

# Relationship Questions

Be very careful in choosing your life partner. A good marriage can be the closest thing to heaven on earth . . . but a bad marriage can be the closest thing to hell. It really is better to remain single in life than to rush in and marry the wrong person.

The following questions are ones that are intended to help you take off the "love blinders" and take an honest look at yourself, the person you are considering, and the prospect of whether or not this is the person you should marry.

Never assume that you know the answer to a question! You may be surprised, and it's better to come across those surprises sooner than later.

## Things to Consider When Choosing a Husband . . .

### \* Does He Show Evidence of Being a Christian?

As a Christian, we are told to not be "unequally yoked". There are many a woman who marries with the idea that she can be a good influence on her ungodly husband and somehow bring him to the faith through her witness and example. Unfortunately, it is very rare that this actually happens and the marriage often suffers as a result of the woman trying to "change" her husband.

There can be so many negative results and unnecessary heartache in a marriage where the couple is "unequally yoked". The act of marriage should never be taken on as a means of evangelism or a form of witnessing. You can save yourself a lot of heartache and strife by being very careful to marry someone who is of the same Christian faith and shows evidence of being a true follower of Christ.

- Have you seen evidence of spiritual growth in his life?
- Can his friends or family attest to the fact that he is genuine in his faith?
- Does he show signs of the fruit of the spirit (love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness, self-control)?
- Does he seek God's will and guidance in regards to decision making?
- Does he accept God's Word as infallible truth and profitable for teaching, reproof, or correction? In other words, if someone were to show him a portion of Scripture that clearly reproofed his actions, would he strive to change in that area out of a deep desire to be obedient to God's word?

### \* Has He Been Growing in His Faith Apart from Your Help or Coercion?

Before marriage, a man has a very strong desire to "pursue" the woman that he is interested in. It is a "hunting" and "conquering" nature that will drive a man to do literally *anything* to win the heart of the woman he desires.

If the woman he is pursuing has a strong religious stance, it is very common for the man to take an interest in her religion and strive to be the type of man she would desire to marry. In some cases a man may even go as far as to make the woman believe that she was in some way his "savior" and that he has "come to the light" through his knowing her, even though in reality he is merely being drawn to God because he feels it will bring him closer to the woman of his dreams and not because of any personal conviction or recognition of his need for Christ.

Unfortunately, if his "revival" was little more than a ploy to please her and win her heart (or even if it came with a genuine level of good intention) if it has not truly penetrated his heart with deep conviction, it will not last.

After a man has won the woman of his dreams and has claimed her as his own in marriage, the need to "pursue" her is not so strong of an impulse or as high a priority for him. Any "good intentions" he had will eventually fade because they were never truly planted in his heart or ever truly his own conviction.

When a woman encourages a man's spiritual growth before they are married he will often see it as a romantic gesture and be thrilled by the fact that she "cares about him" and cares about his eternal destiny.

After marriage, however, such encouragements or attempts to influence his spiritual beliefs will progressively become less of a "caring gesture" and will begin to feel more and more like the woman is nagging him, trying to change him, or expressing that she is discontent with who he is. This will not register well with the man, and over time he may become resistant towards the faith that he now feels is being "forced" upon him, and even resentful towards his wife who seems to be unable to just accept him for who he is.

The best way to avoid the devastating results of such an occurrence is to insure that, before you are married, the man is taking his own initiative to grow in his faith even apart from the help, coercion, or "friendly reminders" from the woman he is pursuing.

- Does he have other *male* friends who can encourage him in the Christian faith?
- Has he sought counsel from a pastor, elder, or a godly man who can serve as a mentor for him?
- Has he taken any steps to develop any spiritual disciplines on his own (making time to read the Bible, spending time in prayer, being alone with God, etc)?
- Is he intentional about pursuing these spiritual disciplines even when the woman he desires is not directly involved or is not "cheering him on" in his pursuit?
- Does he express strong convictions regarding theological opinions, or is he quick to accept whatever you believe to be true?
- If you were to experience a decline in *your* faith or pass through a spiritual "desert" of personal apathy or neglect, would he be led to encourage you in your walk with the Lord or would his own faith also suffer as a result?

### **\* Is He Someone You Can Respect?**

A wife is commanded to respect her husband. This is not something that comes naturally to a woman and is something that will be an on-going challenge for her all throughout her married life.

Many women are under the impression that respect is something that someone should *earn*. But when it comes to a husband and wife relationship, this is as absurd an idea as a wife who has to *earn* the loving attentions of her husband. A husband is commanded to love his wife. A wife is commanded to respect her husband. Both should be completely *unconditional*.

But just as it is difficult for a husband to be loving towards a critical, nagging, or always complaining wife, it is also very difficult for a woman to show respect to a man who is immature, irresponsible, or has no ambition or clear direction in life.

Respect is something that you will be required to give to your husband *unconditionally*, so make your job easier by being careful to marry a man who you deem *worthy* of respect.

- Is he a man of godly character?
- Does he make wise decisions and seek good counsel?
- Is he trustworthy?
- Is he a man of integrity, doing what is right even when no one is watching?
- Is he dependable and true to his word?
- Does he have clear direction in his life?
- Does he show respect to the people around him?
- Is he willing to defend what is right and take a stand against what is wrong?
- Does he have a positive attitude and a positive outlook on life?
- Is he compassionate and caring towards others less fortunate than himself?
- Does he seek God will and direction in life?

#### **\* Is He a Man or a Boy?**

In our current generation we are seeing the marriage age for couples increasing dramatically. Where it used to be common for couples to marry in their late teens or early 20's, it is becoming more common now for couples to wait until they are in their 30's or 40's before getting married.

Much of this has to do with the fact that the men of this generation are not growing up or maturing as early as in previous generations. Statistics today are showing that women are making great achievement in their careers and are climbing social ladders while increasing numbers of men are living in a prolonged state of adolescence with little or no motivation to pursue a career or take on a wife and family.

For the men who *have* married, *do* have a job, and *are* supporting a family, there is still an increasing number of wives who complain that all their husbands want to do when they get home from work is tinker with their cars, hang out with their buddy's, or sit and play video games.

In keeping with the idea that you want to marry a man who is "worthy of respect" it is also important that you marry a "real man" and not just a boy in a man's body.

Many women are under the impression that there just aren't any real men out there, or they're just not willing to wait for these "boys" to grow up.

What they don't realize is that a woman has a great amount of influence over a man, more than she will ever realize. If more women in our culture would raise the standard of what they expect in a man, these "big boys" would find the motivation to become responsible and live up to their manly duties. But far too women are too impatient to wait for the guys to grow up and are so quick to compromise because they themselves are ready and impatient to get married.

In the past, when a man wanted to win the heart of a woman, he had to first go out and make his way in the world and prove himself worthy of her. He had to prove that he was responsible and capable of supporting a family.

Today, there are enough women who are willing to be the bread winners in the home, or to support the family if their husband can't keep a job and there are far too many women who are willing to sleep with a man or even move in and live with him without first requiring a wedding ceremony or the exchanging of vows.

If you want to marry a real man, then you have to keep your standards high and not settle for less. A man who wants to win your heart will rise to the standards you set. If he doesn't, he's not really a man and not really worth your time.

And yes, this may require patience on your part as you wait for your guy to find a steady job, grow in his level of maturity, and prove himself responsible and capable. But it will be well worth the wait. Waiting a few extra years for your man to "grow up" before you get married is so much better than spending the rest of your life married to "big boy" who will never grow up because you took away any incentive he might have had to try.

- Does he manage his time well or does he waste time on "big boy toys" or video games?
- Does he stand on his own two feet or is he dependent on parents or friends?
- Is he financially stable and capable of supporting a family on his single income?
- Is he hard-working and self-motivated in his career?
- Is he wise in how he spends his money or does a large percentage of his income go towards entertainment, hobbies, or "having fun"?
- Is he "man enough" to resist pornography or sexual promiscuity and keep himself for his wife? Or, if he has fallen in this area in the past, is he "man enough" to own up to his mistakes, make restitution, and seek the help of godly men who can mentor him and hold him accountable in this area?

### **\* How is He at Leading?**

The man *is* the head of the family, that is how God ordained it. This idea often goes counter cultural but the idea of a man being the head of his household is a very solid Biblical truth.

Often among Christian circles they put a lot of emphasis on the fact that the husband *should* be the leader in the home. They hold this up as an "ideal" but leave room for a clause that "in the absence of a man's leadership the woman may lead instead".

But what they often fail to recognize is the fact that the husband *is* the head of the family, whether he rises to the occasion or not. A man will lead his family just as much through his absence as he does through his presence. A husband can lead his wife and children through his apathetic nature with the same level of influence as a man who leads through intentional effort, but the effects of the former can be devastating.

It *is* true that a woman can step up and do the *work* that leadership requires and take on the responsibilities that would better be fulfilled by the husband, but this can often lead to high levels of stress and even chronic illness for the woman because it is a weight of responsibility that she was never intended to carry.

The man you marry *will* be the head of you and your family, so it is important to take a look at how he is at leading.

