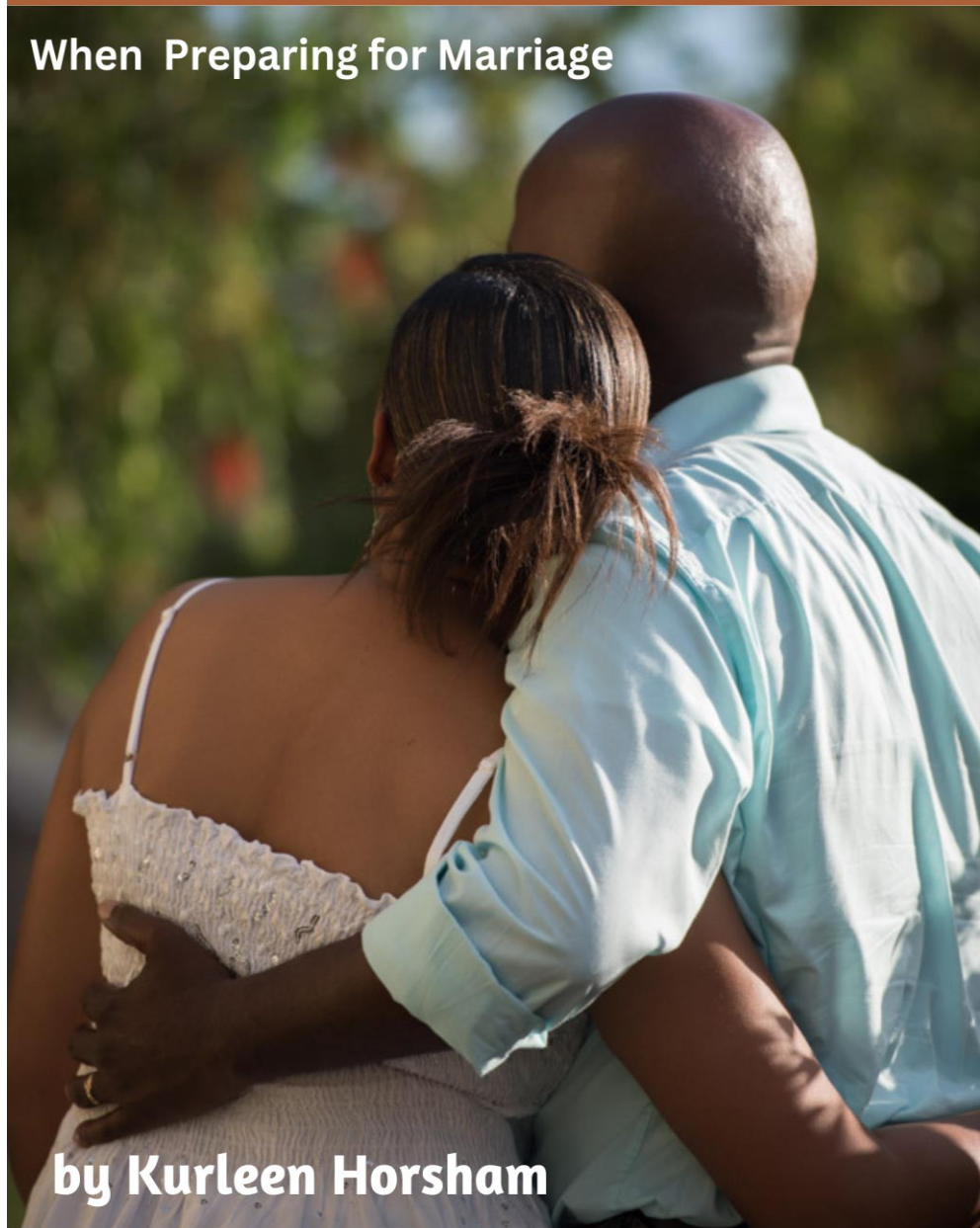


Food for Thought

When Preparing for Marriage

by Kurleen Horsham



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WHEN
PREPARING *for*
Marriage



Kurleen Horsham

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ISBN:	Softcover	978-1-5245-6627-2
	eBook	978-1-5245-6626-5

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All Scripture quotations, unless otherwise indicated, are taken from the King James Version (KJV) of The Holy Bible.

Editors: Professor Norrell A. London and Hannah Earthman.

Interior Design: Nichelle Dottin-John, The Open House Niche Ltd.

Print information available on the last page.

Rev. date: 01/03/2017.

