

# Marriage course part of Love Stouffville initiative

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Calling themselves life-long learners and realizing they are in marriage "for the long haul", Bob Stover said "that leads us to putting an investment in our marriage."

That investment also makes the couple better role models for their children and grandchildren.

For a younger couple who have only been married three years such as Mark Black and Meiyang Wong, the course gave them the tools to deal with their differences and covered different ways people express their love.

"Nobody tells you how to be married," Mr. Black said.

However, "when my wife first suggested (the course)," Mr. Black said, "I said we didn't need to go."

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The Marriage Course is presented through the Love Stouffville program, a joint effort of the Stouffville Ministerial Association.

The Love Stouffville program was started last year by local churches to express Christ's love by having volunteers perform various service projects in town.

Love Stouffville volunteers helped with many aspects of Strawberry Festival, as well as holding other events.

When it comes to many marriages, the biggest issue is communication, course facil-

itator Baha Habashy said.

The course encourages people to talk about what is important, about things that may have been left unsaid for too long and about resentments and other feelings that could eventually threaten a marriage.

"We know that one in two marriages is breaking up," Mr. Habashy said, "and this has a very negative impact on children and society."

More people are looking for marriage maintenance courses because of today's faster-paced life, Mr. Habashy said.

There isn't the same degree of extended family support as previously, families are under more financial strain and children are exposed to more problems at an earlier age.

In his introduction to the course, Mr. Habashy points out that "many men spend more time and money maintaining their cars than their marriage. Some women pay more attention to the quality of their wardrobes than their marital relationships."

During the first session of the course, couples get to complete a marriage health check. Each spouse rates statements such as "my spouse regularly gives me his undivided attention, we are able to talk about strong emotions, excitement, hope, grief and anxiety and my spouse is sensitive toward my sexual needs."

Couples then compare notes.

Couples at the course don't have to worry about discussing the private aspects of their marriage in public.

After an introduction by Mr. Habashy, the course is taught on video and each couple sits at their own table to discuss what they've

## TIPS FOR A HEALTHY MARRIAGE

These are the five "love languages" that are talked about in the program and are tips to make your marriage healthier.

- ▶ give words of affirmation and encouragement
- ▶ do acts of kindness
- ▶ give gifts that are meaningful to your spouse
- ▶ spend quality time where you sit down and talk to your spouse
- ▶ physical touch showing affection is important

—Source: *The Marriage Course*

learned. There are no group discussions.

One main problem facing many marriages is that "we don't know how to communicate love," Mr. Habashy said. "We all have different love languages."

That means while one person feels receiving gifts from their spouse makes them feel loved, others appreciate having help around the house. The course helps make couples aware of what is most important to the other person.

About 25 couples are expected to take part in the course.

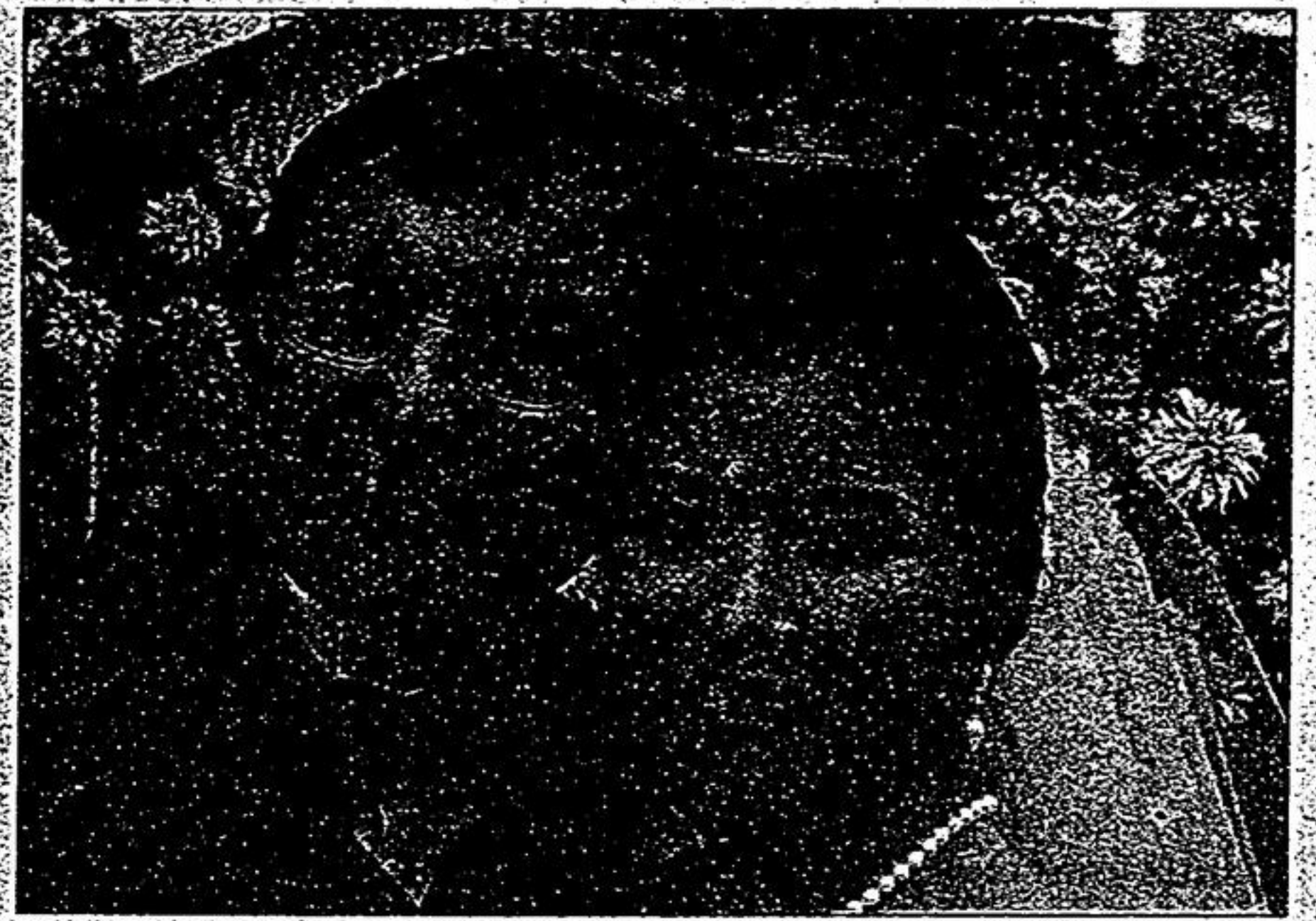
The Marriage Course is presented from Oct. 14 to Dec. 2 at The Cafe at East-Ridge Evangelical Missionary Church, 12485 Tenth Line. It runs from 6:45 to 9:15 p.m. each night.

