

PERSPECTIVES ON

saint mary's press

Marriage



PERSPECTIVES

ON MARRIAGE



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Perspectives on Marriage is designed to be used in a formal program of marriage preparation, although it can also be useful for an individual couple working on their own. A Leader's Guide to ***Perspectives on Marriage***, which contains various program formats for marriage preparation, is also available from Saint Mary's Press.

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Cover design by Patricia A. Lynch
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Previously published by ACTA Publications, 1998, 2014, 2016

9106

ISBN: 978-1-64121-072-0

Printed in the United States of America



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INSTRUCTIONS



Your decision to marry—to commit yourselves to one another forever—may well be the most important decision you have made, or will make, in your lives. Learning how to communicate effectively with each other is at the heart of marriage and therefore should be central to your marriage preparation. So don't spend all of your time before the wedding planning the reception, designing the rings, or furnishing your new home. Spend some time on your relationship.

This workbook is designed to help you take a good, long look at marriage. Not just *any* marriage, but *your* upcoming marriage.

Perspectives on Marriage contains thought-provoking exercises to help you think through and share your thoughts and feelings about marriage, its meaning and its challenges. Don't merely fill out and exchange the exercises. Their value occurs *after* the exchange, when you begin to probe, share feelings, question, and work to understand each other more deeply. The exercises are tools designed to:

- promote and stimulate dialogue
- deepen mutual understanding
- elicit insights and feelings

about potentially sensitive areas that might not otherwise be discussed.

In some of the exercises, two copies are provided so that each of you can complete one individually and then discuss your responses together. Other pages contain "discussion starters" for you to read and think about together.

The value of these exercises is in the dialogue they provoke.





HOW DO YOU SEE ME?

You are invited to compare your views of yourself with your fiancée's view of you. This exercise emphasizes the fact that the image we have of ourselves is not necessarily the image that even those near and dear to us have.

A. MAN ABOUT HIMSELF

S O N O
 V M E M V
 E E U E E
 R W T W R
 Y H R H Y
 A A A
 T L T

calm	—	—	—	—	excitable
insistent	—	—	—	—	accommodating
undemonstrative	—	—	—	—	lovey-dovey
skeptical	—	—	—	—	trusting
extroverted	—	—	—	—	introverted
self-questioning	—	—	—	—	confident
procrastinating	—	—	—	—	compulsive
spendthrift	—	—	—	—	tightwad
happy-go-lucky	—	—	—	—	careful planner
pragmatist	—	—	—	—	optimist
hard-headed	—	—	—	—	soft-hearted
social	—	—	—	—	private
serious	—	—	—	—	whimsical
relaxed	—	—	—	—	intense
discerning	—	—	—	—	open-minded
liberal	—	—	—	—	conservative
reticent	—	—	—	—	expansive
self-sufficient	—	—	—	—	collaborative
outgoing	—	—	—	—	reserved
organized	—	—	—	—	laid-back
practical	—	—	—	—	dreamer
cautious	—	—	—	—	risk-taker

B. MAN ABOUT WOMAN

S O N O
 V M E M V
 E E U E E
 R W T W R
 Y H R H Y
 A A A
 T L T

calm	—	—	—	—	excitable
insistent	—	—	—	—	accommodating
undemonstrative	—	—	—	—	lovey-dovey
skeptical	—	—	—	—	trusting
extroverted	—	—	—	—	introverted
self-questioning	—	—	—	—	confident
procrastinating	—	—	—	—	compulsive
spendthrift	—	—	—	—	tightwad
happy-go-lucky	—	—	—	—	careful planner
pragmatist	—	—	—	—	optimist
hard-headed	—	—	—	—	soft-hearted
social	—	—	—	—	private
serious	—	—	—	—	whimsical
relaxed	—	—	—	—	intense
discerning	—	—	—	—	open-minded
liberal	—	—	—	—	conservative
reticent	—	—	—	—	expansive
self-sufficient	—	—	—	—	collaborative
outgoing	—	—	—	—	reserved
organized	—	—	—	—	laid-back
practical	—	—	—	—	dreamer
cautious	—	—	—	—	risk-taker

Mark list A about yourself by checking one, *and only one*, of the five lines between each set of words above. (Each of the lines is keyed to one of the words above: very, somewhat, neutral, etc.) Check one line you feel most nearly describes your personality, e.g., in the first set of words it might be "very excitable" or "somewhat calm." Then proceed to the next set of words.

