



REMARRIAGE **CHECKUP**

Small Group Study Guide

Church-Based Resource

www.couplecheckup.com

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The Remarriage Checkup Small Group Study Guide
based on the Remarriage Checkup book

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Welcome! Your Relationship Deserves a Checkup

The odds are that sometime this year you will take the time to have a physical exam or get a dental checkup. Most people think nothing of it. Very few, on the other hand, take the time to get a relationship Checkup. But your relationship *deserves* a Checkup.

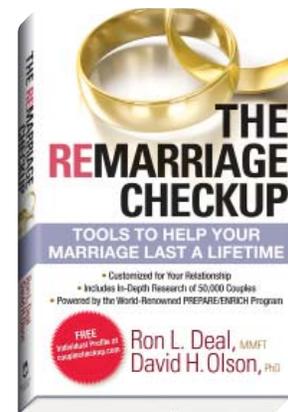
This group study provides an unparalleled opportunity for couples to enhance their relationship and build intimacy. It will help you to apply the principles found in *The Remarriage Checkup* to your relationship, whether dating, engaged, or married.

Congratulations, you're about to add strength to your relationship.

*Ron L. Deal, Family Ministry Consultant
Member of the Couple Checkup Research Team*

Getting the Most from this Study Guide

Whether you are an individual, couple, or group of couples studying this series together, this participant guide can be adapted to serve your needs. Each session walks you through discussion questions that will help you strengthen your relationship. Individuals and couples are welcome to complete the study by themselves (e.g., as part of a premarital counseling program), but we strongly recommend that you work through the material with a group of couples if possible (e.g., small group or Bible class). Our experience in marriage education suggest that fellowship and discussion with other couples is a vital part of applying the principles found in *The Remarriage Checkup*. Together you will support each other and discover how to enhance your relationship. Premarital couples are encouraged to attend groups with married couples to glean from their experience.



Get Started

Here are a few tips to improve the value of the program;

- **Take the online *Couple Checkup* inventory. (www.couplecheckup.com)** This relationship profile is the most researched inventory and will give you insight into the current strengths of your relationship. Like a GPS device that pinpoints your current location and then provides direction to your destination, this *Couple Positioning System* (CPS) identifies your relationship strengths and growth areas and provides specific feedback on how you can deepen intimacy.

The online *Couple Checkup* adapts to the stages of your relationship, (*dating, engaged, or married*) and provides personal feedback for your relationship. It only takes each partner about 30 minutes to complete the *Couple Checkup* online.

- **Get a copy of *The Remarriage Checkup*.** This Study Guide assumes you have a copy of the book and can read designated sections as part of the study. When used in combination, the book and study guide make an excellent learning system.
- **Use this Study Guide to take notes.** Space is provided so you can write down key observations or applications for your relationship.
- **The Wisdom of Scripture.** God’s truth is very evident in our research findings. We encourage you to look up and consider the scriptural references included in this guide.
- **Don’t skip anything.** For those of you studying with a group, be sure to complete the “Before Your Small Group Meeting” sections. This will prepare you for the group discussion time and further your application of the material. Individual couples not meeting with a group can discuss the group sections on their own.
- **Terminology.** Because this study is applicable to dating, engaged, or married couples, we will use the term “partner” throughout.
- **Come prepared.** Come to each group meeting with four items: a Bible, a copy of *The Remarriage Checkup* book, your *Couple Report*, and this Study Guide.
- **Use discretion.** This group study includes an optional discussion of sex. Sexuality is an important matter so if you choose not to discuss it in your group, be sure to have a private conversation with your partner. Likewise, we suggest you keep other private matters on any subject between you and your spouse; don’t mention them in a group setting unless you both agree.
- **Agree to the group guidelines.** See the next section. Group discussions that take place in a safe environment will benefit everyone. Take a few minutes during your first few meetings to review these guidelines and agree to abide by them.

All scripture is from the NIV version unless otherwise indicated.

Session 1: The Remarriage Checkup

Guidelines for Group Discussion

- **Confidentiality** – We agree that what is said here stays here. We honor one another’s privacy and will not share stories or details heard in the group meeting with people who are not in attendance.
- **Honor** – Couples agree not to share intimate details without first asking their spouse whether it is okay to share with the group. If you’re not sure it’s okay to share, then it probably isn’t. Wait and ask your spouse outside of group.
- **Advice** – We agree not to offer unsolicited advice to one another. If after telling about a frustration someone receives advice, they might feel judged and the pressure to abide by the advice. This creates a sharing barrier for them and others in the future. Agree only to give advice if someone first asks for the group’s input.
- **Respect** – We agree to show common courtesy to one another. Examples include allowing everyone to talk (not dominating the group discussion time), not interrupting, not engaging in side-conversations during the group discussion, and showing up on time. Even making a commitment to regular attendance shows respect to others who are counting on us to be there. Call if you cannot attend a session.
- **Acceptance and Encouragement** – We agree to build one another up in the Lord. We will share our faith, love, and support and strive to “walk along side” one another in mutual encouragement. If we disagree, we will continue to love in spite of our differences.

Leader’s Guide

Guidelines for effective group discussion and instructions for leading groups through this material are available in a **free Leader’s Guide** at www.couplecheckup.com. Please note that while individual couple profiles are not accessible to you (they are completely confidential) a **Group Summary Report** is available to help you determine which topics will be helpful to your group. See the Leaders’s Guide for instructions.

Introduction

Covering the Preface and Chapter 1, *The Remarriage Checkup*

WELCOME! Take a few minutes to get to know each other as you begin this study together.

- A. When was the last time you had a dental appointment or annual physical? Why do we do this on a regular basis?
- B. How often do you get your car checked out or the oil changed?
- C. Why do you suppose couples rarely, if ever, get a “checkup” on their relationship?
- D. Take some time to introduce yourselves to one another:
 - Share a brief sketch of your family including whether you are dating or married and how many children or stepchildren you have. Share one peculiar thing about your family that most people do not know.

