



TOGETHER FOR GOOD VIDEO WORKSHOP

Facilitator's Guide

Thanks for being willing to facilitate this workshop. This is important work! Strengthening marriages doesn't just make people happier...it makes them and their families healthier and our churches and communities stronger. Did you know that happily married people live longer, have less illness, make more money and have more and better sex? And did you know that married couples produce children who do better in school, get in less trouble with the law, display less high-risk behavior and who themselves build lasting marriages? In spite of these proven benefits and blessings, research suggests only 80% of couples ever do anything intentional to improve their marriage. So...you are doing something great and we thank you! Be sure to affirm the folks who have chosen to be part of this workshop. They too are doing a great, and all too uncommon, thing.

This guide contains our best suggestions to maximize the impact and benefit of this *Together for Good* workshop. We strongly recommend you employ all the suggestions, as they have been tested and proven helpful, adapting as your unique setting may require, of course. We will offer here some simple steps in the area of preparation, event execution and follow up.

1. Preparation

TEAMWORK

Plan for enough volunteers to work with you so your guests are well served and you are not over-stretched and stressed! The exact number of folks needed will vary by the size of the event but here are the tasks that need attention: greeting, registration, hosting/emceeing, tech support, beverages and snacks (if you choose to provide them).

PROMOTION

The best workshop is of no value to those who do not come. Here are some key principles of effective promotion:

- **Start early.** Many people will need to work on scheduling the time for the workshop.
- **Make the promotion attractive.** Think of how to make the announcements and advertising creative and fun. After hearing or reading your promotion, would you want to attend?
- **Use multiple channels** – print, posters, emails, social media, live announcements and of course – the most effective – personal invitation.
- **Repeat announcements.** The average church-goer attends one Sunday in three. If you promote three weeks in a row, the average person will only hear it once.

LOGISTICS

- **Welcome and registration.** The event begins when the folks show up at your venue, not when the teaching begins. Think of what will make people feel that they were expected, they will be taken care of and something worth their time will happen (things like clear signage, easy check in, good looking material).
- Here are some specifics you and your team should think through:
 - greeters
 - name tags
 - workshop handouts printed and available, one per person (we have learned that if you do one copy per couple, it is like inviting one person to take the workshop off)
 - music in the room. We recommend having music in the room before sessions, between sessions and after the final session. Music sets a tone...and a silent room creates tension. We also recommend playing relationship music...the kind of music your couples may have dated to, music they listen to together today. This is especially true if you are using the workshop as an outreach or for Christ followers to invite their non-Christian spouses. We love worship music...at a worship service.
 - tables and chairs
 - presentation technology (video projector, screens, microphone)
 - break times (refreshments, restrooms)

FOLLOW UP

See the section below for more comments but note that part of the preparation should be to have clear next steps available to the couples at the end of the workshop.

2. Event Execution

The basic structure is that Sharol and Neil Josephson will do a segment of teaching on the video and then they will introduce the couple's projects (called "Your Turn") at which time the digital feed should be stopped and the couples will work together on the project. We have suggested time allotments for each project (see below). The host/emcee tracks the project time and reads the room to make the decision when to call the group back together whereupon the tech person starts the digital content once again.

HOST/EMCEE

It is important to have the right person playing the role of host/emcee. This person – or couple - will warm the room, call folks together at the beginning of each session, provide clear instructions at the end of each session (regarding breaks and schedule) and manage the couple's projects during the session. A good host/emcee helps people feel from the first moment to the last that someone has thought this through, someone is in charge and they will create a safe, productive environment. This person can make people feel stressed and controlled, or make them feel safe and relaxed. **The host/mc needs to preview all the sessions so that they know what is coming at all times.** A common temptation for hosts/emcees is to get up and rephrase the workshop teaching or to add to it. This should be resisted. It adds unbudgeted time to the workshop plus any evaluative or summary comments will reflect the host's personal filter and may actually take away from what the couple has taken to heart from the session.