Next, mark list B about your *fiancée* by checking the line that most nearly describes your partner's personality traits for each set of words.

Compare your sheet with your partner's by holding them side by side. First compare A and D, then compare B and C. Discuss the differences in your perceptions of each other.



CLUE EACH OTHER IN



Your beloved has traits, qualities, and ways of acting which you especially prize and appreciate, which you wish he or she would develop even more. *But your partner is not a mind reader.* Tell him or her those qualities you find especially attractive. Most certainly love will lead your partner to concentrate on them even more.

Read the qualities presented on the right. Pick out and list the seven you appreciate most in your partner. Feel free to include other qualities not on our list—these might be the most important of all. Next to each quality, write down one recent example of how your beloved demonstrated that quality.

- Flexible and open**
- Imaginative**
- Socially at ease**
- Cares about people**
- Considerate of others**
- Confident and secure**
- Understanding**
- Hardworking**
- Cares about home and family**
- Affectionate**
- Even-tempered**
- Patient with me**
- Strong**
- Gentle and kind**
- Makes me laugh**
- Interesting and alive**
- Accepting and tolerant**
- Dependable**
- Talks to me**
- Compromising**
- Intelligent**
- Listens to me**
- Spiritual**

What I appreciate about you most is:

A recent example:

1. _____

2. _____

3. _____

4. _____

5. _____

6. _____

7. _____





HOW DO YOU SEE ME?

You are invited to compare your views of yourself with your fiancé's view of you. This exercise emphasizes the fact that the image we have of ourselves is not necessarily the image that even those near and dear to us have.

C. WOMAN ABOUT HERSELF

S O N O
 V M E M V
 E E U E E
 R W T W R
 Y H R H Y
 A A A
 T L T

calm	—	—	—	—	excitable
insistent	—	—	—	—	accommodating
undemonstrative	—	—	—	—	lovey-dovey
skeptical	—	—	—	—	trusting
extroverted	—	—	—	—	introverted
self-questioning	—	—	—	—	confident
procrastinating	—	—	—	—	compulsive
spendthrift	—	—	—	—	tightwad
happy-go-lucky	—	—	—	—	careful planner
pragmatist	—	—	—	—	optimist
hard-headed	—	—	—	—	soft-hearted
social	—	—	—	—	private
serious	—	—	—	—	whimsical
relaxed	—	—	—	—	intense
discerning	—	—	—	—	open-minded
liberal	—	—	—	—	conservative
reticent	—	—	—	—	expansive
self-sufficient	—	—	—	—	collaborative
outgoing	—	—	—	—	reserved
organized	—	—	—	—	laid-back
practical	—	—	—	—	dreamer
cautious	—	—	—	—	risk-taker

D. WOMAN ABOUT MAN

S O N O
 V M E M V
 E E U E E
 R W T W R
 Y H R H Y
 A A A
 T L T

calm	—	—	—	—	excitable
insistent	—	—	—	—	accommodating
undemonstrative	—	—	—	—	lovey-dovey
skeptical	—	—	—	—	trusting
extroverted	—	—	—	—	introverted
self-questioning	—	—	—	—	confident
procrastinating	—	—	—	—	compulsive
spendthrift	—	—	—	—	tightwad
happy-go-lucky	—	—	—	—	careful planner
pragmatist	—	—	—	—	optimist
hard-headed	—	—	—	—	soft-hearted
social	—	—	—	—	private
serious	—	—	—	—	whimsical
relaxed	—	—	—	—	intense
discerning	—	—	—	—	open-minded
liberal	—	—	—	—	conservative
reticent	—	—	—	—	expansive
self-sufficient	—	—	—	—	collaborative
outgoing	—	—	—	—	reserved
organized	—	—	—	—	laid-back
practical	—	—	—	—	dreamer
cautious	—	—	—	—	risk-taker