Study Overview

This study is about growing your relationship and encouraging others as they grow theirs. To accomplish this each couple will be asked to:

- Read a corresponding chapter in *The Remarriage Checkup* before each meeting
- Discuss the “Before the Meeting” questions with your partner

During each session our group will share thoughts and insights into how to apply the principles of *The Remarriage Checkup*. Creating a safe environment where you and other couples can learn and find support is everyone’s job. To facilitate that safe environment, spend a little time reviewing the following group guidelines. When you agree to abide by these guidelines everyone has a shared expectation of how the group

Focusing On Strength

Most marital research focuses on problems or divorce. This study is based on the largest in-depth survey of remarital strengths ever conducted and believes that building on your strengths is much more productive than focusing on your weaknesses.

- Share a quality of strong marriages that you have witnessed in the marriages of family or friends.
- In general, what qualities do you think contribute to a strong marriage?

Prayer Time

A. Take some time to pray for your study and one another. Ask the Lord to provide valuable insights as you meet each week.

For Next Week

Be sure to read the Preface and chapters one and two and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section privately as a couple.

Session 2: Building on Your Strengths

Covering Chapter 2, *The Remarriage Checkup*

"The only difference between stumbling blocks and stepping stones is how we choose to use them."

From The Remarriage Checkup, pg.31

Before Your Small Group Meeting

1. Read Chapter 2 of *The Remarriage Checkup* before your individual or small group discussion.
2. Complete the Couple Exercise on pg. 35.
3. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 36-37.

Small Group Discussion

A. Review and discuss the following key points from the chapters.

Make application to your relationship when appropriate.

1. Consider this quote:
"...frequently one person in a couple is much happier than their partner. In fact, there is a low correlation in marital satisfaction between spouses, meaning that if you know the satisfaction level of one partner, you will only be able to predict the other partner's marital satisfaction 25% of the time" (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 17).
 - How can it be that men and women have different levels of satisfaction with various aspects of their relationship (e.g., communication, finances, etc.)?
 - Discuss why it is important to remind yourself from time to time not to get lulled into assuming that because you are happy, the other is also happy.
2. Review the list of Key Strengths of Highly Satisfied Remarriage Couples on page 28 of *The Remarriage Checkup*:
 - The items are listed in rank order. What surprises you about the list?
 - Share one positive aspect of your relationship with the group. Remember to celebrate one another's strengths.

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

3. Consider this quote:
“Understanding the differences and obstacles in our relationships removes some of the power they have over us. Awareness generates in us the ability to maneuver more intelligently, perhaps by confronting the challenge that these stumbling blocks pose rather than tripping over them.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 32)
 - Why do we sometimes hide from becoming aware of the obstacles in our relationships?
 - Read James 1:2-8. Knowledge that gives direction to life in scripture is referred to as “wisdom”. Sometimes we seek the Lord’s wisdom but then remain closed to what He is trying to show us. How can you open yourself to the Lord’s wisdom for your marriage?
 - Discuss as a group how you will share wisdom with one another during your group time. Is it permissible to “give advice” to one another? How might you go about doing so?
 - Hebrews 12:7-11 suggests that hardship is discipline that God uses to grow us into righteousness. How do the challenges of marriage also function as God’s discipline or refinement of us?
 - Review the list of Remarriage Stumbling Blocks on page 29. Which can you relate to? Which have you witnessed as problems in the lives of other remarriage couples (before or after the wedding)?

B. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

1. Prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
2. Pray as a group about the relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

Be sure to read chapter three in *The Couple Checkup* book and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Prayer Time

For Next Week

Session 3: Beating the Odds of Divorce: The Stepfamily Connection

Covering Chapter 3, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“...the remarriage journey has plenty of surprises along the way.”
From *The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 41

Before your small group meeting

1. Read Chapter 3 of *The Remarriage Checkup* before your individual or small group discussion.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 45-46.

Small Group Discussion

A. Open: The higher divorce rate for remarriages and stepcouple relationships draws a clear connection between the added stress of stepfamily living and marital dissolution; living in a stepfamily is hard on a marriage. If already married, in what ways did you underestimate this truth when you decided to get married?

B. Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.

Make application to your relationship when appropriate.

1. Consider this quote:

“The unique challenges of being a stepcouple work against marital success, and only those who intentionally work to overcome them find the rewards they dream of before walking down the aisle.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 41)

- How can you be more “intentional”?
- What attitudes, time adjustments, or habits need to change in your family to help you overcome the challenges of your stepfamily?

2. Consider this quote:

“The term stepcouple also accurately communicates our conviction that marriage in a stepfamily cannot be enhanced without consideration of the entire stepfamily system. One cannot compartmentalize the couple’s relationship as if it exists in a vacuum. In other words, the health of the couple’s relationship is interdependent with the health of the stepfamily. Each greatly impacts the other.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 41)

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- The word “stepcouple” is an awkward term, but very descriptive. In what ways do you think it is accurate of your relationship?
 - Currently, what aspects of your stepfamily most impact your marriage for the good? For the worse?
3. Many people like Frank (see page 43) interpret having to work “hard” at bringing a stepfamily together as a sign that they shouldn’t be together.
- How is it reassuring to you to learn that all stepfamilies struggle with added stress and strain the first few years and that “working hard” is normal?
 - How can you keep from being overly discouraged by this process?
4. Consider this quote:
“The fantasy of marital peace and harmony that leads couples to the altar usually doesn’t become reality for seven or more years for most stepcouples. (Some lucky couples with small children may discover the honeymoon within a few years.) Until then, it is hard work and determination—one step at a time—which finally pays off in a “honeymoon” experience” (The Remarriage Checkup, p. 43).
- How is it helpful to know that the average stepfamily needs around seven years to solidify their bonds and become “family”? How is it discouraging?
 - Why is having this realistic time frame important?
 - What do you think happens if adults/parents get impatient with this process and try to force people to like or love one another?
- C. Open Discussion:** Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapters four and five in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 4: Mapping Closeness and Flexibility

Covering Chapter 5, *The Remarriage Checkup*

Nearly everyone knows that communication and conflict resolution are key ingredients to a happy marriage. But closeness and flexibility are just as important.

