy enough much of the time	
7. ___ One of us keeps going too long at activities	
8. ___ One of us is too careless with time	
9. ___ We don't spend enough time together	
10. ___ Our schedules conflict quite a bit	
11. ___ My time seems to rush by	
12. ___ Other (explain)	

I rate our times of use as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

IN-LAWS, PARENTS, OR OTHER RELATIVES	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ Seen too often	
2. ___ They intrude into our affairs	
3. ___ Live too far away from us	
4. ___ Require too much help from us	
5. ___ Something they do creates tension	
6. ___ They are frequently critical	
7. ___ Not seen often enough	
8. ___ They don't help enough	
9. ___ Live too close to us	
10. ___ They create tension when they are around	
11. ___ They try to boss us too much	
12. ___ Often sick or needy	
13. ___ Other (explain)	

Our relationships with our relatives are:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

1.

2.

3.

MONEY	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ Not enough money coming in	
2. ___ Income is too irregular	
3. ___ Our money records are inadequate	
4. ___ One of us borrows money foolishly	
5. ___ We save too much money	
6. ___ One of us is too fussy or worried about money	
7. ___ One of us is too secretive about money	
8. ___ Medical costs take up too much of our money	
9. ___ One of us is too gabby about our money	
10. ___ Our expenses are considerably too high	
11. ___ Too much of our money goes to the wrong place	
12. ___ One of us lends money foolishly	
13. ___ We don't save enough	
14. ___ One of us is too casual or reckless about money	
15. ___ Other (explain)	

I rate our management of money as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

COMMUNICATION	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ One of us talks too much	
2. ___ One of us is generally a poor listener	
3. ___ One of us is too secretive	
4. ___ We talk entirely too much	
5. ___ One of us doesn't believe what the other says	
6. ___ I can talk easily with most people but not with my mate	
7. ___ One of us talks too openly; doesn't keep secrets well	
8. ___ One of us is too quiet	
9. ___ Our talk is often superficial	
10. ___ We often talk at the wrong time	
11. ___ We don't really talk enough	
12. ___ Other (explain)	

I rate our communication as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SHOWING AFFECTION, RESPECT, AND CONSIDERATION	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ One of us is “too cold”	
2. ___ One of us is much too critical	
3. ___ One of us feels overlooked, not respected	
4. ___ Not enough affectionate actions	
5. ___ One of us needs too much affection, reassurance	
6. ___ One of us is too unreliable, unpredictable	
7. ___ One of us shows too much attention to someone else	
8. ___ One of us shows too much attention to something else	
9. ___ One of us behaves differently in public, as compared to private, in showing affection and respect	
10. ___ One of us is too demonstrative	
11. ___ The way affection is shown creates a problem	
12. ___ One of us does not express enough affectionate words	
13. ___ Other (explain)	

In terms of our showing affection and respect, I rate our marriage as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

PHYSICAL HEALTH	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ Our energy levels differ widely	
2. ___ One of us uses too much medication	
3. ___ One of us is frequently sick	
4. ___ One of us has weight problems	
5. ___ One of us suffers from insomnia	
6. ___ Our sleep needs and sleeping times vary widely	
7. ___ One of us is "an early bird"	
8. ___ One of us is "a night owl"	
9. ___ One of us has a continual sickness	
10. ___ One of us drinks excessively or uses drugs	
11. ___ One of us doesn't do enough to keep in good physical condition	
12. ___ One of us suffers from bad breath or body odor	
13. ___ Other (explain)	

In terms of physical health, I rate our marriage as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

SEX	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ____ One of us views sex as really not much fun	
2. ____ One of us can't keep going easily	
3. ____ Sexual disloyalty is a problem	
4. ____ Somehow our timing is off	
5. ____ One of us has fear of pregnancy	
6. ____ One of us views sex as physically painful	
7. ____ One of us can't "get started" easily	
8. ____ Wrong time or places chosen for sex	
9. ____ Sexual loyalty is too demanding	
10. ____ One of us believes our sex life is too routine	
11. ____ One of us has an unfulfilled wish for pregnancy	
12. ____ Contraceptives present a problem	
13. ____ Our interests and preferences in sex differ widely	
14. ____ One of us wants a "wrong" or "distasteful" sex act done	
15. ____ Other (explain)	

I rate our sex life as:

_____ Excellent

_____ Very Good

_____ So-So

_____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

RELATIONS WITH PREVIOUS MATES	PROVIDE ANY CLARIFICATION HERE
1. ___ Alimony costs are burdensome	
2. ___ <i>Too little</i> contact with previous spouse	
3. ___ The ex-spouse psychologically still present	
4. ___ Don't get to see the children of previous relationship(s) enough	
5. ___ The children of a previous relationship seen entirely too often	
6. ___ Present marriage seems a repetition of problems in previous one	
7. ___ One of us is excessively jealous (or worried) about a previous spouse	
8. ___ Previous in-laws or other relatives too close for comfort	
9. ___ Some of the friends made during a previous marriage present a problem	
10. ___ Child support payments are burdensome	
11. ___ <i>Too much</i> contact with previous spouse	
12. ___ Other (explain)	

I rate our handling of this issue as:

- _____ Excellent
- _____ Very Good
- _____ So-So
- _____ Poor

Specific suggestions I would like to make to enhance this area:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Other Disagreements

No inventory can hope to cover all possible areas of disagreement. Use the space below to describe any *other* area that is troubling you in your marriage.

Totals

Now for a summary. Look back over all the preceding pages to determine in which area you would most like to make some changes and work for improvement. Choose the three areas most important to you. Place a 1 before the area most important, a 2 for the next most important area, and a 3 for your third choice.

_____ Recreation

_____ Friendship, Neighborhood, and Community Relations

_____ Religion, Morals, and Philosophy

_____ The Children

_____ Work

_____ Use of Time

_____ In-laws, Parents, or Other Relatives

_____ Money

_____ Communication

_____ Showing Affection, Respect, and Consideration

_____ Physical Health

_____ Sex

_____ Relations with Previous Mates

_____ Other

TOOL #6

Marriage Ranking Assessment (MRA)

On the initial intake or paperwork that the counselees complete, they will answer questions about their spiritual life. When a couple comes in, the counselor needs to explore this issue upfront. If the couple acknowledges a personal relationship with Christ, then goes on to voice unrighteous anger toward each other, this tool can help pinpoint such difficulties and others that may result from a lack of implementing God's Word in their lives.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

The counselor can use this assessment when he or she feels that the couple is using their religiosity to gain an advantage in the marital debate. In such a case, it would be wise not to initially mention that every question comes from Scripture.

The counselor can also use this assessment when dealing with Christian couples who are experiencing relational conflict yet want to live a life pleasing to God.

Marriage Ranking Assessment

Instructions:

Rank on a scale of 0 to 3 each of the following items. Then evaluate your spouse on the same item from your own perspective. Finally, if any item is marked a 1 or 0, under the solutions column, state specifically what you think it will take for you or your spouse to bring that score up to a 2 or 3.

0 = I (or my spouse) am really weak in this area

1 = I (or my spouse) could improve in this area

2 = I (or my spouse) am at an acceptable level in this area

3 = I (or my spouse) am doing great in this area.

DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT	SELF-RANK	SPOUSE RANK	SOLUTIONS
1. We are patient with each other			
2. We are kind to each other			
3. We are not possessive of the other			
4. We are not selfish in our demands, possessions, or time			
5. We quickly ask forgiveness and make amends with humility and grace			
6. We exhibit appropriate behavior. We are not rude, sarcastic, back-biting, or aloof			
7. We do not have a short fuse			
8. We do not keep records of our spouse's wrongs; we don't hold grudges			
9. We praise each other's successes and believe <i>when my spouse succeeds, I succeed</i>			
10. We are strong for each other; we support each other in work, sorrow, pain, and struggles			
11. We have an optimistic relationship; we laugh often and demonstrate hope and thankfulness			
12. We think, behave, and speak as adults when in conflict; we listen to each other and look for win-win solutions			
13. We respect and honor each other			

SUBTOTAL A _____

GRACE-BASED COUNSELING

DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT	SELF-RANK	SPOUSE RANK	SOLUTIONS
14. We put our spouse's needs above our own			
15. We work to see an issue through our spouse's point of view			
16. We do not return insult for insult, but truly seek to give blessings instead			
17. We do not wear a mask. We are honest. We feel free to be ourselves, and trust the other enough to be vulnerable			
18. We are very devoted to each other. We enjoy being with our spouse more than any other person, and we work to keep it that way			
19. We demonstrate tenacity when it comes to mutual goals			
20. We do not fall apart when hard times come			
21. We enjoy socializing with the same people			
22. We demonstrate healthy emotions. We appropriately express anger, pain, joy, fear, and sorrow to each other			
23. We hunger and thirst for the things of God			
24. We have learned to relax in God's providence, plan, and provision			
25. We pray together			