Table of Contents

Chapters	Page
Dedication	5
Acknowledgment	6
Introduction	7
■ ■ ■	
Chapter 1: Foundation	11
Chapter 2: Communication	13
Chapter 3: Conflict Management	16
Chapter 4: Money Management	18
Chapter 5: Sex	20
Chapter 6: Family	23
Chapter 7: Spirituality	26
Conclusion	29

Dedication

This booklet is dedicated to all couples who have made the decision to get married, those who are thinking of getting married, and those who are just curious.

May your eyes, ears and heart be opened to what is expected of you, as you make the decision to walk together on this journey called Marriage.

God richly bless you!

Acknowledgements

All honor and thanks to my Saviour and King, Jesus Christ, who gave me the vision, ability, and strength to write these thoughts to you.

Introduction

Dearly beloved, we are gathered here together in the sight of God, and in the face of this company, to join together this man and this woman in Holy Matrimony; which is commended by the Apostle Paul to be honorable among all men; and therefore is not by any to be entered into unadvisedly or lightly; but reverently, discreetly, advisedly, soberly, and in the fear of God.

(Excerpt taken from *The Minister's Service Book* (2003))



In today's world many couples do not plan for their life together after marriage and neglect to consider that when the two become one, their journey starts. Others do not see the necessity or the benefits of planning ahead; they say (and truly think), "We know each other very well—what else is there to learn."

You could be reading this booklet because you are getting married, thinking about getting married, thinking that marriage is not for you, or just curious. Many young girls dream of having a

“fairy-tale wedding” when they grow up, only to realize when they become older that preparing for a wedding is not only time-consuming but costly as well. The event requires detailed orchestration. Color and style of the wedding dress, groom’s suit, cake, venue, catering, invitations, decorations, honeymoon, etc.—all of these factors must be planned.

But have you considered that you also need to plan for the life you will share with another person once married? You will need to plan to have children (if you do not have them already), to build or purchase your own home, to pursue further studies, to take family vacations, etc. Yes, it is important to plan for your marriage because there are features that will affect the relationship between spouses—positively or negatively.

This type of planning is often handled through premarital counseling in which the couple sits together with their religious leader or a qualified professional counselor to engage in a dialogue on a series of topics relating to marriage and family. In premarital counseling the husband- and wife-to-be learn more

about themselves as individuals, one another, their roles and responsibilities in marriage, and their expectations of each other.

Many consider premarital counseling unnecessary, but after marriage they struggle with their spouse and themselves, engaging in fights that could have been avoided. Creating a map for your marriage is important because it not only benefits you mentally, emotionally, and spiritually but also enhances your ability to become a strong Mr. and Mrs.

As a marriage and family therapist for more than twelve years, I have gained a wealth of knowledge and experience in relationship dynamics, and I know firsthand the purpose and benefits of premarital counseling.

In this booklet, I cover seven areas in which I believe every individual and couple should become knowledgeable as they decide to become husband and wife. While courting couples can also benefit from exploring such realms as educational level, culture, and religious background, this booklet is intended to stimulate the minds and hearts of readers by providing thought-

provoking information on topics such as building a foundation, communication, conflict, sex, money management, family, and spirituality—in other words, by providing substantive food for thought.

It is my hope that after you read this booklet, individually or with your fiancé/e, you will decide to plan not simply for your wedding day but also for your marriage.

Happy reading!

Chapter 1

“Let the wife make the husband glad to come home, and let him make her sorry to see him leave.”

~ Martin Luther

Foundation.

The institution of marriage must never be taken for granted. The level of maturity required by both individuals must come from a place of love, commitment, compassion, understanding, and level-headed thinking. Such qualities are required to deal effectively with the “curve balls” of life, the issues and situations that *will* occur that can strain and put pressure on the marital relationship.

A large majority of men and women want to get married at some point in life, and this is a good thing. Proverbs 18:22

states, “*Whoso findeth a wife findeth a good thing, and obtaineth favour of the Lord.*”

Hebrews 13:4(a) states, “*Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled.*” Whenever a builder is constructing a house, he must ensure that the foundation goes deep into the ground and that the materials used are of good quality, firm, solid, strong, and can withstand the weight of the building. Likewise, a marital foundation must be rooted upon and built around God and godly principles if it is to last a lifetime. It is my firm belief that no couple ever gets married to get divorced!

Marriage is a covenant made between God, the man, and the woman, and this covenant must not be taken lightly. For this reason, marriage is binding not only legally but *spiritually* as well. Genesis 2:24 says, “*Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh.*” It is important to build a solid foundation before entering into the marriage covenant.

Chapter 2

"I want you. All of you. Your flaws.

Your mistakes. Your imperfections.

I want you, and only you."

~ Unknown

Communication.

