

Marriage Education and Enrichment Curriculum Materials

Recommended by United Methodists

These “teach-out-of-the-box” curriculum materials require no specific training. Anyone with group leadership training and experience will find them easy to use and effective tools for helping couples strengthen their relationships. Collaborate with other churches to purchase and present these programs and/or create a community library to share them. See also “Marriage Education and Enrichment Reading List for Couples,” “Marriage Education and Enrichment Reading List for Pastors, Church Leaders, and Counselors,” and “Marriage Education and Enrichment Organizations and Websites” at www.marriagelovepower.net in the Marriage Education and Enrichment section under Best Practices and Recommended Resources (or search by title or topic at www.umcdiscipleship.org/leadership-resources/intergenerational-family-ministries).

10 Great Dates to Energize Your Marriage Video Kit, by Claudia and David Arp (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1997). This kit contains two 75-minute videos, featuring ten fun date launches, a Leader’s Guide, and one Participant’s book, which includes a dating guide with tear-out sheets. Couples come together for the video date launch with its low-key discussion starter; then each couple has time alone to talk during their date. The program could be scheduled one night a week for ten weeks, one night every other week or once a month, or over the course of a weekend retreat. You will need one copy of the *10 Great Dates* book for each participating couple. [Order through Marriage Alive International, Inc., P.O. Box 31408, Knoxville, TN 37930, 888-690-6667, www.marriagealive.com, mailine97@aol.com. Also available through popular booksellers and Cokesbury, 800-672-1789 or www.cokesbury.co]

10 Great Dates for Empty Nesters, by David and Claudia Arp (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2004). The authors provide ten brief chapters discussing issues relevant for empty nest couples. Each chapter has an accompanying guide and exercises for couples to use during a date to share thoughts and feelings about those issues. These conversations are designed to help couples rediscover each other and their relationship, clear the air, reevaluate roles and responsibilities, growth together spiritually, and set goals. Visit www.marriagealive.com to learn about and order a DVD video curriculum *The Second Half of Marriage*, which may be used with groups of couples.

Boundaries in Marriage, by Dr. Henry Cloud and Dr. Cownsend (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan) helps couples understand the boundaries that can “make or break a relationship.” The *Boundaries in Marriage Workbook*, published in 2000, provides questions and reflection suggestions for individuals or for group discussions. These materials emphasize how freedom and responsibility help couples grow in their marriage. Relationships are strengthened when the individuals in them understand the consequences of their actions; take responsibility for their own feelings, attitudes, values, and behavior; realize that while they cannot change others, they can influence others by changing their own behavior; demonstrate respect for each other; make

choices based on love, not on fear; take action to solve problems based on their values, wants, and needs; communicate clearly; and listen compassionately. Available from popular and Christian booksellers and from the website, www.cloudtownsend.com, where you will also find other related resources and can sign up for an e-newsletter.

Dr. Harley's Basic Concepts for Marriage, by Willard F. Harley, Jr. and Jennifer Harley Chalmers (2004). This DVD, in less than two hours, presents Dr. Harley's basic concepts for building and maintaining a happy, fulfilling marriage: The Love Bank, Caring and Romantic Love, Emotional Needs, the Policy of Sexual Exclusivity, the Policy of Undivided Attention, Love Busters, the Policy of Radical Honesty, the Policy of Joint Agreement, and Four Guidelines for Successful Negotiation. Helpful viewing for individuals, couples, and groups. Available at www.marriagebuilders.com.

Fireproof Your Marriage: Couple's Kit, by Jennifer Dion, (Vista, CA: Outreach, Inc., 2008), 800-991-6011, www.outreach.com. This kit contains a six-session DVD, and two copies of the Participant's Guide. The DVD sessions recap briefly (2-5 minutes each) scenes from the *Fireproof* movie. The Participant's Guide provides discussion questions, scripture references, and exercises for use by couples or small groups. The movie itself is available through video/DVD rental sources, but a special license is required for public showings, other than in a private home. You may purchase the license, which is good for one year, by visiting www.cvli.com or calling 800-991-6011. The cost of the site license, which underwrites Christian filmmaking, is based on average church attendance (for average worship attendance of 95, the license costs \$99.).

Get Going and Grow: An Eight-month MEG Curriculum Leaders' Manual (Better Marriages, 502 North Broad St., P.O. Box 21374, Winston-Salem, NC 27120, 336-724-1526, 800-634-8325, info@bettermarriages.org, www.bettermarriages.org). The Leaders' Manual provides guidance for establishing and leading a Marriage Enrichment Group (MEG) and all materials needed for eight months of meetings.

Laugh Your Way to a Better Marriage Small Group Study, by Mark Gungor (Laugh Your Way America! LLC, 2006). This book and its two DVDs of video clips provide material for twelve 60-90 minute sessions for individual couples or small groups. Mark "uses humor to unravel the complexities of marriage and reveals biblical truths to help husbands and wives gain the knowledge and understanding needed to build healthier, stronger and more fulfilling marriage." (page 15) Mark deals with gender differences effectively and portrays vividly the different ways men and women handle stress. Visit www.laughyourway.com to purchase the study guide and other video presentations by Mark.