SUBTOTAL B _____

DESCRIPTIVE STATEMENT	SELF-RANK	SPOUSE RANK	SOLUTIONS
26. We work well together in our marriage and in family situations			
27. When one is down, the other lifts him or her up			
28. When we think our spouse is wrong, we correct each other with a gentle tone and genuine humility			
29. We continually study the Bible in order to grow spiritually			
30. We do not hold bitterness in our hearts toward each other, our circumstances, others, or God			

SUBTOTAL C _____

Subtotal A _____

Subtotal B _____

Subtotal C _____

GRAND TOTAL: _____

Marriage Ranking Assessment Scoring Sheet

82–90: Overall, I (we) believe that our marriage is doing exceptionally well.

72–81: Overall, I (we) believe that our marriage is very healthy.

62–71: Overall, I (we) believe that our marriage is, at best, average.

52–61: Overall, I (we) believe that our marriage is at risk.

0–51: Overall, I (we) believe that our marriage is in extreme danger.

Verses Used to Develop the Marriage Ranking Assessment

Questions 1–12: 1 Corinthians 13

Questions 13–14: Ephesians 5:22–33

Questions 15–16: 1 Peter 3:4–9

Questions 17–22: Romans 12:9–18

Question 23: Matthew 5:6

Questions 24–25: Philippians 4:6

Question 26: Colossians 4:8–9

Question 27: 1 Thessalonians 5:14–22

Questions 28–29: 2 Timothy 2:25; 3:15

Question 30: Ephesians 4:31; Hebrews 12:15

TOOL #7

Parental Success Blockers

These are pointers a counselor or pastor can present if talking to a couple about their parenting skills. It is imperative that couples present a united front when it comes to parenting. The list outlines common mistakes parents make that block successful parenting.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THE ASSESSMENT

These lists can be used as a template for several sessions when the topic is focused on parenting. We have found in our years of counseling that when parents bring their children in for counseling, thinking, *I want this counselor to "fix" my child*, in reality about 60 percent of the reason for the child's behavior stems from parental issues.

The counselor or pastor should copy and give the parents the lists as he or she reviews and discusses each item.

Parental Success Blockers

1. Parents must be in control

A contradictory “Golden Rule” is in force! Rather than treat others as we want to be treated, this golden rule says that the one with the gold makes the rules.

2. Parents must win

Often parents manifest excessive anger to obtain desired results, even if they must rationalize the child’s wrong.

3. Parents are superior to their children

The parenting style is authoritarian, with high demands and low levels of responsiveness and nurture.

4. Parents allow extreme emphasis to surface

Children exist for the parents or the parents exist for the child.

5. Perfectionism

Children often feel pressure from parents to be perfect. The inability to be perfect can cause the child to feel self-contempt and have low esteem.

6. Parents live out their lives through their children

Parents place high expectations on their child, expecting the child to accomplish what the parent could not.

7. Parents who are chameleons in front of their peers

If around a legalistic family, for instance, the parents will be hard on their children, but if around a laidback family, they will go easy on the children.

8. Parents not a united team

When interacting with their children, they do not demonstrate unity.

9. Not enough time spent actually training children

Parents tend to be so busy with their own agenda, they often leave the spiritual training of their children to the church, and their education to the schools.

10. Ingraining the philosophy *Do as I say, not as I do* to their children

When it comes to being a role model to their children, parents often forget that actions always trump verbiage.

11. Not considering the temperament of their children when interacting with them

Proverbs admonishes parents to “train up their children in the way they should go.” The word *train* in the Hebrew indicates they ought to inculcate life lessons according to the “bent” (or temperament) of the child, because every child is wired differently.

12. Not spending enough quality and quantity time with the child

Parents need to be mindful of their own technology use and be willing to put away cell phones, tablets, and computers to be fully “present” with their children.

TOOL #8

To Win as a Stepparent

Stepparenting is a difficult task to master. Failure to do so is a major reason second marriages don't last. Tackling this list with a blended couple will unlock many of the issues they face. Children from blended families often resent the new spouse because quality time with their parent seems diminished in favor of the new "adult" in the home. The objective of this list being presented in counseling is to ensure that the couple find ways to promote family harmony.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

A counselor or pastor can implement this list when he or she sees that the couple is struggling with how to effectively blend their family. It is also useful when a counselor or pastor is conducting premarital counseling for a couple that has been in previous relationships.

