

A Couple's Guide to
Preparing for Marriage

Getting to Know Each Other

Goal: For the couple to get to know the pastor and the pastor to get to know the couple, especially as relates to their stories of family, faith, expectations, commitment, etc.

Pastor's Story:

- Family
- Faith
- Marriage experience and learnings

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Couples Story:

1. How did you meet?
2. How long have you known each other?
3. How long have you been dating?
4. When did you know that he/she was "the one" for you?
5. What were you looking for in a spouse?
6. Why do you want to get married?

Individual Stories:

1. Where were you born?
2. Tell me about your family growing up?
3. What examples of marriage did you have from your parents and/or others close to you?
4. Have you experienced divorce in your family (i.e., parents, siblings, personally, etc.)?
5. What role has faith played in your household, as a child and as an adult?
6. What do you believe about God?
7. How much of a difference do your spiritual beliefs make in your everyday life?
8. What do you believe about marriage and divorce?
9. Have you been previously engaged or married?
 - a. If engaged, why did that engagement end?
 - b. If married, did that marriage end in divorced? If so, what were the circumstances of your divorce?

The Pre-Marriage Course

These 5 video-based sessions are a fantastic resource in helping couples prepare for marriage. Each video session is approximately 50 minutes. For a brief video overview, [click here](#).

- Video 1: [Communications](#)
- Video 2: [Conflict](#)
- Video 3: [Commitment](#)
- Video 4: [Connection](#)
- Video 5: [Adventure](#)

Marriage Expectations

A friend of mine once said, "The key to life is low expectations." He intended this to be humorous, but there is a lot of truth in this statement. Similarly, in many ways, the key to a thriving marriage is low expectations. The difference between expectations and reality is disappointment. Too many marriages end because of the difference between their expectations from marriage and the realities of marriage.

This little worksheet is intended to help you gain a better understanding of one another's backgrounds and experiences, as relates to marriage and family, and to gain a clearer understanding of expectations so that you'll know how to love, respond to, and live with one another in a way that would result in a marriage that grows in love throughout the years.

Questions for Discussion:

Use the following questions as a conversational guide to talk about some of the practical issues of marriage from which challenges and conflicts often arise. It'll be fun to see how much you know / don't know about each other! Keep in mind, every couple has their own unique set of differences and challenges. The key is trying to best identify what they are so that you can best prepare for them.

1. Are you an early bird or a night owl?
2. What temperature do you like to set your thermostat when you go to sleep?
3. Do you have any unique bedtime preferences or habits that your spouse should be aware of (i.e. sleeping with the ceiling fan, having a light on, music playing)?
4. Do you have any sleep related challenges (i.e. insomnia, sleep apnea, snoring, etc.)?
5. What are your expectations relating to cleanliness, organization, and neatness in the home?
6. On a scale of 1-10, what is your expectation for your spouse's cleanliness?
7. Who will be responsible for:

a. Finances:	Bride	Groom	Both
b. Laundry:	Bride	Groom	Both
c. Meals	Bride	Groom	Both
d. Yard work:	Bride	Groom	Both
e. Cleaning house:	Bride	Groom	Both
f. Changing Diapers	Bride	Groom	Both

8. **What is your understanding of each of your individual role in marriage?**
9. **What are your views on divorce?**
10. **Do you want to have children? If so, will you choose for the wife to stay at home with the kids or work outside of the home?**
11. **Describe your relationship with your parents, and with your spouse's parents.**
12. **What do you believe is the appropriate level of involvement from in-laws and/or ex-spouses?**
13. **Would you say that your parents had a marriage that is one you'd like for your marriage to emulate? Why or why not?**
14. **What strengths / weaknesses from your own family experiences, growing up, do you think you bring to this marriage?**
15. **When you have a conflict or disagreement, what will be your strategy to bring about reconciliation and restored relationship?**
16. **How will you handle your money and finances? Do you have any significant debt?**
17. **What is your background (growing up / as an adult) of religious practice, faith, and church life?**
18. **On a scale of 1-10, how would you rank the importance of religious practice, faith, and church life in your marriage and family? Why?**
19. **If you plan to incorporate religious practice, faith, and church life into your marriage, what are your expectations for what that will look like?**
20. **What are your views on education for children (i.e., public, private, home school, etc.)? Why?**

