

Considering Marriage

QUICK REFERENCE GUIDE

An Excerpt from the *BIBLICAL COUNSELING KEYS*

What Is a Christian Marriage?

A Christian marriage is a **covenant** agreement in which a man and a woman, both committed to Jesus Christ, are legally, physically, and spiritually joined as husband and wife.

- A **covenant** is a vow, a pledge, a promise. (Numbers 30:2)
- A **covenant** is a formal, solemn binding agreement. (Genesis 17:9)
- A **covenant** that is broken displeases the Lord (Malachi 2:13–14)

What Are the Biblical Requirements for Marriage?

- **Look** only to a person of the opposite sex for marriage. (Genesis 2:18, 22)
- **Leave** your lifestyle of being dependent on your parents. “*That is why a man leaves his father and mother ...*” (Genesis 2:24)
- **Link** with your mate legally. “*... and is united to his wife ...*” (Genesis 2:24)
- **Live** together as one in sexual union. “*... and they become one flesh*” (Genesis 2:24).
- **Love** your partner for a lifetime. (Mark 10:9)

What Is Premarital Counseling?

- **Premarital counseling** is practical advice given to a couple in preparation for marriage.
- **Premarital counseling** involves teaching a couple open and honest communication in preparation for marriage.
 - **Communication** is sharing and understanding each other, both verbally and nonverbally.
 - **Communication** is listening and responding respectfully.
 - **Communication** involves a willingness to be honest and vulnerable.

Preparation for Partnership

A couple needs to have an accurate understanding of each other’s expectations and desires. *Preparation for Partnership* is an excellent exercise for opening the door to meaningful communication. Both parties should complete each sentence in writing and then talk through each point.

- My definition of love is ...
- My reason for marriage is ...
- My way of handling conflict is ...
- My way of dealing with anger is ...
- My preference for spending free time is ...
- My concept of the role and responsibilities of a husband is ...
- My concept of the role and responsibilities of a wife is ...
- My views on sex within marriage are ...
- My commitments to my extended family are ...
- My commitments to my future in-laws are ...
- My expectation regarding time with friends (following marriage) is ...
- My position on the use of alcohol is ...
- My experience with illegal drugs is ...
- My priorities for spending money are ...
- My priorities for saving money are ...
- My experience with debt and my commitment regarding debt are ...
- My goals for marriage are ...
- My desires regarding children are ...
- My commitment to be actively involved in a church fellowship is ...
- My spiritual goals and desires are ...

*“How much better to get wisdom than gold,
to get insight rather than silver!”*

(Proverbs 16:16)

Wrong Motives for Marriage

- “I want to marry because all of my friends are getting married.”
- “I want to be married so I won’t feel like a failure.”
- “I want to fulfill my romantic dreams.”
- “I want to get out of my painful home life.”
- “I want to get even with the person who rejected me.”
- “I want a better family life than I had while growing up.”
- “I want to prove that I’m stable and can make a commitment.”
- “I want to prove that I’m not struggling with homosexuality.”
- “I want the wholesome family ideal.”
- “I want to please my family.”
- “I want to please my friends.”
- “I want to please the person I’m dating.”
- “I want to please God, who said ... *It’s not good for the man to be alone*” (Genesis 2:18).
- “I want to have sex whenever I desire.”
- “I want to have children.”
- “I want my children to grow up in a two-parent home.”
- “I want someone so I won’t be alone.”
- “I want someone to benefit my career/ministry.”
- “I want someone to need me.”
- “I want someone to make me happy.”
- “I want someone to take care of me financially.”
- “I want someone to take care of me emotionally.”
- “I want someone with whom I can grow old.”