- Have you ever seen him lead a group or event?
- Is he a leader or a follower among his friends?

- Does he make wise decisions?
- Does he follow Godly council?
- Who are the leaders that *he* looks up to and holds as role models?

### \* **Is He Someone You Can Follow?**

Since the man you marry *will* be the head of you and your family, it is important that he be a man that you feel is *capable* of leading, someone you can look up to and feel confident in following.

Following his lead is something that needs to start even in the beginning stages of the relationship. If you are always the one taking the lead in your relationship you are setting a foundation for problems to develop later on.

- Are you the only one who sets boundaries in your relationship?
- Are you the one who decides what activities you do together?
- Are you the one encouraging progression in the relationship or in any way hinting to him that you want a proposal?
- Are you the one who has to initiate reading the Bible, praying, or doing devotions together?

Keep an eye on your relationship and take heed if you find yourself as the one who is making the most decisions or being the one to lead in the relationship.

### \* **Do You Agree With His Theology and Beliefs?**

Later on we present a list of questions you should discuss with the person you want to marry, among them are questions related to theology and core beliefs. It is very likely that you will differ slightly on some issues, but you want to be sure *before* you marry that you have a common ground and firm foundation laid in regards to core spiritual beliefs, especially in regards to how you will raise your children and what you will be teaching them about your faith.

Since the man is the spiritual leader in the home, it is important for a woman to understand what his beliefs are and what theological stance he holds. If you find that you are not in agreement when it comes to the core beliefs of the Christian faith, it may be necessary to hold off on marriage until you can work out your differences.

### \* **Do You Share the Same Core Values?**

They say that opposites attract, and in many ways that is true. It is just fine (and even helpful) to have differing personalities, different gifts and talents, and different perspectives on things, but one thing that you do NOT want to be different in are your core values.

What do you believe in? What matters to you? What values help to govern your life?

Every day you subconsciously make decisions based upon your core values, but have you ever identified what those values are?

The man you marry will also make daily decisions based upon *his* core values, so if his values differ from yours there will be inevitable conflict that will arise and in many cases it will be hard to even

identify why the conflict has arisen because each of you will have a point of view that just feels like it should be “common sense” for everyone.

For example, if you have a core value that “family comes before work” but your husband has the core value that the wife should invest in the well-being of the family while he focuses on succeeding as the “bread winner” . . . there will be a lot of tension in the home as the wife will feel discontented (and even resentful) of the amount of time her husband devotes to work, while the husband will feel disrespected and unappreciated by the fact that his wife doesn’t fully appreciate the sacrifices he makes in his commitment to support the family.

Core values are critical to examine and discuss in your relationship. Never assume that you know the other person’s views when it comes to core values. Talk through them and make sure you are both on the same page or at the very least at a clear understanding of the other person’s views.

The “Things to Discuss Before Marriage” section provided later on in this document provides a lot of topics and questions to help you evaluate your core values and talk through the critical questions that you should examine before marriage.

### **\* What Kind of Man is He? And Are You a Suitable Helper for that Type?**

There are roughly three types of men . . . the “commanding type”, the “visionary type”, or the “steady type”. Since you are called by God to be a helper for your husband, it is important that you evaluate which kind of man you are wanting to marry and whether or not your personality and gifting is suitable for being a helper for that type of man.

For example . . . if you are an adventurous type of woman with a desire to “see the world” and possess incredible skills for communication or the gifting in hosting social events, but you marry the steady type of man who wants a farm out in the country, a very quiet and private family life, and a “stay at home wife” who’s going to have dinner ready and waiting for him when he gets home, you may not be the best helper for such a man.

Or, if he is a visionary type of man, he may be very adventurous, unpredictable, and quick to throw all your hard earned savings into one impulsive investment. If you are a cautious woman who needs to have a plan and know exactly what to expect, or if you hate taking risks and are reluctant to try new things, you may want to reconsider marrying a visionary man, because your tendencies are more likely to hinder him instead of helping him to reach his potential.

Or, if the man you’re wanting to marry is of the commanding type who knows exactly what he wants and expects others to “fall in”, take orders, and obey without question . . . but you’re the kind of woman who needs to have her opinions heard, wants to have a share in the decision making, or has a hard time submitting to a direct command without question or reservation . . . there will be a lot of conflict and heated arguments in your marriage, and you may not be the helper that such a man needs.

For more on this topic, and more specifics regarding each of these types of men and the helpers that are suitable for them, see the following article:

“Three Kinds of Men . . . Which Did You Marry?”  
(<http://www.myallforjesus.com/web/three-kinds.html>)

### \* **Can You Feel Fulfilled in Supporting His Dreams or Goals?**

This one is pretty self-explanatory. What are his dreams? Where is he headed in life? Can you share in those dreams and goals? Can you feel satisfied and fulfilled in helping him achieve these ambitions?

### \* **Is He Really Your "Soul-Mate" or Are You "Settling"**

There is an old poem that goes something to the effect of . . .

"When I was 16, I thought I wanted to marry a man who was blond. When I was 17, I wanted a man with broad shoulders. When I was 18, I wanted a man who was tall. When I was 19, I wanted to marry someone who was fun and could make me laugh. When I was 20, I wanted to marry someone who was strong in their faith and had great ambitions in life. When I was 21, I wanted to marry someone who brought the best out of me and encouraged me to be all that I could be . . . . By the time I was 27, I would have been content to marry someone who was male and breathing!"

It's sad, but very true. With the marriage age increasing in our generation there are a lot of women who would rather settle for less than their ideal of a husband instead of risk being single for the rest of their lives.

Unfortunately, I have met a number of women who married for the wrong reasons only to later meet the man who *could* have been their soul-mate if only they had been patient enough to wait.

In such cases, the woman is highly discontented in her marriage, has an emotional (or even physical) affair, and either ends her marriage with an ugly divorce or spends the rest of her married life wondering "what if?".

The man you marry does not have to live up to all the fantasies you dreamed up, but you *should* have some *key* qualities that you are unwilling to compromise in with regards to choosing a husband. It doesn't have to be a long list, but is *should* be one that you have carefully prayed about and sought the Lord's leading in. If you don't have any "uncompromising qualities" that you require in a husband you will have no way to determine whether or not you are "settling" for less.

Earnestly seek the Lord's guidance in regards to what you need in a husband and then refuse to settle for anything less. If it is God's will for you to marry then He has already determined who the right man is for you. In fact, you were *created* with that man in mind, because you were created to be his *helpmeet*. Do not be among the unfortunately women who could not wait for the Lord's timing and settled for less than their soul-mate.

### \* **Has He Kept Himself Pure?**

This is a big topic that should not be taken lightly or brushed aside without careful consideration. It takes an extra measure of grace to marry a man who has been with another woman, especially when you yourself have carefully been keeping yourself pure for him.

Before you get married, your feelings towards this person and your desire to be with them can help you to overcome the disappointment or hurt you may feel in realizing that he has been in bed with another woman.

After you are married, however, you have to expect that the disappointments and hurt will come flooding in again in a new and deeper way. And as familiarity sets into the relationship and his manners towards you become less of the "romantic pursuit" you felt before marriage, your own

thoughts and insecurities will become your worst enemy, and Satan is going to take advantage of that and use it as a weapon against you.

We have a very real and present enemy! Satan is out to destroy marriage, and sex before marriage is a huge foothold that he can (and *will*) use.

The act of sexual intimacy really does connect two partners together as "one flesh". If the man you marry has had other partners, he has joined himself and become one flesh with another woman (or multiple women). You may think to yourself that this is "in the past" and that it is something that you can "work through" and overcome. But it is important to realize that such a man will never again have an identity that is independent of the woman (or women) he has slept with.

In sleeping with another woman, he has joined himself to her as "one flesh", as a result, the severing or separation of these partners leaves lasting scars and consequences that can be compared to a physical amputation or deep burn. The person will never be the same again. His past partner will forever have her mark on your man, and you can bet that Satan is going to use that to try and get between the two of you and to taint the beauty of what God intended marriage and sex to be.

I heard a saying once that has proven to be true . . . that before marriage Satan does whatever he can to try and get you to have sex, while *after* marriage he does whatever he can to try and *keep* you from having sex.

Bear this in mind now and do what you can to prepare yourself for the battle . . . if you choose to marry a man who has been in bed with another woman you need to be prepared for the consequences and struggles that come with that.

You need to be prepared for the times when this woman "comes to bed" with you. You'll see her in your dreams. You'll think about her in the intimate times with your husband. You'll find yourself wondering how you compare in looks, qualities, and sexual performance. You'll find yourself wondering if your husband is thinking about her instead of you. You'll find yourself wondering if she was better at kissing than you are, or if she was better at pleasing your husband than you are. You'll find yourself resentful of what she stole from you or angry at the fact that there are days when you just can't seem to think of anything else *except* her.

Sex is a tool used by God to accomplish a depth of intimacy in a relationship that cannot exist in any other way. Through sexual intimacy you are placed in the most *vulnerable* condition of all, a vulnerability in which trust and confidence in your partner is critical. Through sexual intimacy you have the potential of the greatest degree of pleasure or the deepest degree of pain.

