

**MOVABLE MARRIAGE  
COMMUNICATION**



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## Couples intro

### Communicating well during relocation is hard work and takes time –but it’s worth the effort!

This booklet is meant to be a support as you connect in your marriage during your first year on the field. Whether you work through using one topic per week or discuss it monthly in one sitting, is up to you. Most couples do well stopping by 2-hours, as fatigue can influence progress. Keep to a solid routine that works well for you both.

Apply the practice of listening well when your spouse shares. When it’s your turn to speak, work to verbalize your feelings. As comments arise that might lead to conflict, use it as an opportunity to grow together in solving issues. Move toward a solution by being creative in building the skill to include all three of these perspectives\*:

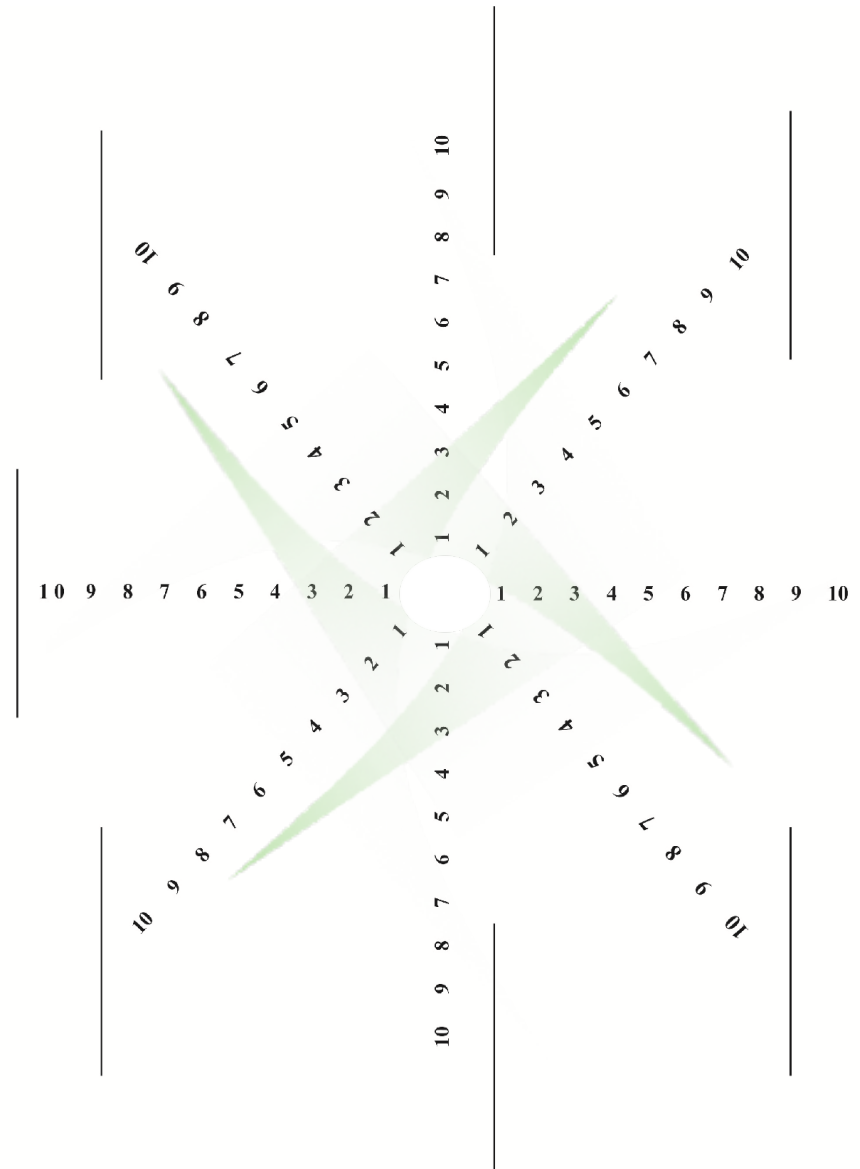
What are my intentions?