Mark list C about yourself by checking one, *and only one*, of the five lines between each set of words above. (Each of the lines is keyed to one of the words above: very, somewhat, neutral, etc.) Check one line you feel most nearly describes your personality, e.g., in the first set of words it might be "very excitable" or "somewhat calm." Then proceed to the next set of words.

Next, mark list D about your *fiancé* by checking the line that most nearly describes your partner's personality traits for each set of words.

Compare your sheet with your partner's by holding them side by side. First compare A and D, then compare B and C. Discuss the differences in your perceptions of each other.



CLUE EACH OTHER IN



Your beloved has traits, qualities, and ways of acting which you especially prize and appreciate, which you wish he or she would develop even more. *But your partner is not a mind reader.* Tell him or her those qualities you find especially attractive. Most certainly love will lead your partner to concentrate on them even more.

Read the qualities presented on the right. Pick out and list the seven you appreciate most in your partner. Feel free to include other qualities not on our list—these might be the most important of all. Next to each quality, write down one recent example of how your beloved demonstrated that quality.

- Flexible and open**
- Imaginative**
- Socially at ease**
- Cares about people**
- Considerate of others**
- Confident and secure**
- Understanding**
- Hardworking**
- Cares about home and family**
- Affectionate**
- Even-tempered**
- Patient with me**
- Strong**
- Gentle and kind**
- Makes me laugh**
- Interesting and alive**
- Accepting and tolerant**
- Dependable**
- Talks to me**
- Compromising**
- Intelligent**
- Listens to me**
- Spiritual**

What I appreciate about you most is:

A recent example:

1. _____	_____
2. _____	_____
3. _____	_____
4. _____	_____
5. _____	_____
6. _____	_____
7. _____	_____





FIGHTING FAIR

Take a moment to recall a recent conflict between you and your partner. Perhaps it was just a small misunderstanding, or maybe something major. What were the circumstances of the problem? Replay the event in your mind. How was the issue resolved? Have the two of you reconciled? How did you feel once the two of you had reconciled?

Someone once said that if you want to avoid conflict you will have to forego all intimacy. Not for us, thanks! Conflict is a part of every close relationship. The more intimate we are, the more vulnerable to hurt we become. As the two of you grow closer in love, you also become more aware of your differences in such things as assumptions and expectations of each other, abilities to listen, family backgrounds, communication patterns, habits, etc. Sometimes, the very things that attracted the two of you to each other in the beginning become the characteristics that grate and cause conflict later on.

To presume that you will never argue is too idealistic and simply not true. Yet working through a "good" conflict can be healthy for your marriage because it usually brings issues to the surface and clears the air between you. Remember, the flip side of conflict is intimacy. There are positive ways to handle conflict and "fight fair." The "DOs & DON'Ts" on the right can help you avoid the destructive and disheartening potential of marital conflict.

DO

1. Give each other equal opportunity to speak
2. Stick to the issues at hand.
3. Complete the argument. Come to some resolution, even if it means setting a later time to do so.
4. Seek first to understand the other, then to be understood.
5. Admit when you are wrong. Graciously accept the other's admission of guilt or wrong-doing.
6. Make up and mean it.
7. Call forth the core love you have in your heart for each other. Remember the vow you made to make your marriage work.

