

Rules of Engagement

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ACTIVITY SHEET



Gardens, like relationships, require intentional planning, planting and pruning in order to flourish. 'Weeds' and 'thorns' need to be dealt with to prevent the environment becoming hazardous and chaotic. Left unchecked and undealt with, 'weeds' and 'thorns' can steal your vitality. By pre-empting some of the pitfalls that relationships typically face after marriage, you can maintain a beautiful environment, and ultimately, help your marriage flourish.



SESSION OBJECTIVES

This Rules of Engagement session is designed to help you:

- (a)** understand potential relationship hazards
- (b)** learn to overcome common pitfalls
- (c)** become each other's safe place to fall

The garden.

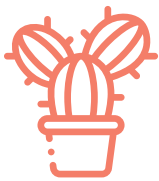
Throughout scripture, Adam and Eve are used as a reference point for marriage. Ironically, they started out in a garden. A marriage, like a garden, needs to be nurtured and protected in order to thrive. If neglected (or not well tendered), both gardens and marriages can become unattractive environments to be in. Not only can weeds and thorns steal the life source of your relationship, the venomous plans of the enemy can sneak in.



WEEDS

THINGS THAT DISTRACT AND STRANGLE YOUR RELATIONSHIP

Wrong priorities - Busyness - Apathy - Breach of healthy boundaries - Comparisons - Criticism - Lack of connection - Life stressors

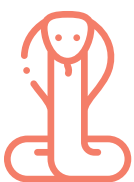


THORNS

THINGS THAT ATTACK AND DESTROY YOUR RELATIONSHIP


Contempt - Arrogance - Selfishness - Anger outbursts - Betrayal - Manipulation - Deceit - Immoral conduct - Conflict

Amid the chaos and dysfunction of an overgrown garden is where the serpent likes to dwell.



SERPENT

THINGS THAT POISON, INTERFERE WITH AND DESTROY YOUR RELATIONSHIP - NOT JUST YOUR RELATIONSHIP WITH EACH OTHER, BUT ALSO YOUR COLLECTIVE RELATIONSHIP WITH GOD

A dirt road in a vineyard at sunset. The road is muddy and leads into the distance, flanked by rows of grapevines supported by wooden stakes. The sky is a mix of orange, yellow, and grey, suggesting a cloudy sunset. The overall mood is contemplative and serene.

**“The thief’s
purpose is to
steal and kill
and destroy. My
purpose is to give
them a rich and
satisfying life.”**

John 10:10 (NLT)

Common pitfalls.

Pitfalls start out as trivial – simple mix ups, misinterpretations or miscalculations here, and there. However, left unrecognised, unabated and ultimately unaddressed, they can have vast consequences.



Consider whether any of the pitfalls below are already at play in your relationship:

01. MISUNDERSTANDINGS

Misinterpreting each other's intention; making assumptions and jumping to conclusions (that may seem to have merit, but may not be entirely accurate – or not be true at all)

OVERTIME, CAN CAUSE FRUSTRATION, DISSENSION AND DISTRUST



Does not relate to us



Relates to us a little



Relates to us a lot

Q: What rescue plan can you establish in advance to circumvent future misunderstandings?
HINT: Strategies were covered in Session 7

02. EXAGGERATING THE TRUTH

When we haven't learnt how to express our hurts and feelings well, we typically want to EMPHASISE our feelings by saying; "you just don't care", "you NEVER listen" or "you ALWAYS do that!"

OVERTIME, UNABLE TO SEE THE TRUTH, CAN BECOME DISMAYED



Does not relate to us



Relates to us a little



Relates to us a lot

Q: What rescue plan can you establish in advance to circumvent future exaggerations?

HINT: Strategies were covered in Session 8

03. KEEPING SHAME HIDDEN

Keeping mistakes hidden in the dark where things fester and become toxic. The enemy wants us to keep our mistakes hidden because therein lies his power. Shame attacks the core of who we are (identity)

OVERTIME, RESULTS IN A SEPARATING FROM EACH OTHER AND GOD



Does not relate to us



Relates to us a little



Relates to us a lot

Q: What rescue plan can you establish in advance to circumvent shame from being hidden?

HINT: The truth hurts but it also sets you free

04. BLAME

To evade the consequences for our own mistakes (or shortcomings) and the possibility of feeling ashamed or condemned, we shift responsibility by pointing the finger/spotlight at someone else

OVERTIME, AVOIDING RESPONSIBILITY FOSTERS A VICTIM MINDSET



Does not relate to us



Relates to us a little



Relates to us a lot

Q: What rescue plan can you establish in advance to STOP the blame game?

HINT: Your battle is not against one another, but against principalities (see Session 8).

“Therefore, as God’s chosen people, holy and dearly loved, clothe yourselves with compassion, kindness, humility, gentleness and patience. Bear with each other and forgive one another if any of you has a grievance. Forgive as the Lord forgave you.”

Colossians 3:13-14 (NIV)



A safe place to fall.

For your relationship to flourish, it is important to make a commitment up front to cultivate spiritual maturity. This means being compassionate, kind, humble, gentle, patient and grace extending (being quick to forgive). In short, it's a commitment to become each other's SAFE PLACE to fall.





DISCUSSION POINTS

Q: From now on, how will you respond to misunderstandings?

Q: How will you deal with future urges to exaggerate or blame?

Q: What does it practically look like to be each other's safe place to fall?

Q: When you next feel let down, what's your commitment to exercising humility, courage, grace and forgiveness?