

## AT ENGAGEMENT

Depending upon the couple, the following may be useful at this time:

### **Supplemental Handout:**

1. Accountability Questions for Engaged Couples

### **Modules:**

1. Communication in Marriage
2. Developing the Spiritual Union in Marriage
3. Sexuality in Christian Marriage – Part I: Depending on the couple, it may be best to give out **Part I** earlier in the engagement and **Part II** in the last weeks of engagement.

## **I. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING COUNSEL.**

### **A. Caution on length of engagement.**

1. Preferably three months or less.

### **B. Conduct during engagement period.**

1. A time to prepare for marriage -- not just a wedding.
2. A special time but special temptations exist.  
*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."*
3. Exercise a brother/sister relationship. Engagement involves a serious commitment; but you are not married.
4. Be sensitive to the feelings of your single brothers and sisters. Be discreet and continue to fellowship with them.

### **C. Control emotions and feelings.**

1. No caressing, petting, or kissing.
2. Do nothing in private that you would not do in our presence.  
*1 Thessalonians 5:22, "Abstain from all appearance of evil."*
3. Limit time alone together.
4. Set moderate nighttime hours together.

### **D. Wedding plans.**

1. Keep simple and in accordance with church practices and not offensive to the brethren. (Will it honor God?).
2. A beautiful wedding is no guarantee of a beautiful marriage.  
*Proverbs 31:30, "Favour is deceitful, and beauty is vain: but a woman that feareth the LORD, she shall be praised."*
3. The Word of God should be the beauty of the wedding.
4. Dresses of bride and her attendants.
  - Should be modest and respectful of local customs with no sheer or see-through sections.  
*1 Peter 5:5, "Likewise, ye younger, submit yourselves unto the elder. Yea, all of you be subject one to another, and be clothed with humility: for God resisteth the proud, and giveth grace to the humble."*

- Necklines should not be low cut -- either front or back.
  - Dresses should not have trains.
  - Traditional prayer veils are to be worn.
5. Attire of groom and his attendants.
    - Business-type suits
    - No tuxedos, cummerbunds, or stripes down the sides of trousers.
    - Shirts should be regular white dress shirts.
    - Ties should be moderate in color.
  6. Photography.
    - No pictures taken in church.
    - Don't miss church services for a photography session.
    - Limit number of pictures. Not everything needs to be on film. Caution on pride.
  7. Flowers.
    - Not in church.
  8. Elder and/or ministers
    - Elder should contact and invite.
  9. Coordinate wedding date with church and fellowship hall activities.
  10. Apply for and obtain a marriage license.
  11. Music during reception should be appropriate for a church function.
  12. The number of guests you invite should be able to comfortably fit within the church where your wedding is to be held. Do not create a burden for the church.
  13. No surprises or deviations from church practices should occur.
  14. Groom should refrain from escorting mothers into the assembly.

## **II. MARRIAGE COUNSEL.**

### **A. Growing together.**

1. Engagement is a time to learn to know, appreciate, and love each other.
2. Become acquainted with in-laws, seek counsel of parents.
3. Discuss plans for the future and establish goals for your marriage.
4. Compare likes and dislikes; be open, yet compromising and tolerant.
5. Be unselfish.
6. Share concerns and problems: spiritual, emotional and physical issues.

### **B. Prenuptial agreement, points to consider.** (This is specifically for older couples who have been married previously.)

1. Preservation of present assets.
2. Provision for living expenses of a surviving spouse.
3. Major medical and/or nursing home expenses.
4. Wills and trusts.
5. Keep children, if any, informed.

## **III. CONCLUSION.**

### **A. Ask for questions or comments.**

### **B. Set date for next counseling session.**

### **C. Pray with couple.**

## MID-ENGAGEMENT: AT LEAST ONE MONTH PRIOR TO THE WEDDING

Depending upon the couple, the following may be useful at this time:

### Modules:

1. Personality and Spiritual Gifts in Marriage
2. Affection, Love Languages, and Gender Differences in Marriage
3. Priorities and Stewardship of Time and Talents in Marriage
4. Roles, Responsibilities, and Decision Making in Marriage

