



Two Churches, One Marriage



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Two Churches, One Marriage is a free, web-based program that explores the challenges and rewards that interchurch couples may encounter, as well as strategies for dealing with those challenges. The program is grounded in research that studied couples from different Christian churches and denominations. That is why the term "interchurch" is used throughout rather than broader terms like interfaith or religiously mixed. Although the program targets interchurch couples, many of the concepts will likely apply to couples from different religions (e.g., Christian-Jewish or Christian-Muslim, etc.). Since couples from the same denomination or religious affiliation can have significant religious differences, they may also benefit from parts of the program as well. Even though the program is written primarily for engaged and married couples, it is hoped that clergy, therapists, or others that frequently work with interchurch couples will find it a valuable resource.

The program is divided into the following eight topic areas or units:

Communication: Opening the Door to Understanding – This unit helps couples develop effective communication skills so that they can more effectively dialogue about issues.

Problem-solving Skills: Creating New Possibilities – This unit presents a six-step model that couples can use to help resolve issues.

Learning to Manage Religious Differences – This unit provides strategies for dealing with religious differences, as well as exploring how religious differences can facilitate growth.

The Meaning of Marriage – This unit helps couples explore their beliefs and values around marriage, including how different factors such as religion may have shaped them.

Developing a Religious and Spiritual Bond – This unit discusses the value in building a religious and spiritual bond, as well as strategies for strengthening this bond.

Religious Affiliation: To Change or Not to Change – This unit explores the pros and cons regarding whether or not to change religious affiliation.

The Religious Upbringing of Children – This unit explores various approaches that interchurch couples have used regarding the religious upbringing of children, including the pros and cons of the various approaches.



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Finding Support and Acceptance – The unit explores the challenges that some interchurch couples face in finding acceptance, as well as strategies for finding greater acceptance.

Each unit is further divided into four sections based on the **IDEA** Model. The first section is the **Introduction**, which gives a brief rationale for the unit. This is followed by the **Discovery** section, which provides questions for the couple so that they can learn more about themselves or their relationship. The **Education** section is the heart of the unit, and provides couples with skills or information that may be useful in addressing each topic area. The **Application** section provides exercises a couple can do to help apply the concepts or skills from the unit. In some cases, supplemental resources are also included within a unit. Although it is recommended that you work through the program as a whole, each unit is self-contained and can be completed separately from the others. The small printer icons (🖨️) can be clicked if you wish to print out parts or the entire unit. Feel free to print out and use as many copies as needed, though each copy must be left in its original, unaltered form.

This program is not intended to give cookie-cutter answers to many of the difficult questions that interchurch couples face. Rather, it is intended to facilitate a process of exploration and decision-making that will help couples find solutions that are right for them. A solution or decision that may fit for one couple may not be appropriate for another. Each couple has a different set of circumstances that must be weighed and considered. Therefore, some units will outline options for couples to consider, but will not advocate for one position or another. The couple is encouraged to use the information and tools provided in this program to achieve some consensus on how to address each issue.

Since the program focuses on interchurch issues, it does not address all the issues that couples in general may need to consider when building a successful marriage. The program does not address in any depth, for example, financial management, personality issues, leisure activities, or sexuality, all which can have a significant influence on a couple's relationship. It is recommended that engaged couples seek additional premarital counseling to address these other important issues in relationships. Couples who are distressed or experiencing significant problems in their relationship should seek out professional help. The Resources section includes a list of national organizations for mental health professionals in the United States.