

**Premarital strategy Paper**

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MFT 509: Premarital Counseling

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## **Premarital counseling strategy paper**

This premarital counseling is for Christian couples who are willing to understand themselves and their partners. Then they can build a healthy marriage based on the bible and reality, not myths. In addition, they can learn the overall factors influencing marriage and how to apply them to their relationship.

▶ Total session = 12 sessions   ▶ Time: 1 hour 30 mins for once a week

### ■ Session #1 – Introduction, Overview & Interactional Assessment

- This first session explains the purpose of this program and what they have to acknowledge before starting sessions, such as policies, session time, homework, etc. In addition, this first session is helping them to understand what premarital counseling is and what they expect from premarital counseling.

#### ▶ Sharing about

- What do they know about Premarital counseling?
- Why do they want to do Premarital counseling?
- What is their expectation about this program?
- How do they meet first?
- What attraction each partner has?
- What makes them consider marriage?

▶ Homework for the next session – Check ‘have you faced the Myths of marriage with honesty’ and ‘Making your roles conscious’ by SYMBIS exercise.

### ■ Session #2 – My expectation and your expectation

Most marriage conflicts and struggles are caused due to wrong marriage expectations and Myths (Parrott & Parrott, 2015). This session supports the couple in realizing their expectation and marriage Myths differ from reality and navigating why they have those expectations by reflecting on their family of origin.

#### ▶ Sharing about

- ‘Making your roles conscious’ results.
- What are my expectations of marriage and marriage Myths?
- How do you have those expectations and Myths?
- What is a happy marriage from your perspective?

▶ Homework for the next session – Family legacy rules by Dr. Mecurio to know what kind of family environment they grew up in and how it influenced them to act and think about marriage.

### ■ Session #3 – My family of origin

Family is deeply related to who we are. Once the pattern forms, that pattern passes down to the next generations (McGoldrick, 2011). Therefore, the attitude about marriage is influenced by their family of origin. So this session helps them find correlations between their family of origin and their marriage expectation then to cut negative patterns.

#### ▶ Sharing about

- ‘Family legacy rules’ results.
- What is the correlation between family legacy rules and their expectations about marriage and roles?

- What do they want to cut off and change in their marriage?

▶ Homework for the next session – MBTI Test for knowing about themselves and others.

#### ■ Session #4 – You and Me

There are many misunderstandings and conflicts in marriage because of ignorance. Also, we are easily against each other when we feel we are different. Everyone is born with different dispositions and grows up in different environments. This session supports the couple to know themselves and others and reduces conflicts due to ignorance and misunderstandings.

▶ Sharing about

- In what areas do they not understand each other?
- What is the MBTI, and evaluate the result of MBTI?
- What do they realize about themselves and others?
- How to incorporate differences based on MBTI results.

▶ Homework for the next session- Communication skills checklist by Dr. Mecurio to know about their communication skills.

#### ■ Session # 5– Communication I

Communication is the primary and powerful tool to relate with people. We can become best friends because of communication, but also we can become enemies because of communication. For instance, negative communication is related to chronic unsatisfied marriage (McGoldrick, 2011). Therefore, knowing about their communication pattern and learning effective communication skills is helpful for the couple to build a healthy relationship.

▶ Sharing about

- Strength and growth parts? ‘Communication skills’ checklist result
- What makes communication the most difficult?
- When do they feel they communicate well?

▶ Homework for the next week – Write five sentences they want to hear and not to hear from others.

■ **Session # 6– Communication II**

Effective Listening skills are an essential tactic to help people communicate well and feel understood by each other. I-statement is also an excellent way to deliver how I feel and think without judgment and blaming others. Learning and practicing these skills help the couple communicate well and build a healthy relationship.

▶ Sharing about

- Five sentences that they want and do not want to hear from each other
- What are listening skills?
- What is an I-statement?
- Helping them practice I-statements.

▶ Homework for the next week – ‘Five love languages’ by Gary Chapman for knowing what kinds of love they want to receive from each other.

■ **Session # 7– What’s your love language**

According to Gary Chapman, each person has an emotional love language, so your spouse may have a different one. It is like learning a foreign language to communicate with someone from another country (Chapman & Green, 2017). Therefore, we should be willing to learn our spouse's primary love language if we want our spouses to feel loved by us. It saves their time and energy. Moreover, it is a powerful way to show their love.

▶ Sharing about

- Guess which love language each other has?
- What are the Five love languages and discuss the worksheet.
- When do they feel loved by others?

▶ Homework for the next week- Writing about the meaning of money in their family origin and finance saving, debt, credit cards, college loans, home, transportation, etc.