### Supplemental Handouts:

1. Communication Guidelines
2. Forgiveness: What it is, What it isn't, and How to do it
3. The Christian Home
4. The Importance of Family Life
5. Suggestions for a Happy Marriage

## I. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING COUNSEL.

### A. Review plans for wedding.

1. Changes in plans or additional plans.
2. Hymns to be used in ceremony.
3. Any Scripture preference?

## II. MARRIAGE COUNSEL.

### A. The Blessings and Responsibilities of a Godly Home.

1. Discuss the importance of following the Word as a couple.  
*Ephesians 5:1-2, "Be ye therefore followers of God, as dear children; And walk in love, as Christ also hath loved us, and hath given himself for us as an offering and a sacrifice to God for a sweet-smelling savour."*
2. Consider the following roles.
  - Husband - Wife.
  - Parents.
3. Family worship.
  - Husband is spiritual head and must set the standard.
  - Read the Word and pray aloud together daily during family worship (e.g., mealtime prayer or devotions).
  - Pray at your bedside together.
4. Support proper use of head covering.
5. Keep home free of "killers of intimacy."
  - Unwholesome publications.
  - Inappropriate use of the Internet
  - Television.
  - Worldly music
  - Excessive use of radio

- Crude or profane language.
- Inappropriate use of alcohol.
- Improper dietary and hygiene habits.

## **B. Communication.**

1. Give priority to spending time together with God.  
*Mark 6:31, "And he said unto them, Come ye yourselves apart into a desert place, and rest a while: for there were many coming and going, and they had no leisure so much as to eat."*
2. Be a good listener.
3. Be open and honest but with great sensitivity to the other's feelings.  
*Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."*
4. Be a good listener.
5. Develop habits of courtesy, kindness, and gentleness in speech and actions.  
*Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*
6. Verbal or physical abuse cannot be tolerated in a marriage.
7. Again, be a good listener!
8. Don't be judgmental. Focus on the other's strengths rather than weaknesses.  
*Matthew 7:1-2, "Judge not, that ye be not judged. For with what judgment ye judge, ye shall be judged: and with what measure ye mete, it shall be measured to you again."*
9. Don't be a bored listener.
10. Don't ridicule your mate.
11. Don't give orders.
12. Don't over-correct (nag).
13. Don't use silent treatment when you are angry. This can be abusive.
14. Don't interrupt.
15. Don't accumulate grievances.
16. When you think you have listened enough, listen a little longer.
17. Try to understand the feelings behind what your mate is saying and be considerate of them.
18. Repeat back what you believe you heard your mate say (i.e., the "mirroring" technique).

## **C. Proper priorities.**

1. Is God is your first priority?  
*Matthew 6:33, "But seek ye first the kingdom of God, and his righteousness; and all these things shall be added unto you."*
2. Do you have an excessive drive for financial gain?  
*1 Timothy 6:9, "But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition."*
3. Does the wife need to work outside of the home?
4. Is the husband a workaholic?
5. Housekeeping -- is the house kept neat?
6. Do you support church activities?

## **D. Relationship with family members.**

1. Plan time to visit with parents.
  - In person, phone calls, letters, etc.
  - Equal time for each set of parents.
2. Counsel with parents and mature family members. They have much experience and can be a source of excellent advice.
3. After God, your first responsibility is to each other.

*Genesis 2:24, "Therefore shall a man leave his father and mother, and shall cleave unto his wife: and they shall be one flesh."*
4. Don't be too dependent on parents.
5. Be a good Christian witness to your family.

## **E. Four R's of Marriage.**

1. Responsibility.
  - Husband is responsible for his wife.
  - Wife reverence her husband.

*Ephesians 5:22, "Wives, submit yourselves unto your own husbands, as unto the Lord."*
  - Accountable and answerable to God and to each other.
2. Respect.
  - Be polite.
  - Be kind.

*Colossians 4:6, "Let your speech be always with grace, seasoned with salt, that ye may know how ye ought to answer every man."*

*Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*
  - Be courteous.
  - Use respectful names and titles for each other.
  - Be considerate.
  - Don't compare.