What are the intentions of my spouse?

What are our shared intentions?



In the coming weeks, *before* you find yourselves in conflict, take the time to read through the “Helpful Resources,” (beginning on page 13) and initiate the “Interruption Plan” (pg. 15).

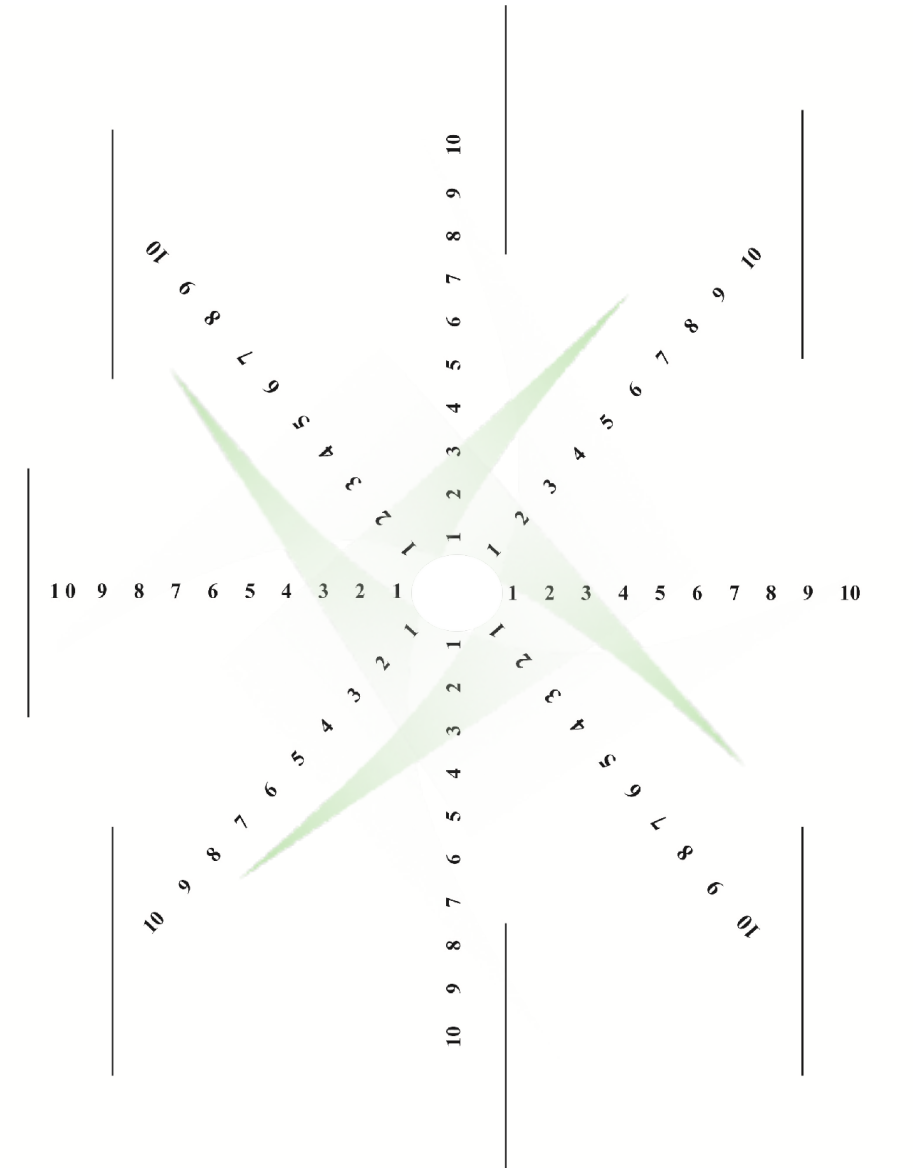


## Daily Practice

1. **Lowlight & highlight** – Each share their day's personal lowest moment and the most uplifting. Your highlight might be where you saw God at work today.
2. **Pray together** - It is helpful to come together before the Father daily. Choose to thank God especially when under pressure! You can be thankful for your highlight no matter how small it is. Many have family devotions and this is invaluable, but couple prayer time together is also important. *Choose a time you believe will work best and add a daily alarm reminder on your phone.*
3. **Be kind one to another** - Do you have a habit of polite, helpful and thankful everyday communication patterns? If not, discuss how to help each other toward that goal and begin now.



