

Foreword by Jefferson and Alyssa Bethke

Nick and Chelsea Hurst

Marriage Minded

A photograph of a man and a woman walking away from the camera through a field of tall, golden grass. The man is on the right, wearing a white long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. The woman is on the left, wearing a patterned long-sleeved shirt and dark pants. They are holding hands. The background shows a line of trees under a warm, golden sunset sky.

10 Ways to Know
If You've Found the One

A PDF COMPANION TO THE AUDIOBOOK

ZONDERVAN BOOKS

Marriage Minded

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#1 CAN YOU COMMUNICATE?

CLEAR COMMUNICATION PROMPTS

This is going to take some work, but it will pay off in your relationship later—trust me! Here are a few questions to ask one another. Set the tone of this conversation by welcoming honesty. There is no room for a defensive spirit. Before you have any important conversation, pray that the Lord would soften your hearts for growth and show areas needing improvement. Ask for solutions and a clear path forward. Let's do this!

Come together and answer these questions freely.

1. In our daily conversations with each other, do you feel you can be honest with me? Why or why not?
2. What does my tone feel like to you when we're having serious conversations?
3. What makes you feel welcome to be who you are?
4. What do you value most in friendship?
5. What do you value most in our relationship?

These are just a few places to start. I can guarantee more questions will arise naturally and this conversation will be a memorable one!

INTENTIONAL LISTENING

Can you work on becoming a better listener? Is the person you're dating a great listener? Do they seek to understand you? Do they validate how you feel and what you say by looking you in the eyes when you talk?

Isn't it frustrating when you're sharing something very meaningful to you and the person across from you is scrolling on their phone? This is how it feels to not be heard or valued in your relationship.

Exercise: For a week after reading this chapter, make a note in your journal of what you notice about your significant other or yourself as you intentionally listen. You may discover new things as you work through this. Your self-control is growing too! This skill is helpful outside of your romantic relationship as well. Just think of how valued your friends will feel as you choose to listen intently and wait to say anything.

View of Conflict

PAST VIEW OF CONFLICT	NEW VIEW OF CONFLICT
draining	life-giving
scary	an invitation to greater intimacy
What if they don't agree?	What if we understand each other better?

#2 DOES PRIDE GET IN THE WAY?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Here are a few questions that may be helpful to ask yourself:

- Do I or does my SO (significant other) always blame others for issues or problems?
- Do I or does my SO try to take responsibility for our actions?
- Do I or does my SO listen intently when someone is speaking, or just prepare for what we want to say?
- Do I or does my SO show a willingness to apologize and ask for forgiveness when we are wrong or out of line?
- Do I or does my SO live in a state of feeling like we need to do certain things to impress others or make others think better of us?
- Do I or does my SO view ourselves as better than anyone else in any way?
- Do I or does my SO really believe we need the grace of God to cover our shortcomings?
- Do I or does my SO enjoy feeling like we are superior to others? (I've struggled with this one.)
- Who is the humblest person I know? Would they agree with how I live?
- What changes do I need to make today?

Was that rather difficult? I understand. I have asked myself these same questions, and continue to as often as I can. If you notice something within yourself, or in the life of your SO, that needs to change, sit down and have a conversation about it together and commit to making changes in whatever area needs to be changed. I promise you will never regret it, as hard as the conversation might be.

Humility is the fear of the LORD;
its wages are riches and honor and life.
(Proverbs 22:4)

#3 CAN YOU TRUST EACH OTHER?

TRUST-BUILDING EXERCISES

Here are some trust-building activities for you and your significant other to try. Doing these exercises with Nick has been so fun and meaningful that we love to look back and see how they built our trust in one another. Feel free to record or take photos of some of these moments to look back on if you want!

- Take turns planning a date night for the other person, without letting them know the plan (include details of what type of conversations you want to have in the car, what type of food you want to try, etc.).
- Write a meaningful letter about how you feel about your significant other. Share your excitement for the future with them and what you have prayed for over time.
- This sounds silly, but it's fun and it works to build closeness and trust! Sit across from one another in the car, over dinner, or somewhere public and have three minutes of eye contact without moving your gaze from one another and without talking.
- Take time to pray for intentional growth in the area of trust for one another. Ask God to reveal areas of opportunity for growth. Have a notebook nearby to jot down anything impressed on your heart.

- Take out your phones and share the memories you have through photos of your family, friends, or meaningful events that were impactful to you. Share why and when these things happened.

A few of these moments may have been goofy or different than you're used to. That is the goal! I hope these activities challenged you to dig deeper with one another and that they sparked curiosity in you.

#4 HOW DO YOU VIEW MONEY?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How does your past or your upbringing affect how you view money today? Do you think the two of you deal with money differently? Why?
- Do you have any debts right now? Be honest with your significant other about your finances before you get married.
- Are you committed to a life of contentment with money, or do you believe that more money means more happiness?
- What does it look like in your mind to commit to investing and saving for your future as a family?
- Are you willing to budget in a way you both agree on, spend less than you make, and save up for things like cars, vacations, and other personal wants rather than taking out loans (with the exception of a home)?

#5 DO YOU KNOW THEIR FAMILY?

