
Pre-marital Counselling

Lesson 8

Introduction

Hebrews 13:4 “Marriage is to be honoured by all, and the marriage bed to be kept pure.”

This is in sharp contrast to the world’s pattern of experimental dating. Courtship is the process of getting to know the person and putting it before the court. Engagement is to prepare for the wedding.

Gen 2: 22-25

22 Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib[a] he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. 23 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.” 24 That is why a man leaves his father and mother and is united to his wife, and they become one flesh. 25 Adam and his wife were both naked, and they felt no shame.

Psychologist Carl Rogers once gave a sobering perspective on marriage. “If 50-75% of Ford or General Motors cars completely fell apart within the early part of their lifetimes as automobiles, “ Rogers wrote, “the public outcry would be overwhelming and drastic steps would be taken to correct the situation”. But this happens to many marriages and hardly anyone raises a complaint. Divorce is frequent and in addition fewer than half of the marriages that persist could be considered successful. Sadly many couples seem unable or unwilling to correct the situation.

I. Why is Pre-marital Counselling so important?

Pre-marital counselling is crucial because:

- A. Many people have been equipped with the world’s ideas.
- B. Many people are ignorant of the practical aspects of the wedding and marriage.
- C. There are a variety of approaches to getting married and having a wedding.
- D. It helps to facilitate the right conversations between the couple (who are often in “la la land”)
- E. It acts as part of the compatibility testing process (Hence pre-engagement counselling is even better)
- F. If done in a group it helps the couple to find connections with others at a similar life-stage.
- G. A lot of marital break-ups are rooted in poor pre-marital foundations.
- H. It’s an opportunity for the officiating minister to get to know what he is involved in “joining”.

You don’t want to be marrying a couple that has hidden issues resulting in annulment of the marriage.

II. What should you ask every participant in a pre-marital counselling process?

- A. Why do you want to get married to this person?
- B. Could you be getting married for the wrong reasons?

Outlined below are some wrong reasons to look out for in counselling situations.

1. Senior Panic
“Everyone else is getting married right after graduation (high school or college), and I’d better, too.” Some young men and women feel left out as they watch friends and classmates getting married.
2. Old-Maid Syndrome: Always the bridesmaid, never the bride.”
Some feel like the only single person left, and women particularly seem to fear being alone after all the “good ones” are taken.
3. The Great Escape.
Some marry because of a bad home life...
4. On the Rebound.
Often people marry soon after a painful breakup. They try to fill the emotional vacuum or take revenge ...
5. Pressure Play.
When a couple’s parents keep pushing them to marry, they often marry. Or when one partner pressures the other one, they often marry (They marry out of obligation, not love.)
6. Meet My Needs.
Many people marry primarily to have their own needs met, rather than to meet the needs of their spouse. These needs may centre on self-esteem, sex, emotions, finances, or other needs. Sometimes there are more deep-rooted needs, such as the need to feel worthwhile or to become someone important.
7. Crisis Pregnancy.
An untold number of couples marry each year because of crises pregnancy. In some rare situations, this is best, but not in most cases.
8. To have sex.
9. To ease loneliness.
10. To be happy.
11. To be an adult.
12. Because of a pregnancy.
13. He or she loves you.
14. To save or help someone.
15. Because you want a baby.
16. For money.
17. Because all your friends are married.

- 18. You've always wanted a fancy wedding.
- 19. Out of fear that no one else will want to marry you.
- 20. For immigration purposes.
- C. Are you ready to get married?
 - a. Are you ready in your relationship with God?
 - b. Are you in a healthy place emotionally to make such a decision?
 - c. Have you accomplished what you feel you needed to have done as a single person?
- D. Have you applied to the best of your ability the relevant biblical principles that would ensure God's blessing on your future marriage?
- E. Have you been through pre-engagement counseling or accountability as a couple for at least 3 months?
- F. Have you sought God on this major life decision with prayer and fasting?
If so, what is God saying?.....What is God NOT saying? IS the YES getting bigger?
- G. Have you explored any patterns or weaknesses you may have had in the past in this area?
What part could this be playing in your current situation? What are others who know you well saying about your possible decision? (Your answers to these questions are crucial as it helps where there are blind spots). Do you believe that God can and will bless you with His best for you? What are your motives in being with this person? If there are negative motives, such as "I'll settle with this coz there might not be another better", the fruit this produces will be negative too. This can also be linked to a low self-esteem.
- H. Does getting married to this person bring you closer to God and His purpose for your life?
- I. How do you feel (about Yourself, God and others) when you are with this person?
- J. Are you compatible in all the major areas?
 - 1. Spiritual Compatibility (2 Cor 6:14)
 - 2. Vision Compatibility
 - 3. Values Compatibility
 - 4. Social Compatibility
 - 5. Intellectual Compatibility
- K. Do you know each other well enough to establish whether you are compatible in the areas mentioned above?
- L. Can you say "I do" and stick with it until death?
If you can, then you have found "the right one" – and you have also become "the right one."
- M. What would be the Deal breakers in this decision?
Hence, list what would cause you to say NO. Are there any signs of these things at the moment?
- N. Are you known by the people around you whom you trust?
Do they know you as a couple?
Do they know your strengths and weaknesses as a couple and as individuals?
- O. Are you able to submit to the same spiritual leaders and seek their counsel?
- P. Are there any significant areas in your lives which could be potentially harmful to your marriage?