Feel free to ask questions of your Facilitators or let us know about your concerns. If you feel that you would benefit from the “Prepare♥Enrich” Marriage assessment, along with their helpful ideas for strengthening your union, please let us know so we can help arrange this for you.



# Today

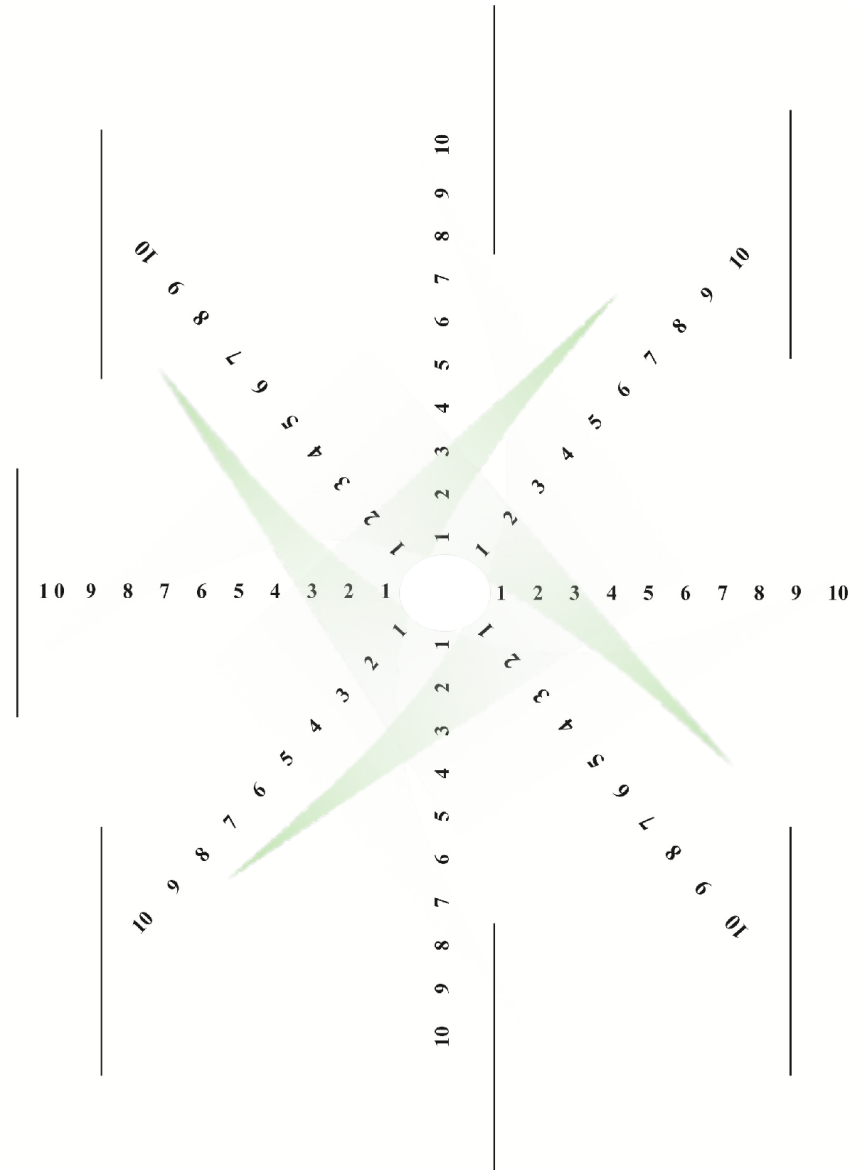
## Colossians 3:12-14

*Put on then, as God's chosen ones, holy and beloved, compassionate hearts, kindness, humility, meekness, and patience, bearing with one another and, if one has a complaint against another, forgiving each other; as the Lord has forgiven you, so you also must forgive. And above all these put on love, which binds everything together in perfect harmony.*

