

read this first!

Congratulations on your decision to get married!

By deciding to get married, you have chosen to do a brilliant thing, and we're delighted that you want to get married in church. By coming on this preparation course, we hope that you will gain some valuable insight into the true nature of marriage and how to build a happy, secure and healthy relationship, which will last through the years.

As we run through this course, we'll see God's 'take' on marriage—he's a big fan—but then he would be, because he invented it! God is concerned that your marriage is built on firm ground, and will become a relationship that lasts.

That's why, as well as covering a number of practical aspects of your relationship, we will also explore the ultimate model for marriage, namely, the self-giving and on-going love of the Lord Jesus Christ.

During each session you will:

- ★ Discuss one aspect of your relationship;
- ★ Read together some verses from the Bible;
- ★ Hear a short explanation of those verses;
- ★ Be invited to discuss what you have heard, and ask any questions you may have.

In addition, there are some things for you to think about at home, and some practical tips to consider. Hope you find them useful! It's well worth setting some time aside each week to work through the questions in preparation for the next session, and to talk through any issues that have been raised for you as a couple through the course. There will be



plenty of time to talk through any ideas or problems you have at your next meeting.

There's a lot to learn about marriage—it's very different to any other relationship you may have had in the past—even different from the relationship you have with your fiancé/e. That is why it's worth doing some preparation. And as you do so, I hope you will discover some new and wonderful depths to your relationship, which will bring you closer together.

I also hope that you will discover how a new and wonderful relationship with the God who made you and loves you can be a part of your lives together—because God's plan for your marriage is bigger and more amazing than you ever dreamed it could be...

Pete Jackson

P.S. The course is designed to be led by a minister who will give you an explanation of the Christian view of marriage. You can listen to my version of these short talks online at www.thegoodbook.co.uk (search for Preparing for Marriage).

a marriage made in heaven?

Write down:

- ★ *What was it that first attracted you to your future wife/husband, and what attracts you to them now?*

- ★ *What do you think is best about them?*

- ★ *Why do you want to get married?*

how it all started

GOD THE CREATOR...

- of men and women
- of everything
- of marriage

MARRIAGE...

- ...for one man and one woman...
- ...for life

GOD...

- made everything and is therefore in charge
- can be known by us because he has spoken
- has even shown us what he is like in Jesus

Questions for discussion:

- ★ *What do you think of God's blueprint for marriage?*

- ★ *Has anything you've heard today surprised you?*

- ★ *If God made everything (and everyone), how should people treat him?*

What God says in the Bible...

Genesis 1 v 26-28

²⁶ Then God said, 'Let us make man in our image, in our likeness, and let them rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air, over the livestock, over all the earth, and over all the creatures that move along the ground.'²⁷ So God created man in his own image, in the image of God he created him; male and female he created them.²⁸ God blessed them and said to them, 'Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.'

Mark 10 v 6-9

⁶ At the beginning of creation God 'made them male and female.'⁷ 'For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife,⁸ and the two will become one flesh.' So they are no longer two, but one.⁹ Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.

Colossians 1 v 15-16

[Jesus] is the image of the invisible God ... For by him all things were created: things in heaven and on earth, visible and invisible ... all things were created by him and for him.

Mark 4 v 35-41

³⁵ That day when evening came, he said to his disciples, 'Let us go over to the other side.'³⁶ Leaving the crowd behind, they took him along, just as he was, in the boat. There were also other boats with him.³⁷ A furious squall came up, and the waves broke over the boat, so that it was nearly swamped.³⁸ Jesus was in the stern, sleeping on a cushion. The disciples woke him and said to him, 'Teacher, don't you care if we drown?'³⁹ He got up, rebuked the wind and said to the waves, 'Quiet! Be still!' Then the wind died down and it was completely calm.⁴⁰ He said to his disciples, 'Why are you so afraid? Do you still have no faith?'⁴¹ They were terrified and asked each other, 'Who is this? Even the wind and the waves obey him!'

to think about together...



1 *Marriage is the closest relationship between two human beings—they become 'one flesh'. How will this affect or change your relationship with:*

- *any children you may have?*
- *your parents or parents-in-law?*
- *brothers, sisters, best mates?*

2 *What boundaries will you need to set for these other relationships?*

3 *How will you make sure that you grow closer together as a couple, rather than get stale or drift apart?*

TOP TIPS

Here are some ideas that others have found helpful:

- ★ Spend half an hour every day talking together—each ask the other about their day, worries, hopes, plans, frustrations, etc.
- ★ Plan to spend two uninterrupted hours alone every week—just enjoying one another—having fun together!
- ★ Every few months or so, plan a day away by yourselves.
- ★ Find an activity that you can do together.
- ★ Plan to eat together
- ★ If you have children, try to have two or three days away together on your own once a year.

Discuss with your partner how you can put these ideas into practice.

For next time: Talk through the issues on this page, and fill in and discuss your answers to the questions opposite.