The cost is \$65 per couple, which includes a resource book and two work books. Desserts are served as well.

The Marriage Course was started in England 21 years ago and is now being run in 28 countries around the world.

To take the marriage health check online, visit [lovestouffville.ca/tmc](http://lovestouffville.ca/tmc)

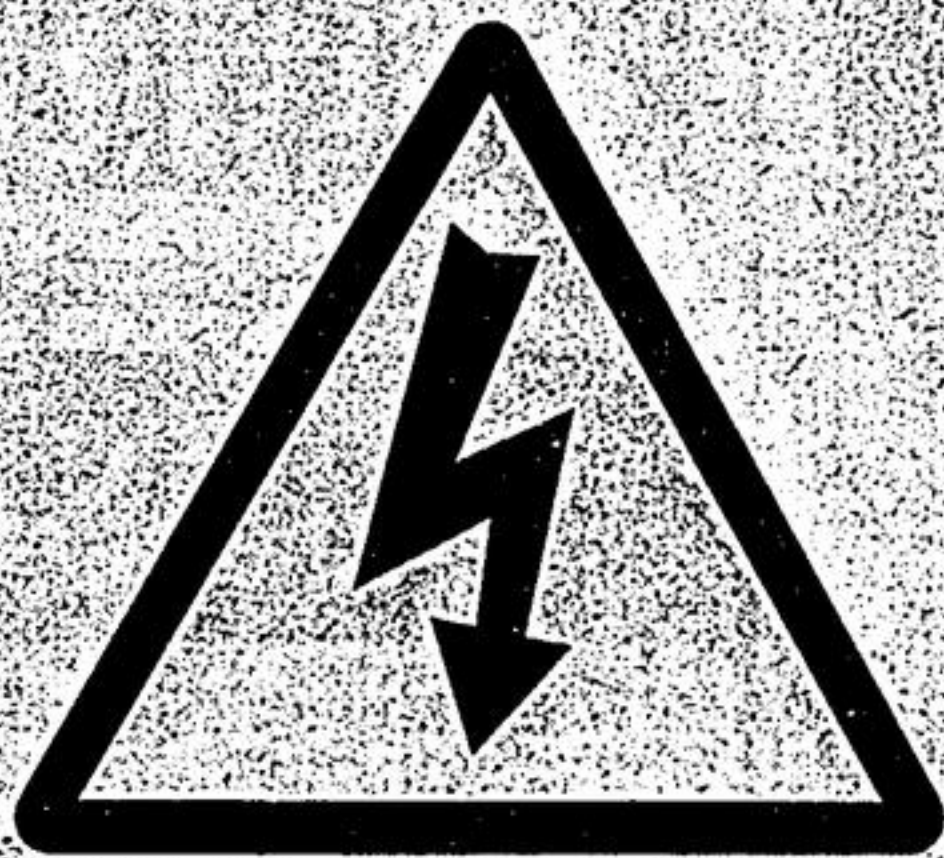
Call 905-294-0380 to register and for more details on the course being offered in Stouffville or log on to [TheMarriageCourse.org](http://TheMarriageCourse.org) for information on the international program.



Mark Black, with wife Meiyang Wong, didn't think they needed marriage course, but says it was helpful.



Bob and Nancy Stover said course fosters appreciation.



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