

Preparing for Marriage

Introduction

Congratulations on your forthcoming wedding!

This document contains a number of questions designed to prompt conversations between you that will help as you prepare for married life together. Some are intended to raise topics connected with your past, others focus on your life and relationships in the present, and others are intended to help in practical ways as you look to the future. Some of the questions you may be able to answer very quickly, while others may prompt lengthy conversations. I suggest that you first read through the questions alone, and then take some time to talk about them together.

When we meet, I'll ask whether these questions raised any areas of concern for either of you, and I may also suggest that we talk through some of your answers together. Importantly, if you find yourself unsure about how to answer a particular question, or disagreeing about the best way to answer it, please be sure to let me know. This isn't necessarily a problem, but it will be helpful for me to know so that I can assist you.

As ever, if you have any questions about any of these issues, don't hesitate to get in touch with me personally.

A. Biblical Foundations for Marriage

1. In broad terms, what is your understanding of the Bible's teaching about marriage? In particular, what would you say are the major emphases of the following Biblical texts?
 - Genesis 1:26-28
 - Genesis 2:18-25
 - Genesis 3
 - The Song of Solomon
 - 1 Corinthians 7 (NB: Don't worry, this text doesn't teach that all people at all times should avoid marriage!)
 - Ephesians 5:22-33
 - 1 Peter 3:1-7
 - Colossians 3:18-21

B. Relationships and Communication

2. What are some things you love most about your future spouse?
3. What are some things you respect about your future spouse?
4. What are some things you find annoying about your future spouse?
5. Do you argue much? When? Why?
6. Can you recall your most significant argument? How did you reconcile? What was good and what was bad about the way you handled this conflict?
7. Are there any topics you are afraid to bring up? Why?
8. Do you think you tend to be active or passive in seeking reconciliation when you feel wronged? What about when you realize you have wronged someone else? Do you find it easy to be communicative in this context?
9. Do you hold grudges? Do you think your future spouse does?
10. Are you comfortable with confrontation, or do you tend to avoid it?

11. Have you ever caught your future spouse in a lie? How was it resolved?
12. How does your understanding of the gospel affect the way you seek reconciliation?
13. Think of four or five passages of Scripture that (should) affect your practice of forgiveness and communication. Talk about these with each other.
14. Exercise: Pick an issue about which you have recently had a disagreement (ideally the most significant one you can remember). Write a letter from your spouse's point of view, articulating how you believe they feel about this issue, and why they hold the views they hold. When you've done this, read and talk through one another's summaries.

C. Church and Personal Piety

15. Have you discussed your personal spiritual disciplines (e.g. prayer, Bible reading) with each other?
16. Do you currently pray and read the Bible together?
17. What habits of prayer and Bible reading do you anticipate having once you're married?
18. Do you presently attend the same church? Have you talked about where you'll worship after marriage?
19. Have you had any major theological disagreements? Have you resolved them? If not, how do you plan to handle those issues in future?
20. What do you look for in a church? Do you know what your future spouse is looking for?
21. In what ways do you expect that you should be involved in the church individually, and as a couple?
22. Do you talk about your faith and your spiritual life with one another?
23. What do you most respect and appreciate about your future spouse's spiritual life?
24. What is most discouraging to you about your future spouse's spiritual life? Have you talked about this with each other?

D. Roles, Responsibilities, and the Home

25. What are your views on what men and women should each do in and around the home (household chores, cooking, washing, ironing, gardening, home maintenance)?
26. Do you have similar definitions of "clean and tidy"?
27. Are you an early bird or a night owl?
28. Do you think that your future spouse is too busy? Or too lazy? If so in what areas and why?
29. What do you like to eat?
30. Is there anything about your future spouse's current living situation or daily habits that drives you crazy?
31. What traditions from your own family do you most want to continue after your marriage? Are these hopes compatible with your future spouse's expectations?

E. Family and Children

32. Do you want to have kids? If so how many? When? How firmly attached are you to these desires?
33. How will your children be cared for when they're under school age?
34. How do you plan to educate your children?
35. Have you talked about birth control? How much do you know about the various options, and their pros and cons? Whose responsibility do you believe it is to investigate and plan these matters? Do you find it comfortable to talk about this with each other?
36. How do you think you will feel if you're unable to have children?
37. Have you ever talked about adoption?