Before your small group meeting

1. Read chapters four and five in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussions on pg. 59-61 (chapter 4) and pg. 80-81 (chapter 5).

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** Throughout this chapter healthy closeness is defined as a balance between individuality (separateness) and togetherness. In what ways does God maintain this same balance in His relationship with us?
(Hint: God wants to draw near to us, but He never limits our free will.)
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. **Closeness is not just a feeling.** It also has a “doing” element. Review the “Getting Close” list on page 66 and discuss how you can live these qualities of close couples. Go around the group and give examples of as many as you can.
 2. **Review the Five Levels of Closeness chart on page 67 in *The Remarriage Checkup*.** Take turns sharing responses to the following:
 - Which level of closeness best describes the family you grew up in (your “family of origin”)?
 - Keeping in mind that we tend to repeat or do the opposite of the closeness style of the family we grew up in, how is this similar or different to your current relationship?
 3. **Closeness Case Study: Review the story about Matt and Sherry on pages 68-69.**
 - If Matt and Sherry better understood one

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

another's need for closeness (and how the other defines it), how could they serve one another better?

- When partners have differing needs for closeness, how can they keep from taking it personally (e.g., that Sherry's need for closeness is less than Matt's)?
- What insights have you gained

C. Discuss relational flexibility.

"Flexibility refers to how open to change a couple's relationship is in the areas of leadership, relationship boundaries, roles within the marriage, and problem solving. Healthy couple relationships maintain a balance between a predictable pattern of interaction ("stability") and the ability to adapt or change when circumstances call for it ("flexibility)." (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 71)

- Case Study: Review the story about Kay on page 70. In what ways can you see flexibility being lived out in her life?
- How might things be different if she remained rigid and unbending?
- What happens if you have too much change in a marriage or family?

D. Review the Five Levels of Flexibility on page 72.

- Which level of flexibility best describes your family of origin?
- How is this similar or different to your current relationship?

E. Review together the Couple Flexibility chart on page 73.

- Contrast the qualities of happy and unhappy couples as you review the chart.

F. Digging Deeper: We theorize that humility is a fundamental attitude of flexible, adaptable people. They are not rigid in their thinking or prideful that their way is right. Is it any wonder that our study found that flexible couples compromise more and share leadership equally?

- God makes it clear in scripture that He "opposes

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

the proud, but gives grace to the humble” (James 4:6). A prideful attitude in us creates opposition from God while a humble attitude in us fosters closeness and grace from God. How does pride and humility function similarly in your relationship (hint: it fosters either distance or closeness, opposition or grace from your partner)?

G. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter six in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 5: Eyes Wide Open: Finding Realistic Expectations

Covering Chapter 6, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“Since love is often blind, we usually keep one—or both—eyes shut during the dating process. We want to see the future as being full of possibilities and, therefore, tend to skip over reality.”

Ron L. Deal

Before your small group meeting

1. Read chapter six in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 98.
3. Complete the Bonus Couple Exercise in Ghost Busting on pg. 99-100. Allow yourself 15-30 minutes for this exercise.

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** What wisdom does this Jamaican Proverb hold for both dating couples and those who are married?
“Before you marry keep both eyes open; after marriage shut one.”

- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.**

Make application to your relationship when appropriate.

“When unrealistic expectations meet reality, disappointment sets in and becomes a huge relational obstacle for many couples. Once disillusionment is felt, persons tend to blame the relationship itself or their spouse instead of their own unrealistic expectations. When this happens, partners posture themselves against one another, not beside each other.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, page 89)

- Disappointment and disillusionment are natural outcomes of unrealistic expectations. How can you keep them from turning you against your partner?
- Why is it important to examine your expectations?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

1. Discuss Unrealistic Expectation #1: *“Getting remarried and creating a stepfamily might be stressful, but what’s the problem?”* (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 89)
 - Why is it important to accept that creating a stepfamily is stressful?
 - It is common for the stepparent to experience more stress than the biological parent because stepparent’s are adjusting to everything—the marriage, parenting, relationships with children, ex-spouses, etc. while biological parents are mainly adjusting to the marriage. Why is it important for biological parents not to minimize the stress of the stepparent?
2. Discuss Unrealistic Expectation #2: *“If we love each other, the children will follow close behind?”* (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 91)
 - The couple relationship (i.e., marriage) and stepparent-stepchildren relationships can be on different trajectories; the openness of children to the stepparent, for example, can operate quite independently of the couple’s relationship. Why is it important to accept this truth?
 - Trying to work with the openness of children instead of pushing them to like or love stepsiblings or the stepparent helps everyone relax with one another. Why do you think this is important?
3. Discuss Unrealistic Expectation #3: *“If we are in love and our marriage is strong, children, outside forces, and ex-spouses will not divide us.”* (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 91).
 - It is common for stepparents to feel left out when their spouse is spending time with their children. How can you prevent that feeling from becoming a wedge in your marriage?
 - Outside forces (e.g., ex-spouses, extended family, court proceedings) that impact your family schedule, finances, relationships, etc. can lead to feelings of helplessness. Accepting the reality

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

of these forces can help to ease the ensuing distress (even though it doesn't get rid of the frustration). What attitudes can help you to cope with these dynamics?

4. Discuss Unrealistic Expectation #4:

"Emotional resolution of previous losses and painful relationships means they won't affect us in the future."
(*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 92).

