

What is Marriage?

You are about to begin one of the most important stages in your life -marriage. Marriage contains unique and interesting potential. As one bright optimist put it, "Marriage is the only game of chance in town where both players can either win or both lose!" Our hope as a Church is that through your Marriage Preparation we can remove the risk element form your marriage. We hope that as you work through the Preparation Program, your present relationship will be strengthened and enriched, and your marriage will be fulfilling, enriching and grow every day. We also hope that you will have a much more realistic perception of yourself, your future spouse and your marriage.

A. Define what marriage means to me.

B. Do you believe that marriage is a contract? Why or why not?

Read the following quotations. After you have read each of them indicate which parts you agree with and which parts you disagree with.

1. "Marriage resembles a pair of shears, so joined that they cannot be separated; often moving in opposite directions, yet always punishing anyone who come between them."

I agree with _____

I disagree with _____

2. "Is marriage a private action of two persons in love, or a public act of two pledging a contract? Neither, it is something other. Very much other! Basically, the Christian view of marriage is not that it is primarily or essentially a binding legal and social contract. The Christian understands marriage as a covenant made under God and in the presence of fellow members of the Christian family. Such a pledge endures, not because of the force of law or the fear of it sanctions, but because an unconditional covenant has been made. A covenant more solemn, more binding, more permanent than any legal contract."

I agree with _____

I disagree with _____

3. “A system by means of which persons who are sinful and contentious are so caught up by a dream and a purpose bigger than themselves that they work through the years, in spite of repeated disappointment, to make the dream come true.”

I agree with _____

I disagree with _____

4. “Marriage is a relationship between man and woman intended by God to be a monogamous relationship, intended to be a permanent bond in which many needs are satisfied—the need to love and be loved, the need for deep friendship, for sharing, for companionship, for sexual satisfaction, for children, the need to escape loneliness. Marriage ought to be a bond of love, reflecting the love Christ has for His people, a bond of sacrificial love where husband and wife have become one, one flesh, a unity.”

I agree with _____

I disagree with _____

Here is another definition of marriage that you may want to consider. The marriage relationship is a school, a learning and growing environment in which (if everything is as it should be) both partners can grow and develop. The relationship grows along with them. If you can see marriage as an opportunity for growth, you can be satisfied and can satisfy your spouse.

As one person graphically described the marriage relationship, “Marriage does not demand perfection. But it must be given priority. It is an institution for sinners. No one else need apply. But it finds its finest glory when sinners see it as God’s way of leading us through his ultimate curriculum of love and righteousness.” Have you ever thought about the purpose of marriage in that light before.

Here’s another definition of marriage. A Christian marriage is a total commitment of two people to the person of Jesus Christ and to each other. It is a commitment in which there is no holding back of anything. Marriage is a pledge of mutual fidelity, it is a partnership of mutual subordination. A Christian marriage is similar to a solvent, a freeing up of the man and woman to be themselves and become all that God intends for them to become. Marriage is a refining process that God will use to have us become the man or woman He wants us to become.

Think about it. God will use your marriage for His purpose. He will mold and refine you for your own benefit and for His glory.

You may be thinking that when you marry there will be two individuals involved in that marriage. That is true, but there is a third party who can give even a greater meaning to your individual and married life—that person is Jesus Christ. In what way will the presence of Jesus Christ in your life make a difference in your marriage?

There are many reasons and motivating factors for getting married. What are yours? Have you ever thought about them? Here are two very important questions for you to answer.

1. What will I receive out of marriage that I wouldn't receive by remaining single?
2. List below the reasons why you are marrying the man/woman that you are. When you have finished share your answers with each other.

There are many reasons why people get married, some of them are healthy reasons and some not so healthy. Here is a list of some **very unhealthy** reasons:

1. To spite or get back at your parents.
2. Because of a negative self-image - marrying your finance will make you feel worthwhile and will give meaning to your life.
3. To be a therapist or counselor to your fiance.
4. Fear of being left out! Being left as a bachelor or an old maid!
5. Fear of independence.
6. Marrying on the rebound - you were hurt in a former love relationship and to ease your hurt you immediately choose another.
7. Fear of hurting the other person - you're afraid of what will happen to your fiance if you break up even though you know that marriage is not the answer.
8. To escape an unhappy home.
9. Because you are pregnant or your fiance is pregnant.
10. Because you have had sex.

Evaluate your "marriagability" by examining the personality traits of yourself and your future spouse List below eight character or personality traits that you feel are important in a marriage. (These are not character of personality traits that you or your fiance possess, but the ones that you feel are important in a marriage.)

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.
- 4.
- 5.
- 6.
- 7.
- 8.

In addition to using the fruits of the Spirit as a guide for evaluating a potential marriage, we have listed eight marriageability traits which would give a person a greater possibility of having an enriched and satisfying marriage:

1. Adaptability and flexibility - the ability to change and adapt.
2. Empathy - the ability to be sensitive to the needs, hurts, and desires of others, to feel with them and experience the world from their perspective.
3. The ability to work through problems.
4. The ability to give and receive love.
5. Emotional stability - accepting one's emotions and controlling them.
6. Communication
7. Similarities between the couple themselves.
8. Similar family background.

We all would look at this list and say, "Oh yes, that's us. We are like that and have these characteristics." If you feel these traits are present in you, please list a specific example of how each of the first six traits were manifested in you during the past two weeks. After you finish that, for traits 7 and 8, give examples of the similarity for each one.

1. _____
2. _____
3. _____
4. _____
5. _____
6. _____
7. a. _____
b. _____
c. _____
8. a. _____
b. _____
c. _____