The *Oxford Dictionary of the English Language* (2010) defines communication as "the imparting or exchanging of information by speaking, writing, or using some other medium."

Communication, however, is generally considered the most overlooked and underestimated input into marriages. A marriage does not have a life of its own, nor can it survive without communication. In husband-and-wife communication, decisions are made pertaining to family and marital life, including but not limited to family planning, sex, money, and conflict.

Psychologists purport that individuals learn from their environment through socialization with parents, siblings, relatives, friends, society, and so on. So, I ask: How is your communication style with your fiancé (or fiancée)? Are you aggressive or passive, dominant or submissive, persuasive or descriptive?

When couples fail to communicate effectively, when unresolved feelings and issues are not lovingly dealt with, the marital relationship comes under stress and begins to fail. Differences, conflicts, and arguments can easily spiral out of control. This is a situation in which the partners should always strive to “talk through” their feelings and not argue or force their feelings and opinions on one another. Be each other’s best friend and learn to talk together about everything under the sun—politics, weather, religion, dreams, aspirations, fears, sex, etc.

Effective communication begins with good listening skills: portraying an actual and active interest in what is being said through eye contact and positive body language, carefully

choosing the right place and right time to address concerns and issues, being clear and specific (saying what you mean and meaning what you say), being respectful and always sensitive to your spouse's feelings and needs. Always remember it is about *the relationship*—not about one of you winning an argument! Ineffective communication, on the other hand, can lead you to become judgmental, critical, and unforgiving. Once this occurs, communication has surely and sorely broken down.

Chapter 3

“A Happy Marriage is the Union of Two Good Forgivers.”

~ Ruth Bell Graham

Conflict Management.

Many people may say, *“I know how to handle conflict. I just walk away, or I stand my ground and let my voice be heard. My fiancé(e) has to listen when I speak.”* Have you ever considered that your conflict management style is ineffective, especially if you are not getting a positive response or outcome? Have you considered that your fiancé(e) will respond to conflict according to his or her personality?

Resolving conflict in relationships is never easy; it takes time, practice, and patience. There are several ways in which two individuals can amicably settle a discord; however, they must be willing to work together.

Firstly, there must be *a speaker* and *a listener*; and the person who is speaking must be clear, concise, and simple in their language. The listener is required to listen intently to what the speaker is saying without interrupting.

After the speaker has concluded, the listener can ask clarifying questions to ensure that he/she understands exactly what the speaker intended to communicate. The roles are then reversed.

Another strategy is to simply take time out and return to the conversation at a later time. This move must be mutually agreed upon, especially when no agreement can be reached or when either individual is becoming upset enough to react with negative words or actions.

Chapter 4

“A great marriage is not when the perfect couple comes together. It is when an imperfect couple learns to enjoy their differences.”

~ Dave Meurer

Money Management.

Researchers have proven that communication, money, and sex are at the pinnacle of broken marriages. Before marriage, couples ought to collaborate on the expenses to be incurred for that special day. You may save, take out a loan, or seek assistance from relatives and friends. Whatever your approach, you should complete a budget, itemizing everything needed to ensure the wedding day goes as planned.

In marriage, financial management—including budgeting and careful spending—is paramount. All other things being equal,

this will ensure that your family goals are achieved. But in this budgeting and planning process, *tithing* is paramount. The Bible discloses in Malachi 3:10, “*Bring ye all the tithes into the storehouse, that there may be meat in mine house, and prove me now herewith, saith the Lord of hosts, if I will not open you the windows of heaven, and pour you out a blessing, that there shall not be room enough to receive it.*” People who give back to the Lord are guaranteed a blessing. There is a return on your investment, so to speak.

This return can take the form of the fulfillment of financial and nonfinancial needs as well as blessings that affect the entire family. This is an extension of the principle that we reap what we sow.

After marriage, it should no longer be a question of “my money” or “your money” but “our money.” It is important to divulge your assets and liabilities to each other before marriage and to discuss your plans for the future use of your money, (e.g., funding a vehicle, a home, or continued studies).

Chapter 5

*“Let her be as the loving hind and pleasant roe;
let her breasts satisfy thee at all times; and be
thou ravished always with her love.”*

~ Proverbs 5:19

Sex.

It’s perhaps the most controversial and talked-about word the world over. Sex. It’s also the part that most, if not all, couples long to engage in on their honeymoon. The terms “sex” and “honeymoon” go hand in hand, and they are frequently uttered by anxious grooms. The bride may or may not feel the same way. She may be tired and may not prioritize sex as does the groom, as she may think, *“We have a lifetime to have sex, so why rush?”*

Other potential factors influencing her perspective include the fact that she may be a virgin and her appetite for sex may not

be as heightened as that of her groom, or she may have been sexually abused (in her childhood or adulthood) and accordingly having sex, especially “plenty” of sex, is not a priority for her.