1. Finish sharing your self-care results from class with the "I-Star Exercise" then develop the "We-Star Exercise" (pgs. 17 - 18) together as a couple.
2. Share and Listen to each other:
  - a. From what you know about the country, the people, and environment to which you are moving:
    - How might this affect your marriage?
    - What are your fears relating to your marriage with this move?
    - How might it benefit your marriage in living there?
  - b. What changes are you expecting concerning your roles? What expectations do you have for your spouse, related to your own roles and your responsibilities?
3. Take some time now to pray together. Ask for the Lord's protection over
4. your marriage as you relocate.



Schedule a day and time to meet for informal communication each week.



## I-Star Exercise \*

1. Identify the routines, habits or outlets that must be in place for you to feel like you have a balanced life right now.
2. Decide which should be the top 8 and fill them in the lines on the star.
3. Circle the number that you think corresponds to how well you are currently doing: 1 = poor to 10 = excellent.
4. Connect the numbers to see your balance level today.

## Next Week

### Hebrews 11:1

*Now faith is confidence in what we hope for and assurance about what we do not see.*

1. Have you started implementing the “Daily Practice” (page 2)? If so, how do you feel it is going?
2. What ministry goals do you each have? How might you help each other accomplish them? What is your biggest concern about your own future ministry?
3. If learning a language: What is your plan to insure both of you will progress in language learning? How will you help each other? How will you keep language learning from becoming a competition?
4. How do you feel spiritual leadership is going in your family right now?  
*Both should answer, as it is helpful to have this understood before you leave.*
  - a. What is your expectation for this? Tell your spouse where you might have gotten that expectation.
  - b. Who will be responsible for any devotions, readings, study or family prayer times together?
  - c. Who is responsible for the children’s spiritual growth?

### Further Recommendations

1. Plan a fun date night to develop your own “Intermission Tool” on page 16.
2. Consider developing a family motto. If your children are old enough, they might be included (e.g. “*Cardens like to have fun and always tell the truth!*”).
3. What is your vision for your life together as missionaries? Take time together to write out your vision statement.

\*Married in Mission: A Handbook for Couples in Cross-Cultural Service (2015), by Alexis Kenny, M.A., pg. 38. [alexisckenny.wix.com/marriedinmission](http://alexisckenny.wix.com/marriedinmission)

