



# FAMILY

## LIFE PLANNER



## Family Life

As the title implies, these questions are designed to assist couples in developing effective plans and strategies for healthy family life. The goal is to end up with very clear, measurable, agreed upon practices clearly stated in a Family Life Planner. Couples need to be open to reviewing this document regularly. This type of self-assessment acts as a plumb-line to keep you on course. The Planner is divided into 3 Parts; Individual, Marriage and Parenting. These all have an impact on each other. As you answer these questions please take into consideration the following categories: 1. What has been your current practice 2. What Is God's Standard according to His Word? 3. What will you have to change?

### Part A Individual Spiritual Health Audit

- I. Historical Issues
  - Describe your upbringing
  - How did you come to know the Lord and be discipled?
  - Do you have any time-bombs or patterns of weakness that keep holding you back in your discipleship process?
  - Are you in any unhealthy relationships that may be holding you back spiritually?
- II. Devotion
  - How is your personal time with God (regularity, content and approach)?
- III. Stewardship
  - How is your time management?
  - Do you believe you are fully utilizing your time to glorify God?
  - What are the time-wasters in your life?
  - How well are you managing the money God has given you stewardship over?
  - Are you being a good steward of your body (physical health, nutrition and fitness)?
  - What will you endeavour to do to become a better steward in this area?
  - Have you been using the gifts and skills that God has given you?
  - If not, what are the hindrances to this?
  - Are you currently aligned to your life call and vision?
- IV. Relationships
  - How is your relationship with your pastors and other church leaders?
  - When was the last time you practised hospitality in your home?

- How are your relations at work?
- How are relations with your extended family?
- How is your relationship with your children?

V. Marital Relations

- What were your positive contributions to your marriage in the previous week?
- What were your negative contributions to your marriage in the previous week?
- When was the last time you did something for the first time in your marriage?
- Where is your spouse in his/her love tank? (Out of 10)

VI. Personal Development

- What books are you currently reading?
- What is your strategy for personal study?
- Describe the progress you are making in the mentorship you may be currently receiving?

VII. Outreach

- How are those you are discipling?
- How are those you are mentoring?
- What are you doing for the community?

VIII. Purity

- Do you have any blind-spots in your life that you would like to make yourself accountable concerning?
- Are there any issues you have been convicted of during the previous week?
- Where are you in your emotional bank account? (Out of 10)

## **Part B**

### **Marriage Life Audit**

#### **I. Dates/Leisure Time Alone with Spouse**

- Where will you go for dates?
- What is the frequency and regularity of this?
- How will you ensure that this takes place?
- Who will look after the kids?
- What will you do for anniversaries?
- How much will you budget for gifts for each other?
- List the key priorities in your marriage relationship
- How will you keep your spouse's Love Tank full? (See Appendix I: The Love Languages Questionnaire).

#### **II. Money**

What are the basic guidelines you have concerning money and its use?

What amounts require consultation between each other?

Who will manage the day to day affairs of the finances?

What are your beliefs and practices about the following:

- Lending money
- Debt (Buying on Credit)
- Saving
- Stewardship of resources
- Giving & tithing
- Charity/the poor
- Standard of Living for you and your family
- Price, Type and Nature of Gifts (birthday presents etc) you give your children

Who has the final say when there is a deadlock?

What are your role responsibilities when it comes to income generation?

#### **III. Work**

What will guide your career decisions?

How will you ensure that your career goals do not have a negative impact on

1. Your marriage
2. Your children
3. Your health

**IV. Roles in Marriage**

Outline the various roles in your marriage (Who does what?). Of course in some cases an activity can be carried out by more than one person. The difference often comes in terms of regularity.

- School runs
- Household management
- Guest relations and entertainment
- Collection of post
- Banking
- Children's Homework
- Children's Sports
- Instilling Discipline

**V. Use of Time**

Come to a place of agreement with your spouse concerning the following:

1. The time you get back home.
2. The time you spend away on business trips.
3. The time you spend away from the family with sport/entertainment.
4. The time you spend away from the family in ministry.
5. The time allocation you give to each child
  - As a working parent when will you spend time with each child (e.g. school runs etc).
  - What will you do with each child during this time?
  - What is the impact of this time?

Use SBI method [Situation, Behaviour, Impact] as you describe these times. Describe the situation/context, explain the behavior and then explore its impact.

Are you in agreement with your spouse with regards to this?