If you join yourself to a man who has already been joined as "one flesh" to another woman, you are also joining yourself to his former partner and she will be just as much a part of you as she is a part of him.

Sex is hard enough when it is just between one man and one woman. Men and women are such opposites when it comes to sex that *that* in itself presents a significant amount of struggle, tension, and conflict in a marriage even without the added hurt and heartache that comes as a result of one partner having had other partners.

Marriage is a battlefield and even more so when there is a foothold for Satan to infiltrate the marriage bed.

Are you ready for that battle?



## \* **How Does He Treat His Mom and Sisters?**

The way a man treats the woman he is pursuing is not necessarily the way he will treat her after they are married. Once you are married and have grown more accustomed to living together you can expect his treatment of you to default back to what is normal in how he treats women in general, and more specifically how he treats his mother and sisters.

When you are first getting to know someone, it can be difficult to determine whether he is naturally courteous and considerate in nature or whether he is just being on his "best behavior" because of his intent to win your heart. To truly find out how he will treat you *after* you are married, it is important to examine his relationship with his mother and sisters and to be mindful of the way he treats women in general.

- Does he speak well of his mother and sisters or is he often putting them down or speaking of them in a critical or condescending manner?
- Do you ever hear him pay a compliment to his mother or sisters?
- Does he spend quality time with his mom and sisters? Does he sit and talk to them for any length of time? Does he take the time to listen to what they have to share?
- Is he warm and affectionate towards his mother and sisters?
- Does he still give his mom and sisters hugs?
- Does he ever give flowers, cards, or gifts to his mom or sisters?
- What is the tone in his voice when speaking to his mom or sisters? Does he ever speak harshly towards them or ever have a tone of frustration, impatience, or anger?

## \* **How Does He Treat Women in General?**

A man who is gentlemanly and courteous to you but does *not* show these same courtesies to other women is not truly a gentleman and is not likely to continue showing you these courtesies very long after you are married. If you want to marry a gentleman, then you need to observe whether or not he is a gentleman to *every* woman he encounters and especially towards elderly women and close relatives.

Some "uncommon courtesies" to look for in a man should include: opening doors for ladies, offering to carry a lady's bags or bundles, walking closest to the street when walking with a lady, pulling out her chair when sitting down to a meal, assisting a lady in or out of a vehicle, helping a lady put on or take off her coat, giving up his seat if there is only standing room, paying the check at a restaurant, holding an umbrella for her when it rains, etc.

A man who practices these gentlemanly courtesies towards women in general (especially elderly ladies and women he has nothing to gain from in the action) then you can be assured that his courtesies towards you will not stop as familiarity sets in.

Another thing to watch for is whether or not he is respectful to women in general. Is he generally kind and polite to women? Watch how he responds to random people he encounters (waitresses, store clerks, receptionists, secretaries, random women he meets in passing, etc) . . . if he is respectful and gracious in how he treats other women you can expect that same treatment from him after you are married. If he is in any way condescending, disrespectful, impolite, or inconsiderate of other women you can expect that he will treat you in the same manner *after* he has won your heart and gained deeper familiarity with you in marriage.

At the same time, you need to beware of the man who is *too* courteous towards women to the point of being flirtatious. A man who tends to be flirtatious towards women while he is single is not going to change in this manner just because he gets married. You do not want a man who is flirtatious by nature or has "crossed eyes" (always examining the beautiful women around him). Such a man has not learned to control his passions and is likely to break your heart through unfaithfulness.

This may be harder for you to gauge since he is not likely to show his flirtatious side towards other women while in your presence. In this regard it may be necessary to get the opinion of close friends or relatives to see if they have noticed any of these tendencies in him during the times that were absent.

Some things to watch out for . . .

- Does he have more female friends than male friends?
- Does he show an uncommon amount of attention to a woman he's only *just* met?
- Is he overly attentive to beautiful women but more passive towards a common or unattractive woman?
- When he enters a room does he scan the premises and evaluate the different women present?
- Is he often found having a one-on-one conversation with a random or strange woman?
- Is he quick to ask a woman for her phone number?
- Is he quick to pay a compliment to a woman he's *just* met (such as complimenting her dress, hair, or other physical appearance)?
- Is he ever seen to be the only man in a group of women?
- Does he seem very comfortable about hugging, caressing, spanking/swatting, or touching a woman who is not his relative?

### \* **What is His Dad Like?**

The older you get the more you start to resemble your parents. As you get older you will start looking and acting a lot more like your mother and your husband will start taking on more of the looks and characteristics of his dad. Of course, you will always have some characteristics that are unique to yourself, but when you are choosing your life partner it can be helpful to take a close look at what his dad is like.

What are his mannerisms? Is he generally polite and courteous? Is he extremely opinionated or critical? Does he have an obsession for a particular hobby or interest? How does he treat his wife? How is he as a father? How is he at providing for his family? Was he an active or passive leader in the home?

Another thing to consider is whether or not the man you are considering had any particular *grievance* towards his father. A man who is determined *not* to become like his father (or determined to not make the same mistakes that his father made) is also likely to swing too far on the opposite end and become the exact opposite of his father.

For example, if a man's father was borderline abusive in how he disciplined his children that man is likely to show those same tendencies towards *his* children. However, if this abusive nature was something that the man grew up hating and firmly determined that he would not repeat this when he

became a dad, he is more likely to become the exact opposite and may have a tendency to be overly lenient with his children, allowing them to become unruly through a *lack* of discipline.

As another example, if a man's father was a very passive leader in the home, the man is likely to take on the same tendencies and may be a good "bread winner" who brings home a paycheck each month but otherwise is not very involved in the affairs of the home or the raising of the children. On the other hand, if a man resented his father for this passive nature and determined not to become like his father in this area, he may swing to the other extreme and be so involved in the affairs of the home that he has to have his hand in every aspect, and a say in every decision, to the point of being *overly* controlling or exasperating.

There is no sure way to know which tendencies the man will have, but it *can* be very helpful to observe his father in the early stages of your relationship so that you can have a clear understanding of where this man is coming from and which tendencies he may be prone to take on or which tendencies he may be prone to take to the other extreme.

### **\* What Do Your Family and Friends Think of Him?**

I think we have already touched on this topic a little, so we will not expand on the topic too much. I mainly just want to stress, once again, the importance of having an outside perspective on the relationship. When you are the one who is emotionally involved in a relationship it can be very difficult to evaluate or see things with a clear perspective. Having others involved in your relationship can be extremely helpful, as they are much more likely than you are to identify "red flags" or warning signs in the relationship.

### **\* Are Your Parents in Favor of this Relationship?**

This is one question that we cannot emphasize enough. Your father and mother are the two people in the world who love you with the most unselfish love that is humanly possible. You are their own flesh and blood and they want the very best for you.

There are many single persons who are under the impression that their parents are "overly protective" or don't really want them to have any fun or pleasure in life. But the truth is, your parents already know the depth of pain that can come from making wrong decisions in life and they really want you to enjoy the pleasures of life with the minimal amount of pain and heartache.

There are also a great many people who think that their parents are just "too old fashion" or just don't "understand them". This may be true to *some* extent, but when it comes to marriage, romantic relationships, love, and sexual intimacy or temptation, there really is "nothing new under the sun".

Parents really are smarter than people often give them credit for, and often understand the circumstances better than their son or daughter thinks. Do not be among the unfortunate ones who realize this too late and look back on their decisions with regret.

If there is any reason why your parents may not be in favor of the relationship, you will be wise to step back and evaluate their reasons and take the time to hear their argument and points of view. In many cases there is something that can be worked out that would help them to be more at peace about the relationship. In other cases it might be best to consider whether your parents' reluctance may be a legitimate reason to reconsider the relationship and possibly break it off or post-pone it until certain issues can be resolved.

### **\* Has He Sought Your Father's Permission to Pursue You?**

A true gentleman will acknowledge the fact that you are under your father's authority, and he will be respectful of that authority by seeking your father's permission before pursuing you.

If he tries to win your heart before making his intentions known to your father then he does not truly respect the authority of your father, which can often indicate that he doesn't truly hold you in high respect either.

We hear stories all the time about fathers who tease about having a shot-gun ready for when the suitors come calling. Many fathers enjoy entertaining thoughts of trying to "scare off" the suitors, and you can guarantee that your husband will feel the same way about *his* daughters, as well.

For many young girls they misunderstand this type of teasing and are under the impression that their father is just overly protective and will never allow any boy near enough to her to ever have a chance at marriage.

But really, the opposite is true. This protective nature that God has put into the heart of a father is one of the factors that makes courtship so beautiful. When a daughter is truly under her father's authority and respects his decisions in regards to suitors, she actually empowers her father to be able to sift through the suitors and distinguish the "men" from the "boys".

There are many young ladies who long to marry a "knight in shining armor". They want a man who is truly man enough to stand up for them, defend them, serve as their protector, and even be willing to die for them. And yet, these same women are afraid to let their dads put them to the test.

