

Making Faith-Based Selections When Registering a Couple

Facilitator pre-selects faith-based versions for the couple

If a PREPARE-ENRICH facilitator wants the couple to take a faith-based version of the assessment, they would pre-select which version they want as they register their couple for the inventory. The assessment then automatically includes the relevant items for that faith tradition.

The standard research-based Spiritual Beliefs scale, made up of 10 statements, is one of the options a facilitator can select. There are, however, several spiritual beliefs scale items which have been adapted for specific faith. If a couple has different faith backgrounds, the facilitator can also pre-select an **Interfaith/Interchurch** version.

Why does the facilitator make this selection instead of the couple?

There are three main reasons facilitators make the faith-based selection:

1. Some facilitators are working in specific faith-based traditions and only want to counsel couples from their specific tradition.
2. Some facilitators work with state and/or federal grants which prohibit the use of a faith-based program. In this case, they always select the standard research-based Spiritual Beliefs scale.
3. Many young couples are not sure how to correctly identify themselves within a religious tradition (“Are we interfaith if he’s a Presbyterian and I’m a Lutheran?”). Having the facilitator make the selection reduces confusion.

When should I use the Interfaith/Interchurch scale?

The Interfaith/Interchurch is a scale designed for couples coming from two different religious traditions (Hindu vs. Christian) or two very different church traditions (Catholic vs. Baptist). It is not indicated for two similar denominations within the same religion (Presbyterian vs. Methodist).

Some facilitators working from a specific tradition (i.e., Catholic) may choose to use the Catholic Scale items even if they have an interchurch couple as a way to highlight some of the differences in the religious backgrounds of a couple. This approach generates discussion by emphasizing differences. Others will use the Interfaith/Interchurch scale as a way to promote discussion emphasizing similarities. This choice is up to the facilitator.

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Standard Spiritual Beliefs

- (–) My partner and I disagree about our spiritual beliefs.
- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (+) Sharing spiritual values helps our relationship grow.
- (+) My spiritual beliefs are an important part of the commitment I have to my partner.
- (–) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our spiritual beliefs.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a place of worship.
- (+) We are satisfied with how we express our spiritual values and beliefs.
- (+) We rely on our spiritual beliefs during difficult times.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our spiritual beliefs.

Protestant Spiritual Beliefs

- (–) My partner and I disagree about our Christian beliefs.
- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (+) Prayer is an important part of my daily life.
- (+) My faith is the foundation for the commitment I have to my partner.
- (–) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our Christian faith.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our Christian faith.
- (+) We rely on our faith in God during difficult times.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the church.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church.

Other Protestant Item Adaptations

- (+) We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity.
(from Sexual Expectations)
- (–) I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography). (from Sexual Expectations)

Catholic Spiritual Beliefs

- (+) We share very similar spiritual beliefs.
- (–) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of our Catholic beliefs.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church.
- (+) We rely on our faith in God during difficult times.
- (+) I understand what the Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament.
- (+) I embrace the teaching that marriage is a permanent commitment.
- (+) It is important to me to go to Mass every Sunday.
- (+) Prayer is an important part of my daily life.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the Church.

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Other Catholic Items

- (+) We agree to teach Catholic values to our children. (from Parenting Expectations)
- (+) It is important to me to send our children to Catholic school. (from Parenting Expectations)
- (+) We have discussed and decided to use natural family planning. (from Sexual Expectations)
- (+) We have discussed and agreed on the boundaries of our premarital sexual activity. (from Sexual Expectations)
- (-) I am concerned that my partner is interested in viewing sexually explicit material (pornography). (from Sexual Expectations)

Orthodox Christian Spiritual Beliefs Scale

- (-) Spiritual differences cause some tension in our relationship.
- (+) We both support the practice of giving a portion of our income to the church.
- (+) I understand what the Orthodox Church teaches about marriage as a sacrament.
- (+) We have discussed the importance of receiving communion regularly as a couple and family.
- (+) I believe our marriage must include active participation in a church community.
- (+) We have discussed what it means to love each other as husband and wife.
- (+) I believe that God calls me to exercise humility and self-denial in marriage.
- (+) The Orthodox faith is very important to both of us.
- (-) My partner and I have different ideas about how we will practice our Orthodox faith at home.
- (+) I understand how God uses marriage and family life to help us work out our salvation.

Jewish Spiritual Beliefs Scale

- (-) It is hard for me to accept some of the major teachings of my religion.
- (+) Religion has the same meaning for both of us.
- (+) Sharing Jewish values and traditions helps our relationship grow.
- (+) My Jewish religious beliefs are an important part of the commitment I make to my partner.
- (-) My partner and I disagree on how to practice our religious traditions.
- (+) It is important to me to participate in a synagogue with my partner.
- (+) I believe our home should include active religious observance and celebrations.
- (+) Loving my partner affirms meaning and something sacred in my life.
- (-) My partner and I disagree about some of the teachings of my religion.
- (+) My partner and I feel closer because of our cultural/religious heritage.

Interfaith/Interchurch

- (-) My partner and I disagree about important aspects of our spiritual/religious beliefs.
- (+) Even though we observe different religious traditions, we share similar beliefs and values.
- (-) There are some religious/faith issues my partner and I may never agree on.
- (-) Differences in our spiritual beliefs cause tension in our relationship.
- (+) Despite our religious differences, we have found (or plan to find) a place of worship we can attend together.
- (-) My family is concerned about our religious differences.
- (+) We are respectful and honoring of one another's faith/spiritual beliefs.
- (-) I wish we could attend more faith-based activities together (weekly services, retreats, classes, or family events).
- (+) We have discussed the challenges associated with raising children in an interfaith family.
- (-) Because of our religious differences, we seem to be less involved in a place of worship.