

Getting Ready for Marriage

Congratulations on this wonderful milestone! Few seasons in life are filled with as much joy and anticipation as the time spent preparing to get married.

You've probably heard it said that as you plan your wedding, you shouldn't forget to plan your marriage. But it sounds so abstract to "plan a marriage" in the midst of the more tangible (and demanding) project of planning a wedding. How do you do it?

STEP ONE: Learn from others

Research demonstrates the long-term value of making time now for marriage education classes or premarital counseling. Those efforts go even further when you supplement them by spending time with an older married couple whose relationship you admire. Take time to search out a couple you look up to and ask them to guide you along in this journey. As we are told in Ecclesiastes, "Two are better than one, for there is a good return for their work." While this is a great statement about the actual act of marriage, it is also good to remember as a couple. Having a support system of other couples to lean on when things get tough, before and after marriage, is a wonderful thing.

STEP TWO: Plan with patience

Couples often overlook the importance of using the wedding planning season as practical marriage preparation. You can intentionally set the tone for your marriage by the values you live out in planning your big day. The transformational process of "becoming one" can occur in everything from how you assemble your guest list to how you determine a honeymoon destination.

STEP THREE: Discover the purpose of marriage

A wedding is bigger than you as an individual and even bigger than you both as a couple. Ephesians 5 describes a couple laying down their lives for one another and becoming one as a picture of God's sacrificial love for His church. That's the counter-cultural call of Christian marriage. Read *The Marriage Masterpiece* by Al Janssen in order to discover the beautiful picture God intends every marriage to reflect.

STEP FOUR: Create a meaningful event

To focus on the sacred nature of marriage in the early church couples often stood during the course of a weekly service to exchange their vows. Those weddings were a part of the community of faith's worship routine and a public vow within a church body.

They did not have anything resembling the grand ceremonies typical of modern weddings, focusing instead on the meaning and purpose of marriage. That's not to say big celebrations are out of order, but many risk making them so complex that they fail to honor God or the community they are uniting – both of which are the basis for a strong Christian marriage.

As you plan your big day take special care to place the attention on the sanctifying work of Christ in your marriage and use this as a time to not only point your audience to the joy you share as a couple but to the joy your share in Christ.

STEP FIVE: Plan the Honeymoon

There are very few times in life when you have the opportunity beforehand to know the experience will be unforgettable. Your honeymoon is one such time. However, many couples are so busy preparing for the wedding day they neglect to plan for the excitement of the wedding night. Take time as a couple, just prior to the wedding, to plan as many details as you can.

- What will you wear? Or better yet, what do you want your spouse to wear?
- What is your schedule for the night?
- What do you want the room to look like?
- What do you want to eat and drink?
- Is there anything you've ever expected on that night? Write it down and plan it.

Remember, this is THE NIGHT God designed for you to come together as husband and wife. You wouldn't wander into any other big experience without some sort of a game plan. Don't wander in to your honeymoon!

GOING FURTHER – Resources

Recommended Books (available @ The Porch or CCC Library):

Before You Say “I Do” (by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts) explores how to clarify role expectations, establish a healthy sexual relationship, handle finances, and acquire a solid understanding of how to develop a biblical relationship.

The Marriage Masterpiece (by Al Janssen) The Bible opens and closes with a wedding and in between God uses the metaphor of marriage more than any other to describe His relationship with His people. So what does that mean for your pending marriage? Al Janssen tells the bigger story of marriage as God created it and as couples can experience it.

Sacred Marriage (by Gary Thomas) is a wonderfully engaging book that tackles the heart of Biblical marriage, which is to bring about HOLINESS in both marriage partners.

Recommended Website:

CoupleCheckup.com features the Prepare & Enrich tools for dating and engaged couples who want to establish a strong foundation for marriage.

GOING FURTHER - CCC Support

If you are seeking someone to walk through the stages of marriage preparation through pre-marital counseling with you, please contact our Family Life Minister, Joe Wisley, at jwisley@conversechurch.org, or find his information at The Porch. This exciting step is a highly recommended and required part of the pre-marriage process for couples here at Converse Church of Christ.

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