*2 Corinthians 10:12, "For we dare not make ourselves of the number, or compare ourselves with some that commend themselves: but they measuring themselves by themselves, and comparing themselves among themselves, are not wise."*
3. Romance.
  - Spend special time alone together.
  - Take walks or drives together.
  - Notes on pillow, in bathroom, kitchen, etc.
  - Give squeezes, pats, winks, etc.
  - Say, "I love you."
  - Continue sharing love and courtesies on a frequent basis.

4. Repentance.

- Say, "I'm sorry."
- Come to grips with differences.
- Seek to resolve issues in a timely, godly manner.  
*Ephesians 4:26, "Be ye angry, and sin not: let not the sun go down upon your wrath."*
- Forgive as Christ forgave.  
*Ephesians 4:32, "And be ye kind one to another, tenderhearted, forgiving one another, even as God for Christ's sake hath forgiven you."*

**F. Some final thoughts.**

1. You cannot be genuinely open to God and closed to your mate.
2. You cannot hurt your mate without hurting yourself.
3. If you want to be treated like a king, treat her like a queen (and vice versa).
4. Marriage does not demand perfection but it must be given priority.

**III. CONCLUSION.**

**A. Any questions or comments?**

**B. Counsel with your elder before problems become overwhelming.**

**C. Set date for next counseling session.**

**D. Pray with couple.**

## APPROXIMATELY TWO WEEKS PRIOR TO THE WEDDING

Depending upon the couple, the following may be useful at this time:

### Modules:

1. Money Matters in Marriage
2. Conflict Resolution Skills in Marriage
3. Sexuality in Christian Marriage, Parts I and II: Depending on the couple, it may be best to give out **Part I** earlier in the engagement and **Part II** in the last weeks of engagement.

## I. ENGAGEMENT AND WEDDING COUNSEL.

### A. Final review of wedding plans as discussed in previous sessions.

Reminder: if the couple is traveling by plane or out of the country, they need to have the wife's name [maiden/married] consistent on tickets, passport, driver's license, etc.

## II. MARRIAGE COUNSEL.

### A. The seriousness of marriage vows.

*Matthew 5:31-32, "It hath been said, Whosoever shall put away his wife, let him give her a writing of divorcement: But I say unto you, That whosoever shall put away his wife, saving for the cause of fornication, causeth her to commit adultery: and whosoever shall marry her that is divorced committeth adultery."*

*Luke 16:18, "Whosoever putteth away his wife, and marrieth another, committeth adultery: and whosoever marrieth her that is put away from her husband committeth adultery."*

*Romans 7:2-3, "For the woman which hath an husband is bound by the law to her husband as long as he liveth; but if the husband be dead, she is loosed from the law of her husband. So while her husband liveth, she be married to another man, she shall be called an adulteress: but if her husband be dead, she is free from that law; so that she is no adulteress, though she be married to another man."*

### B. Spiritual growth.

1. God must be "Number 1."

*Matthew 22:37, "Jesus said unto him, Thou shalt love the Lord thy God with all thy heart and with all thy soul, and with all thy mind."*

2. Read and pray alone and together.
3. Have prayers at meals.
4. Have family worship.
  - Bible.
  - Bible stories.
  - Close with prayer.
5. Support church and church activities.

### C. Financial planning.

1. All you have belongs to God -- you are only stewards.
2. Husband and wife make decisions jointly.
3. Work out differences in spending habits.
4. Be content with your possessions – don't covet or envy.

*1 Timothy 6:6-12, "But godliness with contentment is great gain. For we brought nothing into this world, and it is certain we can carry nothing out. And having food and raiment let us be therewith content. But they that will be rich fall into temptation and a snare, and into many foolish and hurtful lusts, which drown men in destruction and perdition. For the love of money is the root of all evil: which while some coveted after, they have erred from the faith, and pierced themselves through with many sorrows. But thou, O man of God, flee these things; and follow after righteousness, godliness, faith, love, patience, meekness. Fight the good fight of faith, lay hold on eternal life, whereunto thou art also called, and hast professed a good profession before many witnesses."*

5. Be content with your wages.

*Proverbs 16:8, "Better is a little with righteousness than great revenues without right."*

6. You don't need to have everything.

*Luke 12:15, "And he said unto them, Take heed, and beware of covetousness: for a man's life consisteth not in the abundance of the things which he possesseth."*

7. Use caution on indebtedness.
8. Cautious use of credit cards.
9. Work on a budgeting plan.
10. Plan tithing and giving.
11. Savings -- try for a six months' reserve.
12. Life insurance -- provide for your wife.

