

The following sample pages are extracted and condensed from the workbook. This section in the workbook is 22 pages.

ROLES & EXPECTATIONS

Everyone entering marriage does so with ideas about what their relationship and lifestyle will be like. Because of family modeling and other of life's lessons, each person enters marriage with his or her own perspectives. Each person has unspoken rules of behavior that they assume are the universally correct and accepted behaviors and values. In short, the way we see things is the way we think they are and the way they should be seen.

During dating and engagement, we get a general, if not vague, idea about our fiancé(e). Sometimes the person we see is the person *we want to see*. Some people build up those ideals to a high degree of expectation, and it is with those expectations in mind that they commit to marriage. When the ideal does not manifest, it jeopardizes the foundation of the relationship.

In the excitement of falling in love, we think we are tailor-made for each other like a pair of fine-fitting gloves. The problem is that, until we marry and live together, we haven't actually put the gloves on. Don't construe this as an excuse or an endorsement for test-driving your relationship by having sex and/or living together. Doing so is nothing other than basing your relationship on performance, and a performance-based relationship is definitely not what you want. A trial relationship is a pseudo commitment. It looks sort of like the real deal, but it isn't. **It undermines the foundation and opportunity for unconditional commitment.**¹

Well, if people don't live together first, how will they know if they are compatible? Commitment must have a reasonable, effective test, and compatibility and expectations are part of the equation. The premarital preparation you are doing includes such things as your individual communion with God, counseling, personal inventories, books, classes, seminars, and input from family and friends. Additionally, it includes a long enough history with each other to ascertain habits, personalities, character and ethics, conflict resolution skills, and responses to stress and crisis. These are the trustworthy means of determining a relationship and compatibility. And this is what you are doing. All the effort you are putting forth can't guarantee your relationship (you still have to walk the talk), but it puts you at a better starting place than those who don't put forth effort to prepare, to learn, and to change.

Goals and expectations are important topics to discuss. If, for example, you enjoy attending plays, operas, or political events, or if you enjoy spending your weekends restoring classic cars or watching sports, you likely have an unspoken assumption and expectation of continuing to do so. Another example is from the love language session. If you perceive being loved primarily via hugs and snuggling, then, quite naturally, you have an expectation of being hugged a lot. This section gives you the opportunity to discuss your expectations and hopes that you have regarding your relationship, family, lifestyle, career choices, etc.

¹ See the appendix for articles and statistics on cohabiting.

RELATIONSHIP EXPECTATIONS

1. Amos 3:3 encapsulates a theme consistent throughout this course and, pointedly, throughout this section on goals, expectations, and hopes. Comment about how it applies to your union.

2. Does your family’s way of relating resemble the way your fiancé(e)’s family relates? _____

3. List some of the similar family lifestyles, views, relationship methods, etc.

4. List some of the different family lifestyles, views, relationship methods, etc.

5. What hopes or expectations do you have of your fiancé(e)? Finish the following sentence. I expect my spouse to _____

6. Are your hopes and expectations based on your upbringing? _____ If not, where did you get these views, desires, and expectations? _____

7. How is your fiancé(e) in agreement with your expectations? _____

8. Does your fiancé(e) have any expectation or hopes of you (either realistic or unrealistic)? _____

If so, what are they? _____

9. How will you respond if your fiancé(e) does not agree with or meet these expectations?

10. Do you have additional comments you wish to make about hopes or expectations?

ROLES & RESPONSIBILITY

Unspoken rules and roles

As with goals and expectations, each of us enters marriage with a host of preconceived ideas about rules and roles. We get these ideas from childhood upbringing—our family’s way of doing things—from peer groups, school, society, and our own personalities and the way we choose to respond to life. We call these things *unspoken rules and roles* because we mostly take them for granted, and we mistakenly assume that our spouse does also. We assume that he or she sees things the way we see them. When they don’t, it can be a shock, and it can cause great conflict. This is part of the drama of starting and establishing a brand new and unique family.

It behooves both of you to explore and talk about what might be your hidden, unspoken, or assumed rules and roles. You can save yourselves confusion, misunderstanding, and a lot of grief and conflict if you do this. There are many such unspoken, *assumed* rules and roles. We can’t list or even know all of them, but here are a few to get you started in that direction.

- Don’t reveal family secrets
- Helping put your coat on or taking it off
- Talking (not talking) about certain subjects
- Saying grace or not saying grace at each meal
- Washing dishes after each meal
- Public display of intimacy (holding hands, kissing)
- Don’t let anyone know you’re having problems
- Opening doors for the woman
- Decision making
- Washing the tub after each use
- Dress codes: hemline, neckline, jewelry, cosmetics
- Time spent with friends, work, bringing work home

1. Using a few descriptive words, list some of the unspoken rules or roles from your upbringing.

2. Check the roles / responsibilities you see for your fiancé(e) and yourself. **Y = You, F = Fiancé(e)**

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3. Who is going to be the major breadwinner? _____

4. Who will be the major decision-maker? _____

5. **(Man)** I want my wife to: Stay at home Work outside home Doesn’t matter

6. **(Woman)** I want to: Stay at home Work outside home Doesn’t matter