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## **Premarital Counseling: What It Is And Why It Matters**



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# Premarital Counseling: What It Is And Why It Matters

The term “premarital counseling” can bring to mind many different associations. To begin, let’s review some of the biblical principles that guide premarital counseling and why the church has an opportunity and responsibility to help you, as an engaged couple, transition into marriage.

## 1. God wants your marriage to be a reflection of Christ and the Church.

A Christ-centered, healthy marriage will honor God, be a good witness to others, and will bring joy to you, your family, and the church. Godly marriages are foundational building blocks of the family, church, and society. If your marriage is unhappy or conflictual, it may become a poor testimony and example to others, especially to your children. In the unfortunate case of divorce, a broken marriage brings reproach and hurt upon the divorcing couple, their families, and ultimately the church.

*Ephesians 5:30-32, “For we are members of his body, of his flesh, and of his bones. For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh. This is a great mystery: but I speak concerning Christ and the church.”*

## 2. Satan wants to harm and destroy your marriage and family; therefore, don’t be ignorant of his devices.

Satan is well aware that by harming your most important relationships he can disrupt, undermine, and ruin your ability to be effective ambassadors for Christ in this world. He knows that if your children grow up in a home with marital conflict or instability, they will be deprived of much of the instruction and examples that God desires you to model for them. The world today often rejects or undermines biblical values regarding husbands and wives in marriage. Therefore, you need to learn about God’s design for marriage and not simply accept society’s view of marriage.

*2 Corinthians 2:11, “Lest Satan should get an advantage of us: for we are not ignorant of his devices.”*

## 3. While God desires the challenges that you will face in marriage to strengthen you, Satan desires to use stressors to divide you through conflict and unmet needs.

Early marriage is a time when you both will be doing a lot of learning, compromising, and blending. The blending of backgrounds, personalities, and experiences in your marriage is what makes it both a blessing and, at times, a challenge. While God desires to use your unique combination of strengths and weaknesses as a couple to draw you closer to each other and to God, Satan desires to create tension, polarization, emotional distance, power struggles, and bitterness. Satan will “sift” you as a couple and seek to create disconnectedness, poor communication, and spiritual impoverishment within your marriage. Don’t underestimate his ability and determination to try to harm your relationship!

*Proverbs 27:17, “Iron sharpeneth iron; so a man sharpeneth the countenance of his friend.”*

*1 Peter 5:8-9, “Be sober, be vigilant; because your adversary the devil, as a roaring lion, walketh about, seeking whom he may devour: Whom resist stedfast in the faith, knowing that the same afflictions are accomplished in your brethren that are in the world.”*

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*Luke 22:31, "And the Lord said, Simon, Simon, behold, Satan hath desired to have you, that he may sift you as wheat:"*

## **4. If you develop a strong foundation early in your marriage, you can avoid many of the common problems that befall married couples.**

If you are centered on Christ, proactive, and willing to learn, you will be more likely to develop a godly, healthy marital relationship. Doing "preventative maintenance" in your relationship is much easier and effective than doing "damage control." If you let small issues and problems build up and brew for a long time, they can become major issues that undermine your marriage.

*Proverbs 27:12, "A prudent man foreseeth the evil, and hideth himself; but the simple pass on, and are punished."*

## **5. Both of you need to emotionally "leave" your parents and "cleave" to each other.**

The process of "leaving" and "cleaving" is specifically mentioned in Scripture, but is often misunderstood, underestimated, or overlooked by engaged and newly-married couples. If you do not effectively deal with unhealthy entanglements and attachments in your families-of-origin, you are at risk for increased conflict in your marriage and with members of your extended families. If you develop a solid "oneness" together that can relate to, but be separate from, both of your families, you will be more able to live out God's design for your marriage.

*Ephesians 5:31, "For this cause shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall be joined unto his wife, and they two shall be one flesh."*

## **6. You need to successfully transition from a state of celibacy to marital sexuality.**

Transitioning from singleness and celibacy (in which you are trying to "curb" your sexual feelings and desires) to marital sexuality (in which you can express and enjoy sexuality together) can be difficult for some couples. Satan is very aware that he can frustrate and hurt you as a couple through performance anxiety, guilt, lack of knowledge about sexuality, past sexual experiences, etc. By helping you understand God's standards for sexuality and His blessing on it, you will be more able to live out His intended design for sexuality in your marriage.

*Genesis 2:24-25, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and his mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh. And they were both naked, the man and his wife, and were not ashamed."*

*Hebrews 13:4, "Marriage is honourable in all, and the bed undefiled: but whoremongers and adulterers God will judge."*

## **7. Experienced Christian mentors are excellent resources from which to learn accurate information and expectations about God's design for marriage.**

Seeking realistic expectations about marriage is important. Experienced brothers and sisters in Christ can help you to dispel myths and see each other and your marriage more clearly. If you are able to openly discuss your relationship with an elder, minister, counselor, and/or mentor(s) prior to marriage, you are more likely to return to that person(s) to seek further guidance after marriage, should it be needed. You should feel free to ask questions.

*Proverbs 15:22, "Without counsel purposes are disappointed: but in the multitude of counsellors they are established."*

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## 8. Personal responsibility in marriage.

When God draws two people together in marriage by faith, He certainly approves and blesses the marriage. While God has promised to give you grace and provide for your needs, you must realize your responsibility in making your marriage a success. You have a responsibility to God and to each other for the maintenance and growth of your marriage. You will get out of your marriage what you put into it.

*1 Peter 3:7, "Likewise, ye husbands, dwell with them according to knowledge, giving honour unto the wife, as unto the weaker vessel, and as being heirs together of the grace of life; that your prayers be not hindered."*

*Ephesians 5:25, "Husbands, love your wives, even as Christ also loved the church, and gave himself for it;"*

*Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."*

### PRACTICAL REASONS WHY PREMARITAL COUNSELING IS IMPORTANT

#### 1. Premarital counseling can help you learn skills for building a godly, healthy relationship.

You will need to learn some basic skills necessary for a successful marriage. Skills are tools that you can use to help build your relationship and to prevent problems. Because the time of engagement is often so short, it is important that you develop a plan to continue learning about each other during your first year of marriage and beyond.

#### 2. You need to make sure that you are talking through the tough issues.

Don't be afraid to ask for help in working through your concerns. You may find that you need some assistance in working through difficult, but very important, issues that are specific to you as a couple. Examples of these issues could be differences in convictions, physical or mental health problems, family issues, effects of abuse, etc. By talking about potential issues or problem areas prior to marriage, you can begin to develop specific plans to address these issues and prevent them from harming your marriage.

#### 3. You and your elder need to communicate about the specifics of the wedding service.

Your wedding should be a glory to God and respectful of our church practices. Good communication between you and the elder who will be performing the wedding service will ensure that everyone's expectations are met.

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- 4. We want to encourage you to make sure that you are spending adequate time preparing for your marriage, rather than simply getting caught up in planning for the wedding day.**

There are numerous decisions that must be made prior to your wedding; however, wedding planning should not overshadow the preparation of your hearts and minds for your marriage.

## SUMMARY

Premarital counseling is intended to help you establish a Godly, healthy marriage that will glorify God and bring you many years of joy together. You are encouraged to spend adequate time and focus in learning about God's design for your marriage and in taking practical steps to live it out.

