90 Day Marriage Assessment

The Home

Spiritual Formation (while losing your marbles...)

Building Strategies

In order to dramatically stabilize your marriage, you must take the initiative to:

- **Build on Foundation of Committed Love.** Affirm that love is a choice to know and meet the needs of your spouse, no matter how you feel.

- **Do the rough Framing of Realistic Expectations.** Release unrealistic expectations and unhealthy dependencies on your spouse to make you happy.

- **Put on a Roof of Long Lasting Communication.** Express love, communicate needs, and resolve conflict in a clear, calm, current, and constructive manner.

- **Turn on the A/C of Forgiveness.** Live out your faith before your family by extending God’s grace to others.

- **Turn up the Heat of Intimacy.** Protect and nurture a healthy sexual union that touches body, soul, and spirit.

Your Present Reality

Complete the following assessment of your marriage intentionally during the past 90 days.

**Nurturing Intimacy**

- Had a date night twice or more per month to focus only on one another.

- Wrote a note, gave a flower, or demonstrated some other tangible expression of love at least twice per month.

- Called during the workday, sat down to chat, took walks together, or pursued some other kind of focused, non-task communication at least three times per week.

- Prayed with my spouse (other than saying grace over a meal) at least twice per week.

- Demonstrated meaningful touch (hugs, kisses, caressing) and verbal affirmation (words of appreciation, admiration, and affection) at least once per day.
Avoiding Dangers

- Took steps to reduce risk to my marriage in my vulnerable areas (temper, sexual temptation, office relationships, time away from home, demeaning language, substance abuse, etc.) by establishing and maintaining boundaries and by increasing accountability.

- Made a consistent effort to take care of myself physically and emotionally, in order to be the best lifelong partner I can be.

- Following a conflict, apologized or forgave my spouse before going to bed.

Which one of these would you consider your strongest or weakest areas of attention?

Grade Your Marriage Intentionality

- A: Very Intentional
- B. Not Bad
- C. Hit and Miss
- D. Mostly Miss
- F. Totally Haphazard

Your Next Steps

Choose from the following activity ideas or come up with your own.

Date Night

A Walk

Praying Together

Doing something my spouse would like to

Birthday Affirmation

Prayer Board

Teamwork
90 Days of Intentional Parenting

A Clear Purpose
As one blessed with the gift of children, you are called to inspire and nurture the faith of the next generation as life’s greatest privilege and priority.

Effective Strategies
In order to dramatically increase the likelihood your children will embrace Christian belief and values you should:

Leverage Legacy. What you do today will have a long-term influence on your child’s tendencies, beliefs, and actions, for good or bad.

Play the Odds. Nurturing a healthy relationship with your child makes it far more likely he or she will want to embrace your beliefs and values.

Define “Normal.” Giving your child the corrective lenses of biblical truth will equip him or her to navigate the deceptive roads of life.

Go with Their Grain. Determine whether your child is in the imprint, impression, or coaching period and use teaching methods suited to his or her stage of development.

Your Present Reality
Honestly assess your intentionality in spiritual formation at home during the past 90 days and give yourself a grade.

- I did something special with my children (a hobby, ice cream date, movie night, etc.) at least twice per month
- I connected relationally with my children (chatting, helping with their homework, eating dinner together at the table, etc.) at least once per day
- I created or captured an occasion within the home for passing on my beliefs and values to my children (during a family night activity, a mealtime conversation, bedtime reading, etc.) at least once per week
- I prayed with my children (including meals, bedtimes, etc.) at least five times per week
- I participated in some type of intergenerational faith experience in addition to my regular worship services (a service project, family mission trip, volunteering in children’s ministry, a father-daughter banquet, a father-son event, etc.) at least once in the past four months
Grade Your Intentionality in Parenting:

- A: Very Intentional
- B. Not Bad
- C. Hit and Miss
- D. Mostly Miss
- F. Totally Haphazard

Child Specifics

Now identify each of your children’s developmental stage.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>Child’s Name</th>
<th>Stage of Development</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Imprint Period (Age 0-7)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Impression Period (Age 8-13)</td>
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<tr>
<td></td>
<td>Coaching Period (Teen years)</td>
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YOUR NEXT STEPS

With each child’s specific developmental stage in mind, indicate at least one activity per month you can use to create impression point opportunities during the coming 90 days. If this is your first such plan, feel free to use the Getting Started Ideas described in the pages ahead. Additional ideas can be found at Heritagebuilders.com. Be sure to carve out a day and time on your calendar or PDA for each idea. For example, a family with two young children might create a plan like the following.

