

The following sample pages are extracted and condensed from the workbook. This section in the workbook is 17 pages.

YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

Seek first the kingdom of God and His righteousness and all these things will be added to you. (Matt 6:33)

The above scripture is one of the cornerstones of Christian faith. God's kingdom ought to be your hearts desire and your reference point for all the issues of your life. Premarital discipleship, therefore, is firstly about seeking God's kingdom above all else. Your personal lives and your marriage relationship will be the fruit of your relationship with God.

It is essential to the premarital discipleship process to establish that each person has a good foundation—the elementary necessities of the faith (Heb 6:1-2). Some do not have the elemental things of the faith operating in their lives. This could be because they are newly converted or because they have been converted for a long time but are still immature in the faith. (1 Cor. 3:1–2; Gal. 4:19). Additionally, some Christians show little growth in the faith because they heard and embraced a shallow, incomplete, or skewed gospel. (Gal. 1:6–7) Therefore, the appropriate place to begin this course is your relationship to God and to His Son.

This section explores your relationship to God, your life in Christ, and your views of creation, the Bible, and the various teachings of the Biblical writers. The apostle Paul dealt with the problem of false teachers and false doctrine propagating in the church. In one form or another, these problems have existed throughout Church history. In our day we, too, must deal with them. What passes for Christian doctrine is sometimes a watered-down humanistic gospel, a mixture of New Age thought or pop psychology, or books and teachers pandering to a make-me-feel-good mentality. Thus, Christians may have a mishmash of ideas about Christ and the Bible. Because of this, we will touch on some preliminary things and then get into your relationship with God. We want to establish what your overall spiritual worldview is. To do so, we will go to the very beginning—the primordial issues and aspects of life and person-hood. Your views on the origin of life are the starting point.

LIFE'S ORIGIN AND PURPOSE

A worldview is the sum of thoughts, opinions, beliefs, and assumptions that shape a person's mindset. It includes elements that are religious, scientific, cultural, historical, and political. A worldview is the framework of a person's beliefs. It's the foundational mindset, attitudes, behaviors, and beliefs (including superstitions) influencing and directing a person's choices, behavior, and life. Your worldview is your eyeglasses through which you view all of life. Your spiritual worldview is what we want to consider now.

Life's origin and purpose

- 1. Did the universe happen out of the chance interaction of matter? Briefly, explain your thoughts about how the universe began.

- 2. Did we get here by evolution or partial evolution? How did we get here? _____

- 3. Is God: (Yes / No) A life force, a principle, the collective consciousness, etc.? _____ An individual, self-existent being with intelligence, will, purpose, and "character"? _____ The Maker of all things and beings—the cosmos, earth, solar system, and all life? _____

- 4. In your words, who or what is God? _____

- 5. Is Jesus God come in the flesh? John 10:30-36, 20:28; Matt 16:13-17 Comment _____

Some implications of creationism.



Gen. 1:1-27, 2:7; Is. 64:8; Jer. 18:1-6; Rom. 9:20-21; Rev. 4:11

Question: *What is the chief end of man?*

Answer: *Man's chief end is to glorify God, and to enjoy Him forever.*

The Westminster Shorter Catechism A.D. 1647

Believing that God exists and that He is the God of the Bible, leads to some conclusions about the essence of human life. God created us in His likeness with the attributes of consciousness, intelligence, will, emotion, desire, motive, design, purpose, and power. Discuss the following statements and be prepared to discuss them with your mentors.

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| 1 All things that are made have design. You have been made. You have design. | 5 Because you have been designed, you have a purpose. |
| 2 Design means there is a Designer. | 6 Your purpose is bound up in the one who designed you—your Creator. |
| 3 Design means there is intelligence, intent, and purpose, which is of the Designer | 7 You do not exist for yourself but rather for the purpose of the Designer. |
| 4 Design means that all things exist by the Maker and for the Maker. | 8 Living in conformity with the Designer's intent is your life's purpose. |

Example: A chair exists because of intelligence, will, and ability. A chair has design. Man designed it for himself; it exists for a purpose; it doesn't exist by itself or for itself. Its only purpose for existence is in the purpose of its maker (man).

6. What do you think is God's purpose for creating mankind? _____

7. What is God's purpose for creating you? _____

8. How are you fulfilling and/or cooperating with His purpose? _____

RELATIONSHIP SURVEY



Gen 2:7; Deut 8:3; Matt 4:4; John 15:1-6

The fundamental needs to sustain physical life are air, water, and food. Our foremost need is air. We can survive without food for weeks; we can survive without water for days, but we can survive without air for mere seconds. It is interesting to note that in Genesis 2:7, God *breathed* into man the breath of life, and man became alive. We desperately need the breath of life. Similarly, in John 15:1-6, Jesus said that He is the vine, we are the branches, and that our life is desperately dependent upon remaining in Him.

