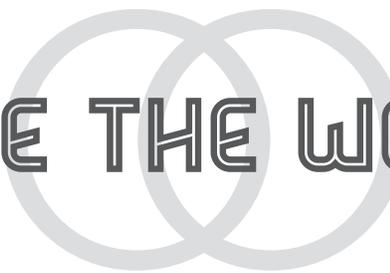


PART ONE

BEFORE THE WEDDING

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## *Congratulations!*

Congratulations are in order because you believe marriage might be in God's plan for your lives together. That is a wonderful thought and one certainly worth investigating.

Congratulations are also in order because you've made the wise decision to spend some time and effort getting ready for marriage. By this time, you may have talked to your pastor about getting married. If you have, he probably has already informed you that he wants to meet with you several times for premarital counseling. Possibly, if there are a number of couples at your stage in their relationship, he has recommended that you join a class designed to prepare people for marriage God's way.

Perhaps your first reaction to this was not all that enthusiastic. But whether you're enthusiastic or less than that, the fact is you're willing to make an effort to prepare for marriage more thoroughly. And that's great!

A lot of couples have never stopped to consider just how important it is to take time to make specific preparation for marriage. When they do, the vast majority of them agree that it makes sense to devote considerable attention to this matter. After all, getting married is one of the most important things you will ever do.

Your pastor, counselor, or teacher will develop the rationale for this endeavor more thoroughly. Indeed, there are good reasons for working through a course of study designed to prepare you for marriage God's way. As you proceed, you will come to believe it to be one of the wisest things you've ever done.

In preparation for your first session, here's what you are to do. Each of you should carefully and prayerfully fill out the following questionnaires. After you've done these exercises individually, share your reflections with each other. Take all the exercises seriously. Make sure you do all the projects thoroughly.

If you're like many who have already completed this course, you'll see an improvement in the quality of your relationship even before marriage. So roll up your sleeves and get ready for a meaningful experience. Carefully do the projects prescribed for session 1. Bring them with you to the session. Be prepared to share the insights you have recorded. And don't hesitate to ask relevant questions.

**Assignments:**

1. *Relationship History*
2. *Relationship Evaluation*
3. *Marriage Expectation*







8. What place should the Lord play in a couple's relationship? What place does He play in your relationship? How has and does the Lord make a difference? Do you talk about the Lord together? How do you make Him a vital part of your relationship? How have you worked together to make Him important? Can you honestly say that both of you are closer to being like Jesus because of your relationship with one another? How have you helped each other spiritually? How have you hindered each other spiritually?

9. What do your parents think about your getting married? What is their opinion of your partner? What do your partner's parents think about your getting married? What is their opinion of you? What kind of relationship do you have with them?
10. What should a person tell his or her intended about his or her past? His or her present? His or her sins? Eccentricities? Weaknesses? Struggles? Limitations? How much? What would be legitimate

reasons for sharing? Are there legitimate reasons for not sharing? If so, what are they?

In his book *The Secret of Loving*, Josh McDowell writes,

A young man named Chris found himself struggling with this question. After listening to his story, I suggested he not share some of his apparent mistakes with his partner, *unless* his motive for silence was fear—fear that revealing his past would negatively effect the relationship and her love and acceptance of him. If this was his real reason for withholding the information, I would counsel him to share his past with her and to let her love be tested. If the fear was there, he would never feel able to open up to her completely, and it would continue to haunt him.\*

Using this criteria, are there any secrets that you should tell your partner?

\* Josh McDowell, *The Secret of Loving* (San Bernardino, CA: Here's Life Publishers, 1985), 97.

**RELATIONSHIP EVALUATION**

1. If you were asked to describe your relationship in one word, what would that word be?
  
2. What word do you think your partner would use?
  
3. What are some of the strong points of your relationship?

4. What are some of the weak points of your relationship?

5. What have you done to strengthen these weak points?

6. In your opinion, what do you think are the most important factors that will make a marriage a success? (Be specific and thorough.)

7. What do you bring to the marriage that will help make it a success?

8. What do you think your partner brings to the marriage that will help make it a success?

9. What can a couple do to prepare themselves for marriage? (Be specific and thorough). What have you done specifically to prepare yourself for Christian marriage? What else could or should you do?





5. What expectations have you had for your partner? How has he or she fulfilled or not fulfilled them?

6. What expectations does your partner have for you in marriage?

7. What expectations has your partner had for you in your relationship? Which ones have you fulfilled or not fulfilled?