TECH PERSON(S)

When tech goes well, no one notices. When it doesn't, no one can concentrate on the teaching/learning. The tech tasks are to start and stop the music, start and stop the digital presentation and to control volume levels of the presentation, music and the mics. One experienced person can do this. But having two tech people means less stress and likely fewer mistakes. It may be obvious, but the tech equipment should be tried and tested...and then retested...prior to folks arriving so when they walk in the room the music is playing, the welcome screen is up and all is relaxed and professional.

WORKBOOKS

Be sure to have the workbooks downloaded and printed at least one day ahead. Murphy's law of printing says if you plan to print just before the event, the copier will jam or run out of ink/toner or who knows what. Reduce your stress. Do it at least a day ahead. Print several extra copies to allow for walk-ins, spilled coffee or whatever. One more note - it is a bit of a mystery why folks show up to a workshop with nothing to write with...but they will, so be prepared. This is a nice time to place your organization's pen in their hands if you have something like that.

3. Follow Up

Planning the follow up is actually part of the preparation. Think of the fact that these couples will come to this workshop with some hopes, needs and expectations for their marriage. They will process the experience in different ways depending on where they are at when they come and how open they are to learn and change. Our experience has taught us that the folks at your event will fall roughly in to a classic bell curve distribution:

- On the one end, some couples will be doing well and the workshop will just give them confidence they are on the right track plus some language and concepts to pass on to others. A next step for these folks might be some form of leadership. Perhaps they should be challenged and equipped to mentor a younger couple or perhaps to lead a couples small group or maybe join the marriage ministry leadership team. Think through the options you can offer ahead of time and present them sometime during the workshop.
- On the other end are couples who are in real need of repair. Perhaps they will come to this event hoping for a breakthrough...a miracle even. Sometimes that happens but we also know that when couples are really in desperate condition, the workshop can underscore for them that they don't know how to communicate, that they have years of unresolved issues and that one or both are feeling hopeless. It is important to offer these folks a place to turn. If your church offers couples' counseling, you can offer that. Perhaps providing a mentor couple is the right next step. For those in need of professional care, perhaps you can offer the names of a few local Christian counselors. The point here is to have these options prepared ahead of time and offered at some point in the workshop.
- The majority of the couples who come to marriage events will be in the middle of the bell curve – doing ok in many respects but with some scratchy areas that they are aware of...and some they are unaware of. For these folks, the key things to offer are follow ups that encourage them to keep working on things, keep growing together, things that help them stay together for good. Here are some good follow up ideas for this group:

DATE NIGHT. Organized by the church 4-6 weeks later. Have promotional materials (perhaps just a business card with save the date) at the workshop and maybe even sell tickets on the spot.

LAUNCH A NEW SMALL GROUP FOR COUPLES. Have the leaders pre-selected and the launch date set. Take sign ups on the spot and in the following week. We recommend a 4-5 week study so folks aren't intimidated. If the couples love being together, they can always re-up. If you ask for a 13-week commitment right off the start, many folks will balk.

ENCOURAGE FOLKS TO CHECK OUT FAMILYLIFECANADA.COM FOR A WEALTH OF MARRIAGE AND PARENTING RESOURCES. Folks can sign up on the website for our monthly newsletter containing great content and light-hearted videos. Liking us on Facebook will provide a daily nugget of wisdom and encouragement for their marriage and family.

MARRIAGE MENTORING. This is our favorite way to follow up with people who want to keep growing in their marriage. There are multiple options out there. Check out the FamilyLife Canada option at marriage mentoringinitiative.com. If you are going to offer this at your event, we recommend that you have mentors already trained or, if you are going to solicit mentors and mentees at the workshop, consider having a training date set and an application track for mentees available on site.

Across this whole spectrum, there are often individuals who make significant spiritual commitments during the workshop. Think through what your church offers to those who make a first time commitment to follow Jesus and be sure to inform the folks about that. Others will be making a decision to make Jesus Lord of their marriage and family instead of just a visitor in their home. What can your church offer to those who make this commitment? Before they leave the workshop, be sure folks know what their options are for further growth and learning.

