

Questions couples should ask themselves before plunging into marriage

Premarital Preparation

The essentials of a successful marriage spans all the right steps and positive things done before marriage, our conduct during our married life and the provisions made for successful life for the children and for a peaceful and quiet life upon the demise of one partner in the marriage such that at the end of the day one can safely say with confidence that I am blessed by God with my spouse to whom I am married. It is vital therefore that those of us who are still single should prepare properly before going into marriage. Jesus Christ says no one who is going into a big project should do so without properly preparing for it. (Luke 14:28-32) We believe that marriages will work out better if those going into it improve their level of premarital preparation.

PREPARE (*PREmarital Personal and Relationship Evaluation*) was one of the earliest premarital inventories. It was developed by David H. Olson, a psychologist at the University of Minnesota, along with his colleagues in 1977. It went through several revisions in 1980, 1986, 1996 and 2000. Olson estimates that by 2003, about 250,000 couples a year used PREPARE. It has been noticed that in financial contracts people want information to be fully disclosed before agreeing to it, yet many marriage covenants break because the involved parties assumed there was agreement or did not want to disclose differences before the wedding.

St. Paul in his letter to the Christians at Corinth declared: “Examine yourselves... prove your own selves. Know ye not your own selves...? (2 Corinthians 13:5) Intending couples therefore need to have an objective assessment of their strengths and weaknesses as a couple

. This cannot be done unless they take a premarital inventory. The would-be couple should draw up questions or be prepared to answer questions to which they should respond honestly. For example,

1. At times am I concerned about the silent treatment I get from my future spouse?
2. Am I concerned that my future spouse sometimes spends money foolishly?
3. Am I concerned that I am marrying too soon?
4. Does my family approve of my future spouse?
5. Have my future spouse and I discussed the number of children we want?
6. Does my future spouse tend to be stubborn and/or inflexible?
7. Do we agree that forgiving each other is essential to our marriage relationship?

The experts contend that questions like the ones just cited are informed by the fact that “too many couples enter marriage not really understanding one another, or even their own deep feelings about many issues. But by bringing the issues to the surface for discussion the couple are helped to resolve those possible areas of conflicts and build a solid marriage. If after answering those questions the relationship

breaks up it should mean that the pair have only succeeded in avoiding a bad marriage before it has begun. Obviously, it is better to have a broken relationship or engagement than a broken marriage more so as divorce is seriously frowned at by God in the Holy Bible.

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1. Ask yourself the question "How well do I know myself?" Most people don't know themselves well. For instance "What is the one dream for my life that I most look forward to achieving?" "What/who makes me angry and why?" "How do I feel about myself physically, emotionally, mentally and spiritually?" "What bores me? What makes me happy?" "In order, what are my three strongest interests?"

2. What are the most important ten traits I "must have" in a mate? The two top choices are usually chemistry and kindness. But Marriage Counsellors say there are 48 others one can choose from, including sense of humour, verbal intimacy, education, excitement, patience, tolerance, energy level, affection, attractiveness, conflict resolving ability, intellectual and artistic strengths, shared interests, loyalty, sociability, spirituality, ambition, calmness, responsibility.

3. What are those things I "can't stand" in my spouse such as vanity, dependency, depression, lying, cynicism, anger, rudeness, materialism, laziness, intolerance, childishness, pettiness, loose behaviour/immorality, sloppiness, etc. It is believed that a person who knows his/her inner character, and firmly has in mind 10 "must haves" and 10 "can't stands" can decide in two dates if a person is worth pursuing.

4. Get a good understanding of the GKS marriage rules and procedure and also the customs of your would-be spouse. The essence of this is to avoid committing oneself and getting embarrassed in a time when one ought to be happy. Therefore ask and seek godly counsel from those concerned so as to do the right things by God's grace.

5. Avoid all physical contacts till all is over. To do otherwise is sinful and brings sorrow and regrets especially when the arrangement fails.

6. Does he attend services regularly?

7. Does he discourse, at least from time to time?

8. Does he pay tithes regularly?

9. Is he regarded by members and even non-members as one who has the fear of God?

10. Does he encourage you in the way of God and does he frown at evil?

11. Above all, exercise the fear of God at all times and commit all your marriage matters from day one to God in prayers. – Psalm 37:3-5; Ecclesiastes 7:18; Philippians 4:6,7.

Culled from address at GKS Marriage Seminar 2007