

PREPARE

TO LAST

Creating A Great Marriage | LEADER'S GUIDE

By DR. DAVID OLSON | DR. PETER LARSON | JEFF & DEBBY MCELROY

LEADERS

PREPARE To Last Leader's Guide
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Creators of the PREPARE to Last Couple Checkup • DVD content advisors/contributors

Co-authors of the Group Leaders and Couples Workbooks

Dr. David & Karen Olson

David is President and Karen is Vice President of Life Innovations, where they work as a team with David creating products and Karen managing the company and its outreach nationally and internationally. The main product is the PREPARE/ENRICH Program which is the foundation for the PREPARE To Last Couple Checkup and couple exercises. PREPARE/ENRICH is used by over 65,000 clergy and counselors around the country and in 15 other countries. Dr. Olson is Professor Emeritus, Family Social Science, University of Minnesota and is a Fellow in the American Psychological Association (APA) and the American Association of Marital and Family Therapy (AAMFT). He is past President of the National Council on Family Relations (NCFR) and he has received several national awards for his contributions from ACME (Mace Medal), APA, AAMFT, AFTA, ACA & Smart Marriages. He has written 20 books and more than 100 articles in the field of marriage and family. His most recent books include: *Empowering Couples* (2000), *Marriage and Family* (2006—5th ed.), *Building Relationships* (1999), and *Families: What Makes Them Work*. He has appeared on a variety of talk shows, including “*Today*” on NBC, “*The Early Show*” on CBS, and “*Good Morning America*” and “*Oprah*” on ABC.

Peter and Heather Larson

Peter is the Vice President of Life Innovations, Inc., and the co-designer of the Couple Checkup online assessment tool. He is a licensed psychologist in the state of Minnesota. Heather has her Masters degree in clinical psychology. Together, they offer counseling, teaching, and speaking to premarital and married couples. Peter received his doctoral degree in Clinical Psychology from Fuller Graduate School of Psychology, and has specialized in marriage and premarital therapy for many years. He has published several articles in professional journals and has co-authored the PREPARE/ENRICH Marriage Mentor Program (2004) and the Building Strong Families Program (2005).

FOREVER FAMILIES, INC.

Hosts/Teachers • DVD/CD content creators

Co-authors of the Group Leaders and Couples Workbooks • Retreat design and delivery

Jeff and Debby McElroy

The McElroys are founders of the international nonprofit organization Forever Families, Inc. Since 1989, they have become one of the most sought-after couples in the arena of marriage enrichment and have spoken to millions around the world in their quest to strengthen marriages and families. Their ability to weave humor, drama, teaching, and music throughout their delivery commands their audience's attention, while their transparent, honest style inspires their audience's trust. Their *Marriage Tune Up* DVD series and *Covenant Praise* CD have sold thousands and have helped marriages across the country, in Russia, and in eastern Africa. Through Forever Families, Jeff and Debby have worked alongside churches, organizations, and businesses to help them develop programs to protect and strengthen their families.

MARRIAGETODAY

Production • Packaging • Project administration and marketing

Jimmy and Karen Evans

Jimmy Evans is one of America's leading authorities on family and marriage relationships. He is a popular church and conference speaker as well as author of the best-selling books *Our Secret Paradise* and *Marriage on the Rock*. Jimmy has served as Senior Pastor of Trinity Fellowship Church, Amarillo, Texas for over twenty years and serves as President and Co-founder with his wife Karen of MarriageToday, an international marriage ministry and nationally broadcast television program. With their call to excellence Jimmy, Karen, and the award-winning production staff strive to passionately share with its viewers and strategic alliances such as the PREPARE To Last Partners the practical, biblical truths of building a strong and satisfying marriage for life.

WINSHAPE MARRIAGE

Project initiation and funding • Project/Retreat advisors • Retreat design

WinShape Marriage is a part of the WinShape Foundation, a nonprofit organization started in 1983 by Chick-fil-A founders Truett and Jeannette Cathy. Bubba and Cindy Cathy direct WinShape Marriage with a two-fold purpose: (1) to strengthen marriages and (2) to foster collaboration between organizations and ministries with a passion for healthy relationships. Both of these purposes are accomplished in the PREPARE To Last project.