Notwithstanding, sex is an extremely important facet of marriage, one whose significance transcends the actual act, and it therefore should not be taken for granted. It is much more than procreation or penetration. It involves intimacy, honesty, affection, trust, and willingness to unselfishly give of oneself to another. Put another way, *intimacy* may be described as “into-me-see,” a full-time requirement for a happy and fulfilling marriage.

Both husband and wife must be willing to communicate honestly with each other regarding their sex life, without one or the other being taken advantage of or being dishonest concerning the information shared. It is about learning each other with the understanding that no one person is perfect and that one partner’s personality type is different from that of the other. Remember that an individual is a sum of his/her environment—home, school, work, and/or church.

Intimacy should always be part of sex because the latter has the potential to join a husband and wife in an act that supersedes the physical, which produces the pleasure. It is about satisfying the sexual needs of each other in a caring and loving way.

Chapter 6

*“I want the kind of marriage that makes my
kids want to get married.”*

~ Emily Wiereng

Family – As the millennium era approached us some years ago, we began to see the constant and rapid changes in the field of technology. Similar changes have taken place regarding family; the nuclear family as we once knew it is no longer the preferred family type for many people, due to varied reasons: an individual’s personal choice, unforeseen circumstances, death of a parent, divorce, migration, etc. That is to say, we now encounter many different family structures, the aim of each one to provide for the love and care of children.

While most family structures have their advantages and disadvantages, the nuclear family is still the institution in which

God has stipulated that a child should be nurtured, and where morals and values should be learned. It is in the family, for example, that the child learns how to socialize with others, is taught how to navigate through life's challenges during schooling and is nurtured and developed to become a good citizen of the land in adulthood.

In this important institution, relationships of trust and commitment ought to be fostered between parent(s) and sibling(s).

The stipulation in Proverbs 22:6, to *“train up a child in the way he should go: and when he is old, he will not depart from it,”* is given in the understanding that it is in the family that training must take place. The parent(s) must therefore take responsibility to train their children and teach them how to make the right choices and decisions.

When you teach your children throughout their growing years, they will develop and grow in character and knowledge and will be positioned not only to defend their faith but also to resist

the temptations of peer pressure, media, and society, as a result
living purposeful lives on the earth.

Chapter 7

*“I have never known a man who received
Christ and ever regretted it.”
~ Billy Graham*

Spirituality.

“And God said, ‘Let us make man in our image, after our likeness’” (Genesis 1:26(a)). An individual is made up of body, soul, and spirit. The *Spirit Man* of an individual is important because this is where the connection to God is made. Through daily prayer and Bible meditation, an individual becomes closer to God, and in the process, an innate desire to live a life pleasing and acceptable to God is nurtured. There is also the understanding of a need to supplicate on behalf of the family, the community, the nation, and the world at large.

Communion with God is required to have a successful life on the earth.

Building a personal relationship with Christ will enable the husband and wife to triumphantly navigate the course of their own lives, and those of their family. It will also help to hold the family together in times of adversity and create a legacy upon which others can build.

Additionally, Galatians 5:22-23 reads, “*But the fruit of the Spirit is love, joy, peace, longsuffering, gentleness, goodness, faith, meekness, temperance: against such there is no law.*” When the man and woman/husband and wife purposefully exercise the *fruit of the spirit* in their daily lives, there is an assurance that personal growth and development will take place spiritually. This growth will benefit the marriage.

Marriage is a spiritual institution that mirrors God’s relationship with His church. Therefore, to satisfy the spiritual demands of marriage, both husband and wife must develop a spiritual relationship with God through Jesus Christ who is the

Chief Architect of this institution. We are reminded in Psalm 127:1(a) that “*except the Lord build the house, they labour in vain that build it.*”

Conclusion

*“The successful marriage is not when you can
live in peace with your wife, but when you can’t
live in peace without her.”*

~ Yasir Qadhi

Marriage is supposed to be a wonderful experience, despite the challenges couples will face at times. To attain this bliss, however, and achieve the balance needed, you must plan your marriage. Couples must learn to effectively communicate with each other about matters beyond those specific to the wedding day.

A happy marriage will not “just happen”; planning and preparation, led by the Word of God found in the Holy Bible, must be the platform.

Decide today...

if you are going to get married,
and make it last beyond the
wedding day.

How?

Plan for it!

*If you fail to plan,
you are planning to fail.*

~ Benjamin Franklin

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