To Win as a Stepparent

1. Understand that a blended family is a mix of at least four-to-six cultures.
2. Start with relational and spiritual commitment.
3. Don't assume a communication connection with your new spouse or children.
4. Spend time with your own children.
5. With your new spouse, outline for the children the basic rules for the home (behavior precedes feelings).
6. With your spouse, proclaim to your stepchildren that you are now the mom or dad of *this* home.
7. The biological parent should discipline the child for the first several years of the marriage, giving the new stepparent time to build relationship prior to disciplining.
8. Team effort with your spouse is mandatory.
9. Relax. Learn to grow together.
10. Parents should not treat children as peers, even after a divorce.
11. Realize that your new spouse is your first relational priority after your relationship with God, and the relationship with children follows next.
12. Make sure you have put closure on your previous marriage/relationship.
13. Learn the difference between absolutes, house rules, and preferences.
14. When in need, seek help.

TOOL #9

Sentence Completion

Sometimes it is challenging to get children to share what is bothering them. The Sentence Completion assessment provides open-ended statements for children to complete so that the counselor or pastor may find clues to identify what issues to focus on.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

Once the child and counselor have established trust, the counselor can say, “Billy, in order to help you the best I can, I am going to start a sentence, and I would like you to tell me the first thing that comes to your mind.” The counselor or pastor can write down the child’s responses. Then the compiled list will give direction for future sessions with that child.

Sentence Completion Exercise

Name: _____

Age: _____

Date: _____

Instructions: Complete the following sentences. Write down what first comes to your mind.

1. If Mom had a bad day, she might _____

2. It is really hard for me to _____

3. Lots of children struggle with _____

4. I wish my dad would _____

5. I wish my mom would _____

6. The best part about being a kid is _____

7. I always have to laugh when _____

8. When I was little we would _____

9. The thing that upsets me the most is _____

10. My favorite teacher is _____

11. My worst class is _____

12. I wish I didn't have to _____

13. The thing that makes me the happiest is _____

14. My feelings are hurt if _____

15. I get "down" and sad when _____

16. The people I don't like _____

17. I wish I was not afraid of _____

18. I am really embarrassed when _____

19. The way I look is _____

20. When I am alone, I think about _____

21. Before I go to bed, I always _____

22. My worst dream ever was _____

23. I wish I'd forget _____

24. What I want most is _____

25. If I got to be a leader, I would _____

26. Something moms do that dads never do is _____

27. How I feel about my dad is _____

28. How I feel about my mom is _____

29. No one should ever _____

30. Most people are afraid of _____

31. My friends like me because _____

32. What's really funny to me is _____

33. If I could do anything, I would _____

34. If I could make one rule for our home, it would be _____

35. A family is _____

36. The best thing about me is _____

37. The thing I like least about me is _____

38. It makes me sad to _____

39. My worst habit is _____

40. The way I feel about chores is _____

41. When I am alone _____

42. I feel helpless when _____

43. The world would be a better place if _____

44. My greatest weakness is _____

45. My greatest strength is _____

46. In my spare time I like to _____

47. The way I feel about church is _____

48. When I think of the future _____

49. My happiest memories _____

50. It is best to forget about _____

TOOL #10

Your “Busyness” Scorecard

This tool is designed to help the counselee understand the severity of the stress and pressures he or she is experiencing, because in many instances, stress is that person’s “normality.” The use of this tool brings to light those habits that interfere with quality relationships. Counselors or pastors can use this assessment to evaluate depression as well since excessive busyness may turn into depressive symptoms.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

If the counselee states that he or she “can’t implement an appropriate plan due to time restrictions,” the counselor or pastor can administer this assessment to determine what traps that person may have fallen prey to.

This tool is also useful when conducting conferences or seminars on the topic.

Your “Busyness” Scorecard

Is your life in balance? Find out by circling the following questions yes, no, or 50/50.

Note: Use 50/50 sparingly.

- | | | | |
|-----|-------|----|--|
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you take periodic work breaks to recharge? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you find it easy to shake depression and moodiness? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Can you forget your worries while at home? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you usually have plenty of pep and energy? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you usually react calmly and rationally when someone else blows up? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you have hobbies or activities you enjoy? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Are you a good listener? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you look forward to going to work on most days? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you spend at least 6 hours a week with your family? If single, do you make at least 6 calls to friends each week? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you find time most days to reflect on spiritual things? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Are you okay if others “win” and you “lose” some of the time? |
| YES | 50/50 | NO | Do you eat at least 4 evening meals a week with your family (with the TV off)? If single, do you eat at least 2 meals a week with friends? |