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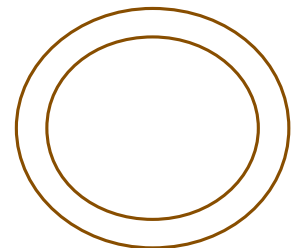
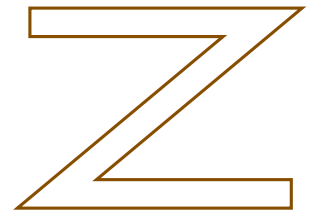
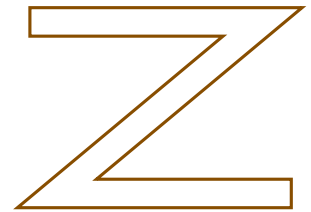
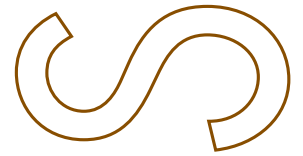
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Welcome to PREPARE To Last!

The fact that you're reading this Leader's Guide is a reflection of your desire to strengthen the institution of marriage in our country. Jimmy Evans has said his concern is that we now have an entire generation of couples that still *dream* of having a lasting marriage, but few still have any *hope* for one. How heartbreaking is that for our society and its future families? The best way to provide hope is by providing knowledge. With your heart and this resource, you'll provide both.

*There's no better way to help couples navigate marriage than by teaching them to drive **around** the potential potholes, rather than waiting to pull couples **out** of the potholes.*

David Olson often quotes Benjamin Franklin, who stated, “*By failing to prepare, you are preparing to fail.*” This innovative program will increase the chances that premarital couples will achieve a successful marriage and reduce their chances of failure by guiding them through teaching, discussions and exercises on core marital subjects. We hope the time you'll invest in offering this educational program is well spent and is one of the best investments a couple can make in their relationship. It will be rewarding to you and empowering to your couples as they PREPARE To Last.

We realize you may have plenty of *desire* to help couples, but you don't necessarily have plenty of time. As you look through the pages of this guide, you'll see that we've done most of the work for you. If you have any questions after going through this guide, we invite you to check the “Leader Support” area of the website at www.PrepareToLast.com. You can find answers to frequently asked questions (FAQ), as well as e-mail your questions for our support team to answer.

Target audience for PREPARE To Last

A Resource for Engaged Couples, Seriously Dating and Newlywed Couples

While this resource is primarily geared to engaged couples, we have found that seriously dating couples also appreciate this program. This was an exciting surprise because it gave dating couples the chance to take a good look at their relationships before they felt the pressure of being engaged.

Newlywed couples will also benefit from the material in this program. Since many couples receive limited premarital preparation, allowing newlyweds to work through this resource early in their marriage is valuable since many are encountering problems and are at a teachable moment. Bringing together a group of newlyweds married in the last year allows them to learn from one another while developing a support network of new friends.

PREPARE To Last built on the foundation of PREPARE/ENRICH

PREPARE To Last is a Group Program for Couples based on PREPARE/ENRICH, which is typically used with an individual couple. If you are already certified in PREPARE/ENRICH, you're aware of the effectiveness of the PREPARE assessment in premarital counseling. Based on 25 years of research and refinement, PREPARE is used and recognized around the world as the standard in premarital assessment. With its comprehensive content, PREPARE continues to be the choice for individual premarital education and counseling.

The PREPARE/ENRICH Program is built on the couple taking one of five inventories and then receiving feedback from their counselor based on the couple's Computer Results. The couple receives a workbook titled, *Building a Strong Marriage*, which they use to complete six skills-building exercises. A brief comparison of the two programs is provided below.

