

*Choose  
Wisely*

The success or failure of your marriage relationship depends on how well you handle several personal issues. From the relationship itself to financial decisions, children, and sex, you both must know what to expect.

A marriage is a commitment between two people that may have differing views on certain issues. That's why premarital counseling often involves some very common, but important, questions that dive into the heart of a healthy marriage. By knowing what your partner expects from your life together, you will be better prepared to handle these situations as your relationship grows.

### **Relationship Goals**

These first questions may be the most important. If you don't know why you're getting married or have different views of where you'll be in a few decades, it could cause problems down the road. Ask yourselves:

- Why are we getting married?
- What do we as a couple want out of life?
- Do you think our relationship will change after we are married?
- What do you think we'll be doing in 30 or 40 years?
- How would you describe yourself?
- How do you think I see you?

### **Personal Habits**

Sharing a home can be surprising. Sometimes it's the seemingly insignificant things that can get under your skin and cause bigger problems than expected. Think about:

- Do you think it is important to know one another's physical and mental health histories?
- How often do you drink?
- Have you ever hit someone?
- Do you have a criminal record?
- Will you clean the toilet?
- How are we going to divide up the household chores?

### **Spiritual Beliefs**

While religion and spiritual beliefs may be taboo topics for polite society, they can play a big role in your marriage. Consider these questions:

- Does religion play an important part in your life?
- Do you think faith and spirituality are important in a marriage?
- What is your level of commitment to God?

## Finances

Money can cause a lot of stress in a family, and studies show that finances are one of the leading causes of divorce. You don't necessarily have to agree on everything, and maybe one of you is better at certain aspects of it than others. As a partnership, dealing with your financial future together and understanding short-and long-term goals is a wise move. Think about these issues:

- Are you a saver or spender when it comes to money?
- How much do we owe in debts and what are our assets?
- Do you have a budget?
- What are our financial goals?
- Should we have a joint checking account, separate accounts, or both?
- Who is going to be responsible for making sure the bills are paid on time?
- Do you consider going to the movies and having a vacation every year a necessity or a luxury?
- Do you have any outstanding debts?
- What are our plans for purchasing a home?
- Do we both know where our important financial documents are located?

## Children

Not every couple wants to have kids, but it's a good idea to keep an open dialogue about it. These questions lay a foundation for continuing this conversation later:

- Do you want to have children?
- If we decide we do, how many children do you want to have?
- How long should we be married before having children?
- What kind of parent do you think you will be?
- What is your parenting philosophy?
- Will one of us stay home after we have children?
- What type of birth control should we use if we want to postpone or prevent parenthood?

## Family

Every family is different, so understanding how your future spouse grew up and their relationship with parents and siblings today will be very helpful. After all, you're each marrying into a new family, so it's best to try and understand them. Talk about:

- What was your childhood like?
- Do you think we will have problems with your family during the holidays?
- What family values do you want to bring family into our marriage?
- What do you like and dislike about your parents' marriage?
- How much time will we spend with our in-laws?

## Sex and Intimacy

No relationship can survive on sex alone, and intimacy is just as important. While you might think you know a lot about your partner's views on either, it's wise to have a serious conversation about it before marriage. Also, some of these questions get into topics like jealousy, loyalty, and self-esteem. As a supportive partner, you'll find them to be beneficial reminders for what your spouse may be going through emotionally. Consider these questions about physical intimacy:

- Can we talk about sex?
- Are you comfortable discussing your sexual likes and dislikes?
- What are your expectations of our sexual relationship?
- Am I a jealous person?
- Do I have trust issues or feel insecure?
- How important are affirmations to me?
- Do I handle compliments well?
- What is your love language?
- Do you think we listen to one another well?
- Do you think it is important to be faithful to one another?
- How do you want to spend our days off?
- What are your expectations about how we will spend our free time?
- Do you believe that we should be doing everything together?
- Can we each pursue our interests?
- Do you need time alone?
- How would you feel if I want a night out with my friends now and then?
- How will we make sure we have quality time together?

## Conflict and Communication

You've probably heard that communication is key to a good marriage, and it's true. Your life together will be filled with important decisions, trying times, and some conflict. It's a natural part of spending your life with another person. You can start it off right by talking about how you'll handle these situations when they come up:

- How will we make decisions together?
- Are we both willing to face difficult areas or do we try to avoid conflict?
- Do we handle conflict well?
- How are we different?
- Do you think our differences will create problems in our marriage?
- Do you expect or want me to change?
- Can we both forgive?
- Are we both willing to work on our communication skills and to share intimately with each other?