

Should We Get Married?

How to Evaluate Your Relationship

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www.newgrowthpress.com

Alex and Melissa smiled at me and asked, “How does premarital counseling work? When will you tell us that it’s okay for us to get married?”

I smiled back and answered, “Never.”

I knew they were puzzled, so I explained, “It would be impossible for me, after talking with you for only a few hours, to know enough about you to say, ‘I think you should get married.’ So what can I do? I can help you think about how to strengthen your relationship, so you will have the foundation for a good marriage. I can help you work on parts of your relationship that are weak. And I can alert you to issues that are potentially dangerous or destructive. I’ll be glad to give you a yellow light to slow down or a red light to stop, but I’ll never give you a green light to go ahead. That final light is between you and God, as you assess your relationship.”

Although you aren’t sitting down with me for face-to-face premarital counseling like Alex

and Melissa, we can still evaluate your relationship together. Use this article to assess your relationship in the different areas discussed. If your relationship is weak in one or more of them, then that's a yellow light: Slow your relationship down and work on strengthening it. If you see patterns that are the opposite of what they should be, then that's a red light, and you should seriously question the health of your relationship. You shouldn't consider marriage until those patterns are reversed.

On the other hand, if your relationship is growing in each area, then keep moving forward. Don't look for perfection—even the best human relationships are marred by sin and need to grow in maturity. But you should be able to list concrete examples that show how your relationship has grown in each area.

Share a Common Vision

It's crucial that you share a common vision. Are you both followers of Jesus Christ? Are you both

committed to living for him? If you don't share a mutual love for Jesus, you will be pulled in opposite directions at the most important, foundational level of your lives. This will keep you from true intimacy with your partner, threaten the long-term stability of your relationship, and tempt you to compromise your faith (Mark 3:25; 2 Corinthians 6:14).

If you are both followers of Jesus and share a common vision, how do your love for Jesus and your desire to follow him express itself in your relationship on a day-to-day basis?

- Do you appeal to the Bible for help when you have conflicts or confusing decisions to make?
- Is God involved in your relationship? Do his thoughts, values, goals, and attitudes shape you on a daily basis?
- Do you pray together?
- Do you share what God is teaching you from his Word with each other?