- A dead and buried past is easily resurrected by the intimacy of a new relationship. What are you learning about managing your internal fears of being hurt by marriage or the stepfamily?
- Because fear erodes marital confidence and trust, you must recognize the warning signs: not working through hurts from the past; high distress when your mate talks about their previous marriage/partner; anxiety or worry about another relationship breakup (or loss); jealousy or worry about not feeling as important to your spouse as you wish you did. Share an example of these concerns in your life.
- Marital ghosts "can lead one partner to live as if negative things are happening when they're not and interpret behaviors, attitudes, or words with meaning that was only justifiably attributable to the previous relationship" (pg. 94). Have you experienced a moment when you interpreted your spouse's behavior or words through the lens of a previous relationship? Share an example.

If you completed the Bonus Couple Exercise on page 99, share some insights to "busting your ghost."

- C. **Digging Deeper:** As a group review the story of Gary and Shirley (pg. 94-95). What can you learn from Gary's ghost and how he tried to protect himself from further pain?

Prayer Time

- D. **Open Discussion:** Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.
- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter seven in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your "Before Your Small Group Meeting" discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 6: Children & Parenting: When Kids Are Part of the Package

Covering Chapter 7, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“Before I got married, I had six theories about bringing up children; now I have six children, and no theories.”

John Wilmot

Before your small group meeting

Small Group Discussion

1. Read chapter seven in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 116-117.
 - A. **Open:** What makes the above quote by John Wilmot so humorous?
 - In what ways can you relate to it?
 - Parenting is a humbling process. Time and time again raising children reminds us that we cannot control everything and that our theories of child-rearing don't always prove correct. Share a time that you were humbled or realized that you still have much to learn.
 - How often do you pray for yourself as a parent, as well as your children's development?
 - Some parents “pray in the moment” when dealing with their children. How can you make this a part of your parenting?
 - B. **Group Check-In:** Your Couple Checkup Report indicates your current relationship strengths. When did you see one of your strengths at work this past week? Share a recent example where you tried to/did put a strength into action
 - C. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

1. Couple Satisfaction & Parenting

“Before the wedding, couple satisfaction is based more on the couple’s interactions than the stepfamily ‘package.’ But after the wedding, parenting and stepfamily dynamics become even more salient to couple satisfaction and happiness.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 102)

- Why do you think this is?
- Discuss this statement: Couples who ignore matters of parenting or stepparenting will likely experience a great deal of dissatisfaction in their marriage.

2. Marriage & Parenting

“Even with the awareness that your marriage transition generates insecurity and anxiety in children, couples must openly declare and demonstrate their commitment to the marriage in order to establish themselves as the foundation to the home. It is the first step toward marital intimacy, stepfamily harmony, and effective parenting.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 104)

- Why might your marriage create insecurity or anxiety in your children?
- What happens to parental authority if a couple doesn’t demonstrate a firm marital commitment to the children?

3. Agreeing on Discipline.

“One of the strengths of very happy couples in our study was their ability to come together around matters of childrearing. Happy couples (84%) had discussed their responsibilities and 68% had agreed on how to discipline the children; much fewer unhappy or dissatisfied couples had (54% and 36% respectively)... Couples who find consensus regarding behavioral discipline and expectations grow closer together and are much better equipped to manage the various emotions demonstrated by the children.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 106)

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- The Biblical story of Abraham and Sarah—a parent and stepparent who didn't agree on how to manage Abraham's son Ishmael—reveals that even the best of people disagree on parenting. It also reveals that conflict, sometimes excessive conflict, is the result of such disagreements (see Genesis 21:1-11). Is this an issue in your parenting?
 - When disagreements occur, how can you keep from assuming it is because the stepparent doesn't care enough (a trap many couples fall in to)?
 - Most people discipline their children as their parent's disciplined them, or they do the opposite. Is this true of you?
 - If you have different styles or parenting philosophies, what needs to change for you to get "on the same page"?
4. **Review the keys to parenting in stepfamilies (found on pages 106-110).** Discuss how they apply to your family.
- Key 1: Biological parents must pass authority to stepparents.
 - Key 2: Biological parents should build trust in stepparents.
 - Key 3: Stepparents should move into relationship and discipline gradually.
 - Discuss this summary quote (p. 109): "A child's trust, respect, and honor grow out of a relational history with a stepparent that comes with time and positive experiences. Successful stepparents are dedicated to relationship building over the long haul and don't try to force their way into the child's heart. They also understand the limitations of positional authority in the first few years of the stepfamily and rely heavily on the biological parent to manage the children until their own relational influence grows."

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

5. Did the **Styles of Parenting** section (p. 110-113) give you any insights into your parenting strengths or weaknesses? Share a few.

D. Digging Deeper: Without a doubt, parents are God’s “plan A” for children. We provide for their physical and emotional needs and teach values.

- What proactive steps are you taking to instill faith into your children?
- Children are the great imitators of our behaviors. Scripture makes it clear that parental modeling is a powerful force in the lives of children. How we live and how we love sets an example that they will follow. Read Deuteronomy 6: 4-8. Instilling values in children occurs when we teach faith during the natural rhythms of life (e.g., at home, when traveling, at bedtime, etc.). But verse 6 indicates that the first method of teaching Godly values is modeling them (“upon your hearts”). Share some ways you are modeling Godly values for your children.
- Parenting is a sacred honor. Some believe that mothers and fathers together reflect the full parental nature of God. When only one parent is involved, children miss out on the unique leadership abilities of the other parent. How do you divide up parenting responsibilities in your home?

E. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?

B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter eight in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Session 7: SCOPE Out Your Personalities

Covering Chapter 8, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“Spirituality is deeply personal, as we come to our own faith journey through a combination of our upbringing, our education, our beliefs, and ultimately, our own encounter with the divine.”

The Remarriage Checkup, p. 148

Before your small group meeting

1. Read chapter eight in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 137-138.
3. Our study found that the following negative personality qualities were dangerous for remarriages. Take a look in the mirror and ask yourself which, if any, of these you need to work on: moodiness, being critical, controlling, stubborn, or have a temper?
4. The Couple Discussion section at the bottom of each personality description on your Couple Checkup Report represents the “intersection” of your personality types.
 - Which aspects of your personalities are different?
 - Which are similar?