# Upon Arrival to the Field

## Psalm 68:32-33

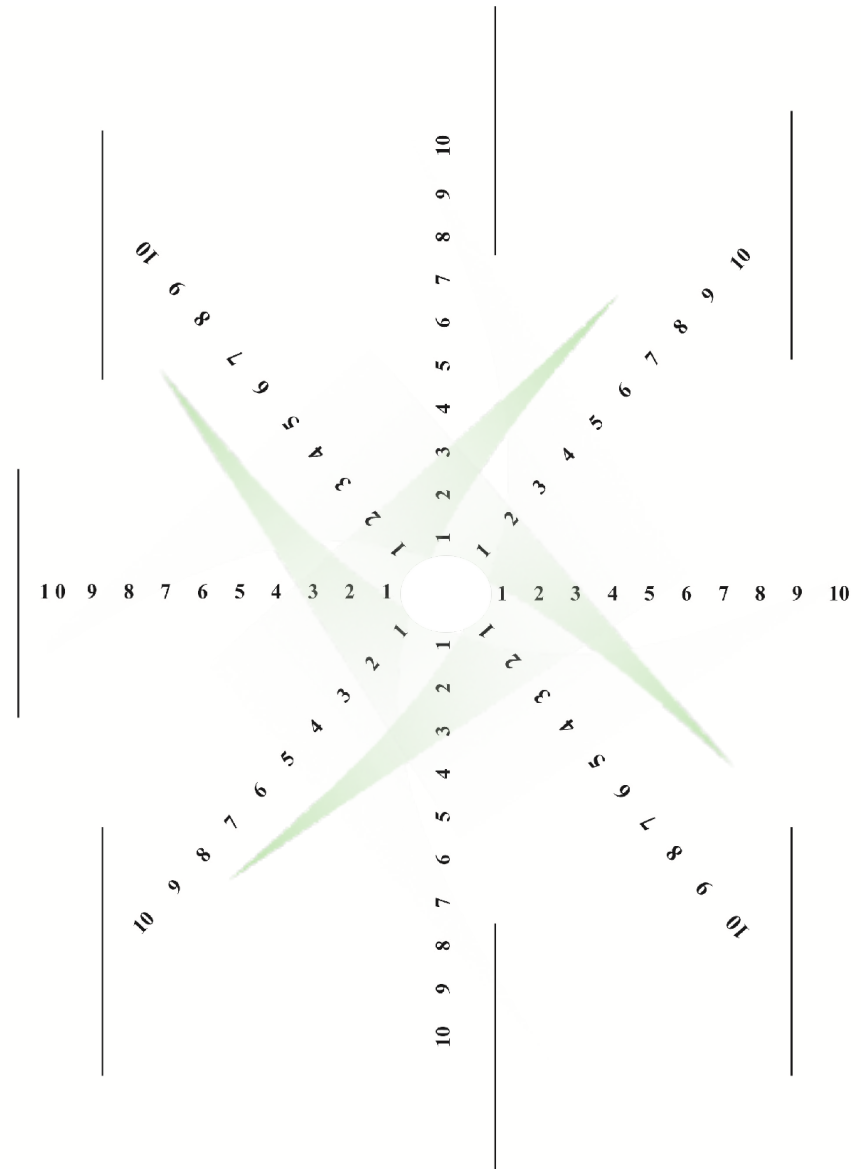
*O kingdoms of the earth, sing to God; sing praises to the Lord, to him who rides in the heavens, the ancient heavens; behold, he sends out his voice, his mighty voice.*

Ask your field leader these questions and afterwards, spend time alone as a couple discussing the answers.

1. What are the cultural norms here for marriages that will affect us?
2. What ministry goals do you have for each of us?
3. What are your expectations for our language study? *Gently let your team know of any needs you might have of them—remembering “How to Enter a Team Well”.*
4. Is there someone willing to help walk us through marriage and cultural stress adjustment together? *If not, try to find someone that you can Skype or phone with, no matter their location.*

## Discuss alone:

1. How can we help each other accomplish the goals given by our leader? *Make sure the goals are realistic and agreeable to you both.*
2. How can we make sure we both have opportunity to learn the culture and language well?
3. Set a date to begin with the monthly Pair-Share communication. Continue to implement the “Daily Practice” at the beginning of this workbook.



## We-Star Exercise \*

### For couples to do together

1. Each make a list separately.
2. Identify the routines, habits or outlets that must be in place for you to feel like you have **a balanced married life** right now.
3. After you have both finished, compare your lists. Decide together *using both lists*, which should be the top 8. Fill them in the lines on the star.
4. Circle the number that you both think corresponds to how well you are currently doing: 1 = poor to 10 = excellent.
5. Connect the numbers to see your “We” balance level today.
6. Re-evaluate the Star Exercises once you have arrived on the field.