YES	50/50	NO	Do you wake up refreshed instead of tired most mornings?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you exercise for 30 minutes or more at least 3 times a week?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you resist eating "junk food meals" more than twice a week?
YES	50/50	NO	Can you say your life is generally void of regrets?
YES	50/50	NO	Are you good at delegation?
YES	50/50	NO	When on vacation, can you leave your computer at home?
YES	50/50	NO	If you have or have had children do (did) you effectively limit their after-school activities? If single, do you spend at least 3 nights a week at home alone?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you limit computer time after 6:00 p.m. to 45 minutes or less?
YES	50/50	NO	If married, do you spend at least 5 hours of quality time each week with your spouse? If single, do you spend at least 5 hours of quality time with your friends?
YES	50/50	NO	At the end of the day, do you normally feel fulfilled at least 80 percent of the time?
YES	50/50	NO	In most cases, do you resist the urge to compare yourself to others?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you plan your major activities for tomorrow the night before?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you experience at least 1 hour of solitude a day (sleeping doesn't count) meditating and reflecting on abstract thoughts?

YES	50/50	NO	When you come home from work, do you still have an energy reserve?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you get regular health check-ups?
YES	50/50	NO	Can you turn the competitive switch off?
YES	50/50	NO	Are you generally satisfied with your current standard of living?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you generally get at least 7 hours of sleep each night?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you tend to complete assigned tasks most days?
YES	50/50	NO	On your days off, do you tend to find time to relax?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you limit your caffeine intake to less than 3 cups of coffee, tea, or soft drinks daily?
YES	50/50	NO	Are you known for your ability to save money and plan for the future?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you regularly find solace and wisdom for life's problems within Scripture?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you limit your work and commute time to 50 hours a week or less?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you accept constructive criticism calmly?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you have at least 2 close friends with whom you share deep intimate thoughts?
YES	50/50	NO	Would your office visits to the MD for general symptoms (colds, flu, etc.) be less than two times a year?
YES	50/50	NO	Do you regularly set personal goals for your life?

Scoring

A "No" score = 5 points

A "50/50" score = 3 points

A "Yes" score = 1 point

Score: _____

Divide total score by 40.

Total Score: _____

Sample

$$30 \times 5 = 150$$

$$5 \times 3 = 15$$

$$5 \times 1 = 5$$

Total score is $170 / 40 = 4.25$

KEY

Life in Balance

Life on the Margin

Life out of Balance



A score of 1.0 – 2.0 = Your busyness is under control and you most likely are living a balanced life.

A score of 2.1 – 3.9 = Your busyness is a moderate concern and you should take precautionary steps to keep from sliding into a busyness addiction.

A score of 4.0 – 5.0 = You may have an addiction to busyness, a condition that, if unchanged, will ultimately lead to an unfulfilled life.

TOOL #11

Running the Bases: The Path of Forgiveness

Besides marital and children issues, an often-voiced issue will be how to forgive someone who has deeply hurt a counselee. This model is a way to help people understand that forgiveness is a multistep process. It also helps the counselee understand that they don't have to pretend the hurtful event never happened.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

When the counselor feels that the counselee is “stuck” in the dimensions of resentment or bitterness, the counselor can implement this model. It is important that the counselor or pastor go step-by-step in an unhurried manner.

Running the Bases: The Path of Forgiveness

Home Plate

The forgiver feels the emotions of sorrow, grief, loss, and anger. It is like a bone has been shattered.

*It is not an enemy who reproaches me,
Then I could bear it;
Nor is it one who hates me who has exalted himself against me,
Then I could hide myself from him.
But it is you, a man my equal,
My companion and my familiar friend. (Ps. 55:12–13)*

*Be gracious to me, O God, for man has trampled upon me;
Fighting all day long he oppresses me. (Ps. 56:1)*

*Trust in Him at all times, O people;
Pour out your heart before Him; God is a refuge for us. (Ps. 62:8)*

First Base

The forgiver makes a decision to forgive the offender. Here the broken bone is set.

