

What is a "PLANNING WEEKEND"?

*"Do two men walk together unless they have made an appointment?"
(Amos 3:3)*

*"As for the days of our life, they contain seventy years, or if due to strength, eighty years, yet their pride is but labor and sorrow; for soon it is gone and we fly away. Who understands the power of Thine anger, and Thy fury, according to the fear that is due Thee? So teach us to number our days, that we may present to Thee a heart of wisdom."
(Psalm 90:10-12)*

Every husband and wife begin their life journey together with great hopes and dreams of what they will become together. But as time flies by, it is easy to lose focus as a couple. Marital teamwork and joy can become lost in the demands and distractions of everyday living.

Successful marriages don't "just happen." They require planning. Yet, rarely do couples set aside the time to evaluate and formulate a strategy for accomplishing their goals.

The "PLANNING WEEKEND" is designed to be an annual "appointment" set by a husband and wife that will help provide the resources and impetus to truly become one, to agree together, and to successfully walk together through their journey of life (*Ephesians 4, 5*).

- What:** A weekend for the couple only (no children allowed) for the purpose of planning, spiritual refreshment, romantic pursuits, and a change of environment.
- When:** Annually, beginning Friday night or early Saturday morning (as the budget permits), and lasting until Sunday afternoon.
- Where:** Any place to get away from it all, depending on the budget.
- Why:** You need it to keep your marriage fresh and vital, to maintain good communication and to keep current on the working out of God's plans for your life.
- How:** Before you go, plan together your schedule for the weekend. The first weekend is the most important. Be sure and go over the "Suggested Weekend Schedule" on page 8.

Components of a "PLANNING WEEKEND"

A "PLANNING WEEKEND" consists of two basic parts:

1. **The Pre-Planning Questionnaire** *(Pages 9-21)*

Located in the back of this booklet is a series of questions that should be filled out by each of you separately BEFORE the weekend begins.

You will be sharing your written responses with each other during your get-away. These questions are designed to facilitate opening up loving and honest communication on a wide variety of subjects.

2. **The "Strategic Planning"** *(Pages 22-25)*

After discussing your responses to your "Pre-Planning Questionnaires", you will begin your "Strategic Planning." This "planning" process is crucial because it will help you to identify your goals as a couple, and establish measurable steps to take that will help you stay on course as you "walk together" in marriage.

A plan will give you a "thermostat" which controls your environment instead of merely measuring it.

Before Your "PLANNING WEEKEND"

Two weeks ahead:

1. Fill out your "Pre-Planning Questionnaire" on pages 9-21.
 - As you prayerfully consider your responses, thoughtfully read each question and record your answers.
 - Highlight questions that were difficult for you to answer, or questions that raise issues that need consideration.
 - Make a list of "issues" that seem significant to you.
2. Enlist the prayer support of several people who share your same heart for marriage. Ask them to uphold you in prayer as you anticipate your time together as a couple with the Lord.

One week ahead:

1. Read the special notes for "Fathers and Husbands," or "Mothers and Wives," on pages 4-7, in preparation for your departure.

Before leaving home:

1. One last thing. Don't forget to pack:
 - Your Bible
 - Some blank paper and pens

FATHERS AND HUSBANDS

PLANNING FOR THE "PLANNING WEEKEND"

If the planning weekend is to be successful there are several important factors for the fathers and husbands to consider:

A. Take Charge

Consistent with his leadership in other areas of the marriage relationship it is the father and husband who has the ultimate responsibility for the planning and implementation of the 'Planning Weekend'. It is not enough that the wife wants the benefit of a PLANNING WEEKEND; the husband must also agree that the time and effort are worthwhile. While there is nothing wrong with delegating tasks, the husband must lead and cooperate graciously in the essential planning.

B. Be Sensitive to Your Wife

Husbands/Dads must be aware that leaving for a weekend is not as simple as dropping everything and leaving town. Be sensitive to your wife and her concerns. Cooperate with her in preparing the children to stay with friends and/or family. Involve her in the researching of places to go. Share with her the eager anticipation of making new discoveries together.

