

State of Your Marriage

Introduction

Regularly checking in on what's going on between you and your spouse is one of the best things you can do for your marriage. Most married people operate under the assumption that no news is good news. They think that if their spouses were struggling in some area of the marriage, they'd know about it. But that's not necessarily the case. What you're experiencing in your marriage right now may differ significantly from what your spouse is experiencing. If that's the case, you need to know about it.

That's why we've created this *State of Your Marriage* resource. It's a simple, one-week discussion designed to help you do a little diagnostic work. You'll have a *State of Your Marriage* meeting three times during the life of your Just Married Group. It's that important.

The purpose of this meeting isn't to assess the overall quality of your marriage. It's to help you explore what is and isn't working *right now*. The meeting consists of a simple three-question discussion you'll have as a group, followed by an extended time of prayer.

The discussion is *simple*, but it's not *easy*. To make the most of this meeting, you'll have to open up to your group. You'll have to begin to let them inside your life. It can be difficult to be transparent. Sometimes it can be difficult to hear what your spouse is thinking and feeling. But the payoff is not only a richer group experience; it's an opportunity to establish some healthy habits that can have a huge impact on the quality of your marriage over the long term.

Discussion Questions

1. What is working in your marriage right now?
2. What challenges are you facing in your marriage right now?
3. What can this group do to help you work through those challenges?

Prayer

Spend the remainder of the meeting praying for one another. Pray for each couple in the group. Be specific.

For the Ride Home

Talk about these questions on your way home:

1. *What did you think and feel during the group discussion?*
2. *What can you do to help and support each other during your current challenges?*

Exercise

If, as a result of *State of Your Marriage*, you need to have a more in-depth one-on-one conversation with your spouse, schedule time to do so. Pick a time when you won't be rushed and a place where you won't be distracted.

Work on these communication skills to make the most of your conversations:

- Give full attention to your spouse when talking. Turn off your phone, the television, and other electronic devices. Make eye contact.
- Focus on each other's good qualities. Praise each other often.
- Be assertive. Share your thoughts, feelings, and needs. A good way to be assertive without being critical is to use "I" statements instead of "You" statements (e.g., "I worry when you don't let me know you'll be late" rather than "You were late").
- Avoid criticism.
- If you must criticize, balance it with a positive comment (e.g., "I appreciate how you take out the trash every week. In the future, can you remember to bring the trash can back from the end of the driveway?").
- Listen to understand, not to judge.
- Use active listening. Summarize your partner's comments before sharing your own feelings or reactions.
- Avoid blame. Work together to come up with solutions.

Moving Forward

Developing and maintaining intentional community with other couples can be a great benefit to your marriage. We hope the *State of Your Marriage* has helped you see that. We also hope it's given you a roadmap for great future conversations. You don't have to be in a group setting to set aside time to talk to each other about what's working in your relationship and what isn't working.

Changing Your Mind

Instead, speaking the truth in love, we will grow to become in every respect the mature body of him who is the head, that is, Christ.

Ephesians 4:15

