

SECOND  EDITION

PREPARING
≡ FOR ≡
MARRIAGE
God's Way

A Step-by-Step Guide for
Marriage Success
Before and After the Wedding

"The staple of my pre-marriage counseling."—Tedd Tripp

WAYNE A. MACK

“What a wonderful tool! Like all Wayne Mack’s books, *Preparing for Marriage God’s Way* is faithfully biblical, thorough, and practical. The priceless bonus with this workbook is its unmatched effectiveness at exposing hidden dangers for engaged couples and providing a platform to help the counselor address them. As a result, couples are much more prepared for the realities of married life.”

—**Marshall L. Asher**, director, Redeemer Counseling Services, San Antonio, Texas

“We’ve been using *Preparing for Marriage God’s Way* for almost ten years now. When I found Wayne Mack’s workbook I realized this was exactly what I’d been looking for. I don’t perform anyone’s wedding without them first going through this workbook with another mentor couple in our church. Over the past ten years, dozens of couples have gone through this material and been given the strong foundation they need for a great and God-glorifying marriage. If you’re looking for biblically based premartial material to use in your church or ministry, don’t look any further.”

—**Brad Bigney**, pastor; author of *Gospel Treason*

“Wayne Mack’s commitment to the sufficiency of Scripture and his years of counseling experience make this book and all his books valuable resources. It is vitally important that people receive biblical instruction going into marriage, and Dr. Mack has provided a most helpful tool.”

—**Bruce Blakey**, pastor, Believers Fellowship, San Antonio, Texas

“God’s wonderful gift of marriage is struggling mightily in today’s world. Christian couples have great opportunities and responsibilities to glorify God as husbands and wives before a watching world. Pastors ought to take advantage of the opportunity to help these couples prepare for this solemn commitment. Wayne Mack’s outstanding manual helps couples get to the core issues of marriage. For more than fifteen years, I have had couples work through the lessons of this book individually and then together. Afterward we spend delightful time reflecting together on their findings. Week by week these men and women become transformed by God’s Word to honor the Lord in their new callings as husbands and wives.”

—**John Crotts**, pastor; co-author of *Tying the Knot Tighter* with Martha Peace

“In a culture rife with confusion over the matter of marriage, Dr. Mack brings much needed biblical clarity to the topic. As a pastor, I have found this book an invaluable resource in helping couples prepare to take their marriage journey together. You will find this book a tremendous benefit, whether you are preparing for marriage, or helping to prepare others for marriage, God’s way!”

—**Glenn Dunn**, pastor, Cornerstone Bible Fellowship, North Ridgeville, Ohio

“What if there were a book that could equip engaged couples to identify relational problems before they emerge? What if its solutions were not simply sage advice or psychological theory, but the very Word of God? Every couple would want it. Every pastor would use it. This is that book!”

—**Daniel Kirk**, senior pastor, Calvary Bible Church, Fort Worth, Texas

“Oh, the problems that could be prevented if couples anticipating marriage worked their way through this book with a caring Christian prior to the wedding ceremony! Wayne Mack’s knowledge both of the Scriptures and of marital problem solving is evident in the order of topics; the clear, practical teaching; and the application assignments. If you want to help a couple get off to a good start in marriage, take them through *Preparing for Marriage God’s Way*.”

—**Randy Patten**, executive director, National Association of Nouthetic Counselors

“*Preparing for Marriage God’s Way* is the most biblical and thorough material I know in helping couples to build their marriage on a firm foundation. I have used the material with numerous young couples, and particularly appreciate the thoughtful discussion questions included in the book that allow both the counselor and the couple to interact on a deep and meaningful level. The book helps the couple anticipate what challenges lie before them in their upcoming marriage, and spurs on conversation that will help them to avoid the ‘trouble spots.’ . . . I heartily recommend it to both pastors and to those who are preparing for marriage.”