*1 Timothy 5:8, "But if any provide not for his own, and specially for those of his own house, he hath denied the faith, and is worse than an infidel."*

13. Investments should be honorable. Use caution.
14. Make a will.

### D. Sexual relationship.

1. Respect each other's feelings, needs, and convictions.

*1 Thessalonians 4:4-5, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour; Not in the lust of concupiscence, even as the Gentiles which know not God."*

2. Men and women have different sexual desires.
3. Be considerate during the menstrual time.
4. The importance of respect.

- When considering any sexual activity, consider as a couple whether it is godly and respectful, and whether it will promote oneness as a couple.
- Neither spouse should ever feel coerced, manipulated, forced into, or guilty about any sexual activity.
- Make sure that we do not inappropriately inhibit couples or create guilt or fear in them as they learn to experience the joy and intimacy God intended in the sexual relationship.
- Discussion of sensitive topics.



## 5. Family Planning.

- God plans for married couples to bear children.

*1 Timothy 5:14, "I will therefore that the younger women marry, bear children, guide the house, give none occasion to the adversary to speak reproachfully."*

- Elder has guidelines in Confidential Minutes, Page 285, Taylor, Birth Control, Item 1.
- Use the following passage to discuss temporary abstinence as a natural family planning method.

*1 Corinthians 7:1-7, "Now concerning the things whereof ye wrote unto me: It is good for a man not to touch a woman. Nevertheless, to avoid fornication, let every man have his own wife, and let every woman have her own husband. Let the husband render unto the wife due benevolence: and likewise also the wife unto the husband. The wife hath not power of her own body, but the husband: and likewise also the husband hath not power of his own body, but the wife. Defraud ye not one the other, except it be with consent for a time, that ye may give yourselves to fasting and prayer; and come together again, that Satan tempt you not for your incontinency. But I speak this by permission, and not of commandment. For I would that all men were even as I myself. But every man hath his proper gift of God, one after this manner, and another after that."*

- Use discipline and self-control.

*1 Thessalonians 4:4, "That every one of you should know how to possess his vessel in sanctification and honour."*

- Many ways to express love in addition to sexual intercourse.
- If you run into problems, counsel with your elder.

## 6. Sexual activities are very private. They are between you and God.

- DO NOT DISCUSS WITH OTHERS.

## **E Be prayerful, cautious, and seek counsel before sharing issues from your sexual history.**

1. At times, one or both of the individuals in a couple may have current or past issues that can potentially affect their sexual relationship in marriage. These issues can include things like having a history of sexual abuse, having had an abortion(s), having had premarital sexual experiences, and/or having struggled with pornography, etc.
2. Sometimes it is difficult to know what to share with your future spouse and what to consider as history that is "*passed away*" (2 Corinthians 5:17).
3. Engaged couples are encouraged to counsel with their elder about what they share in order to prevent unnecessary hurt in their relationship. This is because while sometimes we need to share certain things, other times we need to let things remain in the past.
4. Seek counsel about sharing issues with your future spouse when the issues:
  - Are currently present or are part of an ongoing struggle.
  - Hinder your relationship with God.
  - Hinder your relationship with your spouse.
  - Hinder your ability to live out God's plan for your life.

## **F. Problem solving.**

1. Choose the appropriate time and setting to discuss a problem.

*Ecclesiastes 3:1, "To every thing there is a season, and a time to every purpose under the heaven."*

2. Control your tone of voice.

*Proverbs 15:1, "A soft answer turneth away wrath: but grievous words stir up anger."*

3. Listen very carefully.
4. Define the problem clearly from both points of view.
5. State what you can agree on.
6. Brainstorm together -- don't downgrade your spouse's thoughts.
7. State what changes each of you is willing to make to arrive at a solution.
8. Summarize the best solutions.
9. Pray to God to help take the right steps.

## **III. CONCLUSION.**

### **A. Ask for questions or comments.**

### **B. Discuss post-marriage counseling. Set a time for follow up if the couple will be attending your church. If not, tell them to contact the local elder of the church they will be attending.**

### **C. Have a prayer with couple.**