A man who is truly a man and truly loves you enough to "fight for you", will do whatever it takes to prove to your father that he is worthy of your hand in marriage.

Allowing a man to pursue you before he has sought your father's permission puts you as a mediator standing between your dad and that man you desire. You act as a defender for your man and in a sense "shield" or "protect" him from your dad. This is not only harmful to your relationship with your father, but it also handicaps your father's ability to protect you, undermines his authority, and robs your suitor of the opportunity to prove to you that he is worthy of your hand and capable of being your "devoted knight".

### **\* Do you find his humor genuinely funny?**

A man likes a woman who appreciates his humor and laughs at his jokes. But if you don't really think he's funny, or you only laugh at his jokes because you want to encourage his attentions towards you, you could be deceiving him which could lead to problems later.

After the hundredth time of hearing him tell the exact same joke, or after years of pretending to like his humor, you will inevitably begin to view your husband with contempt or disrespect, which is the opposite of what you are commanded to do as a woman.

If this kind of contempt is beginning to show itself already in your inward reaction to his humor, you may want to reconsider whether you are really being honest in your relationship or trying to make him believe you are right for him when really you are not.

Contempt of any kind will lead to great tension in your relationship which can lead to a great many struggles and consequences.

### **\* Does He Have Any Spiritual Strongholds in His Life?**

Spiritual strongholds are open doors for demonic influence in a person's life. Your marriage will inevitably fall under spiritual attack simply from the fact that Satan is out to destroy marriage, you do not need the added struggle of having an "open door" by which he can easily enter through.

A mighty fortress is only as strong as its weakest gate. When there is a spiritual stronghold present in a person's life, it is the same as unlocking a gate and swinging it wide open for the enemy to enter in.

Unforgiveness is one thing that opens the doors for demonic influence. If you do not forgive others, you yourself will not be forgiven of sin (Matthew 6:14-15), and the presence of sin in your life is an open door for Satan to enter through.

Addictions and unconfessed sins are both strongholds that can open the door for demonic influence in a person's life. If the person has any known sin that they have not confessed and received forgiveness for, this sin still has a hold on their life and continues to stand as an open door for demonic influence in their life. In the same way, if the person has any addictions that hold him in bondage, these addictions also stand as open doors for demonic influence.

You will face a great deal of spiritual attack in your marriage. Before you enter into marriage you want to be sure that all the "spiritual gates" are closed so that when the enemy comes to lay siege against your marriage there are no open doors for him to enter through.

Do either of you have any person that you are holding a grudge against or who you have not been able to forgive? Do either of you have known sins that you have committed but have not yet confessed and received forgiveness for? Do either of you have addictions in your life (alcohol, drugs, pornography, gambling, social media, video games, over-eating, etc)? . . . Any substance or activity can become an addiction if you become dependent on it or have no power to resist it. If there is anything in your life that you are unable to control, then it has control over you, and that addiction can open doors for Satan to gain control over you as well.

### **\* Does He Have Any Experiences of Seeing Ghosts?**

Be especially careful if the person you are considering for marriage has any past or present experiences of "seeing ghosts or spirits".

In some cases the ability to see things in the spiritual realm can be a good thing, in that they have a special gift of being able to pray at a deeper level and intercede for the things that are revealed to them in the spiritual realm.

In other cases, however, it can be a pretty big warning sign that there is a spiritual door open in the person's life that is allowing a degree of demonic influence. It does not necessarily mean that the person is possessed, but it *can* mean that this person is not entirely under God's protection and that Satan and his demons have a means of entrance by which they can influence him and in a sense "own" portions of his life that have not been brought under the authority of Christ.

If the person you are considering for marriage has the ability to see things in the spiritual realm, you may want to look deeper into the prospect of whether or not there could be an open door for demonic influence. Do they have any unconfessed sin in their life? Is there any person they can recall who they are still holding a grudge against or who they have not yet been able to forgive? Do they have any addictions or strongholds of sin that they have not gained victory over?

You may also want to consider whether or not they have ever dabbled with witchcraft or magic arts of any kind. It is also important to note if anyone in their extended family has also participated in any

kind of witchcraft or magic arts. The practice of demonic arts can often be a "hereditary sin" with consequences that pass down from generation to generation.

Some things to consider . . . have they (or anyone in their family) ever consulted a fortune teller or psychic? Used an ouija board, crystal ball, tarot cards, or the like? Read horoscopes? Had their palms read? Been involved in Wicca or magic arts? Used white magic? Consulted the dead? Been involved in a cult? Been involved in the casting of spells or the working of charms? Frequently read books that focus primarily on witches, sorcerers, or magic? Engaged in New Age practices (including some forms of Yoga)? Ever worshiped in a temple? Practiced a religion that acknowledged other gods or spirits other than the God of the Bible? Prayed to any other god, spirit, or saint (including the Virgin Mary or St. Joseph)? Buried any charms for the purpose of "protection" or "good luck" (including the St. Joseph's statue)? Had an abortion or assisted in euthanasia? Practiced homosexuality, bestiality, or engaged in sexual orgies?

Any of the above can be an open door to welcome demonic influence and need to be addressed and dealt with.

### \* **Other Things to Consider**

Does he take God's name in vain, speak crudely, swear, or use fowl language? A man who cannot control his tongue will likely lack self-control in other areas as well.

Have you ever heard him apologize or confess a wrong? It takes a level of maturity and humility to admit that you were wrong. If you have never heard him admit that he was wrong, you may be dealing with a man who has issues with pride. It will be very difficult to resolve conflict in a marriage if you are married to a man who does not own up to his mistakes or admit when he was in the wrong.

If he were rude, impolite, had terrible table manners, and disgusting "bodily functions" would you still be attracted to him? This is one side of your man that you are not likely to see before you are married, but it's worth consideration. Before marriage he is out to impress you and will be on his best behavior. But after familiarity sets in after marriage he will feel more comfortable about putting down his guard and just being himself. That is when you will realize that you are married to a "guy". There will inevitably be something about him that you find disturbing, disgusting, or repulsive. Do not set yourself up for disappointment by thinking him above such things. Even if he is the perfect model of a gentleman, "familiarity breeds contempt" and there will inevitably emerge *something* about your man that would hinder the romantic image you have of him if you allow it. Are you ready to accept him exactly as he is, with flaws and faults included?

What irritates you most about this person? When you are in a romantic relationship it can be very easy to point out all the great things you admire about the person and to go on and on about how wonderful the person is. But when you are seriously considering a life partner, you need to be intentional in this "romantic stage" to also carefully consider his faults. These faults may not be very evident to you, or may not seem like a big deal at all during this stage in your relationship, this is because you have on "love blinders" that tend to exaggerate all their good points and dismiss or overlook their faults. After you have been married a while "familiarity will breed contempt", and all those faults that you used to think were "no big deal" will suddenly seem surmountable and consume your thoughts, blinding your ability to see the good in your spouse.

There are many, *many* wives who sit around and complain or gossip about their husbands. It is easy to point out someones faults, and easy to get sucked into these conversations and find yourself complaining about your husband in front of your friends and peers. This is *not* respectful towards your husband, and will be very damaging to your marriage.

One of the best ways to avoid this trap is to fully consider his faults while you are yet in the "romantic" stage where it comes naturally for you to think the best of him and accept him exactly the way he is. Then, as familiarity sinks in and you find yourself thinking only negatively of him or complaining about his faults, you can think back to the fact that you *knew* about those faults from the beginning, and you can remind yourself of the fact that you *chose* to marry him in *spite* of those faults, so you really have no reason now to complain about them.

## Questions to Ask of Yourself . . .

### \* Are You Ready to Be Married?

An unmarried woman is completely free to concern herself with working for the Lord, while a married woman is concerned about affairs of the world – how she can please her husband (1 Cor. 7:34).

An unmarried woman is free to pursue her own interests and hobbies, while a married woman will find herself having to set aside her own interests in order to look after the affairs of the home. The demands for her time and energy will only increase as children are brought into the picture. There are many women who look back on their life with regret, wishing they had done more as a single woman instead of spending so much of their strength in pursuing a husband. And many mothers complain about not even having 5 minutes of time to themselves in a day, or comment about how they never realized how selfish they were until they discovered that the demands of being a wife and mother would leave no time for their own hobbies and interests.

It also happens that when you get married you change your identity in more ways than one. You put on a ring that declares to the world that you belong to someone. You take on your husband's name, creating a new identity with him and forsaking the old identity you had as a single and independent woman. You put yourself under the authority of your husband and choose to follow *his* direction and leading in life.

All of this can be a very beautiful and rewarding thing . . . but your life will never be the same . . . it will never again be "your own". Before you agree to get married, are you sure you're really ready for this?

### \* How Are You At Submitting to Authority?

Submission is *not* something that comes easily to anyone, but everyone is subject to authority in one way or another. In a marriage relationship, a woman is called to submit to the authority of her husband. But this is much harder than many women realize.