—**Timothy A. Senn**, pastor, The Bible Church of Little Rock

“Preparing for Marriage God’s Way has been the staple of my pre-marriage counseling for many years. The activities and exercises in this book help couples understand their family of origin and the models that they bring to their marriage. I have found that using this book also helps couples identify the pressure points in their relationship as well as the path forward for resolving the conflicts that occur again and again. This study will get couples into the Word and engaged in conversations they would never have without completing these studies.”

—**Tedd Tripp**, president, *Shepherding the Heart Ministries*

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This book is dedicated to the hundreds couples and pastors who have already used the book and have commented on how helpful the material has been to them in their marriages and ministries.

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Foreword

*A*s indicated by the title, this manual is designed to help you prepare for a God-honoring and personally satisfying relationship in marriage.

Primarily, it was developed to provide you with a carefully outlined, biblical, thorough, and practical tool for helping you to be as ready for marriage as you possibly can.

It has been said that an ounce of prevention is worth a pound of cure and that those who act in haste often sorrow in leisure. It is my sincere prayer and hope that the proper use of this study guide will be a means God uses to diminish the need for the pound of cure and the sorrow and disappointment that often occur when men and women enter into marriage without adequate preparation.

You may use this manual in one of four ways:

1. **Self-directed premarital study course.** In this case, you and your proposed spouse work the through assignments in each of your manuals, then get together to discuss your notes and your answers.
2. **Guided by a marriage counselor.** In this case, the study manual actually provides the basis for the counseling sessions. You and your counselor prepare for each session by studying the material in the manual.
3. **Study guide in group sessions.** A number of couples seriously considering marriage make up a special class for this purpose. In a class setting, the leader uses the manual to teach from and as a format for generating lively discussions. This kind of preparation could be invaluable to you as a couple.
4. **Self-directed study combined with counseling.** In this instance, you first work through each lesson on your own and turn in

your exercises to your counselor, who then decides how much individual counseling you need on the basis of your answers.

However you use this manual, it will help you immensely in assessing your marital readiness. It will aid you in uncovering problems that may already exist and will provide you with biblical solutions and guidelines for resolving them.

Preparing for Marriage God's Way will also give you topics for dealing with the inevitable difficulties that will arise after your wedding and encourage you to establish patterns of relating and communicating to resolve conflicts.

Indeed, taking this study seriously could be the launching pad for moving you into a marriage that is truly satisfying and fulfilling. It will certainly prepare you for marriage God's way.

Wayne A. Mack

PART ONE

BEFORE THE WEDDING



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*

RELATIONSHIP HISTORY

1. How long have you known your partner?
2. How did you come to know your partner?
3. List three of your best memories from your dating experience with your partner.

4. List three of your worst memories from your dating experience with your partner.

5. List several kinds of things the two of you like to do together.

6. What place should physical contact and physical involvement play in the relationship of people who are seriously considering marriage? What guidelines or standards should be allowed in this area?
7. What place does physical involvement play in your relationship? Do the two of you agree? Has this been a source of contention or disagreement? If the physical aspect of your relationship were removed, what would be left in your relationship? Is there any guilt or frustration that you have because of your physical involvement during your dating days? How have you maintained a proper balance in reference to expressions of physical affection?

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?

MARRIAGE EXPECTATION

1. What thoughts does the word *marriage* bring to you?
2. What are biblical reasons for marriage? Why do you want to get married?

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?

Preparing for Marriage God's Way is a marriage counseling resource that uses thoughtful self-examination to reveal the personalities, backgrounds, and expectations that you and your partner are bringing to your union. Through rigorous Bible study, you will learn about God's expectations for marriage and be equipped with His solutions for dealing with typical marriage conflicts. Three follow-up lessons for use after the wedding help you to reflect on all that's happened since you said, "I do."

"Oh, the problems that could be prevented if couples anticipating marriage worked their way through this book with a caring Christian prior to the wedding ceremony! Wayne Mack's knowledge both of the Scriptures and of marital problem solving is evident in the order of topics; the clear, practical teaching; and the application assignments."

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—**BRAD BIGNEY**, Pastor, Grace Fellowship Church, Florence, Kentucky

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