

Pre-Marital Workshop: Setting the Course to a Lasting Marriage

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Long lasting and happy marriages don't happen by accident. They take deliberate effort and attention to stay on course. They also take needed preparation before leaving the dock. Many factors can lead a marriage to drift apart or shipwreck on rocks, such as ignoring or minimizing problems, bringing in unresolved emotional baggage from the past, poor examples or role models in life, and a culture that promotes selfishness.

This questionnaire explores your readiness for marriage, expectations, present and potential challenges, and exercises to help your marriage go the distance. Write out your answers to the questions first and then share with your fiancé in three or four meetings or dates together. Get to know each other better than ever—and get to know yourself better too.

What is Marriage?

What are three qualities/traits that you want to define your marriage?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Main Reasons I was Attracted to My Future Spouse:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Main Reasons My Future Spouse was Attracted to Me:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Greatest Strengths of Our Relationship and Future Marriage are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Greatest Challenges, Problems (or Potential Problems) are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

My Three Best Memories with my Fiancé have been:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Difficult Times or Memories with my Fiancé have been:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Dreams of the Future with my Spouse are:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Fears in my Future with my Spouse

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If I Could Change Three Things about Myself, they would be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

If I Could Change Three Things about Our Relationship, it would be:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Things That Turn Me On Sexually:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three Things that I *Don't* Like to do Sexually:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three *Little* Things That I Do That Make My Future Spouse Happy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Three *Little* Things that My Future Spouse Does That Make me Happy:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Primary Ways That a Man Measures His Self Worth:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Primary Ways that a Woman Measures Her Self Worth:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Best Things That My Fiancé Can Say to Me:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Best Things That I Can Say to my Fiancé:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Best Things That I Can Pray/Hope for my Fiancé:

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

The Three Best Things That My Fiancé Can Pray/Hope for Me.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Personal and Family History

Before a man can successfully unite together with his wife in marriage, the Bible says that he first needs to leave his father and mother (Gen. 2:24). The same is true for the wife. Whether or not you have left your parents physically (as in another house, state or country), how well have you left them emotionally and become your own separate person? These questions can help you leave your parents and be your own unique and best self. Your spouse may also learn some valuable things about you and learn new ways to support you in your growth.

What was the best part of your childhood?

What was the most difficult part of your childhood?

How did the above experiences affect you emotionally and relationally?

What helped you get through the difficult times in your childhood?

What helps you today when you go through difficult times?

How did your mother and father communicate and work out their differences?

How do you and your fiancé communicate and work out your differences?

You and Your Mother

How do you feel about your mother?

How well have you emotionally left or separated from your mother?

Describe your mother in one sentence.

What did your mother always say?

Describe the most pleasant and unpleasant experiences with your mother:

Pleasant:

Unpleasant:

How did these experiences affect you?

How did she affect your sense of security and self-confidence?

How did she influence how you feel about and relate to women?

You and Your Father

How do you feel about your father?

How well have you emotionally left or separated from your father?

Describe your father in one sentence.

What did your father always say?

Describe the most pleasant and unpleasant experiences with your father:

Pleasant:

Unpleasant:

How did these experiences affect you?

How did he affect your sense of security, self-image and self-confidence?

How did he influence how you feel about and relate to men?

Your Marriage

How do you want your marriage to be like your parent's marriage?

How do you want your marriage to be different than your parent's marriage?

Think of a married couple that you know and respect. What qualities do you admire in their marriage?

How can you create these same qualities in your marriage?

Is there anything else that you would like to talk about with your fiancé?

Our Marriage Vision

What is the vision for your marriage? Write down a list of twenty actions that will help you reach that vision together. Make these as practical as possible. Start each one with “We...” Some examples:

1. We greet each other with a kiss when we come home.
2. We apologize when we have wronged the other person.
3. We go on regular dates together

Write your list individually and then circle your top five priorities. Compare with your fiancé’s list and together agree on the top five actions. Write up this new list. You now have a Personal Marriage Vision that is unique for your marriage. Post on your refrigerator or screen saver as a daily reminder.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.
- 9.
- 10.
- 11.
- 12.
- 13.
- 14.
- 15.
- 16.
- 17.
- 18.
- 19.
- 20.

Preparing for Your 25th Anniversary

A sailboat needs a destination point and a hand on the wheel to keep it on its course. So does marriage. As you think about the destination to your 25th anniversary, it's not too early to prepare. Talk with your fiancé about where you wish to spend your golden anniversary. How old will each of you be on that day? Depending on your age, go ahead and talk about your 50th anniversary too.

Our ages:

Some great places to celebrate:

When people ask you at your 25th anniversary, "What was the secret of your marriage all these years?" what will be your answer? What are three answers that you believe will get you there?

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Write a Love Letter

This final exercise will be used on your 25th anniversary. Write a letter to your spouse to be opened on your 25th wedding anniversary. Write about why you have chosen to marry him or her, your feelings for him/her, and how you plan to enrich your spouse's life. Include three wishes that you have for your life together. If you like, include any picture, quote, prayer, Scripture, memento, or anything else that you would like to add with your letter. Seal, save and keep these letters with your important records until your 25th anniversary. Discuss a place that you would like to meet in 25 years to open these letters from each other, and exchange them on that day.

Stay the course.

Along the course in marriage, there will be times when your boat will be rocked. You may even be battered by a hurricane or two. But if you are committed to your destination and to each other, and make daily adjustments with grace and respect for each other, your marriage can go the distance into the sunset of your lives. Fair Winds to you.