



## **Couple Councils**

### **Why have Couple Councils?**

Great and powerful businesses are governed by a Board of Directors or Councils. These groups of wise, experienced people (hopefully) make important decisions for their organizations and businesses. They meet to discuss important issues, especially those that involve the success or failure of the business. They weigh the pros and cons of possible organizational changes. Good ones adapt to changes and keep their business healthy and strong. Isn't your marriage worthy of such consideration? What would you change if you thought of you and your spouse as the Board of Directors for your Marriage/Family? The truth is that you are, even if you don't think of it this way.

Councils normally make decisions by majority vote, but since marriage is a duo, decisions need to be reached through prayerful contemplation, respect for one another, more prayer and discussion and maybe some bargaining to seal the deal. It is okay to disagree (just like the Board of Directors). The key is to be 100% respectful and follow the Next Level Guidelines of Empathy, Humility, Gratitude, Progress and Service.

Couple Councils are for focused communication about the status and temperature of the marriage. And address such questions as follows:

How are we doing as a couple?

What needs to be addressed?

Do either of us have hurt feelings or pent up resentment, we need to address?

What do we want to accomplish as a couple and how do we get there?

What can we do this week and this month to help us move towards our goals?

### **Step 1: Name Your Council**

Naming your Council may seem nonsensical. After all, it's just the 2 of you. However, this is the first step in making it real. If you're going to have the meetings and make your marriage a priority, then name it. You can use your last name and be the Smith Council or the Smith Board of Directors. Or, whatever you wish, but name your council.

### **Step 2: Write Your Mission Statement**

When Couple Councils are approached with humble hearts and a unified common goal, the results are amazing. Your mission statement is the target and guide for your decisions. Every important decision should be made within the context of the mission.



Your mission statement should be 3-5 sentences and should touch on the priorities of our council. Here are some general guidelines.

1. Keep it short and concise
2. Think long-term
3. Think in terms of priorities
4. Don't be afraid to change it

Mission statements for a Couple Council might be something like this:

“The Smith Board of Directors aims to fortify the Smith marriage with regular laughter, trips and sincere connection. We make decisions regarding our future with a focus on happiness, financial stability, mutual respect and progress. We consider the health of the Smith marriage/relationship in all decisions with not just a goal to survive, but a persistent effort to thrive and grow.”

### **Step 3: Designate Place/Time to meet**

Choose a private, undisturbed location, reduce all possible distractions (phones, t.v. children, etc.). This is a good time to be an example to your children of building and maintaining a strong relationship. Feel free to share with them what you two are doing and why.

Set up a schedule for meetings. Do them at least monthly, but we find weekly to be most effective. Keep the appointment barring an emergency. The meetings do not have to be long- 20-30 minutes. They may sometimes be longer if you have one or more big decisions. And, cancelling the meetings for non-emergencies is a token of priority. How important is your marriage?

### **Step 4: The Rules of Engagement**

Establish pre-specified rules of engagement. We offer some suggestions, but we encourage you to make these meetings your own.

Sample rules:

1. Be fully present for meetings (no phones or distractions).
2. Listen to each other.
3. Be humble and brave enough to accept feedback and make changes.
4. Look for ways to improve, not ways your partner needs to improve.
5. If the meeting turns into arguing, take a 10-minute break (exercise, read mission statement, do a gratitude exercise).

Include your faith in the meetings. If you pray, pray before and after the meetings. This is another way to make the meetings your own and maintain your standards.

We suggest you take turns conducting the meetings. The conductor asks opening questions, addresses items that need to be revisited or put on hold. You might also have one of you be in charge of snacks.

**What if we get stuck?**

For now, the key is to begin. If you are fearful of getting stuck remember – approach Couple Councils with a humble heart and common goal (Your Mission). JUST START! Things may be bumpy at first, but with time and practice, you'll find the words come easier and your marriage will begin to take a course that brings peace, comfort, safety, and love for both of you.



### Sample Agenda

Date:

Name: Webber's Couple Council

conducting/notes:

1. Prayer (or coming together ritual)
2. Present each other with words of appreciation and affirmation (genuine, find something specific)
3. Sharing of a pressing topic, invite spouse to speak first, what is pressing on their heart? Reassure you will listen and not judge or get defensive.
4. Now take your turn to express what is on your heart/mind. Get reassurance from your spouse that they will listen and not judge or get defensive.
5. Address unresolved issues from previous mtg (This is important. Don't leave things unresolved)
6. Discuss goals for upcoming week/month. What will we do and how will we measure completion/success?
7. More words of appreciation and affirmation (focused on how the conversation went)
8. Take a moment to journal –both of you.
9. Close with prayer/meditation/sex -Yep, probably better than any board meeting you've attended.