4. Our Partnership

We want you and your folks to have a significant marriage-building event. Please contact us if we can provide further assistance in any way...or if you just want to pray with us for your event. We are so grateful you are engaged in the cause of building marriages.

Please do let us know when you are holding your *Together for Good* event so we can pray for you. Help us keep improving what we offer by telling us how things went and passing along any suggestions. We sincerely want your wisdom and insight and promise to consider all suggestions as we shape our future efforts.

Please contact us at events@familylifecanada.com if we can serve you and your church as you seek to bless the marriages and families of your community.

5. Session Overviews

including project time estimates

SESSION ONE Approximately 55 minutes

In this session, Sharol and Neil try to accomplish a few things:

- establish a warm tone, one that says this will be safe, fun and worthwhile
- establish the foundation for staying *Together for Good*
- outline the two concepts woven through the following sessions, differences and drift
- guide each couple to look just a bit at where they have come from (family background) and where they are going (future vision)

Session One Projects.

Your Turn (family backgrounds). Session 1, page 3 in the manual, approximately minute 24 in the video. Allow 2-3 minutes for this.

Your Turn (looking ahead). Session 1, page 5 in the manual, approximately minute 43:30 in the video. Allow 3-4 minutes for this one.

SESSION TWO Approximately 60 minutes

Neil and Sharol begin going deeper on the dynamics of marriage, focusing in this session on Drift. Specifically, how to manage drift...because drift happens! The primary tool for dealing with drift is communication. Sharol and Neil lead couples to see their own communication styles more clearly and reinforce best communication practices for each person to use.

Session Two Projects.

Your Turn (target assessment). Separate handout. At approximately minute 8:24 in the video. Complete the target individually and then share with spouse. Allow 2 minutes for this.

Your Turn (communication style differences). Session 2, page 2 in the manual approximately minute 28:40 on the video. Allow 2-3 minutes for this.

Your Turn (conversation experience). Session 2 page 5 in the manual, approximately minute 47:20 in the video. Six minutes for this project.

- go three minutes then break in and instruct couples to switch roles
- after another three minutes, wrap up the session and intro the break or set up next session

SESSION THREE Approximately 40 minutes

Neil and Sharol continue going deeper on the dynamics of marriage, focusing in this session on the differences that keep us staying *Together for Good*. The result of differences is conflict which is the focus of this session. Sharol and Neil lead the participants to discern what causes conflict in their relationship, what makes it flare out of control and how to deal with the ongoing impact of conflict.

Session Three Projects.

Your Turn (relational sparks). Session 3 page 2 in the manual, approximately minute 3:15 in the video. One minute for this one...they respond individually, don't share with spouse at this time.

Your Turn (response to sparks). Session 3 page 4 in the manual, approximately minute 17:45 in the video. Just one minute. They work on their own again on this one.

Your Turn (dissecting a conflict from the past). Session 3, page 6 in the manual, approximately minute 31:20 in the video. Let couples talk for about 3-4 minutes on this and then call them back to dismiss them to break or set up the next session.

SESSION FOUR Approximately 50 minutes

The focus of this session is the sexual part of being *Together for Good*. Sharol and Neil primarily guide the participants to understand the dynamics of their sexual relationship and provide a process for them to think helpfully about where they are at and where they might go.

There are no "Your Turn" projects in this session. There is a significant take home project at the end of this section of the manual that Sharol and Neil will introduce at the end of the video for this session.

SESSION FIVE Approximately 45 minutes

In this final session, Sharol and Neil begin by simply presenting Jesus' invitation to follow him and then to make him the centre of our marriage and families. They explore spiritual differences in the second half and suggest ways couples can be *Together for Good* spiritually.

Session Five Projects.

Your Turn (your spiritual pathways). Session 5, page 3 in the manual, approximately minute 17:25 in the video. Allow 4-5 minutes for this important conversation.

Your Turn (spiritual activities). Session 5, page 5 in the manual. Approximately minute 23 in the video. Allow 4-5 minutes for another important conversation.