

LEAVING AND CLEAVING

Getting Ready

Here's what you'll talk about:

- parents and in-laws
- forming your identity as a couple
- taking responsibility

Survey Says...

Take a quick look at the Couple Map and Family & Friends sections of your Couple Checkup report. Notice if this is a “strength” or “growth” area in your relationship.

Selfie

Taking a Snapshot of Where You Are Right Now

Can you fill out the following survey in three minutes or less? There's no need to overthink your answers; first reactions are fine. The point isn't to come up with “right” responses, but to start exploring where you stand on some of the issues addressed in this

session. You and your spouse-to-be should fill in your answers separately so that you can compare and discuss them later.

1. What do you think is the ideal distance for spouses to live from their parents?

- next door or across the street
- on the other side of town
- an hour away
- in another state or province
- at least 2,000 miles away with an unlisted phone number and assumed name
- in a different dimension and century
- other _____

2. Which of the following would you consider normal behavior? Why?

- calling your father to ask for a loan
- calling your mother-in-law "Mom"
- calling your father-in-law when the faucet is leaking
- calling your mother when you've had an argument with your spouse
- calling anyone other than your spouse more than once a week
- calling your parents every day to chat

3. What's your definition of "cleaving"?

- cutting in half, as with a meat cleaver

- joining together, as in “two becoming one”
- clinging desperately or possessively
- all of your time is spent with your spouse
- other _____

4. Which two of the following signs of your new identity as husband and wife will mean the most to you? Why?

- changing your last name
- having a new address
- being introduced at the end of your wedding ceremony as “Mr. and Mrs.”
- sharing a bank account or credit card
- learning each other’s computer passwords
- waking up next to each other every day with “morning breath”
- other _____

5. Which two of the following fears about “becoming one” scare you the most? Why?

- losing my identity as an individual
- being suffocated by too much togetherness
- being separated from my old friends
- having to compromise when we disagree
- changing my schedule to match my spouse’s
- finding out that my spouse makes disgusting noises
- other _____

WeTube

Getting the Most from the Video

After watching the Session 3 video on the DVD, discuss the following questions.

1. Do you think “leaving and cleaving” is a phrase used much outside of church? What else might people call the idea? Would you guess most people agree with the concept, even if they call it something else? Why or why not?
2. If all you knew about marriage was what you saw in this video, would you say that *leaving* or *cleaving* is more important? Why?
3. Are you planning anything during your wedding ceremony or reception that symbolizes leaving or cleaving (giving away the bride, lighting a unity candle, pouring two colors of sand into one container, watching the bride and groom drive away, etc.)? What do you hope people understand about your view of the subject?
4. If you were going to write a “Declaration of INDEpendence” from your parents, what are two things you’d like to include? How might you communicate shifting priorities and allegiances?

5. If you were going to write a “Declaration of INTERdependence” about your new relationship with your spouse, what are two things you’d want to mention (protecting, prioritizing, meeting each other’s love needs, oneness, setting boundaries with your parents, guarding your heart and mind, time together, etc.)?
6. From first to last, how would you prioritize your relationship with the following once you get married? Why?
 - your in-laws
 - God
 - your parents
 - your spouse
 - your best friend
7. How do you think your parents will feel about your new priorities? How could you help them understand that you’re not abandoning or severing your relationship with them?
8. Read Deuteronomy 24:5. Have you ever heard of a couple who tried this? If so, what happened? What would you need to do to get ready for such a “leave of absence”? How might you communicate to your parents and close friends that you are taking a “leave of absence”?

9. Erin Smalley mentioned the idea of “nourishing” your future spouse as a way to cleave together. The best way to nourish your spouse is found in 1 John 3:18 (NIV), “... let us not love with words or speech but with actions ...” In other words, instead of merely telling your fiancé(e) that you love him/her—show it by your loving behavior. The key is to customize how you show your love by discovering your future spouse’s love language. To help you get started, answer the following statement in the space below: “I feel loved when you ...”

Now trade answers. Your fiancé(e)’s answers will provide you with a gold mine of specific ways that you can show your love.

10. Role-play one of the following conversations, practicing what you’d say in that situation.
- One of you wants to ask his or her parents to loan you the down payment on a house. The other doesn’t, and thinks you should make it on your own—even if it means waiting a couple of years. Act out the conversation between you and your spouse-to-be.

- Your semi-retired father has been showing up unannounced at your apartment at least twice a week to be a “helpful handyman,” and it’s driving your spouse crazy. Role-play the discussion between you and your spouse-to-be.
- You just found out that your spouse told his or her parents about an argument you had. Role-play how you’d tell your spouse your feelings about that—in a non-threatening way.
- Your mother insists that she be in charge of the guest list for your wedding. You think that’s *your* job. Role-play the conversation between you and your mother.

App(lication)

Taking Things Personally

Want to take action? Here’s an Action Step.

Look again at Deuteronomy 24:5. What would you do (and not do) during a first-year leave of absence? Try coming up with a “Sorry, We’re Leaving and Cleaving” card. It would be used during your first year of marriage, on occasions like these:

- when your parents want you to spend every Sunday afternoon and holiday with them
- when your church’s youth director tries to recruit you to teach the middle-school class

- when your best friend asks you and your spouse to help with her basement remodel
- when your old friends want you to spend every weekend playing video games with them or going on shopping expeditions

Even if you wouldn't use a card like this, how will you guard your "leaving and cleaving" during the first year?