**VI. Intimacy**

What are the ingredients to ensure healthy sexual intimacy in your marriage?

What needs to change in order for this to happen?

What are the potential threats?

**Part C**  
**Parenting Audit**

**I. Child Development**

What will you do to ensure the emotional development of your children?

What will you do to ensure the spiritual development of your children?

What will you do to ensure the social development of your children?

What will you do to ensure the intellectual development of your children?

What will you do to ensure the physical development of your children?

Include in your answer the different roles you and your spouse will play.

How will you decide on schooling options for your children?

What are the deal-breakers for you in terms of schooling choice?

What will be the key indicators that your children are making progress?

- Spiritually
- Academically
- Socially
- physically

What would be valid reasons for concern in these areas?

**II. Protecting Your Children**

What will guide your decision-making process in the following areas:

- The toys you buy for them.
- The gifts you accept for them.
- The TV programmes you are allow them to watch.
- Their freedom of choice they have when it comes to food.
- How do your answers change based on their age?
- What meal-time related behavior will require discipline?
- How will discipline be instilled and why?
- What will you do to ensure the safety of your kids?



1. Around the house
2. Travelling

### III. **Responsibility**

Outline how you share the following responsibilities:

- Family devotions
- Praying with and for the children
- Establishing doctrine
- Giving guidance
- Protecting the children (Media, Strangers, Ungodly Friends etc)

### IV. **Relating to Authority**

How will you teach your children to relate to authority? This includes

- Your friends
- Pastors
- School teachers
- Strangers
- Grandparents
- Public servants (Police etc)
- Domestic Servants

### V. **Domestic Workers**

- What are your criteria for the selection of household help (domestic/child-minder etc)?
- What are the non-negotiables in this selection?
- Who gives the instructions and delegates work to your helpers?
- How are instructions communicated?
- What is delegated and what is not?
- How will you pay your helpers and why?
- What other benefits will they get?
- How will you treat them? What philosophy will guide how you do this?
- How will you correct and guide your helpers?
- What could possibly cause a termination of this working relationship?

**VI. Family Holidays**

What is the frequency and duration of your holidays?

How will you determine the location?

What financial considerations will influence your decision?

What are some creative ways of ensuring you go on affordable holidays?

How far in advance will you plan your holidays? What are the benefits of this planning financially?

**VII. Family Fun and Recreation**

What does Mom like?

What does Dad like?

What do the children like?

What are the age-specific boundaries in entertainment?

What is the time allocation for friends; TV; Computer; Sleep-overs etc?

What are your guidelines for your children's friendships?

What are your views on pets? Types (Indoor/outdoor etc), Health & Safety issues etc

**VIII. Rules of Engagement in Communication**

Tone of Voice with spouse.

Tone of voice with children.

Interruption rules with spouse.

Interruption rules with children.

What can you not discuss in front of children?

How can you demonstrate your love for your spouse in front of the children?

What are considered NO NOs in conflict? (Walking out on the person etc)

As a couple where is your place of appeal, if any?

What is your conflict handling style and how valid is it? **(See Appendix II: Conflict Handling Styles).**

**IX. In-Laws**

What is the role of the children's grandparents?

What are the boundaries in relating with your in-laws (Your children's grandparents)?

Apply your response to issues affecting children; decisions; authority; initiation of visits; holidays etc

How is conflict with in-laws handled? **(See Appendix III: Miscommunication Styles).**

## Appendix I

### The Love Language Questionnaire – Dr Gary Chapman

Rate the sentences 1 to 5 according to what would make you feel most appreciated and loved by your future spouse (FS). 5 represents what you most appreciate and 1 represents what you least appreciate in each group.

No individual grouping can have a number repeated.

#### Group One

- A \_\_\_ Your FS says, "You did a great job on that. I appreciate it."
- B \_\_\_ Your FS unexpectedly fixes something of yours that is broken
- C \_\_\_ Your FS brings you a treat from the shop
- D \_\_\_ Your FS invites you to go on a leisurely walk just to chat
- E \_\_\_ Your FS makes a point of hugging you before you leave the house

#### Group Two

- A \_\_\_ Your FS tells you how much he/she appreciates you
- B \_\_\_ Your FS volunteers to do the dishes telling you to relax
- C \_\_\_ Your FS brings you flowers / chocolates, just because they care
- D \_\_\_ Your FS invites you to sit down and talk about your day
- E \_\_\_ Your FS often tousles your hair

