

PREMARITAL INVENTORIES

Premarital inventories, which may be administered and interpreted by the pastor or by a trained mentor couple, provide excellent insights into how best to work with a couple planning to marry. Each person should write his or her individual responses on a separate copy of the selected inventory without consulting with the other, perhaps while still in the presence of the person administering it; or they can complete and return both copies by an agreed-upon deadline. The administrator will need time to review the responses, or, as with some inventories, submit them for computer analysis, before the next scheduled marriage preparation appointment.

Premarital inventories reveal significant influences in each person's background and life experiences while offering insights into the couple's developing relationship. It is important to surface and affirm strengths and common values, as well as noting areas of difference and potential conflict. Even more important, completing the forms and discussing the results with a trained counselor or mentor couple can stimulate meaningful sharing and deepen their mutual understanding. This process provides a context for affirming that differences are natural and part of the inherent structure of marriage, and that managing conflict can strengthen a relationship and help both individuals grow. For the best results, help the couple create an action plan to build on their strengths and work on areas in which they need to grow throughout the years ahead.

The following annotated list provides contact information for and describes specific aspects of some recommended inventories, as well as training requirements, if applicable.

FOCCUS: Facilitating Open Couple Communication, Understanding, and Study, (Omaha, Nebraska: FOCCUS Inc. USA, 1985, 1997, 2000, 2010). Nazareth Hall, 3300 North 60th Street, Omaha, NE 68104 (402-827-3735), focus@focusinc.com, www.foccusinc.com. This inventory provides individualized couple feedback on where each partner stands in regard to topics important to marriage. It is not a predictor of marital success or failure, but a tool to help couples communicate and work through issues before marriage. The inventory can be administered to an individual couple or to groups, but discussion and feedback should take place privately with each couple. The act of responding to the questions raises issues for the couple to discuss, even before it is scored. Forms are scored online by the facilitator using the QuickScore, or the facilitator can arrange for the couple to take the inventory on line. A facilitator uses the report analyzing the couple's responses to help them reflect on the following topics: Life-Style Expectations, Friends and Interests, Personality Match, Personal Issues, Communication, Problem-Solving, Religion and Values, Parenting Issues, Extended Family Issues, Sexuality Issues, Financial Issues, Readiness Issues, Marriage Covenant, Key Problem Indicators, Family of Origin, and Dual Careers. Additional questions are available for the following topics, where appropriate: Interfaith Marriages, Second Marriages, and Cohabiting Couples. FOCCUS is available in English, Spanish, French Canadian, Korean, Chinese, and Portuguese; as well as in six different versions: Catholic, Christian non-denominational, General, Orthodox Christian, Alternate, and Spanish Abridged (for lower reading levels or disabled persons). Training is required and may be done online or with a certified FOCCUS© Trainer.

Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couple's Edition: Marriage Lifestyle Questionnaire, by Richard and Joan Hunt (Nashville: United Methodist Publishing House, 2000. Instructions for

administering and interpreting the Inventory are provided in the *GLCM Pastor's Manual* by Cliff and Jane Ives, same publisher.

Money Habitudes: Target Your Habits and Attitudes About Money, created by Syble Solomon, (LifeWise, 2006, www.moneyhabitudes.com, 888-833-4331). This set of cards may be used by couples or as part of a group activity to help persons discern the values and attitudes that guide their thoughts and actions in regard to saving, spending, and dealing with debt and money in general. Following a card sorting activity, participants learn about the challenges and advantages of each financial type (Spontaneous, Status, Giving, Security, Carefree, and/or Planning) and ways to achieve a healthy balance. Since differences in attitudes toward and use of money often cause conflict in marriage, couples benefit by increased understanding of themselves and each other and by learning to discuss their differences and to make mutually agreeable decisions that take those differences into consideration. Available in Spanish.

Premarriage Awareness Inventory, by Peter L. Velander (St. Paul, MN: Logos Productions Inc., 1993). Recognizing that couples coming to be married are increasingly likely to be cohabiting or remarrying, the author developed this resource to enable pastors to address non-judgmentally the impact of these factors on a relationship. Available in three versions: First Time (also available in online version), Remarriage, and Cohabitation, the *Counseling Packet* includes multiple-choice surveys for each participant and a Profile Copy for compiling the individual responses on a single form for comparison and discussion. The *Administrator's Portfolio* provides clear information about administering, evaluating, and using the inventory in pre-marital counseling with couples. *A Good Beginning* is an optional 46-page resource for couples to read on their own. Reading assignments are suggested in the *Administrator's Portfolio*, which outlines four counseling sessions. [Contact Logos Productions, Inc., P.O. Box 240, South St. Paul, MN 55075-0240, 800-328-0200, or visit www.logosproductions.com].

PREPARE/ENRICH is a scientifically-validated relationship inventory and program that helps dating, engaged and married couples discuss and understand their relationship while learning valuable relationship skills. The online Customized Version makes it easy for couples to complete the inventory, with content tailored to their relationship stage and structure. Within minutes after a couple have completed the online Customized Version of PREPARE/ENRICH, the Facilitator may view or print a 25-page Facilitator's Report and 10-page Couple Report, along with resources to help with the feedback process, including a Couple's Workbook. Certification training is required to become a PREPARE/ENRICH Facilitator, and upon completion a Facilitator ID number is issued along with materials and a complimentary scoring credit. The online version is available in English, French, German, Korean, Spanish, and Swiss. The older paper and pencil version is available in Chinese, English, and Spanish. Contact PREPARE/ENRICH at www.prepare-enrich.com or 800-331-1661 for more information and/or to find a certification workshop near you.

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