C. Be Sensitive to Your Children

Husbands/Dads must cooperate with Mom in preparing the children for being left for the weekend. Usually, this is fairly painless; however, my experience has taught me not to take too many things for granted when the kids are involved. Remember, unless your wives are secure in the knowledge that the kids are safe and sound, the weekend will be diminished and distracted. Cooperate with your wives to assure the kids that the weekend will be fun and adventurous for both the kids and you.

D. Do the Work.

Do your homework. As dorky as some of them may be, answer and fill out all of the questions on the "Pre-Planning Questionnaire". Make as honest an effort as you can to define the issues at hand. Be prepared for discussions and plan to listen carefully.

E. Add Some Spice.....!

Take the opportunity to do something special for your wife and children. Purchasing inexpensive gifts (wrapped up, of course) for your children can always be used as rewards for good behavior, and easing the anxiety of a child(ren) left alone. Don't forget your wife. Plan something special and out of the ordinary....a special place.....a special dining establishment...., you get the idea.

F. Follow Up

Evaluate the success of the weekend. Follow-up with added planning times. Don't let the initiative die. Follow through on plans. Lead the charge.

MOTHERS AND WIVES

PLANNING FOR THE "PLANNING WEEKEND"

We women set the tone for the weekend before we even leave town. Our adequate preparation makes it easier to get off to a smooth start without being totally frazzled.

A. TIPS FOR "MOMS":

Childcare is a central concern when moms leave town for a planning weekend. Don't feel guilty about leaving your child with loving caregivers. It is great training for your child to learn that Mom should be totally alone with Dad occasionally. It is also imperative for us to realize that our children can continue to thrive for a weekend in the loving care of another.

1. Prepare your child ahead of time by sharing with him your weekend plans.

2. Pack:

- favorite toy(s)
- plenty of clothes (including church clothes)
- crib or collapsible bed (include favorite pillow/blanket)
- bottles, cups, or special eating utensils
- pacifiers (?)
- plenty of diapers (if necessary)
- specialized dietary needs (baby foods, formulas, etc.)
- medicines (well marked, including times and dosage)

3. Information packet for caregivers:

- name and phone number of where you will be staying
- "emergency" phone number (relative, etc.)
- pediatrician's full name, address and phone number
- insurance information
- medical release form for your child
- a list of your child's allergies (food, medication)
- briefly write out your child's normal daily schedule (naps, bedtime, meals, personal quirks, etc.)

4. Information packet for yourselves:

- Take along the address and phone number of caregivers

II. TIPS FOR "WIVES"

While simply getting out of town can seem like a huge task, keep in mind that the purpose for your weekend is to maximize your marriage by spending quality time with your husband. This getaway should be fun, and yes, even romantic!

1. Before leaving home:

- Record all of your preplanning questionnaire responses
- Sincerely commit the weekend to the Lord
- Let your husband know how much you are anticipating the time alone with him
- Don't forget to pack for yourself!

2. While you're away:

- Don't worry about the children. (Remember that your husband is the number one person in your life)
- Resist the temptation to initiate the discussions (Patiently allow your husband room to lead)

Have positive and reasonable expectations. (You've made a beginning, and you have the rest of your lives to see God build your marriage)

Suggested Weekend Schedule

Friday

- All Day Get the Kids and the Family ready for the caregivers.
5:00-6:00 PM Deposit kids, clothes, toys, instructions, food, and phone numbers at the caregivers.
6:00-8:00 Travel to Retreat Location
(Take your time, have dinner on the way. Don't let traffic bother you.)
9:00 Pray together, Read selected passages of Scripture.
Hit the sack early, you need the rest, and the Lord wants you fresh for tomorrow.

Saturday

- Breakfast*
9:00 AM Quiet time - sharing Scripture and prayer together.
9:30 Answer questions together on **Pre-planning Questionnaire**.
10:30 *Coffee break*.
10:45-12:00PM Pray and continue **Pre-planning Questionnaire**.
12:00-3:00 *Lunch and recreation*.
3:00-5:00 Pray and continue **Pre-planning Questionnaire**.
5:00... *Dinner, recreation, courting and romance*.

