

Engaged Couples Prepare with Excitement for the September 7 Cosmic Blessing

John Williams and Debby Gullery
June 25, 2017



In preparation for the 2017 Cosmic Blessing on September 7, 13 engaged 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 June 23 to June 25. The content of the seminar is designed to help engaged couples prepare for the Marriage Blessing and their married life together. The curriculum featured insights into the value of the Marriage Blessing and practical guidance on relationship-building, communication, male-female differences, and intimacy-building. The content was presented by Unificationist Counselor and Marriage Educator, John Williams, and Marriage Educator and Relationship Coach, Debby Gullery.

“It was great to learn how to prepare for the Blessed life practically. Since this is an international match we already went through some struggles, and I thought it was because I am not good enough. However, through the lectures, I learned that it is normal to struggle in the Blessing life. It was good that I could learn what kind of things are part of a normal relationship and what to expect” shared one participant.



On Friday, June 23, the couples spent time discussing their desired outcomes for the workshop and introducing each other to other workshop participants. 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 Hwe 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 Debby Gullery on “Relating & Creating,” which outlined constructive ways to create a unique couple culture. John Williams continued the presentations for the day on “Generalizations,” in which he explored general and scientific differences between husbands and wives, and how to navigate those differences. Debby Gullery then presented on “The Marriage Bed,” which facilitated an open discussion on healthy sexual intimacy in marriage.

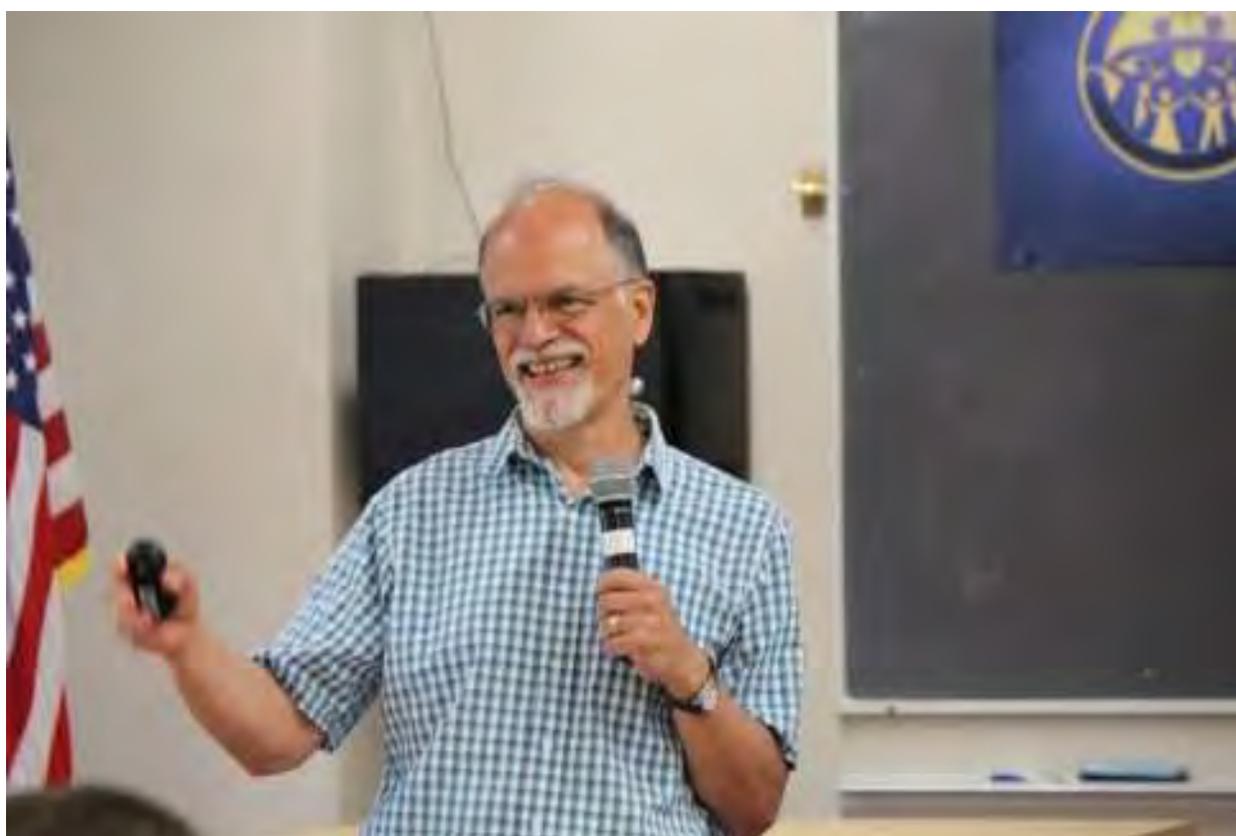


In the evening, two Blessed Couples, Sunkwon and Naomi Bush and Miilhan and Sayaka Stephens, shared about their experience in marriage and developing their relationship. The participants then had an

opportunity to ask the Blessed Couples any questions. Participants were pleased to hear some of the joys and challenges that come with marriage.



On Sunday, June 25, the participants gathered in the morning for a hike around True Father's Trail and had the opportunity to pray together as couples. 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 “Handling Differences,” in which he discussed healthy ways to handle conflict when it inevitably comes up in marriage. The final session of the workshop involved a Q&A 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.

Comments from the Participants

“This was just what I needed in order to prepare more internally for the Blessing. I feel more empowered moving forward”

“Thank you for an incredible workshop! I am very grateful for the experience and I understand why this is a Blessing requirement and wish more couples could have participated in-person”



“By going over various lectures and discussions in a safe and open environment – this brought my fiance and me closer together by letting us discuss topics I have never thought about”

“Sometimes I forget the value of the Blessing and think I am just doing this for my parents but now I realize it is much bigger than that, and not just for my parents.



“I loved the workshop! The presentations held great guidance that was practical and gave great insight into the upcoming stage of marriage. There was a great balance of internal and external information that can be applied.”

“It was great to learn how to prepare for the Blessed life practically. Since this is an international match we already went through some struggles, and I thought it was because I am not good enough. However, through the lectures, I learned that it is normal to struggle in the Blessing life. It was good that I could learn what kind of things are part of a normal relationship and what to expect.”

“This workshop was applicable and down to earth. I felt like I could trust all the speakers, and that they were being extremely honest with their experiences and insights.”

“The most memorable session for me was the discussion on general differences between men and women. How we respond to stressors, how we expect to be supported and many other points were foreign to me. I think this was best heard from the testimonies.”



“Treating my future spouse as she needs to be supported, even if I don’t understand why something may help her more than how I best get through stressful situations.”

“I loved everything. These particular sessions (visions for a strong marriage) were helping my match and I to evaluate our relationship, go over our motivations and goals as well as make determinations. Also, the “Generalizations” and “Handling differences” were powerful and helped us to be more understanding of the other. The “Expectation” concept was very powerful too – it reminded us to continue being honest, open and to communicate our feelings to each other.”



“The point of working as a team facing problems rather than against each other.”

“Everyone should do it (attend the Level 3 in person). It was great and well organized.”

“I am grateful to have had all the couple time. It was much needed and appreciated.”