#### Group Three

- A \_\_\_ Your FS tells others about a recent success you had
- B \_\_\_ Your FS cleans out your car
- C \_\_\_ Your FS surprises you with an unexpected gift
- D \_\_\_ Your FS surprises you with a special afternoon trip somewhere
- E \_\_\_ Your FS holds your hand as you walk around the shops

#### Group Four

- A \_\_\_ Your FS praises you about one of your special qualities
- B \_\_\_ Your FS makes lunch for you
- C \_\_\_ Your FS surprises you by buying you your favourite magazine
- D \_\_\_ Your FS plans a special night out for the two of you
- E \_\_\_ Your FS often stands by your side with their arm around you

#### Group Five

- A \_\_\_ Your FS tells you how much his or her friends appreciate you
- B \_\_\_ Your FS fills out your tedious tax return for you
- C \_\_\_ Your FS sends you something special through the mail
- D \_\_\_ Your FS unexpectedly kidnaps you for lunch
- E \_\_\_ Your FS is physically affectionate to you in public

Transfer your scores from above to this table below:

	<b>Encouraging words</b>	<b>Acts of service</b>	<b>Gift giving</b>	<b>Quality time</b>	<b>Touch</b>
Group 1	A	B	C	D	E
Group 2	A	B	C	D	E
Group 3	A	B	C	D	E
Group 4	A	B	C	D	E
Group 5	A	B	C	D	E
Totals					

Bring your score sheets to the session ready to discuss the exercise, the results, and the questions below.

1. Do you agree with the top two as being your primary love languages?
2. Which ways have you been expressing love to your partner?
3. How can you better love your partner in line with their primary love languages?

## **Appendix II**

### **Conflict Handling Styles**

Depending on our basic personality types we tend to differ in how we handle conflict. As individuals begin to know each other, conflict is very common. As you explore the following conflict styles continue to reflect on your own behavior, and whether your particular style is useful or not.

Thomas-Kilmann Conflict Styles:

- Avoiding (uncooperative and unassertive): person neglects his or her own concerns as well as those of the other person by not raising or addressing the conflict issue.
- Accommodating/Obliging (cooperative and unassertive): One seeks to satisfy the other person's concerns at the expense of one's own.
- Competing/Dominating (uncooperative and assertive): The opposite of avoiding; one uses whatever seems appropriate to win one's own position.
- Collaborating/Integrating (cooperative and assertive): The opposite of avoiding; one works with the other person to find a solution that fully satisfies both one's own concerns and those of the other.
- Compromising (intermediate in cooperativeness and assertiveness): One seeks an expedient middle-ground position that provides partial satisfaction for both parties.

Learning activity

**Briefly complete each sentence:**

1. The time I felt best about dealing with conflict was when...
2. When someone disagrees with me about something important or challenges me in front of others, I usually...
3. The most important outcome of conflict is...
4. When I confront someone I care about, I...
5. I feel most vulnerable during conflict when...
6. When someone avoids conflict with me, I....
7. My greatest strength in handling conflict is...
8. I am most apt to confront people in situations such as...
9. When I was growing up, conflict was...
10. My greatest weakness in handling conflict is...
11. When I think about confronting a potentially unpleasant person, I...
12. I sometimes avoid directly confronting someone when...

### Learning Activity

#### What is Your Primary Conflict-Handling Style

Adapted in part from M A Rahim, "A measure of Styles of handling Interpersonal Conflict"  
Academy of Management Journal, June 1983, pp 368-76.

\*Please circle the number that is closest to your response:

1 = rarely

5 = always

1. I argue my case with my co-workers to show the merits of my position.  
1 2 3 4 5
2. I negotiate with my co-workers so that a compromise can be reached.  
1 2 3 4 5
3. I try to satisfy the expectations of my co-workers.  
1 2 3 4 5
4. I try to investigate an issue with my co-workers to find a solution acceptable to us.  
1 2 3 4 5
5. I am firm in pursuing my side of the issue.  
1 2 3 4 5
6. I try to avoid being "put on the spot" and try to keep my conflict with my workers to myself.  
1 2 3 4 5
7. I hold on to my solution to a problem.  
1 2 3 4 5
8. I use "give and take" so that a compromise can be made.  
1 2 3 4 5
9. I exchange accurate information with my co-workers to solve a problem together.  
1 2 3 4 5
10. I avoid open discussion of my differences with my co-workers.  
1 2 3 4 5
11. I accommodate the wishes of my co-workers.  
1 2 3 4 5
12. I try to bring all concerns out in the open so that the issues can be resolved in the best possible way.  
1 2 3 4 5
13. I propose a middle ground for breaking deadlocks.  
1 2 3 4 5
14. I go along with the suggestions of my co-workers.  
1 2 3 4 5
15. I try to keep my disagreements with my co-workers to myself.  
1 2 3 4 5

### Scoring Key

Insert the score you got for each number and then add up the scores in each category.