Charge Statement Exercise

I want to give you a chance to begin answering the above question for yourselves. To answer this big-picture question, I find it helpful to answer specific question prompts. I always find specific question prompts helpful. After each question, you'll have an opportunity to write a **charge statement**. A charge statement is something you both agree on to move you forward in your relationship. Chat through the questions together and write your own charge statement that expresses the challenge you will embrace. It doesn't have to be deep or poetic; just make it honest. After the statement, you'll share possible roadblocks in your way so you can work on a solution! You can write these either here in the book or in a separate journal, so you can work individually or together on what you want to say. I've provided an example.

1. How did you see your parents communicate growing up?
What kind of communicators do you both want to be?

Charge statement: *We both will carry honesty into every conversation knowing that our desires are to be understood and to be on the same team. We will do this through clear communication, leaving no room for assumptions or passive-aggressive attitudes.*

Roadblocks and solutions: What happens if we get mad? We give each other a little bit of space. For us, it's thirty minutes. After a bit of space, we come back together, hug (because hugs rarely allow arguments to continue) and talk it out.

2. How often will you see each other's families?

Charge statement:

Roadblocks and solutions:

3. How will you communicate disagreements?

Charge statement:

Roadblocks and solutions:

Hopefully after writing out and sharing these thoughts and statements, you'll feel empowered to work together to address some things that can be hard to talk about. You can put this exercise into practice for more than the questions listed above. You can write your own questions in a separate journal to use whenever you are wanting to learn more about each other and decide how you will champion one another.

THE FAMILY BREAKDOWN

	HIS	HERS
Childhood memories		
How your parents communicated		
What you liked or didn't like about your upbringing		

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What were the marriages like in your family?
- What did you see modeled that you liked? Didn't like?
- What role did faith have in your family, and how was that lived out?
- Are there difficult relationships with your family that we should discuss?
- How about holidays and traditions? What's important to you?
- How does your family communicate when there are problems?

#6 WHAT ABOUT SEX AND PURITY?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Here are some questions to help you reflect.

- Does my significant other love Jesus?
- Do we honor one another with our bodies?
- Would we be comfortable doing around others what we do in private?
- Do we care what God asks of us in regard to purity?
- Do I have any hidden issues that I should talk to a trusted adviser about?
- Am I just committed to the relationship because of how physically involved we are?

#7 CAN YOU ENJOY A LIFE TOGETHER?

Personal Preferences

	Her Thoughts	His Thoughts
Favorite way to spend a Friday night		
Favorite type of food		
You're bored—what do you do?		
Who do you look up to?		
What do you love to talk about?		

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How are we going to have a pure sexual relationship leading up to marriage?
- What was your past like with those you dated previously?
- What are your future expectations of sex in marriage?
- Are there any fears you have surrounding intimacy?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Has your significant other been open to you changing during the time of your relationship? How do they respond when you don't do what they expect?
- Have you seen your significant other make changes for the better for themselves? What have those looked like?
- What is their mindset on change? Does it scare them? Do they welcome it? Do you?

#8 HOW DO YOU HANDLE SECRETS?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

The following questions are not easy to answer but are very important. Make sure they are prayed through, thought about, and carefully communicated at the right time so that you and your significant other can maintain an open and honest relationship. The exposure of secrets in our relationship took a while; we had to work through it purposefully, praying for God's guidance to help us move forward. I'd advise you to do the same thing—you'll be glad you did.

- Can you share a secret from earlier in your life that was hard to share then but might be easier now?
- Are there things we should take some time to discuss, anything we might be carrying from our past that has been hard to share that we would like to share now?
- Is there anything from your past or present that you have been keeping from me that I need to know about? I promise not to be upset or make any quick decisions here and now, but I would like complete transparency, and I know you would too.
- If we continue in our relationship and into marriage, can we both work not to keep secrets from each other? How do you think we can do that?

#9 WHAT ABOUT YOUR EMOTIONAL HEALTH?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Do either of you routinely feel angry when certain conversation topics come up?
- What steps are you going to take to experience healing from your hurt?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- What has grief looked like in your life?
- Have you ever lost a close friend when the two of you went separate ways? How did you handle that?
- Do you have any fears surrounding death or loss?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- How have conversations gone in the past when you were upset with each other?
- Do either of you have disappointments that you are afraid might affect your relationship?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

- Are you harboring bitterness at all right now?
- Have you projected any fears from your past onto your significant other?
- Do either of you need to forgive right now?

#10 ARE YOU SPIRITUALLY MATCHED?

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

Here are some questions I hope are helpful in this process.

- Are my partner and I currently honoring God in our relationship? What does that look like for each of us? Are we on the same page?
- Are we having meaningful discussions about what we believe God is doing in our lives and relationship?
- Do we see ourselves as equal in spiritual maturity? Why or why not? Do we see that changing?

If you find that your answers reveal significant differences in your faith journeys, I recommend that you don't seek to "try harder" or "do better" so you can stay together and salvage the relationship, but that you consider loving one another enough to allow each other to grow in spiritual maturity outside the context of a relationship.

Therefore let us leave the elementary doctrine of Christ and go on to maturity. (Hebrews 6:1 ESV)