

Preparation for Marriage Manual

This manual has been prepared to help you remove the risk element from your future marriage. We trust that you and your fiancé/fiancée work through the programme together. If you do, your present relationship will be strengthened and enriched as a prelude to an enriching, fulfilling and growing marriage.

We will take a realistic approach to your preparation for a successful and lifelong union, prompting you to ask questions about future situations.

When we send out printed copies, we include two copies of each part so that the questions posed may be **answered by each partner working alone** and then coming together to discuss what they have written.

Part 1 – What is Marriage?

First of all, each of you write down your own personal answers to the following questions:

1 Define what you think the purpose of marriage should be?

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2 Do you believe that marriage is a contract? Why or why not?

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3 How do you think your fiancé/fiancée will answer these questions?

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4 Read the following quotations then write down which portions you agree or disagree with:

“Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated, often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing anyone who comes between them.”

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“Marriage is a private action of two persons in love or a public act of two pledging a contract? Neither it is something very different, basically, the Christian view of marriage is not that it is primarily or essentially a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. Such a pledge endures, not because of the force of law or the fear of its sanctions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract.”

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“Marriage is a system by means of which persons who are sinful and contentious are so caught up by a dream and a purpose bigger than themselves that they work through the years, in spite of repeated disappointments, to make a dream come true.”

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“Marriage is a relationship between a man and a woman intended by God to be a monogamous relationship, intended to be a permanent bond in which many needs are satisfied. The need to love and be loved. The need for sexual satisfaction, for giving life to children and helping them become mature adults, and the need to escape loneliness. Marriage ought to be a bond of love, reflecting the love Christ has for humans, a bond of sacrificial love where husband and wife have become one – mentally, physically and spiritually.”
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Genesis 2:18-25 [NIV] *“The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” Now the LORD God had formed out of the ground all the beasts of the field and all the birds of the air. He brought them to the man to see what he would name them; and whatever the man called each living creature, that was its name. So the man gave names to all the livestock, the birds of the air and all the beasts of the field. But for Adam no suitable helper was found. So the LORD God caused the man to fall into a deep sleep; and while he was sleeping, he took one of the man’s ribs and closed up the place with flesh. Then the LORD God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, “This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called ‘woman’, for she was taken out of man.” For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh. The man and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.”*

1 Who originated the marriage institution?

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Genesis 1:28 [NIV]; **Genesis 2:18** [NIV]; **Ephesians 5:22-32** [NIV] *“God blessed them and said to them, “Be fruitful and increase in number; fill the earth and subdue it. Rule over the fish of the sea and the birds of the air and over every living creature that moves on the ground.” ... “The LORD God said, “It is not good for the man to be alone. I will make a helper suitable for him.” ... “Wives, submit to your husbands as to the Lord. For the husband is the head of the wife as Christ is the head of the church, his body, of which he is the Saviour. Now as the church submits to Christ, so also wives should submit to their husbands in everything. Husbands, love your wives, just as Christ loved the church and gave himself up for her to make her holy, cleansing her by the washing with water through the word, and to present her to himself as a radiant church, without stain or wrinkle or any other blemish, but holy and blameless. In this same way, husbands ought to love their wives as their own bodies. He who loves his wife loves himself. After all, no-one ever hated his*

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7 What do the words “*they will become one flesh*” mean to each of you?

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8 List six behaviours that you could perform in marriage to promote and maintain the oneness characteristic of marriage:

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- d)
- e)

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9 List three of the most important scriptures upon which you would like to base your marriage relationship:
[Please do **not** use Ephesians 5:21-33; 1 Corinthians 13:4-8; 1 Peter 3:1-7 as most couples automatically look at these. They are important, but think through other important scriptures that will assist you in establishing the type of marriage you are both seeking.]

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Here are other definitions of marriage that you might want to consider:

The marriage relationship is a school, a learning and growing environment in which [if everything is as it should be] both partners can grow and mature. The relationship will grow along with them. If you can see marriage as an opportunity for maturing, you can be satisfied and can satisfy your spouse.

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Marriage does not demand perfection in either partner, but marriage must be given priority in your life.

Marriage is an institution for sinners, no-one else need apply.

Marriage finds its finest glory when sinners see it as God's way of leading us through His ultimate curriculum of love and righteousness.

Have you ever thought of marriage in that light before?

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A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person Jesus Christ and to each other.

It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything.

Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity, it is a partnership of mutual subordination.