*Joseph said to them, “Do not be afraid, for am I in God’s place? As for you, you meant evil against me, but God meant it for good in order to bring about this present result, to preserve many people alive.”
(Gen. 50:19–20)*

*“Blessed are the peacemakers, for they shall be called sons of God.”
(Matt. 5:9)*

“Forgive us our debts, as we also have forgiven our debtors. And do not lead us into temptation, but deliver us from evil. [For Yours is the kingdom and the power and the glory forever. Amen.] For if you forgive others for their transgressions, your heavenly Father will also forgive you. But if you do not forgive others, then your Father will not forgive your transgressions.” (Matt. 6:12–15)

Peter came and said to Him, “Lord, how often shall my brother sin against me and I forgive him? Up to seven times?” Jesus said to him, “I do not say to you, up to seven times, but up to seventy times seven.” (Matt. 18:21–22)

Be kind to one another, tender-hearted, forgiving each other, just as God in Christ also has forgiven you. (Eph. 4:32)

I can do all things through Him who strengthens me. (Phil. 4:13)

The one who says he is in the Light and yet hates his brother is in the darkness until now. The one who loves his brother abides in the Light and there is no cause for stumbling in him. But the one who hates his brother is in the darkness and walks in the darkness, and does not know where he is going because the darkness has blinded his eyes. (1 John 2:9–11)

Second Base

At second base, the forgiver relinquishes bitterness and the desire for revenge. He or she has let the bone heal. The forgiver comes to accept that forgiveness is surrendering his or her right to hurt the other person for hurting them.

Note: If the offender has shown genuine repentance and a 180-degree turn, then off to third base we go! If not, the forgiver stops and remains at second base.

*Do not say, "I will repay evil";
Wait for the LORD, and He will save you. (Prov. 20:22)*

Never pay back evil for evil to anyone. Respect what is right in the sight of all men. If possible, so far as it depends on you, be at peace with all men. Never take your own revenge, beloved, but leave room for the wrath of God, for it is written, "Vengeance is Mine, I will repay," says the Lord. "But if your enemy is hungry, feed him, and if he is thirsty, give him a drink; for in so doing you will heap burning coals on his head." Do not be overcome by evil, but overcome evil with good. (Rom. 12:17–21)

Do not be deceived, God is not mocked; for whatever a man sows, this he will also reap. For the one who sows to his own flesh will from the flesh reap corruption, but the one who sows to the Spirit will from the Spirit reap eternal life. Let us not lose heart in doing good, for in due time we will reap if we do not grow weary." (Gal. 6:7–9)

Let all bitterness and wrath and anger and clamor and slander be put away from you, along with all malice. (Eph. 4:31)

Third Base

The forgiver is able to restore the offender with God's help. A relational and realistic game plan is made, and new boundaries set so that security is restored. (Remember that it took the Christians three years to accept the apostle Paul once he converted to Christianity.)

By the time the relationship has reached third base, time has proven that the destructive cycle has ceased. As a result, a run is about to be scored.

May the God who gives perseverance and encouragement grant you to be of the same mind with one another according to Christ Jesus, so that

with one accord you may with one voice glorify the God and Father of our Lord Jesus Christ.

Therefore, accept one another, just as Christ also accepted us to the glory of God. (Rom. 15:5–7)

[Love] does not act unbecomingly; it does not seek its own, is not provoked, does not take into account a wrong suffered, does not rejoice in unrighteousness, but rejoices with the truth. (1 Cor. 13:5–6)

If any has caused sorrow, he has caused sorrow not to me, but in some degree—in order not to say too much—to all of you. Sufficient for such a one is this punishment which was inflicted by the majority, so that on the contrary you should rather forgive and comfort him, otherwise such a one might be overwhelmed by excessive sorrow. Wherefore I urge you to reaffirm your love for him. For to this end also I wrote, so that I might put you to the test, whether you are obedient in all things. But one whom you forgive anything, I forgive also; for indeed what I have forgiven, if I have forgiven anything, I did it for your sakes in the presence of Christ, so that no advantage would be taken of us by Satan, for we are not ignorant of his schemes. (2 Cor. 2:5–11)

The Run Has Been Scored!

Resolution: The forgiver and the offender are back in harmony once again.

Two are better than one because they have a good return for their labor. For if either of them falls, the one will lift up his companion. But woe to the one who falls when there is not another to lift him up. Furthermore, if two lie down together they keep warm, but how can one be warm alone? And if one can overpower him who is alone, two can resist him. A cord of three strands is not quickly torn apart. (Eccl. 4:9–12)

The father said to his slaves, "Quickly bring out the best robe and put it on him, and put a ring on his hand and sandals on his feet; and bring the fattened calf, kill it, and let us eat and celebrate; for this son of mine was dead and has come to life again; he was lost and has been found." And they began to celebrate. (Luke 15:22–24)

We had to celebrate and rejoice, for this brother of yours was dead and has begun to live, and was lost and has been found. (Luke 15:32)