<table>
<thead>
<tr>
<th>When</th>
<th>What</th>
<th>Impression Goal</th>
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<tbody>
<tr>
<td>Second and fourth Saturdays the Ten Commandments</td>
<td>Dad takes Kyle (11 yrs. old) to breakfast</td>
<td>Memorize together and discuss</td>
</tr>
<tr>
<td>Monday/Wednesday/Thursday reading routine</td>
<td>Mom reads bedtime Bible</td>
<td>Establish a Bible</td>
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To Nicole (7 yrs. Old) in Nicole’s life

To nurture relationships with dialogue

Dinnertime High-Low discussions

First and third Saturdays Pizza & family night

First Month
Just Like Air activity
Listen to and discuss a Narnia episode

Second Month
God Made All Things activity
Listen to and discuss a Narnia episode

Third Month
Romans One field trip
Listen to and discuss a Narnia episode

Fourth Month
Following Directions activity
Listen to and discuss a Narnia episode

Getting Started Ideas
Try any or all of these ideas to create impression points with your children. Be sure to note the appropriate age and stage of development as indicated, or alter the activity to fit your child’s situation.

High and Low
At some point during each family meal together, go around the table and give each member of the family an opportunity to express the high point and the low point in his or her day. Establish the rule that each person must take a turn—even if they had an uneventful day. Also, make it clear that everyone must listen to the others in order to show respect and because sometimes a person’s high and low could be connected to something one of the other family members did. If a child’s low was when Dad hurt his or her feelings, Dad is able to apologize if he hasn’t already done so. If a child’s high
was playing a game with a sibling, it creates a chance to make a sibling feel good about what he or she did.

Mom and Dad can infuse fun and reinforce important values during this time. For example, Dad might say his high for the day was smooching Mommy when he got home from work—thus instilling a sense of security in the children. Mom might say her high was when a child helped clean up without being asked. Dad can then have fun by saying, “My low was discovering Mommy’s high wasn’t smooching me back!” Once you’ve done this activity the first time, you can turn it into a regular tradition by shouting “High-Low” during every family meal. (Ideal stage: all)

**Just Like Air**

Five-year-old Kyle and three-year-old Shaun stare at Dad, seriously contemplating his rather deep question. “How could God be real if we can’t see Him?”

The oldest takes the lead. “That’s a good question, Dad!”

“Well, is there anything else we know is real but we can’t see?” asks Dad.

“How about air?” suggests Mom.

Dad pulls out several balloons and inflates them.

“Air is real enough to expand these balloons. I bet air has power too. Dad says this while releasing a balloon, causing it to fly across the room. Now Shaun, the three-year-old, is really engaged! After ten minutes of intense competition over who can make their balloon fly farthest, Dad introduces a little slogan for tonight’s activity: “Just like air, God is there!”

A lasting impression has been made. In fact, ask either boy about how God can be real though we can’t see Him, and he will respond, “Just like air, God is there!” Ask them what that means, and they’ll explain. “God is real and has power, even though we can’t see Him.” (Ideal stage: imprint period)

**God Is Everywhere**

Observing the beauty outside the car window while driving down the freeway, I (Kurt) asked my five-year-old son where God lives. Disturbed by Dad’s lack of theological education, he quickly and confidently responded with, “He lives everywhere, Dad!”

“How can He live everywhere if He is just one person?” I asked, pushing beyond the acceptable rules of father-son interaction. After thinking for a long moment, my son threw the ball back into my court.

“I don’t know, Dad. You’ll have to teach me about that one!”

Realizing it was now necessary to develop an activity that would teach the omnipresence and omniscience of God at a five-year-old level, I was sorry I ever raised the topic. But we came up with a couple of simple activities that seemed to do the trick.