F. Money and Lifestyle

38. How comfortable are you with what you know of your future spouse's current spending habits?
39. Have you talked about money, finances, budgeting, and so on? What are your current budgeting practices? What do you plan to do after your marriage?
40. Separate accounts or joint?
41. How much debt / savings do you each have? Any other assets?
42. Do you hope to own your own home? When?
43. Do you know how much each of you could realistically contribute (now and in the future) to your total household income?
44. Do you anticipate living on one income or two? How do you think children might affect this?
45. What kind of lifestyle do you expect that you will have (e.g. type of neighborhood, cars, work hours, social activities, vacations, schooling, luxuries, clothes)?
46. Did you grow up in families with a similar income level? Have you considered what impact this might have on your relationship?
47. Did you grow up in a similar type of setting (e.g. urban, rural, suburban, ranch in the wilderness, top-floor downtown penthouse)? Have you considered what impact this might have on your relationship?
48. Are there any aspects of your current lifestyle that you think your future spouse might not understand or enjoy?
49. What are your views on debt? What about savings, investments, and so on?
50. What Biblical passages and principles guide the way you think about and use money?
51. Do you tithe? (For clarity, "tithe" *means* "tenth". If someone says, "I do tithe, but only about 6%," what they're really saying is, "I don't tithe.")
52. How comfortable are you both with the likely implications that children may have for your careers?
53. Is there anything about your spouse's future work or vocation plans that concerns you?

G. Friends and Social Life

54. Who are your closest friends?
55. Is there anyone whom you value as a particularly close friend? How happy are you about your spouse's answer to this question?
56. Are there any of your future spouse's friends whom you hope will fade out of the picture?
57. How frequently do you anticipate socializing with your friends without your future spouse?
58. Do you have access to all of each other's social media accounts? Do these raise any concerns?
59. What are your expectations for socializing as a couple with other people? With whom? How often? Where? How often would you hope to have guests over to your home?
60. When do you anticipate eating meals together?
61. What hobbies and interests would you like to pursue with your spouse? What hobbies do you expect to continue on your own?
62. How often do you plan to go out on a date? What is your future spouse's idea of a date?
63. What was the most fun you ever had together?
64. How often do you plan to go on vacation? How much money would you anticipate spending?
65. Do you play computer games? If so, how many hours per week?

H. Sex and Intimacy

66. Have you and your future spouse discussed your past sexual history? Are you comfortable with what they said, or do you still have lingering concerns and questions?
67. Did you leave out anything from your relationship history that if revealed later would undermine the trust of your future spouse?
68. Do you wish that your future spouse was more forthcoming about their past?
69. Are you still in contact with anyone whom you previously had a romantic or sexual relationship with? To what extent?
70. Do you feel like you can ask any question of your future spouse about their past without fear of receiving a hostile response? Are you confident they're telling you the whole truth?
71. Have you used pornography in the past? When? Are you still using it? If so, have you talked about this with your future spouse?
72. Have you entirely forgiven any past sexual sin on the part of your future spouse?
73. Does the future sexual intimacy of marriage make you nervous in any way?
74. Have you talked about your expectations and fears with each other?
75. Have you talked frankly with a married person sex within marriage?
76. Do you have any Sexually Transmitted Diseases? If so, does your future spouse know?
77. Are you currently sexually active with each other? Are you willing to abstain entirely until you are married?
78. Are you happy with the way your future spouse dresses? Are there any ways in which you would like to see them change?

I. Extended Family

79. How would you describe your current relationships with your future in-laws?
80. Do you anticipate any problems in your future relationships with your parents as a married couple?
81. How much time do you intend to spend with each other's extended family once you're married?
82. Are there any particular members of your (or your spouse's) extended family around whom you feel uncomfortable? Have you talked with your future spouse about this?
83. What do you think Genesis 2:24 implies about your future relationships with each other, and with your parents?
84. Do you anticipate receiving financial help from your families? If so, what implications might this have for your future relationships with them?

J. Health and fitness

85. Do you work out or exercise regularly? Are you comfortable with your future spouse's exercise habits and level of physical fitness?
86. How often do you drink alcohol? How much? Are you comfortable with your future spouse's drinking habits?
87. Have you ever used illegal drugs?
88. Do you have any serious medical conditions?

Acknowledgments

It is a pleasure to acknowledge helpful input to these questions from Pastors Rich Lusk and Michael Foster.