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** When the personalities of partners are similar, it is easier for them to get along. But different personalities (e.g., an extrovert and an introvert) can actually become a mightier strength when couples learn how to appreciate each other. How might this be?
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. **Stability of Personality:**

“Personality characteristics are rather stable over time in most people. A common misperception is that you can change personality traits if you don’t like them. While we might achieve slight adjustments in personality over time, our personality is pretty much set by the time we reach adolescence.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 120)

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- Share one implication of this truth for couples?
- What advice would you give someone who doesn't like an aspect of their partner's personality?

2. Four Stages to Mature Love

Consider the four stages that David Augsburger says couples go through on the way to mature love (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 122-123). Which stages can you relate to? What challenge does the fourth stage present to you?

- Stage 1: During courtship, couples accommodate or tolerate one another's differences to avoid conflict and keep their dream relationship alive. What makes us prone to do this?
- Stage 2: After the wedding, when the reality of a spouse's personality sets in, partners try to eliminate the objectionable differences by criticizing or demanding change. How likely is it that you can change the personality of your partner? What happens when you try?
- Stage 3: When couples reach the third stage, they begin to appreciate the differences in personality as creative, necessary parts of the person they love and of the marriage itself. What has to change within a person before they can appreciate the differences of their partner?
- Stage 4: Mature partners with a mature love then celebrate and delight in their differences, recognizing that each is acceptable and beneficial to the health of the relationship. This type of mature love requires accepting both the other and yourself. How so?

3. Negative Personality Traits

When negative personality traits (i.e., withdrawn, moody, and controlling) become chronically out of balance, they are like a toxic poison to your relationship.

- Read Galatians 5:22-23. If being moody, controlling, critical, and unreliable is a

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- toxic poison to a relationship, what impact would living the fruits of the Spirit have?
- Take some time to discuss each fruit of the Spirit (e.g., kindness, gentleness, self-control). Share practical examples of how you can live them out in your relationship.

4. How are you learning to manage your couple personality differences? Share an insight from your Couple Checkup Report.

C. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter nine in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your "Before Your Small Group Meeting" discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 8: The Vital Importance of Healthy Communication

Covering Chapter 9, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“...for couples creating stepfamilies, communication alone accounted for nearly 35% of what makes for a happy relationship, and the communication scale alone in our study can predict with 92% accuracy whether couples were satisfied with their relationship. In other words, you better learn how to communicate!”

The Remarriage Checkup, p. 140

Before your small group meeting

- A. Read chapter nine in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
- B. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 155.

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** This chapter indicates that every couple—happy or unhappy—needs to continually enhance their communication skills. Why do you think that is?
 - In what way is it encouraging to you that 82% of all couples, both vitalized and discouraged couples alike, have at least one complaint about how they communicate?
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. **Communication and Anger** “A gentle answer turns away wrath, but a harsh word stirs up anger.” Proverbs 15:1 NIV
 - All of us are critical at some point. What are you feeling when you are most critical?
 - Next time you feel this way, what can you do to avoid becoming critical?
 2. **Read aloud the story of Anita and Michael** (p. 142-144). As you read, point out these three dangerous communication patterns: criticism, making assumptions, and failing to listen.

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

3. Listening is not the same as hearing.

- Why is listening so much more difficult than hearing?
- Read James 1:1-20. Share about someone you know who is “quick to listen.”
- Read the example of paraphrasing involving Michael and Anita (last paragraph, bottom of page 145). What might make this easy or difficult for you personally to do?

4. Communication and Safety

Communication skills are really about increasing emotional safety in a relationship so dialogue can be productive rather than threatening, and couples can feel close to one another.

- Solomon agrees. He points out twice that it’s better to live on the corner of the roof than share a house with a quarrelsome spouse (see Prov. 21:9 & 25:24). Without emotional safety we just want to hide from one another.
- What is something you learned in this chapter that could enhance the safety in your relationship?

5. Idealism in Engaged Couples

Engaged couples have the tendency to look for positive qualities in their partner and overlook negative ones. Married couples, on the other hand, are tempted to focus on the negatives in their partner and communication.

- Discuss why you think this is?
- What can engaged couples do to be more realistic about one another?
- What might married couples do to affirm their strengths rather than focus on their negatives?

C. Digging Deeper:

Here is a list of the communication skills discussed on pages 149-153 in The Couple Checkup. Share an example of your partner doing one or more of these.

- A Conversation a Day

- Self-disclosure
- Assertiveness and “I” statements
- Active listening using paraphrasing
- Daily compliments

D. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

1. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
2. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapters ten and eleven in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section. You will need extra time to complete your CPS dialogue so plan accordingly.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 9: Managing and Extinguishing the Fires of Conflict

Covering Chapters 10-11, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“Couples in healthy marriages understand that the fires of conflict—managed in a constructive manner—are actually useful to the marriage. Years of research have confirmed that conflict helps to weed out the unhealthy or weak aspects of marriage and replace them with a stronger marital alliance and growing sense of security.”

The Remarriage Checkup, p. 160

Before your small group meeting

1. Read chapters ten and eleven in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussions on pg. 166-167 and 183-184

Small Group Discussion

A. Open: Share a strength.

Over time growing couples discover attitudes and actions that help them resolve or manage their differences. Take a few minutes to share one thing you have learned to do or say that seems to help your relationship. Take note of the tools others have learned to use.

B. Group Check-in: Whether Conflict Resolution is a strength or growth area in your relationship, all of us can learn new skills to improve how we manage disagreements. Share one insight you gained from these chapters into how you act during disagreements.

C. Conflict Management

Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter. Make application to your relationship when appropriate.

