



conversation jumpstarter

From *Preparing Couples for Love and Marriage* by Cameron Lee and James L. Furrow . Copyright © 2013 by Abingdon Press

Important: Please read these instructions before you begin!

My name:

The Conversation Jumpstarter (CJ) is a tool your pastor/coach will use to help prepare you for marriage. The CJ will ask you to answer questions in six important areas of relationship that often pose a challenge to married couples: roles; love and affection; money; parenting; in-laws; and spirituality. Some of the questions will be easy to answer; others will be more difficult.

- ***Don't discuss your answers with your partner until your coach instructs you to do so.***
- ***Answer the questions as honestly as you can.***

This is not a test, and there are no right or wrong answers. The purpose of the CJ is to help you have candid conversations with your fiancé or fiancée about important things, so be as honest as possible.

- ***Take your time.***

Don't rush through it. Make time to do this well.

We recommend the following: read one section (e.g., on roles), and then put it aside without answering it. Come back later (you can even sleep on it!) when you have at least thirty minutes to fill it out. Do one section a day until the whole CJ is complete.

Some questions ask for personal information and provide a place for you to write in your answers. If you have to use additional sheets of paper, be sure to staple them to the appropriate section of the CJ.

Several of the questions ask you to make a choice between options. In each case, just check (✓) the option that sounds the most like what you currently do or believe. If you don't like any of the options, feel free to write in your own!

Your pastor/coach will tell you what to do with the CJ and your responses when you've finished. We hope that this tool will help you learn something about yourself and about each other!



1. Thinking about your parents when you were growing up, which of the following best describes how they showed physical affection?
- | | |
|--|---|
| <input type="radio"/> "Cold as ice" | <input type="radio"/> "Polite and proper" |
| <input type="radio"/> "Top secret" | <input type="radio"/> "Comfortably close" |
| <input type="radio"/> "Distant and diplomatic" | <input type="radio"/> "Too hot to handle" |

Think of a brief story that best illustrates how your parents expressed affection, and summarize it here:

2. Which of the following best describes how you and your partner feel about the physical affection in your relationship? In the first column, answer for yourself; in the second column, check what you think your *partner* would say.

I would say that the expression of physical affection in our relationship...

- Desperately needs attention
- Needs some attention
- Is just about right
- Meets my needs
- Is exactly what I want

My partner would say that the expression of physical affection in our relationship...

- Desperately needs attention
- Needs some attention
- Is just about right
- Meets his or her needs
- Is exactly what he or she wants

3. Think about the ways you express physical affection that you *most* enjoy with your partner, and those you *least* enjoy. Answer these questions:

What do you do to let your partner know what you enjoy and why you enjoy it?

What do you do to let your partner know what you *do not* enjoy?

If you had one request or one suggestion for improving how you as a couple express affection, what would that be?



4. Physical affection is a common way couples experience intimacy. On the line below, use an X to mark how important physical affection is to you in knowing that you are special and loved in this relationship. Use an 0 to mark how important you think physical affection is to your partner.



Now assume you are married. Use the same marks to indicate how important you think your *sexual relationship* will be both to you and to your partner in feeling special and loved. Use an X for yourself, and an 0 for your partner.



5. If you were to list one or two worries or concerns about your wedding night in particular, or your sexual relationship in general, what would it or they be?

6. Please answer the following questions regarding your plans for birth control.

Which statement best describes your plan for birth control?

- We have no plans.
- I have some worries about the plan.
- The plan was a compromise.
- We have a good plan.
- I am fully confident in our plan.

How satisfied are you with the way you made this decision as a couple?

- Very dissatisfied
- Dissatisfied
- Uncertain (Mixed feelings)
- Satisfied
- Very satisfied

7. It's not uncommon for spouses to have feelings of romantic or sexual interest in someone other than their partner. Has this ever happened to you? What did you do to handle this? How would you want your partner to handle a similar situation?



1. In each group below, check the option that sounds more like you. Do you typically...

- spend more money to get something nice? Or,
- spend less money to get something that's good enough?

- spend reasonably but freely, without having to keep track? Or,
- budget carefully, to keep your spending within specific limits?

- pay the bills, buy what you want, and *then* set aside what's left? Or,
- pay the bills, set some money aside, and *then* spend what's left?

- use credit cards to get things you want, as long as you can afford the monthly payment? Or,
- use credit cards only as long as you can pay off the balance each month? Or,
- use credit cards only in emergencies? Or,
- not use credit cards at all?

