

A person with dark hair tied back, wearing a black jacket, a teal scarf, and a green backpack, is sitting on a stone wall. They are looking out over a city at dusk or dawn, with a cloudy sky in the background. The image is split diagonally, with the top right portion showing the person and the city, and the bottom left portion being white with text.

# Understanding Your Personal History— A Worksheet



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**One of the riskiest, but most rewarding benefits of a marriage relationship** is the exciting experience of knowing and being known—revealing yourself and having the other person reveal themselves to you. And as odd as it may sound, dating and engagement can sometimes work against this process. On the one hand, you want to know everything about this person. On the other hand, you could think that if this person knew everything about you, they might be repelled or lose interest. The temptation here is to hide or cover up some specifics about your past, but let me urge you not to begin your marriage by candy-coating or omitting important parts of your history. Vulnerable transparency is crucial.

Also, you may think you know your fiancé better than anyone else on earth, but we want to help you deepen that already existing knowledge by giving you the opportunity to fill out a worksheet that guides you through an intentional discussion. It will help you both to understand each other's past and how that past has affected each of you today.

The past shapes all of us in ways we rarely understand. Your past influences your behavior, your personality, your emotions, your opinions, and your convictions. And while you both have probably not attempted to conceal your background from each other, you still may not have taken the time needed to adequately examine how your past influences your future.

For example, when most couples marry, they assume that their marriage is between just the two of them. In reality, however, it's two people and *two families* that are coming together to form a new merger of sorts. We rarely consciously consider our family's impact on what will be a new family after marriage, but our past familial experiences must not be minimized in how they've shaped us into who we are today. Rather, they need to be understood, and planned for as we're preparing for marriage.

## PART 1: YOUR RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

This worksheet will take a couple of hours to complete; the effort and time you put into it will be worth it. As you work through this, you'll no doubt uncover some gems along the way that will enrich your current relationship, but also be aware that you'll probably find some unpleasant things too. This is normal, but we urge you to handle all of it properly as to prevent future troubles in your upcoming marriage. Take your time and answer each question as thoroughly as possible.



### A. Your Current Relationship

- 1) How did we meet?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 2) What attracted me to him/her?
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
  
- 3) How long have we been dating and how has that been?

### B. Your Friendships

- 4) Friendships for me have generally been (check one):
- ☐ Easy—I can make friends with little to no effort.
  - ☐ So-so—I can take them or leave them.
  - ☐ Challenging—It's a lot of work, but ultimately satisfying.
  - ☐ Discouraging—It's more painful than I can handle.
  - ☐ Absent—I've never really had an authentic close friend.

Explain why you checked the one you did:



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- 5) Who are two of your closest friends, and what makes those relationships significant or special?

How long have they been your friends?

- 6) What are three to five words these friends would use to describe you?

### C. Your Past Dating Relationships

- 7) Describe a serious dating relationship from the past, if applicable. Briefly state how it began, progressed, and ended.



- 8) Can you identify any patterns that seem to be present in your relationships with the opposite sex? (Examples: “My tendency is to fall hard and fast, then get hurt” or “I am generally the more committed person in my relationships” or “I’ve always been super casual about romance.”)

## PART 2: YOUR FAMILY

### A. Home Environment

- 1) How would you describe your childhood?

What was best about your childhood?

What was most difficult?



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2) What was your family's socio-economic background as you were growing up and how did that shape your outlook on life?

3) How would you describe the emotional environment of the home you grew up in?

4) Did you experience any type of abuse (physical, emotional, sexual) as you grew up? Explain as much as you are able.



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5) What hardships (traumatic events, financial difficulties, etc.) has your family experienced?

6) As you look back over your family history, do you see any legacies that have been passed from one generation to the next? (For example, one family might pass on a tradition of trusting God in tough circumstances, while another family might pass on a tendency toward turning to alcohol to alleviate problems.)

### B. Parents

7) What words would you use to describe your parents' marriage? Explain why you chose each word.

8) As parents, what did your dad and mom do well?

Dad:

Mom:



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9) As parents, what do you wish they would have done differently?

Dad:

Mom:

10) Describe the most significant impact your parents have had on you (positive or negative).

Dad:

Mom:

11) What roles did your parents assume in the household?

In general, who was the leader in the marriage?

Who was the leader as a parent?





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How did they make decisions?

12) Choose three or more words to describe your relationship with your father and explain why you chose those specific words.

13) Choose three or more words to describe your relationship with your mother and explain why you chose those specific words.

14) In what ways are you similar to each of your parents?

15) In what ways are you different from each of your parents?



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16) Currently, are there any unresolved issues between you and your parents? Articulate them here if possible.

17) What are your parents feeling about you getting married? How do they feel about your choice of a spouse?

### C. Siblings and Other Relatives

18) Rate your relationship with each of your siblings (if applicable):

	DISTANT				CLOSE
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5
Sibling: _____	1	2	3	4	5



- 19) Describe any special and unique relationships you have with other relatives (grandparents, cousins, aunts, uncles, etc.)

### PART 3: YOUR SPIRITUAL JOURNEY

- 1) What kind of religious upbringing did you have, if any?
- 2) What role does God play in your life today?
- 3) What does it mean to be a “born again Christian” and would you describe yourself that way? If you wouldn’t describe yourself that way, how would you put into words what you believe?



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4) How certain are you that you are in a personal relationship with the Living God?

- ☐ Absolutely Certain (100%)
- ☐ Sort of Certain
- ☐ Not Certain at All

Why?

5) Describe your spirituality and relationship to God over the past ten years. What were the high points?

What were the low points?



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What caused growth or prevented growth?

6) Check the areas of your life in which you find it difficult to trust God and give Him complete control:

- |                                    |                                       |                                                  |
|------------------------------------|---------------------------------------|--------------------------------------------------|
| <input type="radio"/> Sex          | <input type="radio"/> Critical Spirit | <input type="radio"/> Relationships              |
| <input type="radio"/> Thought Life | <input type="radio"/> Self Confidence | <input type="radio"/> My Future                  |
| <input type="radio"/> Worry        | <input type="radio"/> Finances        | <input type="radio"/> Anger                      |
| <input type="radio"/> Career       | <input type="radio"/> Decision Making | <input type="radio"/> Relationships with Parents |

Other \_\_\_\_\_

7) How has your involvement in a local church helped you grow in your relationship with Christ and in your commitment to following Him?

### PART 4: MISCELLANEOUS

1) What has been your history in handling finances?



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What are your strengths and weaknesses in handling money?

What type of debt do you currently have?

2) What types of health (physical or mental) struggles have you dealt with in the past?

What types of struggles are you dealing with currently?

3) What have been your biggest successes at work?



4) What have been your biggest challenges at work?

5) What are the most courageous things you've ever done?

6) What have been your greatest triumphs in life?

7) What have been your biggest disappointments in life?