\*Married in Mission: A Handbook for Couples in Cross-Cultural Service (2015), by Alexis Kenny, M.A., pg. 38. [alexisckenny.wix.com/marriedinmission](http://alexisckenny.wix.com/marriedinmission)

## Month 2

### 2 Peter 1:5-8

*For this very reason, make every effort to supplement your faith with virtue, and virtue with knowledge, and knowledge with self-control, and self-control with steadfastness, and steadfastness with godliness, and godliness with brotherly affection, and brotherly affection with love. For if these qualities are yours and are increasing, they keep you from being ineffective or unfruitful in the knowledge of our Lord Jesus Christ.*

As you recall– Communicating takes time and is more beneficial when operating under 3 understandings:

What are my intentions?  
What are the intentions of my spouse?  
What are our shared intentions?

1. Share with your spouse the areas that have brought the greatest strain to your marriage this month?
2. What one thing can you name that would most help you right now to deal with the challenges at this stage of your cross-cultural adjustment?
3. Survey other expats or members of your team to consider for yourselves:
  - How often do you take breaks?
  - When are your days off? (weekly, monthly, quarterly)
4. Plan a vacation in the coming year and mark out small breaks on a calendar. Plan several short getaways the first year or two to relieve stress. Generally, the earlier adjustment years require more breaks than for those who have been on the field for a while.
5. Choose the next date for Month 3, when you will meet to continue the PAIR-SHARE.

## Month 3

### Psalm 119:88

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name.*

1. Communicate your present energy levels to each other (e.g. *I feel a low-medium-high level of energy*).
2. What are pros and cons of marriages you've observed in your host country thus far? What have you observed about child rearing? *Remember it is early and your observations are not fully informed.*
3. Tell your spouse how you feel about your part in home life and the role that you play. Is there dissatisfaction or reason to celebrate? *If it is not smooth, don't despair you're just beginning.* Do your roles appear to be divided by interest or skill? Work on it and celebrate what is going well.
4. General stress affects how you feel about your relationship. What can you each do, to help your spouse feel more respected or loved during stressful times?

Here are some ideas to help start the conversation:

- doing physical activities together
- being more/less involved in ministry or team
- more time alone/more time together
- level of physical intimacy or affection
- initiating discussion more often
- receive more affirmation *What type would you like?*
- speaking highly of me in front of other people
- listening to the point of understanding
- keeping commitments
- expressing appreciation
- keeping me up-to-date on what's happening

## Intermission Tool

### A secret weapon successfully used by true friends who know each other intimately

Negative feelings can intensify when life seems out of our control. This is a tender time for issues to flare up and derail solid construction toward resolution.

Consider coming up with your own personal "intermission code". It can play a key role in diffusing tense moments or moving your relationship back to the positive side through a lightening up of the atmosphere.

The idea is to basically stop a spiral of intensifying negativity by delaying the conversation to a later agreed upon point. You will then handle it with less emotion and more creative problem solving.

1. Together create a personal "intermission" code-word, sign, indication or gesture for each other to immediately start your recess.  
*It can be comical, dramatic, musical or something that has meaning to both of you (e.g. "Beach!", "Blow a kiss", "Time-out")*
2. Use your code at the sign of impending trouble over an issue, saying it out-loud to your spouse (if word or phrase). When it is used- *honor your spouse by backing down and sticking to your plan to discuss the issue later in a productive way.*
3. At the moment one of you decides it's time to use the code, it should immediately put a halt to the escalating intensity of the conflict and put it into a pause-mode!
4. At the pause, your plan comes into effect.
5. Decide now, what the pause will mean for you; e.g. *it might mean:*
  - *We'll discuss it this weekend and go out*
  - *At dinner we schedule a time to get together and work this out*
  - *To be continued tonight, after kids are in bed*
  - *Kiss me now and we'll put it on the calendar to discuss*



## Interruption Plan

### Avoid creating habitual conflict patterns

It has been said, “*The definition of insanity is doing the same thing over and over again, while expecting different results.*”

Write down 3 key issues you feel create the most conflict in your relationship right now. Prioritize them 1 through 3, and then each of you share yours in the following way:

1. Choose who goes first and discuss their number one pick.
2. Each of you states the ways you believe that you, not them, have personally contributed to the problem. *As you both finish, gently and kindly help each other add anything missing.*
3. Brainstorm and write down at least 3 or 4 ways to resolve the issue. Choose the best one to implement. If it fails, you will try another one later.
4. Repeat this next week with your #2 issue. Re-read the guidelines at that time.

