

# Frequently Asked Questions by Engaged Couples



## **How do I know if I'm ready to marry?**

- Do most people consider you emotionally mature, able to compromise, communicate well, share your feelings, and handle anger constructively?
- Do you love this other person so much that you are willing to put his or her happiness before your own?
- Are you marrying out of strength (I know who I am and am happy with myself) rather than weakness (I need someone to fill the gaps in my personality)?
- Have you developed strong friendships that have lasted over time?
- Are you able to keep commitments and delay gratification?
- Do you struggle on a regular basis with harmful habits or addictions, e.g. to alcohol, drugs, or pornography? That's not necessarily a reason not to marry, but it is something that left untreated can seriously weaken your ability to have a healthy marriage.
- Is God calling you to marriage? Have you prayed and discerned about this?

### **How do I know if this is the right person?**

- Do you share similar basic values about respecting human life, fidelity, commitment, what's right and wrong, honesty, life goals, and lifestyle?
- Does your significant other bring out the best in you, and you in him or her?
- Are you physically attracted to this person?
- Can you imagine growing old together?
- Do your trusted family members and friends support your relationship and affirm that it's healthy and respectful?
- Do you experience ongoing conflict or, worse, violence and abuse in your relationship? That is a red flag to slow down and seek advice and help, ensuring your safety if necessary.
- Is God calling you to marriage with this person? Have you prayed and discerned about this?

### **Is it necessary to feel “chemistry” between us for this to be the right person to marry?**

Chemistry, or feeling like you “click” with another person, is a natural part of a deepening relationship, and a wonderful part of falling in love, but unfortunately, chemistry is sometimes confused with infatuation, which can be fleeting.

In the good sense, chemistry means you feel a strong physical and emotional attraction to the other person and want to become closer to him or her. You feel happy in his or her presence and enjoy your time together. This sense of unity and joy at the other's presence can be a great foundation for a happy marriage.

In contrast, infatuation means you are consumed with thinking of the other person to the point of doing silly or risky actions to be together. You are blind to the faults of the other and consumed with being noticed by him or her. Your need to be liked is so strong that you are willing to give up your own personality or morals for the other's affection. Often infatuation is an unequal relationship between the object of adulation and the infatuated person. If this describes your relationship, you may want to step back and reevaluate.

### **Doesn't living together before marriage prevent me from marrying the wrong person and thus getting divorced later on?**

Although it may sound counterintuitive, studies show that cohabiting couples:

- Increase their risk of breaking up after marriage (46% higher divorce rate)
- Increase the risk of domestic violence for women, and the risk of physical and sexual abuse for children
- Have lower levels of happiness and well-being compared to married couples

### **Why should I attend a marriage preparation program? We've known each other for a long time and can't imagine we'd learn anything new.**

You don't have to discover all the things that make a marriage work by trial and error. Others have done some of that work for you. At a marriage prep program, you get a glimpse into other couples' marriages so you can have a more realistic sense of what's normal and what's not, and you can get solid advice on how to have a happy, holy marriage.

Although every marriage relationship is unique, there are many tips experienced couples can share that will help you when you face bumps in your own marriage. Marriage preparation programs also give you an opportunity to talk with each other about the wide spectrum of "must-have conversations" before marriage. You've probably talked about most of them, but you may have avoided a few. This is a time to check yourselves.

Most likely you will find that you gain confidence in your decision to marry as a result of attending a marriage preparation program. Occasionally, attending a marriage preparation program can make you realize that it isn't the right time to marry, or that this may not be the right person. That's okay, because engagement is a time to discern marriage actively and intentionally.

### **How much income should we have between us to marry?**

Many couples, especially younger ones, start their married lives together without a large income, and possibly with debt. This can be a challenge, but it shouldn't necessarily delay marriage. There's no magic number when it comes to the income and financial assets a couple should have before marrying, and bride and groom promise to be faithful "for richer" or "for poorer." At the same time, it's important to realize that financial hardship can cause conflict in a marriage, and to talk with each other about your plan for meeting your basic needs. Don't be afraid to seek wise counsel if you're not sure how you'll make ends meet.

### **How much does a typical wedding cost?**

Many wedding planners will tell you that the average wedding costs between \$20,000-\$30,000, but it definitely doesn't have to! Although the ante has been rising as to what is considered "typical" for a wedding, simplicity can be elegant. Consider asking friends and family for help on your big day, having a smaller wedding if cost is a major concern, or researching inexpensive do-it-yourself alternatives. Don't let the perceived cost of weddings keep you from saying "I do." And remember, a wedding is a day; a marriage is a lifetime.