PREPARE To Last Program

Group Program for Couples
Couple takes Assessment Themselves
No Certification Training Required
Online Couple Checkup
Couple Receives Computer Report
PREPARE to Last Couple Workbooks
Group Summary Report for Leader
8 Topics & Couple Exercises

PREPARE/ENRICH Program

One Couple seen by Clergy/Counselor
Clergy/Counselor Administers Assessment
Requires 1-Day Certification Training
PREPARE Online or Paper/Pencil
Counselor Receives Computer Report
Building a Strong Marriage Workbook
No Group Summary Report Available
6 Topics & Couple Exercises

New Online Couple Checkup built on PREPARE Assessment

The new Couple Checkup is a great educational tool that goes directly back to the couple. It is a simplified version of PREPARE and it requires no certification to use or interpret the Computer Report. Designed to maximize your time with couples, the Couple Checkup is taken online by the couples themselves at www.PrepareToLast.com.

The Couple Checkup ranges in length from 110 to 145 items, automatically adjusting the content based on how a couple answers background questions regarding co-habitation, age, and children from previous relationships. It can be completed in approximately 30 minutes. The new Checkup allows couples to take the assessment and print their own results. The Computer Report is written in an easy-to-understand format that allows couples to gain a clear understanding of their strength and growth areas, priming them for feedback before your program even begins. The couple should bring their Checkup Report with them to all the sessions.

By combining the Couple Checkup results with the fun teaching and lessons on the DVDs, and the exercises for skill development throughout the workbooks, you'll have a variety of ways to reach couples with this resource.

Group Leader's Summary Report based on Couple Checkup

As a group leader, you will be able to obtain a Group Summary Report on each group of couples that you lead through the PREPARE To Last program. This 15-20 page summary will help you better understand your group and will enable you to personalize the information and feedback that you offer your couples. For example, you will be able to share the top five strengths and issues for males, females, and the couples in your group. You will also have a summary of their personality scores, their couple systems and families of origin.

PREPARE To Last: Getting Started

This section provides you with an overview of what you need to do to get your group organized for the program.

- **As the Group Leader, we recommend that you take the Couple Checkup.** Using the voucher number on the back of your Welcome Card, go to www.PrepareToLast.com and take the Couple Checkup with your partner. (There is no additional charge.) This will give you a greater understanding of the process and you can look through your results on the Couple Checkup Report to familiarize yourself with what your couples will be receiving.
- **Placing Order for Couple Kits:** Once you know how many couples will be a part of your group, go to the website and place your order to purchase one Couple Kit per couple. The Couple Kit includes a Welcome Card, two workbooks, and Date Night CDs.

- **Registering for a Group Summary Report:** If you want the ability to produce a Group Summary Report, go to the “Group Leader” section of the Couple Checkup and create a group code that you will provide to your couples. You will create one common group code number to be entered by each couple in your group.
- **Distributing the Couple Kits:** The Couple Kits (described below) can be shipped directly to you. Once you receive them, you will distribute the kits to couples in your group, along with the group code you’ve assigned. If you prefer, you can also have couples go to the website and purchase their own Couple Kits to be shipped directly to them.
- **Instructing couples to go online and complete the Couple Checkup:** Communicate to your couples that it is imperative for them to complete the Couple Checkup and print their report before the first session so they can bring the report with them. Couples will be instructed to refer to the results of their Couple Checkup in every session, so it’s important for the couples to have it with them right at the start. This will be especially important if you are providing this material in a retreat format. If couples arrive at the retreat without having completed and printed their report, they will be at a significant disadvantage throughout the weekend.

Taking the Couple Checkup Online:

Each couple will use the unique voucher number located on the back of the Welcome Card in their kit to take the Couple Checkup at *www.PrepareToLast.com*. They will also be prompted to fill in their group code (if you provided them with one) as they complete their assessment. They can then complete the Couple Checkup before the first session and print a copy of their report, which they should bring to all sessions.

