Leader supplement | Read first

These pages strengthen the six-session toolkit that follows. Each session provides a passage, background, a suggested 60–75-minute plan, questions, an exercise and guidance for the leader. Read the passage in your preferred translation and adapt to your church's statement of faith and policies.

Safety comes before a joint process

Ordinary premarital exercises assume both people can disagree and decline safely. Fear, threats, stalking, sexual coercion, financial control or isolation require a different response. Pause joint exercises; offer a safe, private way for the person to speak if they want it. Do not confront a suspected abusive partner or pressure anyone into joint counseling, mediation, disclosure or reconciliation. Consult a qualified domestic-abuse advocate and follow applicable safeguarding and reporting duties.

The National Domestic Violence Hotline explains why couples counseling is not recommended in an abusive relationship: thehotline.org: couples therapy and abuse. Consider safe ways to share resources because devices and communications may be monitored.

Set expectations

Explain your pastoral role, time, privacy limits and reporting duties before sensitive discussion. Do not promise absolute secrecy or claim clinical, legal or financial expertise. Each person may decline a question. A wedding date does not override safety or readiness.

Church safeguarding contact / backup	
Local advocate and referral contact	
Church policy and legal duties to verify	

Session 1 | Covenant and expectations

Read: Genesis 2:18–25; Ephesians 5:1–2, 21–33. Genesis places marriage within God's creation of man and woman and describes a new family union. Ephesians calls believers to love shaped by Christ's self-giving. Explain your church's teaching on marriage and do not use Scripture to excuse coercion or silence a person's concerns.

Prepare and lead | 65 minutes

5 min: Explain purpose, privacy limits and choice. **10 min:** Read the passages and ask what the texts say about commitment and love. **20 min:** Each person shares a hope and a concern; the other listens without answering for them. **20 min:** Compare one expectation about household life and name where clarification is needed. **10 min:** Agree on a question to revisit and close with prayer if welcomed.

Questions and leader notes

"What promise do you think marriage involves?" "What did your family model about handling difference?" "Which expectation have you never discussed?" Listen for differences without demanding instant agreement. A calm disagreement can be explored; fear or control calls for the safety response on page 1.

Between meetings

Each person privately writes one expectation about time, worship or household responsibilities. Bring only what they are comfortable discussing. Explain that a worksheet is a discussion aid, not a test or legal agreement.

Passage or question to clarify	
Agreed follow-up	

Session 1: Story, expectations, and covenant | Couple worksheet

Complete these independently before the meeting. Bring your own words, not the answer you think a pastor wants to hear.

Conversation prompt	My notes
What did you learn about marriage in your home?	
What do you hope will feel different in your own home?	
When do you feel most known by your partner?	
What promise do you believe marriage asks you to keep when feelings are difficult?	

One thing I want my partner to understand before we finish this session:

Write it plainly