If so, do you have a strategy in place to deal with them PRIOR to making a decision to getting married? Some common ones are:

1. Unresolved past relationships/Soul Ties
2. Views of sex and sexual practices/boundaries
3. No Job security on the part of the breadwinner (What's your appetite for risk).
4. Major debt
5. Lack of agreement on
 - i. Current friends
 - ii. Church & Doctrine
 - iii. Where to live
 - iv. The place and type of education of the kids
 - v. How many kids to have
 - vi. The roles each of you will play in the home.
 - vii. Expectations
 - viii. Degree of accountability as individuals and as a couple.
 - ix. Morality
 - x. Relating to In-laws
 - xi. How to handle money particularly spending habits

In order to know this one needs to have adequate time with one's possible future partner for various issues to emerge.

- Q. One needs to be able to answer the question "Why are you thinking of getting married to this person and no one else?"

When this question is answered honestly it becomes easier to ascertain whether the reasons are healthy and sufficient or whether they are founded on lies, misbeliefs and insecurities.

- R. How well do you know their family?

It is important to also examine the homes which the couple grew up in. Often people are well-meaning in terms of intentions but then they take on the characteristics of what they saw growing up. One is obviously not limited to this but it is so common that it's worth noting.

III. What are the practical issues that need to be covered in the pre-marital process?

The counsellor needs to facilitate discussion around the following topics being guided by the church code and specific books and media resources with best practice. The areas are:

1. Sex in Marriage

This material should be covered only a couple of weeks before the wedding for obvious reasons.

2. Planning the wedding

3. Financial, Medical and legal matters in marriage

Appendix I**Pre-engagement checklist****Checklist: Can you answer these questions?**

Are you both Christians (see 2 Cor 6:14)? Have you sought God's will in a biblical manner?

Do you love each other with a biblical love?

These are questions are the biblical bare minimum requirements for a Christian hoping to embark on a godly route toward marriage. Other questions that may help to clarify the depth and breadth of a relationship:

Do you help each other grow closer to God?

Can you talk?

Can you play together?

Can you work together? *(Not all of these are complete deal breakers but can show you what to work on)*

Do you have mutual friends?

Are you proud of each other?

Are you intellectually on the same level?

Do you have common interests?

Do you share the same values?

Do you feel comfortable about how you make decisions together?

Do you help each other emotionally?

Do you have absolute trust in each other?

Are you more creative and energetic because of each other?

Can you accept and appreciate each other's family?

Do you have unresolved relationships in your past?

Is sex under control?

Have you spent time together? (Stafford suggests, "a year of real closeness is the minimum.")

Have you fought and forgiven?

Have you talked about each area of your future life?

Have you had counseling?

Acknowledgements

Bill Scheidler pre-engagement checklist.

Recommended Books:

1. Model Marriage by Dag-Heward Mills. Parchment Books
2. Conversing by Paul Nyamuda. Warrior Resources
3. His Needs, Her Needs by Willard Harley. Marriage Builders.
4. Intended for Pleasure by Ed and Gaye Wheat. Revell Books.
5. The Act of Marriage by Tim and Beverly LaHaye. Zondervan.
6. Generation Next Marriage by Tricia Goyer. MultNomah
7. Boundaries in Marriage by Cloud and Townsend. Zondervan.
8. Enjoying the Premarital Life by ZT Fomum. Christian Publishing House.
9. All you need to know before you say I do by Les and Leslie Parrott.

10. Love and Respect by Dr Emerson Eggerichs. Christian Art Publishers.
11. Engagement and Marriage by David and Janet Cunningham. Family Impact.
12. The Marriage Book by Nicky and Sila Lee. Alpha International Books.
13. The Portrait of a Marriage (DVD Series) by Bruce Wilkinson. Walk Thru the Bible.
14. Loving on Purpose (DVD and Book) by Danny Silk. I-Bethel.org