- **Generating Group Leader Report:** To ensure you can generate the report, you will want to send an e-mail asking for each of the couples to send you confirmation they have completed their Checkup. Once you are sure all your couples have completed their Checkup, you can log on to the Group Leader section and generate a Group Summary Report. Examples of this report are on the Group Leader section of the Couple Checkup. No names or specifics are given on any one couple. Instead, the Group Summary Report provides the overall statistics of your group, including the primary strength and growth areas corporately represented in your couples, as well as breakdowns by males and females. This will allow you to really know your group and know what subject areas are their strengths and which ones they need more help with during the program.

Note: To generate a Group Summary Report, the computer system requires that at least five couples from your group have completed the Couple Checkup. This helps to protect the privacy of individual couples.

Marriage Mentor Teams—A Great Resource

While this resource is designed to be easy enough for you to single-handedly facilitate a group, we recommend you also consider using a team of mentor couples to assist you. Mentor couples can be an invaluable asset to the success of this program whether using it as a resource for a retreat or a small group study. Having their help with hospitality, set-up and running of the games, facilitating couple discussions and just being available for pre-marital couples to talk with can really make the difference in the overall effectiveness of your program.

You'll see some "Mentor Couple Moments" in several of the sessions in which the mentors can share some of their own life-stories or advice in regards to a specific subject. Letting couples experience the positives of having a mentor couple available at this point in their relationship can help you affect their willingness to listen to, or ask for help from, mentors throughout their marriage.

Any happily married couple who is willing to talk about their own mistakes and lessons learned can be mentors. Most mentors find their marriage is helped as much as the couple they're mentoring. To learn more about developing a Marriage Mentor program, visit the PREPARE/ENRICH website at www.Prepare-Enrich.com and click on "Training."

Prepare To Last: Small Group Formats

There are two basic formats for using PREPARE To Last as a small group resource:

- 1 *Eight-week small group program*
- 2 *Weekend retreat*

To help you decide which format best meets the needs of your couples, we have described each format in detail below.

PREPARE To Last Eight-week small group program

The eight-week small group program is designed for you to take engaged, seriously dating, or newlywed couples through the material at your church, counseling center, college campus, or place of business. This structure gives clergy, counselors and lay leaders the chance to teach an entire group of couples all at once in just one two-hour session each week for eight weeks.

During those eight weeks, your couples will watch the eight core subjects of the resource. In between your weekly small group meetings, the couples will also have the opportunity to go on guided “Date Nights.” Explained in each chapter of the workbook, and guided by the Date Night CDs, these dates are designed to let the couples further process and apply the small group teachings to their relationship.

The typical schedule would be as follows:

Week One: *Small Group: Expectations*
Date: Relationship Roles

Week Two: *Small Group: Communication*
Date: Communication

Week Three: *Small Group: Conflict Resolution*
Date: Conflict Resolution

Week Four: *Small Group: Personalities*
Date: Couple and Family Maps

Week Five: *Small Group:* **Financial Management**

Date: Financial Budget

Week Six: *Small Group:* **Sex & Intimacy**

Date: Affection and Intimacy

Week Seven: *Small Group:* **Secret of our Success**

Date: Spiritual Unity

Week Eight: *Small Group:* **Goals & Dreams**

Each week's small group session is pre-planned for you later in this guide.

The sessions are designed with each of the following **Small Group Elements:**

Gathering Time:

This time allows your couples to get some food and have a laid-back, unstructured chance to get to know one another.

Ice Breaker Game or Discussion:

For best development of relationships and communication among the couples of your group, we recommend using the games we've provided. These games have been designed to require minimal setup in order to keep your job as easy as possible. (See Appendix II for detailed instructions on each game. You can also view streaming video clips of each game being played in the Leader's Support Section of the website.) Not only do the games help break the ice, but they also provide some teaching points that will actively introduce that night's subject matter. For many people, activity-oriented lessons will take deeper root than listening-oriented lessons, especially for your guys, since they are usually wired to learn best through activity.

If you decide not to use the games, we have provided you with an ice-breaker discussion for your couples. Some group leaders may choose to use both elements — the game and the discussion. If so, you might put the ice-breaker discussion on a dry-erase board or a piece of paper at the refreshment table and encourage couples to discuss it during the gathering time or after the session.