Marriage Wreckers & Marriage Savers

1. **Covenant (def):** a solemn (holy) agreement (promise) between two or more persons (and God)

2. **Commitment:**

Marriage Vows

*I, Groom/Bride, take you, Bride/Groom, to be my wedded wife/ husband
And I do promise and covenant before God and these witnesses,
To be your loving and faithful husband/wife
In sickness and in health, in plenty and in want
In joy and in sorrow, as long as we both shall live.*

Token & Pledge

*This ring I give thee, as a symbol and pledge
Of constant faith and abiding love*

3. **Top 10 Marriage Wreckers**

The following items have the potential of causing conflict in marriage relationships, and if not addressed, can present serious threats to any marriage. The root causes to everything listed below are pride and selfishness, which are both a battle for every human being.

- 1) **Love** - misunderstandings about love, in that, love is more than a feeling, love is a decision of commitment, regardless of feelings
- 2) **Money** – dealing with debt and finances (i.e., budget, spending, shared accounts, etc.)
- 3) **Roles** - misunderstanding and/or disagreement of the roles of husband and wife
- 4) **Expectations** - unrealistic expectations on spouse to meet our deepest needs
- 5) **Accountability** - lack of community and relationships with other couples and individuals who really know you and have the freedom to speak truth into your lives
- 6) **Authority** - lack of belonging to a faith community, that's rooted in the gospel, and being under the loving authority and relational accountability of a larger body of people
- 7) **Communication** - inability or unwillingness to communicate needs, wants, and desires
- 8) **Confession** - inability or unwillingness to confess, repent, and ask forgiveness
- 9) **Wounds** - personal wounds from emotional, sexual, or physical abuse
- 10) **Sex** –every couple has some issues of sex that can be obstacles to intimacy and unity; issues include unhealthy attitudes, experiences, and practices; pornography; pre-marital sex; past sexual abuse, divorce, etc.

4. Marriage Savers

Because we're all inherently sinful and selfish, the greatest threat to every marriage is ourselves. We all need outside help, that comes from above and alongside. We need God's help, His power, and His love. We also need support from friends and people who will come alongside to encourage, provide wisdom, challenge, and pray for success in our marriages.

- a. **The Gospel** – Gospel means “*Good News*.” The Good News is that, when we trust in Christ, God pours His unconditional love into our hearts, not because of us, but because of Jesus. By faith, we receive His love. We also receive His power and motivation to extend that same love to others. The reality is that we can only love, forgive, and accept others to the extent that we have experienced love, forgiveness, and acceptance ourselves. God's love does that for us.

Scripture

There is no condemnation for those who are in Christ Jesus, because through Christ Jesus the law of the Spirit who gives life has set you free from the law of sin and death. For what the law was powerless to do because it was weakened by the flesh, God did by sending his own Son in the likeness of sinful flesh to be a sin offering. And so he condemned sin in the flesh, in order that the righteous requirement of the law might be fully met in us, who do not live according to the flesh but according to the Spirit. – Romans 8:1-4

This is how God showed his love among us: He sent his one and only Son into the world that we might live through him. This is love: not that we loved God, but that he loved us and sent his Son as an atoning sacrifice for our sins. – 1 John 4:9-10

Jesus answered, “The work of God is this: to believe in the one he has sent.” – John 6:29

Quotes

“God does not love sinners because they are attractive; sinners are attractive to God because he loves them.” - Martin Luther

“The only thing we contribute to our salvation is the sin that makes it necessary.”
- William Temple (a bishop in the Church of England in the 1920's – 1940's)

“To be a Christian means to forgive the inexcusable, because God has forgiven the inexcusable in you.” - C.S. Lewis

- b. **Accountable Relationships** – Far too many marriages have ended in divorce that could have easily been saved if they just had one other couple in their lives encouraging them, holding them accountable to their wedding vows, and helping them keep their vows and fight for their marriage, rather than throwing in the towel and giving up. Don't look for accountability partners who will only tell you what you want to hear. Look for friends who will hold you to the standard that you want to be held (even if that means difficult and uncomfortable confrontation, if necessary).