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A Christian marriage is similar to a solvent that frees up the man and woman to be themselves and to become all that God intends them to become.

Marriage is a refining process that God can use to have us become the man or woman He wants us to become.

Think about it.

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God wants to use your marriage for His purpose for all human beings, to mould and refine you for your own benefit and for His glory.

You may be thinking that when you marry there will be just two individuals involved in that union. This is true of many marriages, but there is a third person who can give even greater meaning to your married life, that person is Jesus Christ.

In what way will the presence of Jesus Christ in your marriage make a difference?

Matthew 7:24-27 [NIV] *“Therefore everyone who hears these words of mine and puts them into practice is like a wise man who built his house on the rock. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house; yet it did not fall, because it had its foundation on the rock. But everyone who hears these words of mine and does not put them into practice is like a foolish man who built his house on sand. The rain came down, the streams rose, and the winds blew and beat against that house, and it fell with a great crash.”*

This passage of scripture is talking about building your life on the firm foundation of Christ’s Words as recorded in the four gospels.

List the ten firm foundational principles as spoken by Jesus Christ that will make a solid foundation for your marriage.

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There are many reasons and motivating factors for marriage.

What are yours?

Have you ever thought about them?

Below are two very important questions for you to answer and discuss with your fiancé/fiancée:

1 What will you receive out of marriage that you would not receive by remaining single?

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2 List the reasons why you are wanting to marry your fiancé/fiancée:

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Next list the reasons why you think your fiancé/fiancée wants to marry you:

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Now share these thoughts with your/fiancé fiancée.

3 Now compare your reasons for marriage with the following list which has been compiled by several specialists in marriage and family life education.

These are a list of unhealthy reasons for marriage

If you find any of these appear in either of your lists or in your minds, you should spend time discussing them with your fiancé/fiancée or your minister.

- 1 To spite or get back at your parents who disagree with your choice of future mate.
- 2 Because of a negative self-image. Marrying your fiancé/fiancée will make you feel worthwhile and will give meaning to your life.

- 3 To be a therapist or counsellor to your fiancé/fiancée.
- 4 Fear of being left out! Being left as a bachelor or an old spinster.
- 5 Fear of independence.
- 6 Marrying on the rebound, having been hurt in a former love relationship and to ease your hurt you immediately choose another relationship.
- 7 Fear of hurting your fiancé/fiancée, you are afraid of what will happen to them if you break up even though you know that marriage with them will not be the best choice.
- 8 To escape from an unhappy home.
- 9 Because you are pregnant or your fiancé/fiancée is pregnant.
- 10 Because you have had sex.

Now a few positive reasons for marriage

- 1 Companionship
- 2 To work together and fulfil your own and each other’s needs.
- 3 To fulfil sexual needs in the way God intended.
[This will be expanded in a future study]
- 4 Love [by love is meant an adequate blending of the various types of love as will be explained in a future study]
- 5 Because you are convinced that it is God’s Will for you to be marriage to this person.

Next evaluate your “marriageability” by examining the personal traits, of yourself and your fiancé/fiancée.

List eight character or personality traits that you feel would help your marriage be a success.

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Galatians 5:22-23 [NIV] *“But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control. Against such things there is no law.”*

Study and meditate on these fruits of the Holy Spirit.

Would you agree that these traits, manifested in a person would give them greater potential of success in a marriage?

If so, indicate which of these you manifest and which of them you are still having difficulty in displaying in your day-to-day life.

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In addition to utilising the fruits of the Holy Spirit listed below are eight marriageability traits that have been isolated which give a person a greater possibility of having an enriched and satisfying marriage.

- 1 Adaptability and flexibility – able to change and adapt to changing circumstances.
- 2 Empathy – the ability to be sensitive to the needs, hurts and desires of others, to feel with them and experience the world from their perspective.
- 3 The ability to work through problems.
- 4 The ability to give and receive love.
- 5 Emotional stability – accepting one’s emotions and controlling them.
- 6 Communication – allowing it to be two way!
- 7 Similarities between the couple themselves.
- 8 Similar family background.

The natural inclination is to look at this list and say *“Oh yes, that’s us. We are like that and have these characteristics.”*

If you feel these traits are present, give specific example of how each of the first six traits was manifested in the past two weeks.

Your day-to-day life:-

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The life of your fiancé/fiancée:-

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Now for answers to No.7 and 8, list five similarities for each one.

Similarities between the couple:-

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Your day-to-day life:-

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Next time we will study uniqueness and acceptance of marriage