

SIXTY CARDS, FOUR SUITS

Christian Couples Conversation Cards

Twenty minutes. One card. Both phones in another room.

Conversation card decks usually fail for one of two reasons: the questions are so gentle that nothing is learned, or they are so heavy that one card ruins an evening and the deck goes in a drawer. These are sorted into four suits by weight, so you can pick the size of the conversation you actually have time for. Start with THE WEEK. Do not start with THE HARD ONE.

- Sixty cards, eight to a page, with cut lines
- Four suits: The Week, The Money, The House, The Hard One
- One page of rules - twenty minutes, one card, no solving
- Written for a marriage that has some mileage on it, not a first date
- Prints on plain paper or card stock

One card a week is a year of conversations you were not otherwise going to have.

Break the cycle. Build the system. Be the man.

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For personal and small-group use.

The rules

A deck with no rules becomes a novelty for two evenings. These six are what make it survive past week three.

- TWENTY MINUTES, ONE CARD. Set a timer. The timer is not there to cut you off - it is there so that neither of you is privately wondering how long this is going to take, which is the thing that makes one of you answer briefly.
- BOTH PHONES IN ANOTHER ROOM. Not face down on the table. Another room. A phone in the room is a third party in the conversation and you both behave differently.
- BOTH ANSWER. The one who suggested the deck answers first, every time. A man who produces a card deck and then interviews his wife with it has built himself a very slow way of avoiding the same conversation.
- NO SOLVING. If she says something that has a fix, do not supply the fix in the twenty minutes. Write it down and raise it tomorrow. The fix is not the point and supplying it immediately teaches her that telling you something means being handled.
- EITHER OF YOU CAN PASS. No cost, no comment, no bringing it up later. A pass is information too - and a deck where passing is expensive is a deck that produces polite answers.
- WHAT IS SAID HERE IS NOT AMMUNITION. If a card produces something that turns up in an argument three weeks later, the deck is finished. That is a hard rule and it is the one that gets broken.

The four suits, in order of weight

- THE WEEK - light. Where to start, and where to go back to after a heavy one.
- THE MONEY - practical, and the suit most couples avoid for the longest.
- THE HOUSE - the division of the invisible work, and what it has cost.
- THE HARD ONE - do not open this suit in a bad month, and never twice in a row.

If a card starts a fight

Stop the card. Not the conversation - the card. Say out loud that you are putting the deck down and having the actual conversation, because trying to finish a card game while something real is happening is how one of you ends up feeling managed. Come back to the deck the following week, and go back to THE WEEK for a fortnight before you touch the heavier suits again.

THE WEEK

What was the best twenty minutes of your week?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is something you did this week that nobody noticed?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What are you looking forward to, and what are you dreading?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

When this week did you feel most like we were on the same team?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is something you wanted to tell me this week and did not?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What did you need from me this week that you did not ask for?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is the thing you have been putting off? Say it out loud.

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

When did you laugh hardest this week?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is something I did this week that helped, that I might not know helped?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

If you could take one thing off next week's calendar, what goes?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What are you praying about at the moment that you have not mentioned?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is one thing you would like us to do that costs nothing?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What did you learn this week - about anything?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What is a small thing that has been irritating you for a while?

BE THE MAN

THE WEEK

What do you want the next three months to look like?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What is a number about our money you are not sure you know?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What did your family teach you about money without ever saying it?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What do you worry about financially that you have not said?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What is something you would spend on if you did not think I would object?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What is a purchase either of us made that you are still thinking about?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

If our income dropped by a third, what is the first thing you would cut?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What does being generous look like to you? Give an example.

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What do you think we are actually saving for?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

Is there anything you have spent that you have not mentioned?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What is one financial decision you would make differently now?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

How would you know if we were doing well?
What is the actual measure?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What would you want to be true about our money in five years?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

Who handles what, and is that arrangement working or just old?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What did we give away this year? Was it what we intended?

BE THE MAN

THE MONEY

What is the conversation about money we keep not having?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What are you carrying that I do not see?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What do you remember about the house that I have forgotten to do?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

Which job in this house do you hate most? Why that one?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What would you take off your list if you could hand it to somebody?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What is something I said I would handle that you are still tracking?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

How is the division between us different from what you expected?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What do you want the children to say about this house in twenty years?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

Which of our children is hardest for you right now, and why?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What are we teaching them without meaning to?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What is a rule we have that neither of us actually agrees with?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What is the last thing you did that you wish I had thanked you for?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

Where do you feel most alone in running this house?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

If you had one free afternoon a week, what would you do with it?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What do you want more of from me, said as a specific thing?

BE THE MAN

THE HOUSE

What do we do well that we never say out loud?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What have I done that you have forgiven but not forgotten?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

When did you last feel unsafe telling me something?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What do you think I do not know about how the last year went for you?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What is a promise I made that I have quietly stopped keeping?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What would you say if you knew I would not react?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

Where have I made you the one who chases and reminds?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What have you stopped asking me for because of how it went last time?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What part of me now would surprise the person you married?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What do you need me to stop explaining and just change?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

Is there something you are hoping I will bring up so you do not have to?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

When have you felt like you were competing with my work?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What do you wish we had done differently in the first five years?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What is a thing about us you have made peace with but do not accept?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

How would you know if I was really changing, as opposed to trying?

BE THE MAN

THE HARD ONE

What would make this the best year we have had? Be specific.

BE THE MAN

After the card

The one that came up twice

Over a few months, something will surface in more than one suit. That is not a coincidence and it is not the deck being repetitive - it is the actual issue in your marriage announcing itself through whatever door is open. Write those down. Two mentions is a signal.

The thing you wrote down instead of solving

Rule four says do not solve it in the twenty minutes. It does not say do not solve it. Raise it the next day, with a time attached to whatever you are going to do about it - which is the difference between having had a nice conversation and having changed something.

DATE	WHAT CAME UP	WHAT I AM DOING ABOUT IT, AND WHEN

Sixty weeks

One card a week is more than a year. Tick them as you go. A couple who plans sixty and does thirty-one has had thirty-one twenty-minute conversations with the phones out of the room, which is more than most marriages get in five years.

WK	SUIT	THE CARD	WORTH COMING BACK TO
1			
2			
3			
4			
5			
6			
7			
8			
9			
10			
11			
12			
13			
14			
15			

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