If you are accustomed to submitting to the authority of your father, that will make the task of submitting to your husband much easier. If you are *not* very good about submitting to your father's authority, you will find it extremely difficult to submit to your husband. This is especially true when you consider the fact that it is *easier* to submit to a father than it will be to submit to a husband.

As wives, we often mistake our "equality in value" as also being equality in making decisions in our marriage and families, and often do not feel that it is wrong to contradict or undermine the opinions or decisions of our husbands. It is also harder to submit to someone who is closer to you in age or equal to you in maturity.

Are you ready to be married? How are you at submitting to authority?

### **\* Have You Sought the Blessing of Your Father on this Relationship?**

Part of submitting to authority is to require your father's blessing on the relationship. If there is any hesitancy on his part, or any reason why he cannot give you his blessing, you would be wise to resolve these issues before moving ahead in a relationship.

This is *not* to say that you should try to persuade your father to change his mind, or try to "convince" him or manipulate him into giving you his blessing against his better judgment.

If you cannot genuinely seek your father's blessing, and cannot willingly accept his view on your relationship, you may consider whether or not you are really able to submit to authority. Remember, submitting to your husband will be even harder than submitting to your father. If you have a hard time submitting to your father you may want to question whether or not you are really ready to *be* married.

### **\* Are You Truly Seeking God's Will in Regards to this Relationship?**

It is often easy to ask God to bless a relationship without actually seeking His will in regards to it.

God is love. He is the creator of love. He is the one who put in you the desire to be married and the desires for love that you have. He is the one who created you specifically to be a helpmeet to a specific man.

If you want the most beautiful of love stories to play out in your life, that will *only* come by following God's will for your life.

Have you really sought God in regards to this relationship? Has your seeking truly been genuine? Do you honestly want to know what HIS will is or have you been trying to manipulate His will to make it what *you* want it to be?

### **\* Would You Be Content if God Calls You to Remain Single?**

Every person is called by God to be single for some period of time in their lives. If you want to be content and happy in your marriage, you need to first be capable of being content and happy in your singleness.

If you are not completely satisfied and content with being single, chances are that you will have unrealistic expectations of your husband and your marriage.

Unrealistic expectations will lead to great conflict and strife in your marriage, and you are likely to cause a lot of pain to the one you love when you lay on them expectations that they will not be capable of fulfilling.

God never intended for marriage to be something that "satisfies us" or "makes us happy". If anything, it challenges us, humbles us, refines us, and leads us to a deeper dependency on Him.

If you are not happy and content in your singleness, you will not be happy or content in marriage, either. These things are not to be found in circumstances or marital status, they can only be found in Christ.



**\* Does Your Relationship With This Person Draw You Closer to God? Does it Bring Out the Best in You? Does it Free You to Be Yourself?**

A healthy relationship is one that brings you closer to God. Your husband is to be your spiritual leader . . . if your relationship with him does not draw you closer to God then is he really capable of leading you spiritually?

A healthy relationship is one that brings out the best in you. Does being with this person inspire you to be a better person or to reach your greatest potential?

A healthy relationship is one that frees you to be yourself. Are you really able to be yourself around this person or do you find yourself "putting on an act" or being something other than who you truly are just because you are trying to impress this them?

**\* Are Your Feelings for this Person Clouding Your Better Judgment?**

Be careful if you find yourself noticing "red flags" or potential problems in the relationship but you keep dismissing them or making excuses for why they may not be "such a big deal".

If your emotions lead in a relationship and you are set on marrying a certain person regardless of any problems or issues there may be, you are likely headed down a road that will lead to regret.

**\* Are You Feeling Pressured to Move Ahead in this Relationship?**

A beautiful love story is one that progresses naturally through each stage of the relationship. You should never, at any stage in a relationship, feel any pressure to progress to the next stage.

When you feel that you have special feelings for someone and they also have special feelings for you, that is the point in which you should include your parents and close friends to seek their approval, advice, and blessing on the relationship.

When you have worked through the different topics regarding the relationship, have a sense of peace about this person truly being the one God has called you to marry and you have worked through any issues or concerns that were brought to light, that is an appropriate time to then move into an engagement.

The engagement period is a good time to seek pastoral counseling and to work out in further detail what your differing expectations may be in regards to family, lifestyle, finances, child-rearing . . . and of course, the planning of the wedding.

There should be a natural flow and smooth transition between each stage in a relationship. If at any point you do not feel at peace about moving to the next stage, you should not allow any peers or "feelings of guilt" pressure you to move forward. Always listen to any reluctant instincts you may feel and take as much time as you need to discover what issues may still lie behind your feeling of reluctance.

In regards to physical intimacy, it is always best to keep it to a minimal. Physical intimacy is like a fire that gets kindled in a prairie of dried grass. It starts as a small spark and very quickly grows into uncontrollable flames. This can be a beautiful thing within the confines of marriage but it can be a very dangerous and destructive thing outside of marriage.

From the start of the relationship it is wise to establish physical boundaries regarding what is appropriate and what is not.

It is highly advised that the "first kiss" wait until the wedding day, or at the very least until the week of engagement. Despite popular belief, a kiss is never an "end to itself", rather, it is an open door by which other passions and deeper desires are released. A kiss does not satisfy, but rather leaves a couple longing for more. Therefore, it is wise not to kindle that flame until very near to the marriage when that "longing for more" can be satisfied.

As for other forms of physical touch, clear boundaries should be set in place regarding the appropriate kinds of touch to match the appropriate stage in the relationship.

If the man you are considering has a past history of sexual promiscuity, it is best to practice a "hands off" policy for an extended period of time during the relationship, and perhaps even through a portion of the engagement period.

A woman needs to know, before she gets married, that the man she is marrying is actually capable of controlling his passions. A man who is incapable of keeping his hands off of you during a period of time in your relationship is likely to also be incapable of keeping his hands off of *other* women *after* you are married.

It is good, and even health in the relationship, to test a man in this. A man who truly loves you will be willing to respect your boundaries and willing to wait until given the right to touch you. And that right should not be given in haste. The heart is much easily guarded when physical intimacy is kept in its rightful place.

Once you are married, all boundaries and all limitations will be lifted and you will be free as a couple to enjoy the fullness of physical intimacy which will more than make up for the time in which you refrained. A "hands off" policy in the relationship is a very small sacrifice to make in light of the benefits it rewards. It is always better to err on the side of caution than to get carried away with premature passions and live the rest of your life with regrets.

### **\* Of All the People in the World, Why Do You Want to Marry *This* One?**

You should be able to come up with the answer to this question with very little reserve or difficulty. If this is really the person you want to spend the rest of your life with, you will have an answer ready and waiting as to why this particular man stands out above all the rest.

You do not need to meet every man in the world in order to know which is right for you. And when you choose the one man out of all the rest, there should never again be a thought entertained in your mind about whether or not you made a mistake in your decision.

Take advantage of the early stages in a relationship to test and prove whether or not this is really the man God has for you, and if this is truly the person you are willing to submit to and spend the rest of your life with . . . for better or for worse.

Take off the "love blinders" early on in the relationship and take an honest look at each and every aspect. Then, when you are married, put the "love blinders" back on and love that person unconditionally for as long as you both shall live.

## Potential “Red Flags” To Watch Out For . . .

It can often be very difficult to recognize potential problems in a relationship, especially when you are the one who is deeply and emotionally involved. It is always good to get outside opinions and to be mindful about watching for key “red flag” warning signs.

Many of these “red flags” have been discussed in detail above, so we will not expand on them here, but simply lay them out for the sake of clarity.

**\* Does the Person Have a Past of Ungodly Sexual Relations?**

*If so, how recent? How did they go about confession and reconciliation? What steps have they taken to avoid falling into sexual sin again?*

**\* Does the Person Have Any Spiritual Strongholds or “Open Doors” in Their Life? Does the Person Have Any Addictions in Their Life or in Their Past?**

**\* Does the Person Lack Self-Control in Regards to Passions?**

**\* Do They Have a Hard Time Keeping Their Hands Off of You?**

**\* Is the Person Overly Protective, Possessive, or Controlling?**

*A man who is overly protective, unusually possessive, or excessively controlling is also likely to become abusive in a relationship.*

**\* Does the Person Struggle with Anger Management or Uncontrolled Outbursts? Do They Become Defensive or Livid When Confronted? Do They Tend to Get Physically Animated When Upset?**

*Yelling, waving arms around, kicking furniture, etc. A person who has trouble managing their anger or outbursts is likely to become abusive in a relationship.*

**\* Does Your Relationship Tend to be One-Sided (one person always giving, one person always receiving)?**

*If your relationship is always about him (what he thinks, what he wants, what he needs) this can be a sign of an unhealthy relationship and does not show that he loves you or values you at all.*

**\* Does the Person Have a Hard Time Holding a Job, or Show a Lack of Initiative for Finding a Job? Is the Person Still Dependent on Others (parents, friends, etc.)? Do They Show a Level of Immaturity or Irresponsibility?**

*A man needs to be able to support his family. If he is not mature, responsible, or able to stand on his own two feet, he is not yet ready to support a wife and family.*

**\* Does the Person Show Any Signs of Being Dishonest?**

*Stretching the truth, only telling part of the story, or flat-out lying. A man who is dishonest is also likely to become a cheater. Trust is a critical part of any relationship. Never marry a man who lies!*

**\* Does the Person Show Signs of Being Distrusting or Even Suspicious of You?**

*A person who is overly suspicious or distrusting of others is usually carrying around a guilty conscience of their own. Once again, trust is a critical part of any relationship. Never marry a man who does not display trust and confidence in you.*

## Things You Should Know About Each Other . . .

### \* What Are Your Primary and Secondary Love Languages?

There are five basic "love languages" . . . words of affirmation, acts of service, physical touch, gifts, and quality time. It is good to discover early on what each other's love languages are. But not only WHICH love languages you have but also specifics within those love languages.

