

Getting Ready for Marriage

Congratulations on this wonderful milestone. Few seasons in life are filled with as much joy and anticipation as the time spent preparing to get married.

You've probably heard it said that as you plan your wedding, you shouldn't forget to plan your marriage. But it sounds so abstract to "plan a marriage" in the midst of the more tangible (and demanding) project of planning a wedding. How do you do it?

STEP ONE: Learn from others

Research demonstrates the long-term value of making time now for marriage education classes or premarital counseling. Those efforts go even further when you supplement them by spending time with an older married couple whose relationship you admire.

STEP TWO: Plan with patience

Couples often overlook the importance of using the wedding planning season as practical marriage preparation. You can intentionally set the tone for your marriage by the values you live out in planning your big day. The transformational process of "becoming one" can occur in everything from how you assemble your guest list to how you determine a honeymoon destination.

STEP THREE: Discover the purpose of marriage

A wedding is bigger than you as an individual and even bigger than you both as a couple. Ephesians 5 describes a couple laying down their lives for one another and becoming one as an icon of God's sacrificial love for His church. That's the counter-cultural call of Christian marriage. Read *The Marriage Masterpiece* by Al Janssen in order to discover the beautiful picture God intends every marriage to reflect.

STEP FOUR: Create a meaningful event

To focus on the sacred nature of marriage in the early church couples often stood during the course of a weekly service to exchange their vows. Those weddings were a part of the community of faith's worship routine and a public vow within a church body. They do not have anything resembling the grand

ceremonies typical of modern weddings, focusing instead on the meaning and purpose of marriage. That's not to say big celebrations are out of order, but many risk making them so complex that they fail to honor God or the community they are uniting – both of which are the basis for a strong Christian marriage.

GOING FURTHER – Resources

Recommended Books:

Just How Married Do You Want to Be (by Jim & Sarah Sumner) is all about practicing oneness in marriage. Scripture beautifully describes the unity within a healthy marriage as a window into the unity that ought to characterize our relationship with God.

The Peacemaker (by Ken Sande) reminds us that every marriage has conflict. You are marrying a sinner and in case nobody has told you, you're a sinner too. Don't merely avoid conflict, learn to become skilled in resolving conflict in a biblical, God-honoring way. The Peacemaker provides very practical insights into conflict resolution including the 7 A's of Confession and the Four Promises of Forgiveness.

The Four Gifts of Love (by Willard Harley, Jr.) explores the gifts of care, protection, honesty, and time. This short book also helps couples identify their most important emotional needs and begin to understand how to intentionally meet those needs for your future spouse.

Recommended Website: ***CoupleCheckup.com*** features the Prepare & Enrich tools for dating and engaged couples who want to establish a strong foundation for marriage.

GOING FURTHER – Maranatha Support

Maranatha pastors are excited to walk alongside couples during this exciting season of life. We highly encourage all couples to connect with a pastor for premarital counseling.

One resource utilized by some of our pastors is an online couple assessment called PrepareEnrich which evaluates the strength and health of the couple in the following nine key areas within the relationship: communication, conflict resolution, partner style and habits, financial management, leisure activities, sexual expectations, family & friends, relationship roles, and spiritual beliefs.

If you do not have a relationship with an older married couple, but would like to benefit from the rich mentoring and friendship such a relationship can provide, contact a pastor to express your desire and we will do our best to match you up with a mentor couple. These relationships can provide strength and support to a younger couple for many years into the future as a couple transitions through various life stages as well as different trials and struggles common in marriage.

In addition to the resources listed already, our pastors have compiled numerous other resources they have found helpful. For recommendations based on your situation and needs, talk to a Maranatha pastor or check out the recommended resources on our website at www.maranathafree.com/resources/

Engaged

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