**Hide-and-Seek**
Each child loves to play hide-and-seek with his or her parents. The simple game can be used to illustrate the truth taught in Psalm 139v7-10, that we cannot hide from God because He is everywhere and know everything. After reading the passage in a children’s version of the Bible, play hide-and-seek with your children. When someone is found yell out the phrase, “You can’t hide from God!” This will reinforce the biblical truth in your child’s mind. Play over and over again until the child tires of the game, which could take hours! (Ideal stage: imprint period)

**Picture Parable**
Young children also love to draw and color. You can use a simple drawing to illustrate the reality of God being everywhere at once because He is outside the limits of time and space. Take some paper and crayons and ask your child to draw a picture of the world. Next have him draw a picture of himself and a good friend inside that world. Ask the question, “Can you see (insert name of friend) right now? Why not?” The answer: Because he or she is in another house with walls between us. Instruct the child to draw a wall between the two characters on the picture to show that they can’t see one another. Then ask the question, “When you look down at the world that you made can you see yourself and your friend?” The answer: Yes, and that is the way God sees the entire world. He can see everyone even though we can’t see each other. (Ideal stage: imprint period)

**God Made All Things**
After reading the creation story in a children’s picture Bible, pull out a large box if linking toys such as Legos or K’NEX. Help the kids make several designs such as people or cars or houses-whatever they’d like. After completing the “creation” process, take the creations apart and place the individual pieces on the floor. Ask the question: “How long do you think it will take for these pieces to put themselves back together without any help from us?” The obvious answer: It will never happen. Next, take the toy pieces and place them in a bag or box. Ask the children to shake the bag or box around and then dump the pieces on the floor. After they fall randomly, express frustration. “I wanted them to fall into place to re-create the same designs we made before!” Why didn’t it work?” Try again over and over and keep expressing frustration that it doesn’t work. The kids will consider you silly, which is precisely what you want!

Then pose the question, “How many times must we shake and dump before the designs reappear again?” The obvious answer: It will never happen. Explain that many people believe the world simply made itself by chance rather than God creating it on
purpose. Just as you were silly to expect the toys to fall into place, it is silly to think our entire world made itself without a Creator! (Ideal stage: imprint period)

**Light to My Path**

On a particularly dark evening, turn out every light in the house and enjoy a “light to my path” scavenger hunt with the kids. Create a list of things in the house that you need to find. Give each child a flashlight or candle to light their path as they search for the various objects on your list. Once they have successfully gathered all of the required items, reward them with a bowl of ice cream while you read Psalm 119:105. Then compare your scavenger hunt adventure with how the Bible serves as a light to help us navigate our way through life. (Ideal stage: imprint period)

**Following Directions**

Tell your kids that you have planned an exciting outing to someplace special. You may or may not choose to reveal the destination, but make it a place you know they will enjoy, such as a favorite restaurant, an ice cream shop, a miniature golfing range, a bowling alley, a movie theatre, etc. Create a special map that has step-by-step directions to the location. Assign a child to help you navigate. (If that child can’t read, then let them simply point which way to go after each step in the directions has been read aloud.) As the child tells you which direction to turn, ignore his or her instructions. Tell them that you know what you are doing and you don’t need to heed the map. Your child will likely become frustrated with you, insisting that you follow directions so you don’t get lost. After several turns, stop the car and admit that you are lost. Give the kids a chance to scold you for failing to follow the map. Ask the kids what you should do next. They will say go back to the start and follow directions. This time, do as they say. Upon arriving at the special location, read 2 Timothy 3:16-17 or Psalm 119:105 and explain that God gave us the Bible as a life map, and that those who are wise will obey its directions. (Ideal stages: imprint and impression periods)

**Drive-Time Audios**

We spend so much time in the car driving our kids from school to soccer practice and from church activities to who knows where. Not to mention the long vacation drive times that create ideal opportunities to enjoy a good speech, drama, or audio book addressing the issues we are trying to teach our children. One set of effective tools for this purpose is the audio dramas produced by Focus on the Family. Rather than allowing the kids to waste time playing handheld video games in the car, baptize their imaginations with stories that reinforce your beliefs and values. We suggest getting started by ordering a collection of Adventures in Odyssey stories or by getting all seven audio versions of the Chronicles of Narnia tales. (Ideal stage: impression period)

**Reading Rewards**

One of the most important ways we can help form our children’s view of the world is by providing them with quality reading material. Establish a reading reward system that gives your child an incentive for reading books (or having others read books to them)
that reinforce or challenge their thinking on key beliefs. For example, you may wish to pay them an appropriate amount of money for reading books on a list you create. Or they can earn points toward a special outing or whatever incentive will work for you child. In order to instill in them a love for reading and to find titles appropriate for their age and interests, we recommend obtaining several resources. *Honey for a Child’s Heart* and *Honey for a Teen’s Heart*, both by Gladys Hunt, are terrific guides for parents in pursuit of good literature for their kids. *The Read-Aloud Handbook* by Jim Trelease also includes a giant treasury of great books and coaches parents on how to instill a love for reading in their children. (Ideal stage: impression period)

