

Marriage • Parenting • Spiritual Growth • Sexuality • Relationships • Mental Health
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a resource in:

Parenting

Relationship Check



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Relationship Check

A fundamental aspect of relationships is intimacy. Like many aspects of relationships, intimacy is difficult to quantify or objectively evaluate. This paper is designed to help create a measureable definition of relational intimacy so you can consider how intimate your current relationship is as well as if the level of intimacy is in-line with biblical principles. In this document, a healthy relationship is defined as one in which biblical principles govern the relationship. A few biblical principles will be used to help get you thinking about the current state of and future plans for your relationship. This should not be considered an exhaustive evaluation of intimacy or the health of your relationship, but rather a starting point for evaluating the health and depth of a relationship.

It would likely be useful to give a copy of this document to your partner so they can consider these concepts as well. This will help show where your perspectives are similar and different. If your partner is not willing to take the time to fill this information out, it is likely a good indicator that they are not very committed to the relationship.

Is this paper for you?

- Are you engaged to be married?
- Are you considering marriage with a potential partner?
- Are you in a dating relationship?
- Are you considering entering a dating relationship?

Romantic relationships can be exciting and therefore difficult to keep within appropriate boundaries. Boundaries can feel restrictive, but they are paramount because they are biblical and provide safety. As you go through this exercise you may find the need to strengthen boundaries in certain areas of your relationship, or you may be encouraged by the boundaries you have established. This exercise looks at how intimate you are in the following areas of your relationship: 1) commitment, 2) spiritual, 3) emotional, 4) social, and 5) physical.

Instructions: For each of the five areas listed above you will be asked to consider where you believe your current relationship falls on a continuum from 0% to 100%. This exercise is designed to be helpful, so take your time and consider where your relationship falls. Throughout the exercise keep the following two questions in mind. First, is this relationship healthy (following biblical principles), and second, how intimate is this relationship?

Relationship Check

Commitment

How committed to the relationship are you? How committed is the other individual? Below are helpful guidelines to use when considering a couple's commitment to their relationship.

We will define 100% commitment as being married and 75% commitment as being engaged to be married. What would you call a relationship with 50% commitment; how about 25%? With these as starting points, where would you mark your current level of commitment? Why did you identify this as your level of commitment to the relationship?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Spiritual

How spiritually intimate are you? Having similar beliefs is essential to having a relationship that can withstand challenges that arise. However, determining if you have similar spiritual beliefs will most likely not happen overnight.

The following are some examples for evaluating this area of your relationship: 1) never talking about spiritual matters, 2) knowing the other person believes in spiritual things but not being sure what they believe, 3) knowing what the other person believes about God, Jesus, and the Holy Spirit, 4) sharing deep spiritual concerns and joys in a one on one setting, 5) engaging in talks about biblical truth in a group setting. As spiritual intimacy deepens you will learn whether or not your beliefs are similar, and how to handle beliefs you find to be different. Consider where you would place these items on the "intimacy line" and what additional bench marks of spiritual intimacy you would add to the line. Where would you put your relationship on "spiritual intimacy" continuum?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Relationship Check

Emotional

How about emotional intimacy? For the purpose of this exercise, we will define emotional intimacy as how emotionally connected you are to the other individual. Some examples you might use to help evaluate this would be: 1) no emotional connection, 2) enjoying being around the other individual, 3) desiring to be around the other person, 4) experiencing strong emotion when the other is present or not present, 5) sharing hurts and joys with the other in a one on one setting, 6) wondering what the other person is doing when you are apart. Consider where you would place these items on the “intimacy line” and additional bench marks of emotional intimacy you would add to the line. Where would you put your relationship on the “emotional intimacy” continuum?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Social

Social intimacy is defined by the amount of time you spend with each other. Consider where you would place the following amounts of time per week (hours) on the “intimacy line”: 0-1, 1-3, 3-5, 5-10, 10-14, 14+. Where would you put your relationship on the “social intimacy” continuum?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

Another important consideration is “social” time spent with others. In the lines provided below, identify others you spend time with and how much time you spend with them each week. A healthy romantic/marital relationship is often supported by having meaningful friendships with others outside of the romantic relationship. If you don’t have meaningful friendships outside of your romantic relationship, this is likely a sign of an unhealthy relationship. Identify other friendships you have and the amount of time you spend with those individuals when your significant other is not present.

Two other questions regarding time together are: where and how. Where do you spend time together? How is time spent together? (For example: Where do you go? What do you do? Is interaction in person, over the phone, over the internet, etc.)

Relationship Check

Physical

Where would you put the following physical interactions on the continuum of physical intimacy: no physical contact, holding hands, hugging, kissing, petting, intercourse? Where does your relationship fall?

0%-----25%-----50%-----75%-----100%

For a relationship to be following biblical principles, commitment and spiritual intimacy has to set the stage for all other areas of the relationship. For example, we started this exercise by defining being engaged to be married as 75% committed to the relationship. Therefore, if you are not engaged or married, your commitment had to fit somewhere below 75%. If the Bible reserves certain aspects of a romantic relationship to marriage, then we ought to do the same. This means the four relationship areas following commitment would all need to be lower than where you marked commitment. So for example, if you are 75% physically intimate and only 50% committed to the relationship, it is out of balance and needs reorienting.

What would need to change in your relationship to help it fall within biblical guidelines for intimacy?

Who will you ask to help keep you accountable to either maintain biblically based boundaries or establish biblically based boundaries in your relationship?

How do you foresee these areas changing over time?

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