In all these things we overwhelmingly conquer through Him who loved us. (Rom. 8:37)

TOOL #12

The “One Another” Commands Found in Scripture

A portion of a pastor’s counseling ministry to his flock will involve instructing individuals on what it means to have the “mind of Christ.” A practical assessment to help others toward this goal is to teach them the “one another” commands found in Scripture. Copying this list as a teaching template will help individuals grow in their faith. It will also benefit those who are struggling in their relationships with family members, friends, and peers.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

When discussing each of these commands, the counselor or pastor should ask the counselee, “On a scale of 1 to 10 (10 being *I am confident that I am following this command*, to 1 being *I am not following this command*), how would you grade yourself? And what factors went into your thinking that led you to relay to me the score you chose?” The answers given will provide data for your counseling sessions.

The “One Another” Relational Commands Found in Scripture

If Christians are truly sold out to Christ, these “one another” commands will be visible in their lives. Beside each command, the counselor can ask the counselee to rank their score on a scale of 1–10 (10 = With God’s help, I am close to 10; 1 = I am nowhere close to being faithful in this command).

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	OBSERVATIONS OF THE RELATIONSHIP	
Acts 7:26	Moses questioning sons of Israel	
Acts 19:38	Gentiles bringing charges in court	
Romans 12:5	Christians are a part of one another	
Romans 15:14	Christians are able to admonish one another	
Galatians 5:15	Christians can consume one another	
1 Thessalonians 4:9	God teaches us to love one another	
Titus 3:3	Christians used to hate one another	
1 John 1:7	Christians have fellowship with one another	
SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	LOVE ONE ANOTHER	SELF-RANK
John 13:34–35	So that all will know we are Christ’s disciples	

John 15:12	As Christ has loved us	
John 15:17	Christ's command	
1 Thessalonians 3:12	Increase and abound in love for one another and all people	
1 Peter 1:22	Fervently from the heart	
1 John 3:11	The message from the beginning	
1 John 3:23	Christ's commandment	
1 John 4:7	On the basis of your relationship to God	
1 John 4:11	Since God so loved us	
2 John 5	The commandment from the beginning	

SCRIPTURE REFERENCE	OTHER POSITIVE COMMANDS	SELF-RANK
Mark 9:50	Be at peace with one another	
Romans 12:10	Be devoted to and give preference to one another	
Romans 12:16	Be of the same mind	
Romans 14:19	Let us pursue the building up of one another	
Romans 15:5	Be of the same mind	
Romans 15:7	Accept one another	

1 Corinthians 11:33	At communion wait for one another	
1 Corinthians 12:25	Stop divisions by having the same care for one another	
Galatians 5:13	Through love serve one another	
Galatians 6:2	Bear one another's burdens	
Ephesians 4:2	Show forbearance to one another in love	
Ephesians 4:25	As members of one another speak the truth	
Ephesians 4:32	Be kind, tenderhearted, forgiving one another	
Ephesians 5:21	Be subject to one another	
Colossians 3:13	Bear with and forgive one another	
Colossians 3:16	Teaching and admonishing one another	
1 Thessalonians 4:18	Comfort one another with the truth of the resurrection	
Hebrews 3:13	Encourage one another	
Hebrews 10:24	Think of how to stimulate one another to love and works	
James 5:16	Confess sins to one another and pray for one another	
1 Peter 4:9	Be hospitable to one another without complaint	
1 Peter 5:5	Clothe yourselves with humility toward one another	

TOOL #13

Antidotes to the Pressures and Feelings that Affect Senior Citizens

Fear is the number one psychological problem for senior citizens. Much of this fear stems from a realization that they are gradually losing control of many things they once took for granted. When counseling senior citizens, the counselor or pastor needs to assess their predominant fears. This tool identifies three basic fears that senior citizens face and antidotes that can dispel those fears.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

Aging adults face unique challenges and fears. These pointers may be useful when counseling the senior citizen population. The following guide addresses three of the most common fears senior adults experience. Counselors can use this tool in an individual or conference setting. The counselor or pastor should copy the list of these fears and distribute them to the counselee or audience. Assign homework to encourage the senior to implement the particular antidotes given.

Antidotes to the Pressures and Feelings that Affect Senior Citizens

Fear #1: I AM AFRAID.

- I'm not as strong and self-sufficient as I once was.
- While income is fixed, nothing else seems to be holding steady.
- Changes in technology make me feel inadequate, like I'm losing touch with how to keep up.

Biblical Antidotes for Fear #1: I AM AN ADVENTURER.