DON'T

1. Dominate the argument.
2. Dredge up past hurts or problems, whether real or perceived.
3. Postpone a resolution indefinitely.
4. Sling mud and arrows. Avoid put-downs, yelling and name calling. Terms such as "stupid jerk," "fat slob," "drunken bum," or "airhead" only incite more anger and hurt.
5. Use physical violence...ever!
6. Use sex as a source of power or manipulation. Never threaten to withdraw love or sex.
7. Use the "silent treatment."
8. Always give in. Your resentment will build because the conflict hasn't really been resolved.
9. Make a scene. Never deliberately embarrass each other in front of others. Most conflicts need private space and time to be resolved.



FIGHTING WITHOUT FIGHTING



While an argument may have its benefits in the long run, it's not exactly a pleasant experience—and it's certainly not what you are getting married to do. First of all, some things are just not worth arguing about. Remember, it's "for better or worse." You also need to learn now—before the wedding—the difference between the "negotiables" and the "non-negotiables" for both you... and your partner.

Still, there will be plenty of serious issues in the years ahead that will produce conflict. You both must stand up for what you believe and express your expectations. But you must also be willing to grow and change. Most conflicts signal a need to readjust expectations of each other. Here are some suggestions for healthy, non-combative conflict resolution:

TIPS AND SKILLS FOR RESOLVING CONFLICT

- 1. Face the problem squarely.** The disagreement or difference of opinion will not go away just because you don't talk about it. In fact, it will only fester and grow.
- 2. Actively try to understand your partner's viewpoint.** Listen intently to what he or she is saying, rather than building up ammunition for your comeback.
- 3. Try the "two-question" method.** As your partner shares his or her side, ask at least one question to clarify or enhance what was said. Then, ask a second question about his or her response to your first question.
- 4. Respond to the problem and/or your beloved in an honest yet caring way.** Don't allow the *tone* of your voice to communicate something different from your *words*.
- 5. Speak for yourself.** You are the world's greatest expert on *you*. Tell your beloved how you feel and allow him or her to do the same. It's better to get all the feelings and emotions on the table, including the negative ones, rather than trying to guess what they are.
- 6. Own your feelings.** Your beloved is not the one responsible for your emotions, so you cannot expect him or her to "fix" how you are feeling.
- 7. Take your share of initiative.** Don't always leave it up to your partner to raise sticky issues or propose solutions. Accept responsibility for resolving conflict.
- 8. Seek "win-win" solutions.** Most conflicts can be solved through creative compromise and seeking alternative ways to meet both person's needs. If an argument ends with one winner and one loser, in the long run you both lose.
- 9. Take immediate steps to implement your agreed-upon solution.** There's nothing worse than talking through a problem and then having nothing happen as a result. Even small, positive steps toward solution will make both sides feel better.
- 10. Set a definite time for review.** Schedule a date and time when you can both see if the issue needs further discussion and compromise. When the time arrives be sure to check with each other that the conflict has been resolved.





ON OUR WORST BEHAVIOR

People respond in different ways during a fight or disagreement. Anger and negative feelings can bring out less than positive behavior in all of us. Listed below are 10 behaviors people often use in conflict situations.

Working alone, check if each behavior characterizes you, your partner, neither of you, or both of you. Then share your answers with each other.

Finally, discuss...

- A. where your perceptions about your behavior differ and why
- B. how productive it is where you do agree on the nature of your behavior
- C. which behaviors you might want to change

	Me	You	Neither	Both
1. Silence				
2. Blaming				
3. Yelling				
4. Pouting				
5. Sarcasm				
6. Avoidance				
7. Appeasement				
8. Crying				
9. Threatening				
10. Physical Violence				



TRY, TRY AGAIN



Few things are more frustrating for a couple than trying to solve a simple problem together. Neither of you can fathom why the other does not recognize how wise and reasonable you are, concur with the solution you propose, and get on with other, more important, things.