For example, my husband and I discovered that we had the same love languages (words of affirmation and physical touch). Early on in our relationship and marriage we thought that expressing love for each other would be easy because we had the same love languages. It wasn't until later that we realized that even with the same love languages we were not feeling our "love tank" being filled by the other person's expressions of love.

After closer examination we realized the importance of knowing the specifics within each love language.

When it came to words of affirmation, I felt the need to be affirmed in regards to my performance and the things I *did*. But my husband needed more to be affirmed in regards to his personal identity. So when my husband would tell me that I was beautiful or creative, I still felt "unloved" at times because he failed to affirm whether or not I had cooked a good meal or done a good job at keeping house. When I would tell my husband that the meal he cooked was delicious or that he did a good job at teaching a class or preaching a sermon, he still felt "unloved" at times because I never complimented his looks or told him about character qualities I admired in him.

The same happened in regards to our secondary love language . . . physical touch. My husband often shows his love to me by stroking my hair or massaging my feet. I express my love to him through a long embrace or a hand on his shoulder. We both express love in a physical way and yet we both feel "unloved" at times because we are expressing love in the way that WE long to be touched and not in the way that would mean the most to the other person. If I were to give my husband a foot massage or stroke his hair, he would feel deeply loved by that gesture, even though those are not gestures that necessarily speak love to *me*. When my husband gives me a long embrace or lays supportive hand on my shoulder I feel more loved even though these are not gestures that would really speak love to *him*.

Just as it is possible to speak the same language but still have miscommunications because of differing dialect or accents, it is possible to speak the same love language but still feel unloved in a relationship because of the different specifics of how it plays out.

It can be very important, and very helpful, to gain an understanding of each other's love languages, and not only what actions speak love to them but also more specific details on how that looks practically.

### \* Are You Generally Flexible in Nature or More in Need of Predictability in Life?

To you tend to be very "easy-going" and flexible in nature or do you prefer to have a schedule, routine, a laid out "plan of action, and a level of predictability in life?

### \* What Are Your Communication & Learning Styles?

Communication will inevitably be a struggle in your marriage, if for no other reason than the simple fact that men and women think and communicate completely different from each other.

You may be aware, before marriage, of the fact that men and women are different, but it isn't until after you get married that a new depth of realization sets in and you discover for the first time just *how* different men and women really are.

Apart from the male/female differences in communication, there are also styles of communication that can cause problems in a relationship.

A lot of miscommunication and misunderstandings can be avoided if you enter your marriage with a basic understanding of each others communication and learning styles.

Do you communicate better through speech or writing? Are you a verbal processor or do you work through thoughts and emotions better through writing them out on paper? Do you retain information better if you learn through a "hands-on" approach, or do you retain information better by hearing an oral lecture or teaching? Do you retain information better through something you *read* or something you *hear*? If someone asks a favor of you are you more likely to remember if they *tell* you all the specific details or if they write out all the details for you to look over?

### **\* What Are Your Strengths and Weaknesses**

What would you consider to be your areas of strength, or the things you are gifted and talented in? What would you consider to be your areas of weakness, things you may struggle with have a difficult time doing?

Do your strengths balance the other person's weaknesses? Do *their* strengths balance *your* weaknesses? Complimentary strengths and weaknesses can bring a beautiful balance to your relationship?

### **\* What is Your Level of Education?**

How far did you go in school? Are you content with your level of education or do you wish you could advance further? Is your level of education sufficient for the goals you have in life?

### **\* Have You Ever Been in a Romantic Relationship Before?**

You don't need to know every detail, and in many cases it is best *not* to know too many details so you do not encourage feelings of jealousy or insecurity. But at the same time, it *is* important that you both have a mutual understanding of where the other person is coming from, any past hurts or regrets they still feel today, and any expectations they may have as a result of previous relationships and experiences.

### **\* Have You Dealt with All Your Past Baggage or Past Hurts?**

If a person has still not recovered from a past relationship, it may not be wise for them to pursue another relationship until the past hurts and past dealings have been addressed and worked through.

Do not downplay past baggage, it has the power to destroy your relationship. If either of you has baggage from the past that needs to be dealt with, this should be done *before* you go any further in your relationship.

**\* What Are Your Convictions or Boundaries for the Different Stages of the Relationship?**

This is something that is better talked about sooner than later. Without set boundaries and a clear understanding of each other's convictions and expectations, emotions will run wild and before you realize it you will find yourself on a "fast-track" with a relationship that is moving faster than you want it to, with a feeling of pressure to move on to the "next stage" or to make decisions before you are really ready.

What physical boundaries will you set in place? When is the appropriate time for you to be holding hands? Exchanging hugs? Stroking each other's hair? Enjoying a long embrace? Sitting closely pressed against each other? Sitting with an arm around the other? Sitting on his lap? . . . at what point in your relationship will a "first kiss" be permitted?

Are there any other boundaries that need to be established apart from the physical boundaries?

How often will you be permitted to communicate with each other? In the early stages of a relationship it is best to limit it to a couple times a week . . . having too much interaction early on can cause your emotions to run wild or cloud your vision at a time in which you need to be able to think clearly and evaluate the relationship from a logical standpoint.

What level of accountability will you have as a couple? Will you have a chaperone present at times (or in settings) where you would otherwise be alone? Will you hold to a conviction to always be in a public area and among a group of people when no chaperone is available?

**\* Do You Have Any Chronic Health Problems or Past Injuries that Still Affect You Today? Do You Have Any Criminal Record, Felonies, or Other Legal Issues?**

In getting married you will become "one flesh" and everything that affects one person will equally affect the other. It is good to know, in advance, what circumstances may come up as a result of health or legal issues.

**\* What are Your Views and Expectations Regarding Sex? How Familiar Are You With Male/Female Anatomy?**

This is a topic that is best to put off until the weeks leading up to the wedding, and even in that regard, it is good to keep the discussion vague and not go into too much detail.

The primary thing that should be discussed is whether or not you have any fears or concerns in regards to sex. It is important for your partner to know to what degree they should be reserved on the wedding night or to what degree you are comfortable in going.

As a general rule, it is expected that a couple will have sex on the wedding night. But if the wedding ceremony does not end until the late hours of the night (or early hours of the morning), or if either of the partners is coming from a background of abuse or sexual promiscuity, it can be sometimes be healthy to post-pone the act of sex and allow time for a more gradual adjustment period.

It is not necessary to have sex on the wedding night, but it *is* highly recommended that you both spend some time completely exposed/naked together on the wedding night, whether you shower or bathe together, or sleep together without anything on.

If you are not going to have sex on your wedding night, you should both be in agreement to this *before* that night, both be intentional about being exposed and discovering each other's body to some degree that night, and intentional about having sex within the first week of marriage.

Sexual intimacy is the consummation of your marriage and the act that will truly unite you together as "one flesh". Sex is also an act that you owe to one another as a part of the marriage union and the primary thing you can do as a couple to protect your marriage from temptations and unfaithfulness (1 Cor. 7:2-5).

## Topics to Discuss Before Marriage . . .

The following questions and topics of discussion are ones that are important to address before you enter into a marriage relationship.

As you work through the questions, bear in mind that the answers to these questions may change over time, but that's okay. It can be really good to go through this list again after you've been married a while to see how your answers have changed, because many of them will, but the important thing is that you are both completely open and honest about answering the questions in whatever capacity you can right now to be sure that you are on the same page and have a clear understanding of what the other person's opinions or expectations may be. Then, once you are married, it is important to keep the channels of communication open so that you can both grow TOGETHER as your opinions change with time.

### \* **Beliefs About God**

Is there a God? Who is God? What do you believe about the Trinity? Who is Jesus? Was Jesus wholly God, wholly human, or a combination of the two? What is the role of the Holy Spirit?

### \* **Beliefs About the Bible**

Is the Bible fact or fiction? Which books of the Bible are God-breathed and completely reliable without error? Where did the world come from? Is the Genesis account accurate? Do the "days of creation" refer to literal 24-hour days or figurative spaces of time?

### \* **Beliefs About Salvation**

What defines right and wrong or good and evil? What defines or determines what "morality" is? Why did Jesus have to die? Was the resurrection of Jesus figurative or did it actually happen? How does a person become saved? What are they saved from? Is a person saved by grace, works, or a combination of the two? Can a person lose their salvation? What are your views on hell and purgatory?