This means:

- I look out for despair (Ps. 34:4)
- I have evaluated my outlook on life (Matt. 6:25–30)
- I don't overplan for tomorrow (Matt. 6:34)
- I have to reorient my priorities (Luke 10:4)
- I have loosened my grip on life (1 Peter 5:6–7)
- I apply suffering wisely (1 Peter 5:10)
- I search out perfect love (1 John 4:18)

Fear #2: I AM ALONE; I AM A FAILURE.

- I am developing a critical nature.
- Fears of yesterday keep me pessimistic.
- I resent self-disclosure, because I try to appear perfect.
- Retirement gives me more time to think about my problems.
- Many of my friends have passed away.
- I wish I had a second chance; I now feel put on the shelf.

Biblical Antidotes for Fear #2: I AM ACCEPTED.

This means:

- I have learned to meditate on my significance to God (Ps. 139:1–6)
 - I can age gracefully (2 Cor. 5:4–5)
 - I don't have to dwell on my past mistakes (2 Cor. 5:17)
 - I have achieved victory over bitterness (Eph. 4:31)
 - I have needs and am needed by others (James 5:13–14)
-

Fear #3: I AM ADRIFT.

- My kids are grown and gone.
- I have lost my purpose on earth.
- I have lost my self-respect.
- I am depressed.

Biblical Antidotes for Fear #3: I AM ACCOUNTABLE.

This means:

- I have chosen to deal with my anger biblically (Lev. 19:17–18)
- I have chosen to yield control of my life to God (Job 22:21)
- I have chosen to meditate on God's Word (Ps. 1:2–3)
- I have chosen to wait on God for my emotional strength (Isa. 40:28–31)
- I have chosen to keep growing spiritually (1 Peter 2:2)

TOOL #14

Self-Encouragement Exercise

We all feel discouragement from time to time. This assessment is designed to help individuals practice self-reflection as well as offer encouragement.

HOW AND WHEN TO USE THIS ASSESSMENT

A counselor or pastor can use this tool when the counselee is self-deprecating or struggles for emotional balance. Most individuals, including upstanding biblical characters, struggle with periods of feeling low and worthless. When a counselee begins to express those same sentiments, the counselor can use this exercise to enlighten him or her.

Self-Encouragement Exercise

Scriptures that center me:

Foods that delight me:

Friends who strengthen me:

God who loves me:

Memories that encourage me:

People who count on me:

Dreams that inspire me:

A family who surrounds me:

Problems that challenge me:

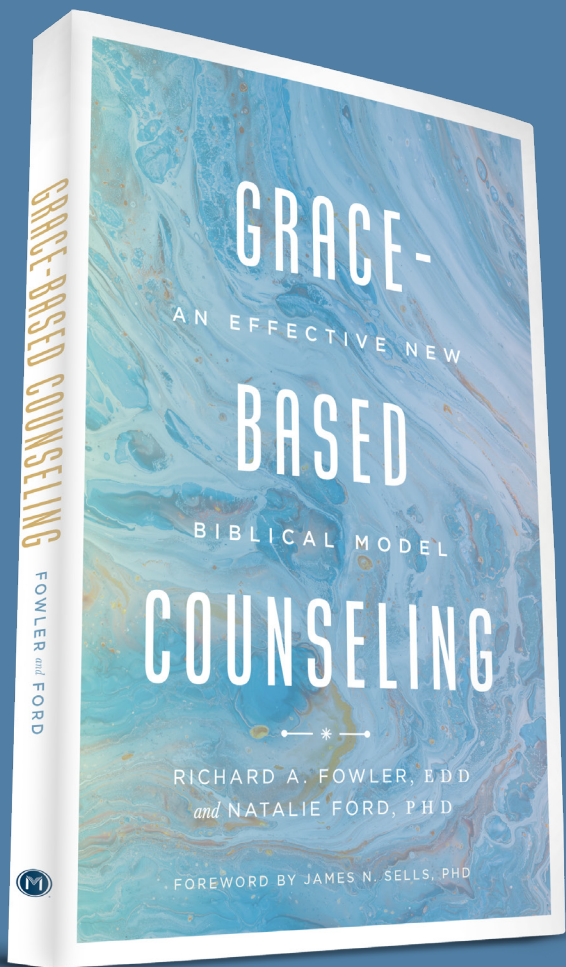
Mentors who have shaped me:

Stories that amuse me:

Twelve stones that remind me:

A call that compels me:

Physical activity that calms me:



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