■ **Session # 8– Finance**

Discussing their partners' financial history before they marry is essential, but many of them avoid this topic. However, managing finance is significant in married life. Knowing each one's financial management and condition, such as savings, debt, credit cards, college loans, home and transportation, is more realistic before getting married to avoid the fantasy that love is enough. This session will help them to disclose their financial status and discuss how to manage their finances after getting married.

▶ Sharing about

- Each person's financial status and spender or saver?
- Should we have joint accounts or separate accounts?

- Who will be in charge of organizing the finances and paying the bill?
- What are your financial goals?

► Homework for the next week – Checking ‘Sexual intimacy questionnaires’ to know each one’s opinion about Sex

#### ■ Session # 9– Sexual intimacy

Sex is an essential issue in a marriage that God allows in marriage life. It should be open to talk freely and asked by partners without shame or guilt. This session provides an excellent opportunity to learn about Sex in God’s perspective. (Gen 2:18, 24-25)

► Sharing about

- What do they think about Sex?
- Experience about Sex in the past and now?
- Wise rules for Sexual intimacy

► Homework for the next week – Answer to 25 Questions You Should Ask Your Partner Before Having Kids ( <https://www.cosmopolitan.com>).

#### ■ Session # 10– Pregnancy and parenting

Pregnancy and rearing children are blessings from God, but without planning and knowledge, marriage will become stressful and conflicted. This session gives a chance to learn basic knowledge about pregnancy, rearing children, how a couple's relationship will change because of that.

► Sharing about

- What the bible says about children

- Discuss '25 questions you should ask your partner before having kids'

▶ Homework for the next week – Conflict and anger management by Dr. Mercurio

■ **Session # 11 – Conflict management**

We can not avoid conflicts until we live; otherwise, conflict can be a chance to develop and mature our lives if we solve the problems appropriately. This session helps the couple know their way of solving the conflict and learn conflict management to build a stable and productive relationship.

▶ Sharing about

- Strength and growth regarding conflict management.
- What are their unsolved problems?
- Using I- statements and Listening skills

▶ Homework for the next session – Reading the sacred marriage chapter 1

■ **Session # 12– Vision as a Christian couple**

God called us into marriage for holiness, not happiness only (Thomas & Thomas, 2018). That is the fundamental difference between secular marriage and Christian marriage. God gives us chances to see our naked spiritual condition and personality in marriage so we can keep growing to follow Jesus Christ within each other. Therefore, this session will teach them how marriage became a place to be holy and how to support each other for spiritual oneness. This is the last session so we can review what topics we went through and the counselor encourages them to keep cooperating together to build a healthy relationship.

▶ Sharing about

- What do they realize about sacred marriage after reading a chapter?
- Briefly describe your relationship with God.
- What does it mean to you to be “spiritually one”?
- How do they support each other’s spiritual growth?
- Take a minute and write a prayer for yourself, your partner, or your marriage.
- Evaluating the premarital counseling experience.
- Additional sessions if needed or desired.

► **Contraindications or termination Policy**

1. This Premarital counseling program is for only Christian couples.
2. It can be terminated when abuse or addiction is found. The counselor will recommend professional counseling.
3. It can be terminated if one of the partners still has a relationship with someone else.
4. During the session, termination happens..
  - 1) If the couple is absent more than one time.
  - 2) If the couple does not do homework more than two times.

► **Policy regarding sexual purity**

“It is God’s will that you should be sanctified: that you should avoid sexual immorality; that each of you should learn to control his own body in a way that is holy and honorable, not in passionate lust like the heathen, who do not know God.” (1 Thessalonians 4:3-5).

Sex is good because God created it, called it “good,” and it existed before any sin existed in the world. But God allows Sex within the marriage relationship (Proverbs 5:18,19; Song of Solomon 4:5; 7:1, 6-9). Sex life is not just about sexual pleasure. It is for procreation (Gen 1:28) and is a symbol of profound union. Therefore, sexual purity is obeying God and respect for each other.

1. Before starting premarital counseling, ask what they think about sexual purity and explain about sexual purity in the bible.
2. Sexual purity agreement
3. If they do not keep the vow of sexual purity agreement after starting premarital counseling, they should report the counselor honestly.
4. Consider what leads them into that situation and encourage them to retry sexual purity.

► **The issue of hierarchy or egalitarian structure**

God created men and women in His image. Whether men were made first and women last, God made them precious. The roles of each gender can be flexible depending on culture and individual situations. However, the way they treat and think of each other must be equal and respected. Married couples are not in a hierarchical relationship. Instead, they are one team to be called to love each other and follow His way of life. They can share what they think their relationship looks like, whether they are in equal positions or hierarchy.

### **References**

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