**Romans One Field Trips**

The first chapter of Romans says that God has made His nature and character evident I the things He has made. As parents we can turn routine outings into opportunities to highlight various aspects of God’s nature with our children. A trip to the zoo, for example, can be used to discover God’s marvelous creativity and sense of humor. A hiking trip can become an examination of the brilliant engineering behind an ecological system-everything in it working together to sustain life in all shapes and sizes. Moments of a ski trip can be captured to intentionally experience God’s eye for beauty as you take in the masterpiece of mountaintop views. The key is capturing such moments in order to turn them into Romans One Field Trips. (Ideal stage: any)

**Dinner-Table Debates**

A great way to help children better grasp and defend what they believe is to create dinner-table debates. Set aside a day to hold your debate during dinner, assigning different sides of the issue to individuals or teams. (For example, Mom and son defend the existence of God while Dad and daughter oppose it.) Give the teams several days or weeks to prepare for the debate. When the big day arrives, remind everyone to bring his or her notes to be prepared to begin the debate immediately after prayer. It is wise to assign a moderator or to clearly establish rules for the debate in order to keep everything fair and under control.

If you choose to conduct dinner-table debates with your family, consider several important points. First, you may be concerned about entertaining arguments that oppose your beliefs. However, it is better for your children to struggle with those ideas in the safety of a believing home than to wait until they are exposed to the same ideas in a less supportive context. Second, this activity requires some work on the part of parents. You must be willing to learn along with your kids, taking the time to read and prepare. It can do more harm than good to organize a debate in which you don’t fully engage. Ask your pastor or a trusted leader at your church for recommended resources appropriate to the chosen debate topic. (Ideal stage: coaching period)

**Parent and Teen Movie Nights**

As you enjoy watching movies together with older kids, capture those moments and reflect upon how certain films or scenes within a film reflect a view of God that is either
consistent or inconsistent with a Christian perspective. Of course, you must carefully
decide what films would be age-and-content-appropriate for your children. For help
getting started with this activity you can visit www.MovieNightChat.com to hear a free
audio podcast explaining the process and to find discussion questions that make it easy
to get started. The following are a couple of our favorite discussion movies. (Ideal stage:
coaching period)

**Dead Poets Society:** The main character in this film, Mr. Keating (played by Robin
Williams), reflects a worldview that says that we should pursue life to the fullest while
we are alive because when it’s over, it’s over. The primary theme is “Carpe diem-seize
the day!” The film ends in tragedy for a boy names Neil; unable to get what he wants
from life, he kills himself. After viewing the film, ask the following discussion questions:

1. **What view of God does Robin Williams’ character represent?** Answer: The view that there is no God, or at least no life beyond this life.
2. **What book of the Bible speaks to the same outlook?** Answer: The book of Ecclesiastes because it talks about what life is like without God.
3. **Why did the boy kill himself?** Answer: Because he thought there was no
meaning in life unless he could do what he wanted with it.
4. **Why is this a lie?** Answer: Because there is a God who gives us purpose
and meaning even when life doesn’t go as we want.

**Contact:** The main character in this film, played by Jodie Foster, is a scientist on a
quest to find intelligent life beyond Earth. Once contact is made, the people of Earth
create a machine that allows her to travel across galaxies and to communicate directly
with alien beings. There is a scene in the film in which she becomes overwhelmed with
the beauty and majesty of space-to the point that she can’t even speak. Zero in on this
scene and ask the following discussion questions:

1. **What view of God does Jodie Foster’s character represent?** Answer: The view that without proof, we can’t believe in God.
2. **Why did she become overwhelmed at the splendor and majesty of space?** Answer: Because she was experiencing something greater than herself.
3. **What passage of Scripture speaks to what she experienced while traveling through space?** Answer: Psalm 19 says that the heavens declare
the glory of God!
4. **What is the truth she refused to accept?** Answer: That the order and
beauty of our universe is evidence of a Creator God.

We hope these suggestions will get your creative juices flowing as you create a
120-day plan for capturing opportunities to point your child’s moral compass
toward truth in a manner that fits his or her stage of development.