Sunday

- Breakfast*
9:00 AM Devotional led by husband (planned beforehand, not necessarily by him alone)
9:30 Begin **Strategic Planning**:
Discuss lifetime goals, yearly goals, trimester goals, all with a view toward action and implications for a weekly schedule. Take brief breaks.
12:00 pm Check Out, or get ready to leave. Pray, thank God, and depart for home
12:30 *Lunch*
2:00-3:00 Pick up the kids

***NOTE:** Within this time frame you may not complete the Pre-Planning Questionnaire and may not arrive at a completed weekly schedule; especially if this is your first "PLANNING WEEKEND." Yet, you will have in hand the communication enabling you to continue completing your plans later.

"PRE-PLANNING QUESTIONNAIRE"

(SUGGESTION: Work on this questionnaire long before you leave. Don't leave it to the last minute. Write out your answers beforehand.)

Warning and Exhortation!

**Remember to speak the truth in love (Ephesians 4:15).*

**Don't dodge the hard questions, but realize that those areas of greatest difficulty or doubt may just be the future platforms for the demonstration of God's power (II Corinthians 12:9)*

GENERAL LIFE ISSUES

1. What are my personal goals in life?
2. What personal goals have I set for this coming year?
3. How can my spouse help me achieve my goals?
4. What are our family goals?
5. Are we achieving our family goals?
6. Do I feel comfortable with the amount of money we are actually receiving?
7. What can I do to help or improve our financial situation?
8. Do I spend too much time away from home?
9. Do I feel that my spouse has a proper balance between outside activity and time at home?
10. Are we pushed constantly or given so many responsibilities that we must neglect our family? Who or what pushes us? Do we know how to say "no" when over-extended?
11. Do I sense that we are trying to "hide behind our children" rather than having a ministry?
12. What kind of ministry can the wife have in the home?

CHILDREN

1. What are the three main characteristics of children rearing in Ephesians 6:4?
2. Do we consistently and properly love our children?
3. Do we consistently and properly discipline our children?
4. Do we consistently and properly give instruction to our children?
5. How should we discipline other children when they are in our home or playing in our yard?
6. How can we help prevent our children from pitting us one against the other?
7. Whose responsibility do I feel it is to change the children's diapers?
8. Whose responsibility do I feel it is to watch the children when we are in someone's home or car?
9. Which of us should go to our children if they wake up a night?
10. (*Wife answers*) How much time would you like your husband to spend with the children before and after work?
11. (*Wife answers*) Do I feel that my husband is fulfilling his responsibilities as the father of our children?
12. (*Husband answers*) Do I feel that my wife is fulfilling her responsibilities as the mother of our children?
13. Are we sensitive to people without children, making sure our children are not getting into their things or bothering them in some way?
14. (*Wife answers*) What is my attitude while my husband is gone? What is our children's attitude? What actions have we taken to cause our children to have this attitude? (either good or bad) What can we do to cause good attitudes?
15. Some children at times will act like they resent their father's absence. How might we handle this situation?
16. (*Wife answers*) What do I do while my husband is out of town? Do I have some type of routine with the children, do different things, or special projects?

IN-LAWS

1. Discuss the meaning of Genesis 2:24:

"For this cause a man shall leave his father and his mother, and they shall cleave to his wife; and they shall become one flesh."

2. Do you sense that your parents ever interfere with you and your spouse "cleaving" together?

3. Do I ever sense that my spouse fails to support me in front of his/her parents or extended family?

4. What could my spouse do to encourage and build me up in the eyes of his/her family?

5. Do I feel comfortable when we visit with my spouse's extended family? Why, or why not?

6. Do we see our parents too often? Too seldom?

7. What role do our parents play in the ways that we celebrate holidays?

8. Do we treat both (all) sets of parents equitably?

9. If there are several sets of parents involved due to divorce, are we relating to each set of parents as we should?

10. How much input should the grandparents have in the lives of our children?

11. How do I feel about the grandparents babysitting, or caring, for our children for a weekend?

12. How do I feel about the grandparents disciplining our children in our absence?

13. When was the last time that I told my spouse's family that I loved them?

14. Do either one of us hold onto any bitterness against our parents today?

15. What would you like for me to say or do the next time that you say something critical about your own parents or siblings?

16. What is one positive quality from my spouse's family upbringing that I would like to have duplicated in our own family?