2. How would you like money to be handled in your marriage? Check one option in each group.

- I should be free to decide how to spend the money I earn.
- I should be free to decide how to spend the money I earn, within agreed limits.
- The money I earn goes into a common pot, and both of us can spend it within agreed limits.
- The money I earn goes into a common pot, and both of us can spend it as we choose.

- All of our money should go into joint accounts.
- All of our money should go into individual accounts.
- Some of our money should go into joint accounts, and some into individual accounts.
- All of our money should go into joint accounts, with a mutual understanding of what expenditures need to be checked with each other first.

3. What is your current monthly income (gross and net)?

Gross (before taxes) monthly income: \$ _____ Net (after taxes): \$ _____

4. What is your current debt? Take into account any money owed to anyone, including mortgages, credit card balances, student loans, unpaid bills, loans from friends or family members, and so on.

Total amount of debt / money owed: \$ _____

5. How much are you currently paying per month to service these debts?

Total monthly debt payments: \$ _____



(Note: the wording of the questions below assumes that some couples are remarrying, and possibly bringing children into the marriage.)

1. In the space below, make a list of all your *brothers and sisters*, by name, from oldest to youngest, *including yourself*. Put an asterisk (*) next to the names of your biological siblings.

2. In the space below, make a list of all your *children* (if any) from previous relationships. Write their names and ages.

3. Would you rather...
 - begin having children together as soon as possible? Or,
 - begin having children soon, but take a little time to just be a couple first? Or,
 - not think yet about having children? Or,
 - adopt children? Or,
 - not have children at all? (Check this response if you are bringing children into the marriage and would prefer not to have any more children together.)

4. Complete the following sentence by putting a tentative number in the blank:

“As I think about the future, I imagine us as a couple with _____ kids.”

5. If you have children from a previous relationship, who had the primary responsibility for dealing with their misbehavior? (If you don’t have children yet, skip to the next question.)
 - I did.
 - My spouse / the other parent did.
 - We dealt with it equally or together.
 - We seldom dealt with misbehavior.

6. As you anticipate your upcoming marriage, who will have the primary responsibility for dealing with misbehavior in your new family?
 - Me
 - My spouse
 - We will deal with it equally or together.
 - There will be no children in the family.



7. Growing up in your family, which parent did you feel closer to emotionally?

- Mom
- Dad
- I felt close to both of them.
- I didn't feel close to either of them.
- Other adult (explain: _____)

8. Think about how your parents responded when you misbehaved as a child. Who was the primary disciplinarian? Was there too much or too little discipline? Was it harsh or lenient, predictable or unpredictable? Write out some examples below. In general, in what ways would you (or do you, if you already have children) model your own parenting on how your parents treated you? What should be kept the same, and what should be different? Write these thoughts down as well.



1. Think about how your own parents seem to feel about your upcoming marriage. Then look at the following sentence, and put a check by the phrase that best completes it:

“Overall, when it comes to our getting married, my parents are...”

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Indifferent
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned

2. Now do the same for how you think your *partner's* parents feel about your upcoming marriage. Put a check by the phrase that best completes the sentence below:

“Overall, when it comes to our getting married, my partner’s parents are...”

- Very supportive
- Somewhat supportive
- Indifferent
- Somewhat concerned
- Very concerned

3. Couples often turn to their parents for various forms of support. If you needed it, how likely would you be personally to go to your own parents for either emotional or financial support? Check one answer in each column.

Emotional support

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

Financial support

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

4. Sometimes, it goes the other way: parents turn to their children for support. If they needed it, how likely would your parents be to come to you for either emotional or financial support? Check one answer in each column.

Emotional support

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all

Financial support

- Very likely
- Somewhat likely
- Not very likely
- Not likely at all



1. Approximately how often do you do each of the following? Check one response for each line.

	Never	Seldom	Once a month	Once a week	Every day
Go to church or religious services.....	<input type="radio"/>				
Read the Bible or other sacred texts by yourself.....	<input type="radio"/>				
Read other religious materials (books, magazines, blogs, etc.)	<input type="radio"/>				
Pray to God by yourself.....	<input type="radio"/>				

2. What religious activities, if any, do you hope the two of you will do on a regular basis, together as a couple? Name them in the space below (if none, write “none”).

3. How much would you say your spiritual and/or religious beliefs and values guide your decisions and behavior in daily life (e.g., how you spend money, how you relate to other people, etc.)?

- Not at all
- A little; occasionally
- A lot
- They guide everything I do.
- I don’t think of myself as having spiritual or religious beliefs.

If you answered “a little,” “a lot,” or “they guide everything I do,” then in the space below, please give a brief example of how a decision you’ve made and/or an action you took was guided by your beliefs/values.

4. In what religious or spiritual tradition were you raised, if any? Name and describe it below.