## Month 4

### Ecclesiastes 4:9-12

*Two are better than one, because they have a good reward for their toil. For if they fall, one will lift up his fellow. But woe to him who is alone when he falls and has not another to lift him up!*

*Again, if two lie together, they keep warm, but how can one keep warm alone? And though a man might prevail against one who is alone, two will withstand him—a threefold cord is not quickly broken.*

During adjustment, you will have times when one feels weaker or stronger. This is normal and can change often. Allow the one feeling stronger to care for and serve the other.

1. How are you doing together with stress? How are you handling the different types of stresses?
2. Finish the sentence: “My biggest stressor is\_\_\_\_\_.”
3. Are you using a “stress escape” where you might be spending a bit too much time on something? Help each other by reflecting what you see.
4. Are you sticking to plans you’ve made together? What should now be changed? What steps or things need to be added or taken away from what you are doing? *Help your spouse by showing them you are actively listening and working toward change.*
5. Revisit the “I–Star” and “We–Star” exercises and consider whether at this point, you need to adjust some things to keep your lives and marriage in balance. Use the extra stars at the end of the booklet if you need to reconstruct in your new setting.

## Month 5



### Psalm 119:132

*Turn to me and be gracious to me, as is your way with those who love your name.*

1. How are you doing in balancing your time between ministry, team, nationals, language learning and communication back home with family and friends?
2. How are you doing with hospitality? Do you feel it is balanced?
3. Ask your spouse some of these marriage-enhancing questions. *Give them time to think before responding:*
  - a. What do you need in order to be in the mood for intimacy during this time?
  - b. Are we intimate often enough for you?
  - c. Do you feel comfortable initiating more intimacy? Why or why not?
  - d. Is there anything we can do to increase how often we are alone?
  - e. What can we do while together that leads to a more fulfilling time?
  - f. Is there something I can do to make a difference?
4. Do you need to rearrange your time in order to integrate the “Daily Practice” from page 2, of this Workbook? How are you doing with the habit of polite and thankful everyday communication patterns? How can you help each other improve?



This might be a good time to look back on the “Helpful Communication Resources” at the end of this workbook (pgs. 13 - 16)

f. Never forget that your relationship with your spouse is far more important than winning an argument. Being “right with God” is far greater than your need to “be right”, fulfilled or to have things just as you want them.

g. Remember that love keeps no record of wrongs. Be quick to forgive, quick to admit your own mistakes, and ready to move on from the conflict.

2. Here are some strategies to deal with conflict when it arises:

a. Ask yourselves, “Who cares more about this issue?” *You can decide to gracefully adjust your preference if your partner has strong feelings about an issue.*

b. Periodically assess your stress and feelings of competency now that you’ve moved. *When your partner is not following through on tasks they had agreed to do, or if you feel better equipped for a task, discuss it.*

c. Tell your spouse what you’ve learned rather than assuming the other “gets it”. Sometimes one of you will not see a problem that is quite clear to the other.

d. When you are doing your best to deal with your differences and yet remain polarized, consider whether personal issues are the underlying conflict? *For example: is there a feeling of envy, unbalance or competition? Sometimes the issue lingers from your past—or it’s not at all between the two of you, but something outside.*

e. Consider the big picture as it affects each decision.

f. Have you initiated the “Interruption Plan” (*next page*) to break bad patterns and see success? How is it going?

## Helpful Resources

Differences and disagreements are inevitable during stressful adjustments. Effective communication is particularly important when there's tension between you. Choose the best time and place to talk about difficult matters.

