

## Engaged Couples Prepare with Excitement for the Cosmic Blessing

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In preparation for the upcoming [2018 Cosmic Blessing](#) on August 27, matched couples from across the United States gathered at the Unification Theological Seminary in New York to participate in the Start Smart: Level 3 Blessing Workshop from July 20 to 22. The content of the seminar is designed to help engaged couples prepare for the Marriage Blessing and their married life together. The program featured insights into the value of the Marriage Blessing and practical guidance on relationship-building, communication, male-female differences, and intimacy. The content was presented by Unificationist Counselor and Marriage Educator, John Williams, and Marriage Educator and Relationship Coach, Debby Gullery.



"It was such a precious time that was specifically for me and my match to prepare for this next journey as a Blessed Couples. I'm very grateful for the content and staff who created this workshop for us to gain more insight for ourselves." shared one participant.



On Friday, July 20, the couples spent time discussing their desired outcomes for the workshop and introducing each other to the group. John Williams gave the first presentation on "Vision for a Strong and Loving Marriage", in which he described three keys of a strong marriage. Couples then had the opportunity to discuss the content with each other.



The following day, the couples began the day with a Hoon Dok Hae Hike, which consisted of reading True Parents' words about marriage and the Marriage Blessing and then exploring the UTS property. The first presentation of the day was by John Williams on "Handling Differences," in which he discussed healthy ways to handle conflict when it inevitably comes up in marriage. Debby Gullery then continued the presentations for the day on "Relating and Creating," which outlined constructive ways to create a unique couple culture. Debby Gullery then presented on "The Marriage Bed," which facilitated an open discussion on healthy sexual intimacy in marriage.



In the evening, two Blessed Couples, Seung Kook Burns and Sunmarie Burns and Kimisei Miyake and Christina Lange, shared about their experience in marriage and developing their relationship. The participants then had an opportunity to ask the Blessed Couples any questions. Participants were pleased to hear some of the joys and challenges that come with marriage. Following the testimonies were gender-specific discussion groups.





On Sunday, July 22, Debby Gullery gave the first presentation of the day on "The Value of the Blessing." This discussion-based presentation consisted of couples reading True Parents' words on the Marriage Blessing together in groups of three couples, and then discuss the content. This format was effective in bringing True Parents' words into practical application in their marriages.



John Williams then presented on "Generalizations," in which he explored general and scientific differences between husbands and wives, and how to navigate those differences. The final session of the workshop involved a QandA session with Debby Gullery and John Williams. Participants were given the opportunity to ask any questions to the presenters.



Much joy, laughter, and insights were shared between the couples and between the other participants throughout the weekend.



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### **Comments from Participants**

"I feel the workshop was amazing. Not only being with my future spouse, I am just really grateful to spend time preparing for the Blessing by understanding each other more. This definitely was worth the time and I feel I am more prepared to plan my future out better with her. Thank you for all the lectures and testimonies, I will definitely use them as tools to create an amazing family."



"It was very helpful. I gained a lot of insight into how we can have a successful marriage and learned a lot about me and my match that clarified many things."



"The workshop was well organized and had just the right mix of heartfelt, spritual, and practical content. I gained a lot more than I expected and feel it will help both me and my fiance Start Smart."



"Super helpful! So grateful for all the guidance, especially the advice I didn't even know I needed. Debbie Gullery and John Williams were fountains of knowledge."



"A great environment to bring up any questions or problems your dealing with without feeling any judgement. Very thorough."



"I am very excited about creating our own "couple culture". We really want to build a strong support system and discuss more about what faith traditions we want to practice in our family."