This is an opportunity to take a look at how you really do come across to each other when you're in the middle of a "fight" or even a "spirited discussion." Together, choose one conflict the two of you have had recently which is still not resolved. In a word

or phrase, write the issue below. Then, working separately, try to remember your perception of how each of you handled it.

For each of the 10 questions in section A, put an "I" in the space before each response that you feel most closely describes your reactions and "Y" in the space before each response that you feel most closely describes your partner's reactions during your recent conflict. (You may fill in the same space for both of you on some or all of the questions.)

Name the Issue: _____

SECTION A: DURING THIS PARTICULAR CONFLICT, I FELT THAT YOU (Y) AND I (I)

1. ___denied that a problem existed ___exaggerated the importance of the problem.
___faced the problem squarely.
2. ___heard what the other was saying ___ignored the other side.
3. ___stuck to the point ___brought up extraneous issues.
4. ___refused to discuss ___sought to explore the issue.
5. ___held back ___poured forth feelings (especially negative ones).
6. ___did ___did not accept responsibility for coping with the conflict.
7. ___tried to compromise or create alternative solutions.
___left all the suggestions to the other person.
8. ___blamed someone else for causing the conflict ___accepted ownership of the difficulty.
9. ___recognized what is possible ___held to unrealistic expectations.
10. ___dealt with the conflict constructively ___kept harping on the same points.

Now compare your answers, discussing any surprises or differences in your perceptions. Finally, discuss each of the five steps listed in section B and see if they would help you actually resolve this particular conflict. If you think they would, then try them!

SECTION B: WHAT WOULD HAPPEN IF WE...

1. listed at least three possible options for resolving the current conflict?
2. discussed each option and then chose one together?
3. told each other how we felt about this decision?
4. tried to implement the decision?
5. agreed to discuss the matter again in two weeks?





ON OUR WORST BEHAVIOR

People respond in different ways during a fight or disagreement. Anger and negative feelings can bring out less than positive behavior in all of us. Listed below are 10 behaviors people often use in conflict situations.

Working alone, check if each behavior characterizes you, your partner, neither of you, or both of you. Then share your answers with each other.

Finally, discuss...

- A. where your perceptions about your behavior differ and why
- B. how productive it is where you do agree on the nature of your behavior
- C. which behaviors you might want to change

	Me	You	Neither	Both
1. Silence				
2. Blaming				
3. Yelling				
4. Pouting				
5. Sarcasm				
6. Avoidance				
7. Appeasement				
8. Crying				
9. Threatening				
10. Physical Violence				



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7. ___tried to compromise or create alternative solutions.
___left all the suggestions to the other person.
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2. discussed each option and then chose one together?
3. told each other how we felt about this decision?
4. tried to implement the decision?
5. agreed to discuss the matter again in two weeks?



PERSPECTIVES ON *Marriage*

Congratulations on your upcoming marriage!

What a wonderful, exciting time this is for you as you plan for your wedding day and the rest of your life together as husband and wife.

Perspectives on Marriage has been used successfully by millions of engaged couples just like you—and is updated regularly to include the newest and most important issues facing today's engaged couples. The practical, down-to-earth activities in this book are easy to understand and put into practice. They focus on the essential topics and issues that engaged and newly married couples face, including:

communication	money and finance
commitment	faith and religion
family of origin	conflict resolution
sexuality	children and family planning
goals and expectations	love and intimacy

Through a combination of exercises, discussion questions, helpful information, practical guidelines, solid ground rules, and good advice, *Perspectives on Marriage* will help the two of you lay the foundation for a strong, long-lasting marriage filled with love and happiness.

This book is the result of consultation with family life ministers, counselors, clergy, psychologists, and married couples—all of whom have helped hundreds and even thousands of engaged couples prepare for their marriage.

In the hectic weeks and months between now and your wedding day, believe with all your heart that every minute you spend completing the pages in this book will result in years of joy together as husband and wife, supporting and nourishing each other and with the grace and love of God.

Religion/Marriage