

Getting Ready for Marriage

From the staff at Greenville Free Methodist Church
With Kurt Bruner, The Center for Strong Families

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:

*(Available for checkout in the HomeGrowth Center)

Please check out the library resource list for more choices

The Marriage Masterpiece (by Al Janssen) The Bible opens and closes with a wedding and in between God uses the metaphor of marriage more than any other to describe His relationship with His people. So what does that mean for your pending marriage? Al Janssen tells the bigger story of marriage as God created it and as couples can experience it.

Love and Respect (by Dr. Emerson Eggerichs)* discusses a powerful biblical model for each spouse understanding and meeting the other's most deeply felt need.

Boundaries in Marriage (by Henry Cloud and John Townsend)* Learn when to say yes, and when to say no to your spouse and to others, in order to make the most of your marriage.

The Five Love Languages (by Gary Chapman)* describes how to discover and serve your spouse's unique love language.

Preventing Divorce (McPherson and Biehl) Fun questions for facilitating discussion on a variety of issues.

The Marriage Book (by Nicky and Sila Lee) Full of practical advice, this book is easy to read, and is designed to help prepare, build and even mend marriages.

Engaged

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The Meaning of Marriage, Facing the Complexities of Commitment with the Wisdom of God (by Timothy and Kathy Keller)* An extraordinarily insightful look at the keys to happiness in marriage that will inspire Christians, skeptics, singles, long-time married couples, and those about to be engaged. It is essential reading for anyone who wants to know God and love more deeply in this life.

Before You Say "I Do" (by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts)* explores how to clarify role expectations, establish a healthy sexual relationship, handle finances, and acquire a solid understanding of how to develop a biblical relationship.

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 – GFMC Support

Congratulations on your engagement! Please talk to one of the pastors about arrangements for pre-marital counseling, an important step in preparing for a Godly marriage.

GFMC offers LIFE GROUP for Young Adults (college, career, young professionals) for more information please visit greenvillefmc.org