### \* **Beliefs About Baptism**

Why should a person be baptized? Should babies also receive baptism? Is there ever a time when someone should be "re-baptized"? Does it matter how much water you use in baptism (sprinkling with water vs. full immersion)?

### \* **Beliefs About Communion**

What is the purpose of Communion? Does the bread and wine used in communion *signify* the body and blood of Jesus or is the body and blood of Christ *actually* present in the taking of the bread and wine? Can people with differing beliefs about communion still take communion together? Is there ever a time when a believer should *not* participate in communion?

### \* **Beliefs About Prayer**

How important is prayer? Does prayer actually change circumstances in life or is it primarily for the purpose of building character in the life of a believer? Is praying to Mary or any of the saints ever acceptable? Should fasting be a regular practice in the life of a believer? What is the role of fasting in prayer? What are the advantages of joining with other believers in corporate prayer?

**\* Other Theological Beliefs**

What is the purpose of life? Do you believe in life after death? What motivates you to live your life the way you do? Do the laws of the Old Testament hold any relevance to the believers today? Are any of the 10 Commandments of higher importance than others? Are believers today still required to "observe the Sabbath"? What is the purpose of going to church? What does it mean to be apart of the "body of Christ"? What do you believe in regards to speaking in tongues? What do you believe regarding the end times?

**\* Corporate Worship**

In your opinion, what is the purpose of church attendance? How important is corporate worship to you? To what degree do you want to participate in church events, small group studies, or in using your gifts and talents to benefit the body of Christ? What are your views on age segregation in the church (nursery, youth groups).

**\* Devotions and Quiet Times**

How regular are you in your devotions and quiet times with the Lord? What are your personal devotional practices? How is the condition of your prayer life? What is the longest amount of time you have spent in concentrated prayer? What are your views of corporate prayer? Do you have a favorite method for studying the Bible? Do you have regular Bible reading habits? Do you spend time in meditation or memorization of the Scriptures? Will we conduct devotions as a couple/family? What should our couple/family devotion times look like? How can we begin incorporating these devotions times now? What version or translation of the Bible will our family use?

**\* Health**

Do you have any chronic illnesses, past injuries, or psychological problems that still affect you today? Do you have any allergies or food restrictions? Have you ever struggled with depression? Do you have any habits in your life that may lead to health problems in the future? Are there any health conditions that run in your family? What are your views on diet and nutrition? What forms of exercise do you prefer? Are you regular in exercising? What are your views on using natural health methods vs. standard medicine?

**\* Marriage**

In your opinion, what does it mean to become "one flesh"? What is your idea of "quality time" as a couple? What will getting married "cost you" as far as what you will have to give up or what sacrifices you will have to make? What are your views regarding prenuptial agreements? What are your views on divorce? Is there ever a legitimate reason to get a divorce? Can a divorced person remarry? What could be an alternative to divorce when there is conflict in the marriage?

**\* Past Relationships**

Have you ever been deeply hurt by a breakup? Who was your "first crush"? What is the longest relationship you have been in (not counting this one)? Why did it end? What lessons did you learn? Do you have any behaviors that you exhibited in previous relationships which you are not proud of? What are your views about sharing past relationship experiences, should they be left in the past or brought to light? Do you still keep letters, pictures, emails, or memoirs of your previous relationships? Have you ever had a live-in partner? If yes, why did you choose to live together instead of getting marrying? What did the experience teach you about marriage and commitment?

**\* Affair Proofing the Marriage**

In your mind, what constitutes betrayal or unfaithfulness in a relationship (both emotionally and physically)? What boundaries should we establish to help protect our marriage against temptation of an affair (both physical and emotional)? What should be the code of conduct if you find yourself alone with someone of the opposite gender? Is it ever appropriate to confide in someone of the opposite gender (who is not your spouse) about personal matters or struggles? How important to you think it is to be a part of an accountability/support group?



**\* Privacy**

How much "time alone" do you need? Is it permissible for us to open each other's mail? Should we have access to each other's email accounts? Are we allowed to read each other's journal entries? Should we have free access to use each other's computers? What about reading each other's text messages or looking at browser history on the internet? What "privacy" boundaries should we set in place? How will we be held accountable for what is "private" in our lives? Do our "privacy boundaries" change if our spouse has reason to doubt our faithfulness? Who else could be an accountability partner for us if not our spouse?

**\* Roles of Husbands and Wives**

What are the roles of the husband and wife? To what degree, or in what areas, is a man to be the leader and "head" of the family? What should "submission" look like on the part of the wife? How important to you is "equality" in marriage? What happens when there is a decision to make that we do not agree on?

**\* Gender Roles**

What are the roles of the husband and wife in regards to household duties? How should household tasks be shared (cooking, cleaning, taking out trash, changing diapers, yard work, car maintenance, shopping for food, repairs, etc). Are there any career or home responsibilities that you feel should be the sole domain of a man or woman? Should the roles in the family be filled by a specific gender or by the person best equipped or gifted in that area? How did your family view roles of men, women, boys, and girls when you were growing up? Did your father or the boys in your home ever help with the cooking or laundry? Did your mother or the girls in your home ever help with maintenance or bringing in an income?

**\* Priorities**

How would you rate the different priorities in your life . . . career, education, ministry, extended family, friends, children, spouse, church, personal devotions, hobbies, family devotions, household work? Did you list the priorities according to an "ideal" you have or does your current lifestyle actually testify that this *is* the order in which you focus your priorities in life?

**\* Family Habits (from *your* childhood)**

Would you say that you grew up in a happy home? What did you *admire* about the way your father and mother treated each other? What did you *dislike* about the way your father and mother treated each other? Did your parents have any major conflict in their relationship? Who was the primary disciplinarian in your family? How did your parents discipline you and your siblings? How did your family conduct meal times? Did your parents raise you in any specific religion? Did your family attend church? Did your parents lead any family devotions? Who was the primary spiritual leader in the home? In what ways did you spend quality time together as a family? In what ways did your family show love for each other? How did your parents support your education? Did you attend public school, private school, or homeschool? What kinds of family vacations did you go on? Was your family typically early, on-time, or late in arriving at events? What have you learned from your parents that you are proud of? What mistakes did your parents make that you have decided not to repeat?

**\* Home**

Where are we planning to live after getting married? Do we want to rent or own our home? What is your ideal living conditions? What should determine the location of where we live (work, church, family, friends, school, etc)? Do you prefer country, rural, or city living? Is it important for you to have a private home or are you fine with living in an apartment, condo, or shared facility? What are your views on hospitality? Is your home your private haven or are your doors always open? How important is it for you to have space in the home that is "all your own"? What amount of freedom should a wife have in decorating the home or arranging/re-arranging the furniture (would you leave it up to the wife to arrange the home, or should the husband have a say in the matter)?

\* **Pets**

Are you an animal lover? Do you want to have pets? How do you feel about keeping pets in the house? Do you consider a pet to be a member of the family? Would you get rid of a pet if your spouse did not want them around anymore?

\* **Vehicles**

How many vehicles will we need? What type of vehicle(s) would be most suited to our lifestyle needs? Which factors are important to you when buying a vehicle . . . Lots of space in the car? A certain make or model? A particular color? Gas mileage? Reliability (minimal upkeep)? Speed? Looks nice or cool? Can seat a certain number of passengers?

\* **Lifestyle Habits**

Do you like to eat most of your meals sitting at a table or do you tend to eat on the run? Do you live from paycheck to paycheck or do you typically have money left over at the end of the month? Are you a morning person or a night owl? What are your sleeping habits? Do you go to bed at a certain time every night or do you wait until you "feel tired"? What temperature do you like the room to be when sleeping? Do you require a fan or any white noise when sleeping? What are your lighting preferences for sleeping? Are you a person who needs a lot of sleep or requires a nap during the day? What do you typically do to help you wind down in the evenings? What can you do as a couple if your sleep patterns do not match?

\* **Family Goals**

Do you want to have children? What do you picture in your mind when you think of the "ideal family" or a family of your own? What would you consider to be your "ideal" family size? What are your thoughts on birth control or methods of family planning? How long should we wait until starting a family? What are your views on abortion? What are your views on adoption? How would our relationship be affected if for medical reasons we could not have children? If we are unable to have children of our own would we consider adopting?

\* **Raising Children**

How important is it to you that your children be raised in the same religion as you? Are there any toys or games that you would consider inappropriate for children? What are your views about fairytales and fantasies? What are your views about magic and the presence of fairy godmothers, witches, or the like in children's videos or books?

\* **Discipline and Child-Rearing**

Do you anticipate raising our children the same as you were raised, completely different from how you were raised, or a mixture of both? What forms of discipline do you consider to be appropriate? Where would you draw the line between discipline and child abuse? What are your views on spanking? What are your views about giving a child a "time out"? How many chances should a child get before discipline is required (will we "count to three" or repeat the command multiple times before inflicting a form of discipline)? What is the appropriate age to begin disciplining a child? At what age physical discipline end? What are your views on teenage rebellion? What would you consider to be effective/appropriate forms of disciplining a teenager? How should sibling conflicts be addressed? How can we teach our children proper conflict management? What should the husband's role be in discipline and child-rearing, especially if he is away at work much of the time? How can the wife show respect for the husband and support him as the "head" when it comes to discipline and child-rearing?