1. Consider this quote: “Healthy stepcouples have conflict, but they make having fun and romance a strategic part of their conflict management plan. Enjoying each other makes times of conflict easier to handle because your attitude toward your partner and the problem is one of collaboration. Having a loving relationship makes you more willing to find ways of resolving conflict. But a relationship plagued by months and years of debris will find that even small fires can rage out of control.” (*The Remarriage Checkup, p. 159*)

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- a. How are you adding the “wet rains” of fun and romance to your marriage.
2. “Couples in high-quality relationships resolve their differences, demonstrate important listening and understanding skills, and have unity in how they tackle disagreements. In stark contrast, unhappy and dissatisfied couples stockpile the debris in their relationship because they avoid issues, invalidate one another’s concerns, don’t feel heard, turn small problems into big ones, and can’t even agree on how to disagree.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 161)
 - a. If someone recorded you during an argument with a video camera, what would we see? Mention both strong points and weaknesses?
 - b. What would you tell a friend who repeatedly ended up in fights with their spouse—fights they could not resolve on their own?
3. “We highly recommend that you, too, have controlled burns in your marriage. Sitting down weekly (or on some other regular basis) to proactively discuss family decisions, parenting dilemmas, financial concerns, and the status of your stepfamily’s growth is a healthy way of reducing the potential of hazardous fires. In addition, we believe doing so will increase “fire-fighter safety” in your marriage (protecting you from becoming trapped by wildfire) and increase confidence in your ability to lead and manage your stepfamily.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 162)
 - a. Have you ever tried having weekly (regular) proactive business meetings on behalf of your marriage or family? What results did it produce?
 - b. For some couples, one of the advantages of controlled burns is protecting their romance. If an issue arises on Friday night, they can hold off the problem discussion until their next meeting on Monday. This protects their weekend time together. How might this work for your marriage?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

4. What's your conflict resolution style?
 - a. Are you a Pursuer, Distancer, Overfunctioner, Underfunctioner, or a Blamer? Refer to pages 172-173.
 - b. How can knowing this about yourself help you to stay in control during a conflict? How can you balance your responses?
5. Consider this quote.

"What makes the constructive approaches to resolving conflict especially effective is an overall posture of humility... A humble attitude about yourself during conflict means you don't have to defend your every action or attitude; when appropriate, you can take responsibility for what wasn't healthy and ask forgiveness. Humility also facilitates listening and considering the other's opinion or preference without feeling compelled to accommodate or forcefully advance your own opinion. It a posture of openness and grace, which invites the other to move toward you emotionally because you are safe. Conflict naturally pushes couples apart, but a spirit of humility directly counteracts that by facilitating softness, gentleness, and self-control—all of which create a safe environment to explore the conflict." (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 175-176)

 - a. Share some examples of humble people you have observed.
 - b. A demonstration of humility in conflict is not having to defend yourself and/or taking responsibility for your actions. How well can you do this? Rate yourself on a scale of 1 to 10 and share why.
6. Assuming you completed the Couple Exercise on page 180, share some insights from your couple discussion. How did the 10-step process help?

- D. Digging Deeper:** A conflict Case Study. Review the story about Ned and Amy on pages 163-164.
- Could you see yourself in any of the description of Ned and Amy?

- What insights does this story give you about your relationship heat, fuel, and oxygen—and how those elements intersect?
- What fire management strategies have you learned that might be helpful for your marriage?

E. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter twelve in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your "Before Your Small Group Meeting" discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 10: Leisure: Maximize Your Fun Factor

Covering Chapter 12, *The Remarriage Checkup*

"...shared leisure activity was the number four predictor of a healthy, vitalized stepcouple relationship. Why? Because it fosters closeness, friendship, and enjoyable opportunities for you to bond. That's why we've dubbed it the Fun Factor of a great marriage."

The Remarriage Checkup, p. 185

Before your small group meeting

1. Read chapters twelve in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 190.

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** Read the quote at the beginning of this session. What do you think? Is the "fun-factor" more a function of fun (i.e., an enjoyable activity) or of marital friendship?
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. Consider this quote:
"Carving out time together away from the children when trying to win another person's heart is a sacrifice most individuals and parents are willing to make [during courtship]. But once the marriage is official, there is a natural temptation to shift one's focus back toward the children."
(*The Remarriage Checkup, p. 186*)
 - a. Why do we naturally drift away from intentional fun, romance, and adventurous activities after the wedding?
 - b. In what ways have you seen stepfamily couples focus so much on "not abandoning" their children that they sacrifice their marriage?
 2. Which of the following stumbling blocks can you relate to and why? What can you do about it?
 - a. Finding time for fun.

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- b. Differing ideas on what constitutes a “good time”.
 - c. Share other stumbling blocks in your relationship or someone else’s.
3. Consider this statement:
“One possible resolution for couples whose ideas of fun or personality preferences vary is to find the balance between individual recreation and making sacrifices which seek a common pleasure.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 187)
 - a. Some refer to this as adding to the “us”. When you don’t personally care for an activity, but do so willingly on behalf of the “us” (that is, your relationship), you are contributing to your marital strength. What are some examples from your life you can share with the group?
4. “Another strength of healthy couples is not letting individual interests interfere with couple experiences. For 95% of strong couples leisure time together takes precedence over individual interests. This is not to say that healthy couples don’t ever have individual interests; 79% of them respect each other’s unique interests and find a balance between leisure time spent separately and together. But they work to ensure that individual time doesn’t come at the expense of the marriage.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 188)
 - a. How can you find a balance in pursuing individual interests and making sacrifices for the “us”?

C. Digging Deeper:

As a group, review the Growing Together Exercise on page 188. Complete the discussion as a group. Share as many ideas as you can for maximizing your fun-factor.