17. What are some ways that we can honor our parents even though we have "left" them?

STRATEGIC PLANNING

After discussing your responses to the "Pre-Planning Questionnaire" you may be tempted to skip this final planning session. But, resist the temptation!

Your earlier discussions this weekend have now set the stage for you to actually "plan" for the success of your marriage. The time spent here is the key ingredient of your "PLANNING WEEKEND!" So, hang in there!

By following the steps suggested below, you should be enabled as a couple to:

- Identify your common goals.
- Design a plan to reach that goal; a guide or map, a predetermined course of action.
- Envision your entire life together. Time must be measured by the whole life, not just a month or year or even ten years. Therefore plan as if you have a lifetime.

Remember that Jesus is sovereign and in control of your life. Pray before starting your time together, and totally trust His direction.

"The mind of a man plans his way, but the Lord directs his steps." (Proverbs 16:9)

STEP ONE:

In light of your conversations this weekend, identify various life goals that you agree upon as a couple. Begin by asking yourselves this question:

"In the major areas of my life (our lives) what would I like to see accomplished when I am eighty years old?"

Record these life-goals in the space provided on the "PLANNING CHART" located on the following pages.

STEP TWO:

Great progress will be made in your marriage if you can successfully translate these general life-goals into specific short-term goals. It is one thing to say that you'd like to see "x, y, or z" happen in our lives; it is another thing to design a plan to see those goals accomplished.

Considering the life-goal(s) that you identified in STEP ONE, consider what success in that arena would look like in ten years. Ask yourself:

"If we are going to see progress in accomplishing our life goal(s) by the time that we are eighty years old, what might we hope to see happen within the next ten years?"

Record your answer.

STEP THREE:

A major key to success is to translate your life goals into measurable, bite sized pieces that are achievable and measurable. After considering what you'd like to see accomplished in the next decade, take it one step further by asking yourself:

"What would I like to see accomplished this year in the major areas of my life?"

Again, record your response in the appropriate section on the chart provided.

STEP FOUR:

Making it even more tangible, translate those yearly goal(s) into trimester goals (four month periods). Ask yourself:

"What would I like to see accomplished in the coming four months that will contribute to my yearly goal(s)?"

Record your response on the chart provided.

STEP FIVE:

Next, translate trimester goals to weekly goals:

"In light of the desires of my heart, and of my goals for this four-month period, what will I (we) do this week to begin seeing those goals accomplished in my life and in the life of my spouse?"

Be sure and write down all of the long term and short range goals that you set as a couple. You may use the "PLANNING CHART" is located at the back of this booklet.

- Using this written schedule can be a great tool used to keep the communication in your marriage up to date and on course.
- These written goals will also serve to remind both the husband and the wife to be consistent in establishing and maintaining your appropriate roles in marriage.
- It will serve as a great encouragement as life progresses when you are blessed to see the progress accomplished through the Holy Spirit in years to come.

Below are two examples of how to translate life-goals into measurable, weekly goals.

PLANNING CHART

Life goal	Decade goal	Yearly goal	Trimester goal	Weekly goal	Steps I will take TODAY!
1. We want to know the Bible well by the time we are seventy years old.	We want to read through the Bible together several times and memorize Scripture.	We want to begin reading the Bible together and memorizing Scripture this year.	We will read the Bible together for five minutes a day, five days a week. We will memorize one verse every month.	Beginning in Genesis 1:1; we will read together a 9 PM each night for five minutes. We will begin to memorize John 3:16 this week.	Tonight we'll start getting the children into bed by 8:45 PM
2. We want to exercise hospitality in our home and through our lives.	We want to have people into our home on a regular basis. We will make ourselves available for hosting individuals, Bible studies, and group gathers in our home.	We will have one social event in our home each month this year. We will need to prepare our home by getting adequate seating, and learning to cook some easy menus for serving guests.	We will ask the Lord to give us a heart to love others, and see their needs, so that we'll know who to invite to our home. We'll select four individuals, or couples, to invite to our home sometimes within the next four months.	This week we'll try out two new recipes for serving potential guests. We'll also invest in some extra folding chairs. During the first week of the month we will invite those people whom the Lord has placed on our hearts.	I'll look through some good cookbooks.