### Negotiation during times of conflict

**Read these 3 qualifiers together.**

- Speak for yourself using “I-statements”, rather than attacking the other person
- Be patient and give your partner time to reflect, before responding
- Listen *to understand*, before beginning to discuss solutions

1. While in negotiation:

- a. Stick to the issue and don't add secondary points.
- b. Get on the same side of the fence. Rather than attempting to resolve an issue *my-way* or *your-way*, work toward a solution that represents *Our-Way*.
- c. Try to identify the core issue. Arguments often arise because of events or issues that disguise the real problem. Consider which attitudes or beliefs are motivating your behavior, for clues as to what the core issue in any conflict is.
- d. Don't be a mind reader. Discuss your beliefs and expectations openly. Don't try to interpret your spouse's thoughts or motives. Ask clarifying questions instead. Likewise, don't expect your spouse to know what you are thinking.
- e. Avoid character assassination. As you work to resolve conflict, it's okay to talk about circumstances and behavior. However, attacking your spouse's personality or character is never acceptable.

## Month 6

### Ephesians 6:10-12

*Finally, be strong in the Lord and in the strength of his might. Put on the whole armor of God, that you may be able to stand against the schemes of the devil. For we do not wrestle against flesh and blood, but against the rulers, against the authorities, against the cosmic powers over this present darkness, against the spiritual forces of evil in the heavenly places.*

1. Ask your spouse if there is something that you do that is embarrassing. In what way is it embarrassing? Has crossing a culture created or had an effect on this? *It's okay- most marriages have this.*
2. Discuss your budget, savings plan, and financial goals. Is it working well for you? Do you need to make changes? Who will be responsible for which part(s)? Having a plan you agree on is a proactive way to avoid stress and conflict later.
3. Do you need to come up with a different health plan? Exercise, sleep and eating habits contribute to your overall well-being and ability to thrive in your marriage relationship.
  - Are you in a good eating pattern yet? What can you do for improvement?
  - Do you need to increase your exercise or slow down a bit? How can you work together to make those changes?
4. Is there a sport, hobby or interest you'd like to continue or begin now that you've begun to settle in a little?
5. Do you both feel you have outside interests balanced together? Perhaps too much time together? Maybe not enough time together?

## Month 7

### Colossians 3:16

*Let the word of Christ dwell in you richly, teaching and admonishing one another in all wisdom, singing psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, with thankfulness in your hearts to God.*

1. Do you both feel able to shop and get the things you regularly need at this point? Adjust to help each other learn to be proficient as needed.
2. Are you seeing success with balancing your time, feeling organized, or having good rhythm in your lives? Do you need to change some things?
3. Has living overseas necessitated changing the way you show affection? In light of the past 6-months, what might you do from here that is culturally appropriate, to see more warmth and tenderness in your relationship?
4. Continue to work to develop deeper, more meaningful communication with each other. Suggestions:
  - a. How can differences of opinion become bonds rather than wedges in marriage? How is it possible to disagree without being contentious?
  - b. What are some of your favorite childhood memories? If you could change one thing about your upbringing, what would it be?
  - c. What does affection mean to you? How did your father show affection? How did your mother show affection?

## Month 8

### Ephesians 4:1-3

*I therefore, a prisoner for the Lord, urge you to walk in a manner worthy of the calling to which you have been called, with all humility and gentleness, with patience, bearing with one another in love, eager to maintain the unity of the Spirit in the bond of peace.*

### Repeat Months 2 – 7 again!

*Yes really!*

Your adjustment level will be very different the second time through. Share your answers from how you are presently feeling. Accept and value the different ways that you each respond to what is happening around you. This will allow transformation and bring you closer,



If there is anything we could possibly help with, please don't hesitate to ask. Write us with questions and we'd love to hear how you are doing! [citmail@cit-online.org](mailto:citmail@cit-online.org)

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