Integrating		Obliging		Dominating		Avoiding		Compromising	
Item	Score	Item	Score	Item	Score	Item	Score	Item	Score
4		3		1		6		2	
9		11		5		10		8	
12		14		7		15		13	
Total		Total		Total		Total		Total	

Your Primary Conflict Handling Style is: \_\_\_\_\_

(The category with the highest total)

Your Back Up Conflict-Handling Style is: \_\_\_\_\_

(The category with the second highest total)

### References

- "Conflict Management: Dyadic Sharing" by Marc Robert in The 1979 Annual Handbook for Group Facilitators, edited by John E. Jones and J. William Pfeiffer. San Diego, CA: University Associates, 1979.
- Steven L. Phillips and Robin L. Elledge (1989) "The Team-building Source Book." San Diego, California: University Associates



## **Appendix III**

### **Miscommunication Styles**

**Discuss** which of the following communication styles you use

#### **The Avoider**

The avoider refuses to fight. When a conflict arises, he'll leave, fall asleep, pretend to be busy at work, or keep from facing the problem in some other way. This behaviour makes it very difficult for another to express his feelings of anger, hurt, etc. because the avoider won't fight back.

#### **The Guilt Maker**

Instead of saying straight out that he doesn't want or approve of something, the guilt maker tries to change his partner's behaviour by making him feel responsible for causing pain. The guilt maker's favourite line is: "It's OK, don't worry about me..." accompanied by a big sigh.

#### **The Subject Changer**

Really a type of avoider, the subject changer escapes facing up to aggression by shifting the conversation whenever it approaches an area of conflict. Because of his tactics, the subject changer and his partner never have the chance to explore their problem and do something about it.

#### **The Mind Reader**

Instead of allowing another to honestly express feelings, the mind reader goes into character analysis, explaining what the other person really means or what's wrong with the other person. By behaving this way the mind reader refuses to handle his own feelings and leaves no room for the other person to express himself.

#### **The Withholder**

Instead of expressing his anger honestly and directly, the withholder typically punishes his/her spouse by keeping back something – courtesy, affection, good cooking, humour, sex. As you can imagine, this is likely to build up even greater resentments in the relationship.

#### **The Trapper**

The trapper plays an especially dirty trick by setting up a desired behaviour for his partner, and then when it's met, attacking the very thing he requested. An example of this technique is for the trapper to say: "Let's be totally honest with each other," and then when the partner shares his feelings he finds himself attacked for having feelings that the trapper doesn't want to accept.

**The Gunny sacker**

This person doesn't respond immediately when he's angry. Instead, he puts his resentment into his gunnysack, which after a while begins to bulge with large and small gripes. Then when the sack is about to burst, the gunnysacker pours out all his pent-up aggressions on the overwhelmed and unsuspecting victim.

**The Trivial Tyranniser:**

Instead of honestly sharing his resentments, the trivial tyranniser does things he knows will get his partners goat: leaving dirty dishes in the sink, clipping his fingernails in bed, belching out loud, turning up the television too loud, and so on.

**The Joker**

Because he's afraid to face conflicts squarely, the joker kids around when his partner wants to be serious, thus blocking the expression of important feelings.

**The Beltliner**

Everyone has a psychological "beltline", and below it are subjects too sensitive to be approached without damaging the relationship. Beltlines may have to do with physical characteristics, intelligence, past behaviour or deeply ingrained personality traits a person is trying to overcome. In an attempt to "get even" or hurt his partner the beltliner will use his intimate knowledge to hit below the belt, where he knows it will hurt.

**The Kitchen Sink Fighter**

This person is so named because in an argument he brings up things that are totally off the subject ("everything, but the kitchen sink"): the way his partner behaved last New Year's Eve, the unmade bed – anything.

Taken from Weinstein, et al: Communication Skills





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