\* **Finances**

What are our current assets or liabilities? Have you ever taken a debt or loan? Do you *currently* have any debts you owe? What are your views on taking debts/loans? How much of a debt or loan is acceptable? What is your credit score? Will we have credit cards? How often should credit cards be used and for what kind of expenses? Will we have separate bank accounts or shared accounts? If separate accounts, who will be responsible for which expenses? Will we live off of one or two

incomes? Who will pay the bills, balance the checkbook, or work out the family budget? Who will file taxes? Will we file our taxes separately or as a joint couple? What will be our level of budgeting?

**\* Savings and Investments**

Will we have a savings account? How much should we aim to put into savings each month? Will we give our children financial aid for college? Will we save for retirement? What sorts of investments do we currently have? Are there any forms of investment we should pursue?

**\* Insurance**

Will health insurance be covered under employment? Do we want to have health insurance or be a part of a Christian health coop? What will we do for life insurance? Will we want to have dental insurance? Which insurance companies do you favor in regards to car insurance and home owners insurance?

**\* Charity and Tithing**

Will we tithe out of our earnings? How much should our tithe be and where should we give the tithe? Do either of us currently support any charities? What kinds of charities do you like to support? How much of your income goes towards charity? What are some ways we can financially help others less fortunate than ourselves? What do you think is an ideal way to help a homeless person? What are your views and convictions in regards to volunteering for a good cause?

**\* Missions**

What are your views on missions? Will we support missions as a couple? Have you ever been on a missions trip or have any desire to do so? What do you see as being your personal responsibility in regards to obeying the Great Commission?

**\* Work, Career, and Ambitions**

What is your dream job? Have you ever been called a workaholic? Have you ever been fired from a job? How much time is appropriate to give towards work? How do you feel about your spouse "bringing work home"? What do you envision as a "successful future"? Who will be the "bread winner" in our home? Will the wife work out of the home before we have children? Will the wife hold a career while there are children at home? Will the wife have a career after the children have left home?

**\* Conflict Management**

When you experience conflict in a relationship do you tend to fight or withdraw? What kinds of things make you angry? How do you handle your anger or frustration or how do you react when you're upset? How do you deal with stress? How should disagreements be handled in a marriage relationship?

**\* Extended Family**

Are you close to your extended family? Have you ever been alienated from your family? How important is it that you and your partner be on good terms with each other's families? What are your thoughts regarding having parents, in-laws, or dependent relatives living with you in your home? How important is it to you to attend family reunions or family get-togethers? What expectations do your parents or extended family have of you and how will you address these expectations? How close or far away do we want to be from our parents/in-laws?

**\* Friends**

Do you have a best friend? Is it important to you that your partner accept and like your friends? Who are the friends you most enjoy hanging out with? What qualities do you look for or require in a close friend? What do you do with your friends? Once married, are your current friends likely to encourage you to be faithful to your spouse? What expectations do you have for spending time with friends (with or without your spouse)? To what extent should a husband and wife engage in activities together or separate from their spouse? What are your views about maintaining friendships with past girlfriends/boyfriends/crushes? What if there is a personality clash between your friend and your

spouse? What if your spouse is uncomfortable about your interactions with a particular person? At what point would you be willing to sever a relationship/friendship for the sake of your spouse?

**\* Community**

Is it important for you to be involved in your local community? How important is it to you to know your neighbors or members in the community? Do you participate in community projects or meetings?

**\* Entertainment and Leisure**

Are you an introvert or an extravert? Is socializing important to you? What do you do for "fun"? Do you regularly go to the movies or prefer to watch movies at home? What criteria should we have in regards to books and written material? Will video games or computer games be permitted in our home? How much time is appropriate to spend on video/computer games? Do you enjoy spectator sports? Are certain seasons "off limits" because of sports? Do you enjoy going to museums, art shows, plays, or bazaars? Do you spend time reading about, watching, or discussing actors, models, or celebrities? How much money do you typically spend on hobbies or leisure activities? What are your hobbies or interests? How can we support each other's hobbies and interests? What would be an appropriate amount of money for our family to put towards hobbies or entertainment?

**\* Music**

What are your personal preferences in regards to styles of music? Are there any forms of music that you would consider wrong or inappropriate? Are there certain styles of music that you do not want in your home or would not want your children exposed to? What are your thoughts regarding lyric content? How do you determine whether or not a song is inappropriate?

**\* Movies, TV, and Theatre**

How often should movies or TV be permitted in our home? What should our standards be for the *type* of movies we watch? At what point will we turn a movie off or throw the disk away because of inappropriate content? What types of movies will we allow our children to watch? Should we have access to TV channels or just watch movies and films? How frequently will we go out to a theater?

**\* Social Media**

Do you belong to any internet chat groups? Have you ever met anyone through online dating programs? How much time in a day do you spend on email, facebook, twitter, or other social media sites? Do you have any "virtual friends" who you have never met in person?

**\* Rest**

Will we observe a Sabbath rest each week? How will we schedule in "days off", "family days" or "couple dates"? Will we have a specific time in the evening when we are officially "done working"?

**\* Vacations and Travel**

Will vacation getaways be an important part of our family's annual planning? How much is ideal for a vacation to cost? What did vacations look like for your family when you were growing up? What would you repeat or do differently from your childhood vacations? Do you have favorite vacation destinations or places you really want to visit? Do you enjoy traveling? How important is it for you to travel and "see the world"? Will we always aim to travel together or will we make independent trips from time to time? How would it affect the other person if one were to go places alone rather frequently (for work, commuting, hobby, visiting family, etc)?

**\* Holidays**

Which holidays are important for you to celebrate? What holiday traditions did your family have when you were growing up? Which of these traditions would you like to implement in our family or pass on to our children? How important is it to you that the holiday celebration happen "on the day"? Would you be hurt or disappointed if you had to post-pone a birthday or anniversary celebration until another day? What are some holiday expectations that our parents or extended family may have of

us? How should we deal with those expectations? How much is an appropriate amount to spend on gifts for each other (birthdays, anniversary, etc)? How much is an appropriate amount to spend on gifts for our children? How much is an appropriate amount to spend on gifts for extended family or friends?

**\* Political**

Do you think it is important to vote? Which political party do you favor? Do you consider yourself to be liberal, conservative, moderate, or do you reject political labels? Do you vote in presidential elections? What about congressional or local elections? Which political issues do you care about or have a strong opinion on (national security, global warming, environment, national debt, women's rights, gay rights, human rights, abortion, foreign affairs, etc)?

**\* Military**

Have you ever served in the military? What are your views about women soldiers? Do you personally identify more with a non-violent approach or agree with military action?

**\* Law**

Do you consider yourself to be a law-abiding citizen? Have you ever committed a crime? Have you ever been arrested or put in jail? Have you ever been involved in legal action or lawsuits? Have you ever been a victim of a crime? Do you believe it is important to be rigorously honest when paying taxes? Do you habitually drive above the posted speed limit? How much driving "over the speed limit" do you feel is wrong? Have you ever received a speeding ticket? Have you ever been in an accident? Are your family members and/or friends of the impression that you are a good/safe driver? Would you refuse to drive if you've had any alcoholic beverages? What if there was no other driver available?

**\* Cultural, Ethnic, or International Affairs**

Do you think it is important to have a passport? Do you think it is important for your children to have passports? Social security numbers? Do you speak any foreign languages? Is language learning going to be a priority in your children's education? If so, which language(s) do you want them to learn? Do you have any racial prejudices? Do you hang out with people of a different race, religion, or ethnicity?

**\* Convictions**

Do you have any strong opinion or personal convictions regarding . . . Card playing? Dancing? Musical instruments in church? Alcoholic beverages? Traditional holidays (Christmas, Thanksgiving, Halloween, etc)? Eating meat? Rules on modesty? Women wearing pants? Headcoverings for women? How short is appropriate for a woman's hair? Jewelry or make up? Men wearing jewelry? How long a man's hair should be? Facial hair?

**\* Wedding Ceremony**

What are your expectations for the wedding ceremony/celebration? What do you envision when you think about your wedding ceremony? What sort of budget do you see the wedding fitting into? What do you think are the responsibilities of the Groom's family or the Bride's family in regards to the wedding?

**\* Honeymoon**

Should we plan our honeymoon together or should it be a surprise to one of us? Do you have any particular expectations regarding a honeymoon? Do you view a honeymoon as an "opportunity to travel" or as a time to "step back and adjust to married life"?

**\* Sex and Physical Intimacy**

What was the attitude toward sex in your family? Was it talked about? Who taught you about sex? How familiar are you with male/female anatomy? Have you ever been tested for STD's? What are your views on masturbation and homosexuality? If I put on weight would it affect your attraction to me? If we eliminated physical attraction from our relationship, what would be left?