- D. Open Discussion:** Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you’re not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter thirteen in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 11: Remarriage Finances: Yours, Mine, and Ours”

Covering Chapter 13, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“No one can serve two masters. Either he will hate the one and love the other, or he will be devoted to the one and despise the other. You cannot serve both God and Money.” (Matt. 6:24 NIV)

God has a great deal to say about money and the accumulation of possessions throughout the Bible. Obviously He understands the temptation it presents us and He wants us to maintain a healthy perspective about its place in our lives. This lesson will guide your thinking and attitudes about money in your relationship.

Before Your Small Group Meeting

1. Read chapters twelve in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 206.

Small Group Discussion

- A. Open:** What do you think about this statement?
Money is often cited as a key reason couple’s divorce. However, those of us who study marriage view it a little differently. Money doesn’t cause problems per se, but when attitudes and values about money clash, couples find they have many disagreements that divide them. Keeping God’s perspective about money is the solution to such difficulties. When you surrender to God’s values about money, you will find relationship coming together in honor of Him.
- B. Review and discuss the following.** Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. *“If you sometimes feel as though financial issues dominate your life, you are not alone. It is estimated that we spend up to 80% of our waking hours earning money, spending money, or thinking about money. A survey conducted by American Express Financial Advisors revealed that 66% of Americans spend more time thinking about money and careers than they do about sex, health, or relationships.” (from the sister book *The Couple Checkup*, pages 79-80)*
 - Now Read Hebrews 13:5

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

Questions to Discuss:

- How does God's promise never to leave us help us to keep our lives free from the love of money?
- Practically, we do have to think about earning money or spending money, but how can we find contentment with what we have?
- What does Jesus mean when he says, "You cannot serve both God and Money"? (Matt. 6:24 NIV).

2. *"Consumerism interferes with interpersonal relationships by replacing the normal common-sense desire for an adequate supply of life's necessities, community life, a stable family and healthy relationships, with an ongoing and insatiable quest for things. We can assume it is this quest for things that has led to a substantial increase in consumer debt and bankruptcies. Many studies have found a link between financial problems and marital dissatisfaction and divorce. But even in marriages and families without debt or financial strain, using money as a model of success and happiness is sure to disappoint."* (from the sister book *The Couple Checkup*, pg. 83)

- Now Read Ecclesiastes 5:10

Questions to Discuss:

- People are often fascinated with the luxurious lives of rich people. We often envy what they have. What do we think money or the accumulation of material things will give us that we don't already have?
- Solomon says that those who love money or wealth will never have enough. Why not? What is meaningless about this pursuit?
- By comparing ourselves to those who have more we rarely view ourselves as being a "lover of wealth." What do your couple spending habits say about your attitude toward the accumulation of things?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

3. **“Spenders and savers are the classic money personalities. Not surprisingly, saving/spending problems are common among couples because individuals often have different personal preferences of spending and saving.”** (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 201)

- Now Read 1 Timothy 6:6-10

Questions to Discuss:

- Spenders and savers alike struggle with contentment. What insights does this passage give you regarding contentment and the role of money in your life?
- What kinds of temptations do people who want to get rich fall into?

4. **There are four common orientations or attitudes toward money.**

“Money as status. A person with a status orientation toward money is interested in money as power—as a means of keeping ahead of his or her peers.

Money as security. A person with a security orientation is conservative in spending and focuses on saving.

Money as enjoyment. A person with an enjoyment orientation gets satisfaction from spending, both on others and on himself or herself.

Money as control. A person with a control orientation sees money as a way of maintaining control over her or his life and independence from a partner or other family members.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 193)

Now Read Luke 12:13-21

- Which of the above attitudes describes the “rich fool”?
- God called him a fool. Why?
- What does it mean to be rich toward God in your marriage?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

Now Read Luke 12:22-34

- In verse 22 Jesus' use of the word "therefore" indicates that being rich toward God means that we don't have to worry about your life. Our provision is a matter of faith, not how much money we have. If you maintained this attitude in your marriage, what would change?
- When finances are stressed, why is it so hard to trust God to provide (see verse 28)?
- How would you know if you were seeking possessions over the Kingdom of God?
- Jesus seems to be teaching us, then, that money is simply a tool, but it is in "God we trust." Your stewardship of money over the past 60 days is a good testimony to your attitude toward money. Is it a tool or your treasure?
- How might you live differently if you worried less about money? What decisions would you handle differently in the future as a couple?

C. Digging Deeper: When remarriage money decisions are paired with pain—and the fear of being hurt again—persons tend to be distrusting, withholding, and controlling about money (see page 196). How would you advise someone who was acting this way out of fear?

- There are different ways of managing "yours" and "mine" finances. A one-, two-, or three pot system of money and asset management is an option for couples. Each has its advantages and disadvantages. How might you know if one partner was "holding on to their pot" out of fear instead of logistics?

D. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?

- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Be sure to read chapter fifteen (note, you are skipping chapter fourteen) in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your “Before Your Small Group Meeting” discussion section.

Notes / Action Plan

Session 12: Finding Your Spiritual Core

Covering Chapter 15, *The Remarriage Checkup*

“High shared spirituality in remarrying couples is able to predict with 76% accuracy whether they have strong, happy relationships or fragile, unhappy ones. Without question, shared spirituality is a significant contributor to overall marital satisfaction.”