What, then, is relationship to God? What does it mean? There are many varieties of religious expression. Denominational doctrines, for example, influence our views and shape our spiritual identity. They also influence our concepts of God and our walk with God. Denominational affiliation, however, doesn't reveal much about one's actual relationship to God. Likewise, the term, "born again" is often used to identify one's faith. When Jesus used the phrase, he was stating something that specifically transpires between the Spirit of God and the spirit of man. The term equates salvation to a life-giving, life-transforming, ongoing relationship.

Jesus called God His father, and we are told to call God our Father. However, your idea of the heavenly father possibly is shaped in part by your experience with (or without) an earthly father. What thoughts and feelings do you connect with your idea of father? Does it conjure up good, bad, or indifferent thoughts and feelings? Let's find out.

1. Do you have a relationship with God? _____ Do you know what this means? _____

2. What were the particulars of your salvation experience? When, where, and how were you saved. What led up to your conversion? (Use additional paper or elaborate in person to your mentors)

3. What makes you related to God? _____

4. Describe your relationship with God. _____

5. Are you born again—born of the Spirit? (John 3:3) _____ What does this mean? _____

6. Explain how God is real to you. _____

7. You can know *facts about* God through creation and through His Word. But can you *know* God or only *know about* Him? (Matt. 7:22-23; John 10:4, 14–15, 17:3) Is there a difference? Comment.

8. What does it mean to worship God in spirit and in truth? (John 4:24) _____

PERFORMANCE-BASED RELATIONSHIP

Pretty Woman is the name of popular song from the 1960's and the title song for a movie of the same name. The movie is an umpteen hundredth remake of the Cinderella story. It's a story that touches a universal chord in us—sympathy for a downtrodden female victim. But, of course, she has to be pretty.

The reason that the ultra-successful, ultra-rich character played by Richard Gere gets involved with a low class street prostitute played by Julia Roberts is that she is pretty. Oh yeah, she can drive a stick shift and knows how to get to Beverly Hills. That's a very straightforward road to love and a successful, meaningful relationship isn't it!

What's the real message this movie delivers? It's that love has everything to do with appearance and performance. It's likely that all of us somewhat buy into this message every day of our lives. Performance and appearance have everything to do with how we rate each other and how we relate to each other. Think not? Think again. Many marriage problems can be traced to a root of disappointment with one's spouse, and disappointment, simply stated, is the failure of one person to live up to the other's expectations or standards. The same can be true of our relationship with God. For example, when God doesn't meet a person's expectations—when God doesn't perform the way a person wants or expects Him to perform—that person might become disappointed, angry, frustrated, or depressed. They might blame God for not listening, for being unavailable, for being distant, uncaring, and uninvolved. In this part, you will explore the subjects of performance and grace and how those are factors in your relationship with God.

1. What's your definition of performance? _____

2. Give some examples (from the world) when you have experienced acceptance based on performance. _____

Most likely it was easy to list examples of consistent performance-based situations from the world. Here are some examples if you haven't already listed them.

- You rush to punch the time clock so that you will not incur dismissal.
- You would be fired if you don't do our job well.
- Social contacts drop you if you are no longer cool, hip, or on top of your game.
- You are well qualified for a position but are passed over for a younger, prettier woman.
- Your car or home will be repossessed if you fall behind on payments.

This world is a fallen world, and it is based almost completely on performance. We learn to operate by the world's methods early in life. We are, by fallen nature, performance-based beings. For a humorous example, other than weathermen and politicians, can you think of any people who can consistently get it wrong, mess up, fail, and still keep their jobs? Probably not! The world works on performance. But the question to explore is whether or not, and to what extent, your marriage will be based on performance and how you will respond if the performance you expect, or that your spouse expects, is not met. The scriptures below could seem contradictory (performance vs. grace), which is why they are used as examples to ponder.



Matt. 7:17-23	Luke 6:46, 13:23-24	Rom. 3:24, 5:15-18, 11:6	2 Cor. 9:15
Gal. 2:21, 5:4	Eph. 2:8-9, 4:7	James 2:20-26	

3. Does God expect you to perform? _____ Do you perform in order to be accepted by God? _____
 Comment _____

4. Does God love you based on your performance? _____ Comment _____

5. Do you perform in order to be accepted and loved by your fiancé(e)? _____ Comment _____

6. Are there legitimate expectations of performance for marriage partners? _____

7. If so, what are some of them? _____