*“A person may think their own ways are right,
but the LORD weighs the heart.”*
(Proverbs 21:2)

Dos and Don’ts for Those Contemplating Marriage

- **Don’t** live in your past.
Do ... Look for the positive in the present. (Isaiah 43:18–19)
- **Don’t** focus on your fiancé’s past mistakes.
Do ... Focus on your fiancé’s choice to marry you.
(Proverbs 10:12)
- **Don’t** expect to change your fiancé.
Do ... Accept your fiancé the way he/she is. (Romans 15:7)
- **Don’t** expect your fiancé to meet all of your needs.
Do ... Expect God to be your primary Need-Meeter.
(Philippians 4:19)
- **Don’t** expect oneness to be equivalent to sameness.
Do ... Aim for unity while accepting that no two people always think the same. (Romans 15:5–6)

- **Don’t** criticize your fiancé’s parents.
Do ... Speak about them with kindness and understanding.
(Ephesians 4:29)
- **Don’t** nag your fiancé.
Do ... Make your position clear; then commit it to prayer.
(Proverbs 19:13)
- **Don’t** joke about sexual promiscuity.
Do ... See sexual intimacy as a picture of the holy union between Christ and His bride, the church. (Ephesians 5:3–4)
- **Don’t** joke about divorce as an option.
Do ... Eliminate the word *divorce* from your vocabulary. God hates divorce! (Malachi 2:16 NLT)
- **Don’t** rationalize, “It’s okay to have sex—we’re engaged, and we’ll be married soon.”
Do ... Realize that sexual responsibility before marriage demonstrates that you will be sexually responsible after marriage. (1 Thessalonians 4:7)
- **Don’t** disregard a check in your spirit.
Do ... Talk with someone who knows your fiancé well in order to discern the cause of your uneasiness. Then wait for God’s confirmation. (Psalm 32:8)

Key Verses to Memorize

*“And this is my prayer: that your love may abound
more and more in knowledge and depth of insight,
so that you may be able to discern what is best and
may be pure and blameless for the day of Christ.”*
(Philippians 1:9–10)

Key Passage to Read

1 Corinthians 13:4–7

Our Commitment to Grow Together Spiritually

- We commit our lives to Jesus Christ and submit to His control.
(Luke 9:23)
- We commit our home to God and pledge to make it Christ-centered. (Joshua 24:15)
- We commit our bodies to each other and vow to be sexually faithful. (Hebrews 13:4)
- We commit our finances to God and will honor Him with our tithe. (Malachi 3:10)
- We commit to reading the Bible and praying with each other daily. (Psalm 119:105–106)

- We commit to not going to bed while still angry with one another. (Ephesians 4:26)
- We commit to nurturing each other through loving encouragement. (Hebrews 10:24)
- We commit to admitting our weaknesses and to seeking prayer support in order to change. (James 5:16)
- We commit to growing with each other into a deeper relationship with the Lord. (Hebrews 10:22–23)

“Submit to one another out of reverence for Christ.”
(Ephesians 5:21)

Questions and Answers

“How can I be 100% sure that the person I marry will remain committed to me?”

You can't be 100% sure about the commitment of any other person, but you can commit 100% of yourself to the marriage and choose to stay 100% committed to your covenant partner.

*“She is your partner, the wife of your marriage covenant.
... So be on your guard, and do not be unfaithful
to the wife [husband] of your youth.”*
(Malachi 2:14–15)

“I cannot financially afford to marry my fiancé. Isn't it okay for us to live together without marrying?”

No. In the second chapter of the Bible, God says a man is to leave his parents, enter into marriage, and then enjoy the sexual union. If the order is wrong, the results will be wrong. Before you enter into marriage, you do need to have wisdom and discipline about money, both income and expenses. God knows how to meet your financial need. Your resource for wisdom and provision is your God.

*“And my God will meet all your needs
according to the riches of his glory in Christ Jesus.”*
(Philippians 4:19)

“My fiancé has difficulty talking about his feelings. How can I help him open up and share his hopes, dreams, and expectations for marriage?”

If communication is not established before marriage, you may both wake up afterward and discover you don't have much in common. Therefore, seek advice from an older, mature couple. Find a church that offers premarital counseling. Make a list of topics for both of you to address. Ask married couples which issues they wish they had discussed prior to marriage.

*“The heart of the discerning acquires knowledge,
for the ears of the wise seek it out.”*
(Proverbs 18:15)

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