The Remarriage Checkup, p. 226

Before Your Small Group Meeting

1. Read chapters fifteen in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 232

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open: Discuss this statement.**
Marriage is one of God’s tools for shaping us into the image of his Son. Ultimately, shared spirituality is not about enhancing the couple’s relationship (it does that, too), but about refining us to be more like Christ.
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.**
Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
 1. **Consider this quote:**
“Attending church on a regular basis is but one aspect of shared spirituality. Others include praying together, making joint decisions together based on clearly articulated values, and setting behavioral limits and standards for children so as to train them in the value of spiritual boundaries and godliness. Happy couples know that shared spirituality does not mean problem-free living, as if faith in God is a self-serving path to happiness and personal fulfillment. Rather, vibrant, intimate couples realize that shared spirituality provides direction for life and orients them to that which really matters. It unites them in vision and purpose.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, p. 227)
 - a. How does sharing spiritual values and activities facilitate a closer relationship?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- b. When spiritual values are not shared, couples find themselves moving in different directions with their decisions, parenting, and choices? In stepfamilies this is even more complicated because children tend to follow the values of their parent (and distance from the stepparent). What would you advise a couple in this situation?
2. **Consider this statement:**

“Spiritual submission to God helps relationships by teaching partners to consider the needs of others above themselves. Out of reverence for their God, they seek to serve each other... a marriage centered on two people who humble themselves and seek to bring blessing to the other also results in a competition, but it is a competition of kindness.” (*The Remarriage Checkup*, pg. 228)

 - a. In what way does God’s love for you teach you how to love your partner?
 - b. What would a “competition of kindness” feel like?
3. **Donald Harvey suggests that couples need the following prerequisites to develop shared spirituality (see page 229). Discuss each as a group and explore how you can make them part of your marriage.**
 - a. Couples need a relatively stable marriage from which to explore the deeper dimensions of spirituality. If they do not trust each other and aren’t willing to confront the deepest parts of themselves with the other, they will avoid spiritual conversation?
 - b. Couples must desire to share their spirituality with their partner. Not everyone wants to be vulnerable with their temptations, struggles, and fears. Not everyone wants to be this exposed.
4. **Discuss these suggestions for becoming soul mates and how you might put them into practice.**
 - a. One way to connect spiritually is to be continuously curious about your partner’s spiritual beliefs, mood, or prayers. How might you practice this in daily life?

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- b. Share the deepest parts of your spiritual journey with your partner. Don't just talk to God, talk to your partner about your conversations with God.
- c. Serve together. Find ways of giving back, together.
- d. Make decisions by first discussing the spiritual value behind the dilemma.
- e. Touch or hold hands during worship. This connects you to each other while connecting to God.

C. Digging Deeper: Couples who engage in corporate worship together on a regular basis sometimes report a struggle in praying privately together.

- a. What makes praying together as a couple difficult?
- b. If you practice this, even occasionally, share how it is initiated and who prays.
- c. If you do not pray together on a regular basis, challenge yourself to begin doing so. What needs to change for you to accomplish this goal?

D. Open Discussion: Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

Prayer Time

- A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?
- B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

For Next Week

Chapter fourteen on sexuality is optional. Discuss as a group whether you want to explore this material as a group or as individual couples. If you decide to meet as a group read chapter fourteen in *The Remarriage Checkup* and complete your "Before Your Small Group Meeting" discussion section.

Session 13: (Optional for Group or Individual Couple Discussion) The Sex Connection

Covering Chapter 14, *The Remarriage Checkup*

"[Sex] is about connecting the deepest parts of ourselves to another person, resulting in a spiritual oneness that is unlike any other experience on earth. When a couple's sexual experience reflects this affirming and giving spirit, a powerful connection can result."
The Remarriage Checkup, p. 209

Before Your Small Group Meeting

1. Read chapters fifteen in *The Remarriage Checkup* before your couple and group discussions.
2. Complete the CPS discussion on pg. 221.
3. Review and talk through the 10 suggestions for enhancing your sexual intimacy found on pages 218-220.

Small Group Discussion

- A. **Open:** Discuss this quote (p. 211)
"A good sexual relationship goes hand in hand with a good emotional relationship between partners. Couples who feel safe and secure with each other in most aspects of their relationship have the best physical relationship. For them, sexuality flows from emotional intimacy based on honest communication, trust in one another, a strong friendship, and passionate love. On the other hand, a marriage that is characterized by a lack of trust or that is plagued with destructive conflict is probably not sexually satisfying over time for one or both partners. For many couples, the first step to improving their sexual relationship is to improve the quality of their relationship outside the bedroom."
- B. **Review and discuss the following key points from the chapter.**
Make application to your relationship when appropriate.
1. **Consider this quote:**
*"...one-fourth of the all couples in our study reported having a difficult time talking openly with their partner about sexual expectations, and 16 percent were uncomfortable talking about sexual issues."
(The Remarriage Checkup, p. 212)*

Small Group Discussion (Cont.)

- a. What makes talking openly about sexual matters difficult for some?
 - b. What parameters could couple put on their conversations to make it more safe (e.g., giving permission to different opinions or agreeing not to share the other's comments with anyone else)?
2. **Review the case study of Luisa and Ramon (pages 213-218).**
- a. What assumptions did they make that added to their difficulties?
 - b. How did previous hurts (ghosts from the past) play a role?
 - c. How did poor communication contribute to the problem?
 - d. What shifts in their thinking and understanding helped them move toward one another and resolve the issues?
3. **Consider this statement: " Unhappy couples were somewhat more likely than average couples (19% of all 50,575 couples) and significantly more likely than happy couples to report feeling concerns about previous sexual experiences. What seems to be in question is how previous experiences compare to the current couple's sexual relationship or how they might be limiting their sexual fulfillment." (The Remarriage Checkup, p. 217)**
- a. Review the "Remarriage Sex: Tips for Not Getting Caught in the Past" chart on page 216.
 - b. Which one do you think pertains to most remarried couples? Why do you think that?
- C. Digging Deeper:**
As a group, review the Enhancing Your Sexual Intimacy suggestions on page 218-220. Which suggestion do you think couples could benefit from most?

Prayer Time

D. **Open Discussion:** Share a principle or insight you learned from the book that was helpful or, if you're not sure you understand something, pose a question to the group for discussion.

A. Action Plan prayer requests. What would you like others to pray for on your behalf this week?

B. Pray as a group about the key relationship principles you discussed and how you can implement them in your relationship.

Group Close

Take some time to celebrate what you have learned throughout this study. We encourage you to continue meeting with your group to study additional Biblically-based materials.

Notes / Action Plan