

Pre-Marital Counseling

Session 1

This is a guide for a couple contemplating marriage, or engaged to be married, through a basic process of discovery. Few things are more profitable than men and women committed to the study of God's Word as it relates to marriage.

These sessions keep in mind that each couple to be counseled will have different levels of spiritual maturity and needs. Circumstances among couples will also vary. Some will be engaged for the first time; others may have been married before. Children may or may not be involved. There are many possible scenarios. Whatever the scenario, we believe God has something to say to us.

Session 1: The Criteria for Marriage.

My job in this marriage counseling process is...

- A.** To get to know the couple and to make them feel comfortable and at ease with myself, my spouse (should they be able to sit in), and with the counseling process.
- B.** To discern the spiritual condition of the counselees, and the degree to which each is familiar with the spiritual history and commitment of the other.
- C.** To discern problem areas which might disqualify the couple for marriage, and determine if the couple meets the qualifications for marriage.
- D.** To come to an understanding of the necessity of sexual purity prior to their marriage.
- E.** To outline the counseling process and what will be required of the couple. Schedule all other meetings, about one month apart, and outline what will be covered in each meeting.

Questions... Lots of them...

The following questions need to be asked in this meeting.

- A.** How did the two of you meet?
- B.** How long have you known each other?
- C.** How long have you been dating? Are you formally engaged?
- D.** How and why did you decide that you should get married?
- E.** When do you plan to get married? Where? By whom?
- F.** Why do you want to get married?
- G.** Why do you want to have Pre-Marriage counseling?
- H.** Is it your desire to have a Christian ceremony and Christian wedding? To the best of your knowledge, what is a Christian marriage? How is a Christian service and marriage different from other marriages?
- I.** How do your friends and family (including children) feel about your engagement?
- J.** Have any expressed concerns? If so, what are they?

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- K.** Have either of you been married before? (More questions will follow if yes..)
- L.** Have either of you been “in love” before? How many times? How long ago was the last time? What is there about your present relationship that makes it different from those past instances which did not last?
- M.** Describe the spiritual dimension of your relationship up to this time? How do you want your spiritual relationship to improve?
- N.** Describe both the strengths and the weaknesses of your mate. What is it about your mate that attracted you? What potential problems do you anticipate in your marriage?
- O.** Have you been involved in pornography in the past or are you at present?

Whew... Lots of deep personal Questions...

4 Priorities

Although there is a lot to do in this first meeting, there are four things that must take priority.

First, and most important; **Do both the bride and groom profess faith in the Lord?**

We care about you. We care about this marriage, but we even more we care about your eternity. We strongly encourage that we take care of this eternal, salvational matter before we move forward with this wonderful yet temporal matter.

There are churches that refuse to be involved in the wedding if this question of faith is not answered in the affirmative. We aren't saying we won't be involved, but we are saying we **MUST** discuss this topic.

Bride, tell the groom's testimony.
Groom, tell the Bride's testimony.

There is intimacy in Marriage. **Are you intimately acquainted with the story of Jesus saving your loved one? Can you see the importance of this?**

We are finding out somethings...

- A.** Does the couple talk about their faith with each other?
- B.** Are they confident about each other's conversion?
- C.** Does the couple seem to have an interest in spiritual things?
- D.** Do they celebrate each other's salvation experience?
- E.** How well do they really know each other?
- F.** How well do they communicate about spiritual things? One day they may have a new generation to communicate their faith.

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It is a delight to hear a couple talk about the Lord, what He has done in their life, and how He is still at work.

Sometimes this question of can you tell each other's testimony can completely stump the couple! That should reveal some things to us.

If you aren't really able to tell your mate's testimony then we will make it an assignment to be ready to do at the next meeting.

Second, **is the couple committed to a Christian marriage as defined in the Bible?** If the couple is not committed in this way, it will be impossible, for example, for the husband to obey the command of Ephesians 5:25: "*Husbands love your wives, just as Christ also loved the church and gave Himself up for her.*" How can a husband love his wife as Christ also loved the church if he is not committed to the principals of biblical headship?

A Christian marriage is a lifelong building project that begins on the foundation of God's Word. The couple must express a desire to be in God's Word on a regular basis and to worship and fellowship with other believers.

Third, **does the couple have parental approval?** Although not necessarily a biblical requirement for marriage, it can be inferred and is very important.

Will the counselor not grant approval for the wedding and for the church's involvement if one or more parents are against it? We aren't saying that, but we will point out a lack of parental approval is a huge red flag!

If you find yourself in a situation where you don't have parental approval, proceed with much prayer and caution. Take some time and find out the reason. If possible I may meet with the parents and have them articulate their concern.

Fourth, and somewhat uncomfortable to discuss, is **sexual purity.** To be specific, **are you involved physically and to what extent?**

If you are involved physically I want to communicate clearly the expectation that from here on to the wedding, you must commit to refraining from all sexual intercourse. Let's not think our flesh, but let us explore each other's mind, heart, & spirit.

I will check with them at each meeting on how you are doing on your commitment.

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I also need to find out if they have been involved physically with others, and have they discussed it?

Although potentially very hurtful, it is better for the couple to address this issue now rather than after they are married.

Turn to and read Ephesians 5:3, I Thessalonians 4:1-8 and Hebrews 13:4.

Where do they stand in relation to these verses?

Another difficult discussion to have, but necessary, is the issue of pornography and/or sexual abuse. Many in our body have witnessed first hand the tragic result of pornography and sexual abuse on individuals and married couples.

If this is too awkward to admit right now in front of your spouse I want you to email me privately about the subject.

This concludes Session 1.

Do you have questions for me?

Let's close in prayer.

Homework...

NO SEX!

Tell those Testimonies!