Love to Stay: Sex, Grace, and Commitment, by Adam Hamilton (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). Marriage "has its ups and downs, its ebb and flow, and it requires perseverance, hard work and from time to time a bit of help." That's how the author describes the reality of marriage in his new book, an effort to provide that "bit of help," practical advice and encouragement for married couples or for people contemplating marriage. He explores the little things (annoyances or habits) and the big things (emotional or physical abuse; addictions to drugs, alcohol or

pornography; and infidelity) that can hurt marriages, offering strategies for dealing with them. Each chapter ends with discussion questions and valuable suggestions for couples, for individuals within a marriage, and for single people. He encourages people to take the long view and “do love until you *feel* love.” When it is difficult to feel love, the trick is to hold on to the knowledge that it will get better and to avoid doing anything stupid in the meantime.” (review by Sarah Lowther Hensley) For group use, you may also purchase a DVD containing six ten-minute video clips related to the book chapters and a downloadable leader’s guide at www.cokesbury.com)

Making Love Last a Lifetime: Biblical Perspectives on Love, Marriage, and Sex, by Adam Hamilton (Nashville: Abingdon, 2004). This kit contains a Leader’s Guide, DVD, participant’s book, and other helps for an eight-week series for married couples of all ages or for singles or couples preparing for marriage. A Pastor’s Guide with CD-ROM provides directions for a church-wide emphasis and community outreach using this program. [Available through online booksellers.]

Marriage Enrichment Groups: A Guide for Leaders of Ongoing Marriage Enrichment Groups, by Dave and Sarah Catron (Winston-Salem, North Carolina: The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment, 1996). This manual explains how to start an ongoing marriage enrichment group for strengthening couples’ marriages. Suggestions are made for how such a group might function, for topics they might discuss, and for appropriate resources. [800-634-8325 or www.bettermarriages.com]

Money Habitudes: Target Your Habits and Attitudes About Money, created by Syble Solomon, (LifeWise, 2006). This set of cards may be used by couples or as part of a group activity to help persons determine the values and attitudes that guide their thoughts and actions in regard to saving, spending, and dealing with debt and money in general. Following a card sort activity, participants discover the challenges and advantages of each financial type (Spontaneous, Status, Giving, Security, Carefree, and/or Planning) and ways to achieve a healthy balance. Since differences in attitudes toward and use of money are a primary cause of conflict in marriage, couples benefit by increased understanding of themselves and each other and by learning to discuss their differences and to make mutually agreeable decisions that take those differences into consideration. [www.moneyhabitudes.com, 888-833-4331]

Right Steps: Discovering a Better Marriage, A Self-Guided Course for Couples, (Winston-Salem, NC: The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (now Better Marriages), 2006). Based on the work of Dr. David and Vera Mace and on the Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment’s leadership training program, the workbook outlines four two-hour sessions for couples to use on their own. Each person needs one copy. These may be purchased as hard copy or download by phone or from www.bettermarriages.org (click on Store, then on either eResources or How-to Manuals).

Right Steps: Discovering a Better Marriage Leaders’ Manual for group sessions, (Winston-Salem, NC: The Association for Couples in Marriage Enrichment (now Better Marriages), 2006). The Leaders’ Manual provides clear directions and reproducible handouts and exercises for four two-hour group sessions. Participating couples will need to purchase at least one copy of the

Self-Guided Course for Couples, described above. Order by phone or from the website as hardcopy or download (click on [Store](#), then on either [eResources](#) or [How-to Manuals](#)). This program could be adapted for shorter time frames or used in a retreat setting. [800-634-8325, www.bettermarriages.org]

The Marriage Course, www.themarriagecourseusa.org/m/ Using this program, similar to the Alpha series, churches offer couples seven candlelit dinners, with a lively, often humorous video presentation at each, time to talk privately as a couple, and opportunity to practice new strategies to deepen their relationship. The Marriage Course is designed for couples who have good marriages and want to keep them that way, and it also helps couples get back to being happy when they've forgotten how. [Order the Starter Kit, with videos, a leader's guide, and manuals for participating couples, at <http://www.alpharesources.org/stores/1/index.cfm>.] Alpha also offers "The Marriage Preparation Course," "The Parenting Children Course," and "The Parenting Teenagers Course."

The Second Half of Marriage: Facing the Eight Challenges of the Empty Nest Years DVD Curriculum [Zondervan Groupware], by Claudia and David Arp, MSW (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 2000). Designed for a nine-session small group experience or weekend event, this kit includes a DVD and a Participant's Guide and a Leader's Guide, both of which may be purchased separately. Drawing on their national survey of hundreds of "second-half" couples, the Arps offer strategies for meeting each of the eight challenges of the empty nest years: letting go of past disappointments; creating a partner-focused rather than child-focused marriage; learning to communicate better; using anger and conflict in a creative, constructive way; building a deeper friendship; renewing romance; adjusting to changing roles with aging parents and adult children; growing closer to God and to each other. [Order through Marriage Alive International, Inc., P.O. Box 31408, Knoxville, TN 37930, 888-690-6667, www.marriagealive.com.]

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