

*Countdown for Couples: Preparing for the Adventure of Marriage*  
Discussion guide written by *Countdown for Couples* authors Dale and Susan Dale Mathis

## Chapter 1: A Marriage of Three: What's God's View of Love and Marriage?

1. What is God's view of love and marriage?
2. What's the importance of a covenant commitment?
3. List two or three reasons why cohabitation is unhealthy.
4. In your own words, describe the meaning of "leaving and cleaving" and explain why this is so important.
5. In what ways can selfishness erode the foundations of marriage?

## Chapter 2: Ready or Not: Are You Ready for a Lifelong Commitment?

1. What are some common reasons why people get married?
2. Name three or more unique challenges that remarrying couples face.
3. What three statements should you be able to make before deciding to marry? (If necessary, refer to page 22.)
4. What danger signs or red flags should you consider and settle before you get married?

### Chapter 3: Surviving or Thriving: How Do You Meet Each Other's Needs?

1. Describe the basic differences between wants and needs. How do these elements impact marriage?
2. Talk about the differences between your needs and your future mate's needs. Take turns naming practical ways you can meet each other's needs.
3. How can wants be influenced by the media and become destructive if they're perceived to be needs?
4. Name some emotional and spiritual needs that should be met in a Christian marriage.
5. Articulate and prioritize your individual needs as well as your needs as a couple.

### Chapter 4: Great Expectations: What Should You Expect in Your Marriage?

1. What are some sources of expectations, and how do they affect us?
2. How do we keep from falling prey to Hollywood's view of what we should expect in a spouse?
3. How do you meet each other's expectations now and work out differences in expectations when you fall short?

4. Discuss your expectations about having children.

5. Discuss your most important expectations – as individuals and as a couple.

#### Chapter 5: Beautifully Different: Can Your Differences Be Gifts from God?

1. Are differences always negative? Why or why not?

2. How do family-of-origin differences affect a marriage?

3. Name two to four common gender differences.

4. List at least three differences between you and your future mate.

5. How can you work out your differences in a loving way?

6. Discuss the steps the authors present for working through your differences.

#### Chapter 6: Loving Communication: How Do You Express Love?

1. Name three to five elements of loving communication.

2. How can communication styles of men and women be different?

3. Why are the tone of your voice and your body language important in communication?

4. In what practical ways can you learn to listen more effectively?

5. Name some ways you can build your communication skills with each other.

### Chapter 7: Rules of Engagement: How Do You Fight Fair?

1. What's your MO (mode of operation) when it comes to conflict? (Refer to pages 94 and 95 if necessary.)

2. What are the most common causes of conflicts in a relationship?

3. Why is it important to have a plan before trying to resolve any conflict?

4. The authors listed 10 A's—or steps—for conflict resolution. Name as many as you can.

5. Describe some behaviors you should avoid when trying to resolve a conflict.

6. Why is forgiveness so critical to successful conflict resolution? How do you forgive?

### Chapter 8: Let's Make Cents: How Do You Navigate Your Financial Life?

1. Explain how family history affects your attitudes about money management. Take a moment to talk through your family histories, both the positive and negative elements.
2. What are some of the early danger signs that indicate poor money management? Are any of these traits seen in you or your future mate's life? Discuss.
3. Why is credit card debt so harmful?
4. Why is a budget essential for good money management? Have you taken the time to create a budget based on the format provided for you in the book? If not, do that now. If so, talk about financial goals you'd like to set for the first year of marriage, first five years of marriage, and so on.

#### Chapter 9: A Productive Partnership: How Do You Handle the Nitty-Gritty of Daily Life?

1. Why can daily living, chores, and the division of labor be such a struggle in marriage? Give two or three examples.
2. How can your individual strengths and weaknesses help you decide what roles you play and jobs you do? What might this look like for you and your future mate?
3. According to God's Word, how is a woman's role different from a man's role?
4. Name as many "be-attitudes" of daily living as you can.

## Chapter 10: The Intimate Mystery: What's God's Design for Sexual Intimacy?

1. What are some of the purposes of sex?
2. How did you first learn about sex?
3. How have television, movies, books, the Internet, magazines, music, music videos, and even church influenced your worldview regarding sex?
4. Why did God limit sex just to marriage?
5. How are men and women different in their sexual desires?
6. Discuss the elements that make up true sexual intimacy and enjoyment.

## Chapter 11: It's a Family Affair: Why Is Family Such a Challenge?

1. What are some practical ways in which you can make your in-law relationships successful?
2. Why is it important to form your family first and keep your marriage the top priority? How do you do that?
3. Explain how holidays can be especially challenging when it comes to in-laws, and discuss what you can do about those challenges.

4. How can you work through conflict with in-laws while remaining respectful and honoring your own parents?

## Chapter 12: The Great Adventure: What Do You Do with the Rest of Your Life Together?

1. How is marriage a lifelong journey rather than a destination? Why does knowing this matter?
2. Discuss ways in which your wedding can set the tone for your marriage. What do you, personally, want to show (or reflect) at your wedding?
3. Talk about the importance of the wedding night and honeymoon, what priorities you'd like to set, and what concerns you may have.
4. What are some ways you can build a solid marriage during the first few months? What priorities do you want to establish? What do you want to avoid?
5. Think of a couple whose marriage you admire and respect. What qualities in their marriage would you like to emulate in your own relationship?
6. Name some ways you can strengthen your marriage throughout your lifetime together.