

Known & Loved

Feelings, Needs & Truth for Couples — Instructions Booklet

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A tool for naming what you feel, uncovering the need underneath it, seeing the truth over the lie, and taking one real step toward each other.

What's In This Deck

80 cards across 10 categories, each pairing a Feeling, the Need underneath it, and a short Stronghold vs. Truth line that names the lie and answers it with truth.

- Fear → Safety
- Shame → Acceptance
- Pride → Humility / Being Known
- Anger → Respect & Boundaries
- Grief / Heaviness → Comfort & Hope
- Abandonment → Connection & Presence
- Jealousy → Trust & Assurance
- Poverty / Scarcity → Provision & Enough-ness
- Addiction / Compulsion → Freedom & Self-Control
- Lying / Deceit → Truth & Honesty

Use this booklet alongside the printable card sheets. This meeting should never feel like a chore — if it starts to, reframe it, don't skip it. This is the relationship-tending you already promised each other.

How To Use The Deck — Modes

1. Daily Check-In (solo or couple, ~5 min)

Pull one card each morning or evening. Name whether the feeling is present for you right now, even a little. Read the Stronghold vs. Truth line out loud as a short declaration over your day.

2. Guess-the-Need Draw (couple, ~10 min)

One partner is the Speaker, one the Listener — swap after. Speaker shares what's on their heart for 2-3 minutes, uninterrupted. Listener then lays down a feeling+need pair and softly asks, "Do you feel ____ because you need ____?" — offered as a guess, never a diagnosis. Speaker doesn't answer yes/no; they just receive it. After a few guesses, Speaker picks the 1-2 that land truest and shares what it felt like to be understood. Then swap.

3. Conflict Repair Draw (couple, mid-conflict or after cooling down)

Instead of defending your position, each partner privately picks the feeling + need card under their reaction. Read the Stronghold vs. Truth line together and name which lie is talking. Each shares: “I feel ____ because I need ____” — no “you made me” language.

4. Appreciation Draw (couple, anytime — good for date night)

Pull a card for a need your spouse recently met. Say: “When you [specific thing], I felt ____ because you met my need for ____.” Turns the deck from repair-only into a gratitude practice.

5. Smaller Themed Sub-Decks (optional)

Pull relevant cards from the master set into situational mini-decks:

- Newlywed/Dating — trust, intimacy, playfulness, security
- Parenting Season — exhaustion, teamwork, patience, support
- Ministry/Serving — purpose, boundaries, calling, replenishment
- Hard Season/Grief — comfort, presence, hope, rest

6. Blank Cards

Keep 2-3 blank feeling cards and 2-3 blank need cards on hand so you can write in a word the deck doesn't cover.

7. The Weekly Marriage Meeting (30-45 min, same time each week)

Structure: Looking Back → Looking Forward → Close.

- 1 Pull 2-3 Weekly Check-In questions (see Question Bank below), rotating so you're not repeating the same ones.
- 2 Check in on “Our Top 3” needs list (see Bonus Tool below).
- 3 Looking forward: name the week ahead, one way to support each other, any unspoken expectations.
- 4 Close it out: pray together, end with a real, unhurried embrace — at least 20 seconds.

8. Communion Night (monthly or quarterly, ~20 min)

New

Pull 3-5 cards from whatever categories feel most alive this season. Talk through them using the Reflect-It-Back step below. Then, instead of ending in a to-do list, end at the table: read the **Communion for Couples** liturgy together (see the companion download) and share bread and juice. This is the one night that isn't about resolving anything — it's about remembering you're already covered, whether or not everything got resolved.

The Resolution Step — Turning Insight Into Action

This is the step most feelings/needs practices stop short of: naming the feeling and need is diagnosis, not treatment. This sequence is meant to be applied live to your real situation — not pre-written on a card. After any mode above, close every session with these moves:

Step 4 — Reflect It Back

Before moving toward a solution, the Listener restates what they heard, in their own words: “So what I'm hearing is — you feel ____ because you need _____. Did I get that right?” The Speaker confirms or gently

corrects it. Don't skip this — most couples move to fixing before the other person feels truly understood. Use short, feeling-word responses rather than long explanations, and no fixing or advice yet. Keep trying until your spouse can say, “Yes — that's it, I feel understood.”

Step 5 — Make the Request

Once the need is confirmed, ask: “What's one specific, doable thing that would meet this need right now?” A good request is concrete — it names what, who, when, and how long.

Step 6 — Pray It Together

Bring the request to God together, out loud: “God, thank You that You see [name]'s heart. Where [stronghold] has spoken lies, we ask for Your truth. Help me love my spouse by [the specific request]. Amen.”

Ground Rules for Honest Sharing

- 1 When your spouse is talking, give them your full attention — really listen.
- 2 If you have questions while they're sharing, keep them to clarification only — not rebuttal.
- 3 When it's your turn to respond, start with what you can affirm or agree with before raising a different view. Aim every response at building your spouse up, not proving a point.
- 4 What's shared in vulnerability is a trust, not material for outside conversation or later leverage. Guard it.

Steps To Reconciliation

For after you've caused hurt. Say these in order, without justifying your behavior in between:

- 1 “This is what I did that hurt you: ____.”
- 2 “This is the pain I believe it caused you: ____.” (Ask your spouse to confirm or correct this.)
- 3 “Here's how I feel, knowing I caused that pain: ____.”
- 4 “Here's what I intend to do differently going forward: ____.”
- 5 Look at them and ask directly: “Will you forgive me for this?”

New

Close by saying to each other: **“I receive what Jesus already paid for this. I choose to let it be finished between us too.”** If you have bread and juice on hand, this is a good moment to share communion instead of just ending the conversation — see the companion **Communion for Couples** download.

Follow-through matters more than the words — if the intended change doesn't happen, this exercise will do more harm than good next time.

Affirmation Exercises

Eye-to-Eye Blessing

Sit facing each other, holding hands, and take turns speaking a true, positive statement about the other — 5-10 rounds each. Keep it specific rather than generic.

A Letter in God's Voice

Spend 10-15 minutes writing down your spouse's strengths, gifts, and things you appreciate. Then, with worship music playing if you like, write a short letter as if God were speaking it over your spouse — first person, encouraging, true. Read it to them when you're done.

Dreaming Together

Ask God to speak to you about your future as a couple — your shared calling, hopes, and next season. Journal separately for a few minutes, then share what came up, then pray it together.

Going Deeper — Question Bank

Tier 1 — Daily Connection

- How was your day, really?
- How are you doing emotionally right now?
- How are you doing spiritually today?
- What's one good thing that happened today?
- Was there anything hard today?
- Did you have a meaningful moment with someone today?
- Where did you notice God today — in a thought, a feeling, or a moment?

Tier 2 — Weekly Check-In

- Did anything I did or said this week hurt you or come across as short?
- Do you feel seen and heard by me lately?
- What could I do that would help you feel closer to me?
- How would you rate our communication this week — and how could it improve?
- Is there anything unresolved or unsaid between us right now?
- What's one way I can support you this week?

Tier 3 — Foundational (occasional, big-picture)

- Are we managing our finances in a way that feels fair and peaceful to both of us?
- Do we have a fair balance of household responsibilities?
- How do you envision our future together, and how can I support the dreams God's placed in you?
- Is there anything quietly causing you anxiety that we haven't talked about?
- Are we spending enough quality time together, honestly?

Bonus Tool — “Our Top 3” Needs List

Separate from the cards: each spouse writes down their top 2-3 recurring needs in the relationship right now — not tied to a specific incident (e.g., “quality time,” “peace and an unhurried pace”). Revisit this list at every Weekly Check-In.