

Premarital Counseling: Things to Cover

By Ron Edmondson - December 22, 2012 in [Marriage, Ministry](#)

As with most pastors, I've performed a fair number of weddings. Part of being in ministry is helping couples enter the most important of relationships...marriage. It's a daunting task and responsibility. Prior to a wedding, however, a minister has access to speak into a couple's life in a way unique to any other time in their life.

I feel it's important to help couples, as much as I can, be prepared for marriage. With time always at a premium, I frequently suggest couples walk through the book "[Preparing for Marriage](#)". I've found it a helpful tool in thinking through many of the issues a marriage will encounter. I also try to make sure, as a minimum, the couple understands a few key principles prior to their wedding day.

Here are 7 issues I try to teach in pre-marital counseling:

You are different – Opposites do tend to attract. Each spouse is not only differently physically, but there are differences in backgrounds, outlook on life and the way to approach a situation. This is not intended as a curse against marriage. God designed those differences for a reason. The more a couple learns to celebrate those differences, the stronger a marriage will become.

Leave and cleave – Don't let either set of in-laws dictate how you lead your new family. Decide in advance that no one, related or otherwise, is going to be a wedge between you two. Every couple has lots of other relationships, including perhaps children someday, but none of them should be allowed to interfere with the oneness God intends to create with the marriage.

Expect surprises – Life won't always be as blissful as it is today. There will be hard days, whether self-induced or life-induced. Life brings changes and those times have the ability to catch even the best marriages off guard if not prepared for them. We can never be fully prepared for what might come, but we can prepare ourselves that when something comes, whatever it is and no matter how hard it is, that we will handle it. Couples should use these times to improve the strength of their marriage rather than allow them to pull the marriage apart.

Make a commitment to the marriage no matter what – Couples usually assume they are doing this by standing at the altar together, but statistics would say otherwise. Many times these days a person is saying "I'm committed until it becomes difficult or until the love we have today fades." That's not the Biblical picture of marriage God designed. Marriage is more than simply a feeling of love, it is a commitment to love...for better or worse...from this day forward. Verbalizing and agreeing to that on the front end, and continuing to remind yourself of that through the difficult days, will help the marriage last. Couples who should ask for help soon, not letting problems in the marriage linger too long without asking for help. Remove the fear of

asking for professional counseling if necessary. It would be better to get help early than to see the marriage disintegrate beyond repair.

Model after the right couples – I encourage couples to find a couple whose marriage they admire and follow them closely. Most likely they have some stories to share. Things may not have been as wonderful throughout their marriage as they are today. No doubt they have learned some practices to having a strong marriage. I challenge couples to learn all they can from the couple they want to be like.

Evaluate often – Couples should ask themselves often, are we growing together as a couple or further apart? Is the marriage growing stronger or are there holes that need addressing? Don't assume your spouse feels as you do. (I've learned this is especially true for men who often don't know there is a problem until it's a big problem.) Establish the understanding early in the relationship that you have the right to periodically check on the state of your marriage. (

Put Christ first – This is the one most couples expect the pastor to say, but it's not just the preacher answer, it's the best secret to a lasting marriage. "A chord of three strands is not easily broken." A couple's individual and collective relationship with Christ will ensure they can endure the hardest days of a marriage. When the relationship with Christ suffers, the marriage will often suffer. Satan looks for any excuse to destroy the marriage. Pour your heart and life into Christ and let Him strengthen and sustain your marriage.

That's my list. I'm not sure they apply simply to premarital couples. These are good principles for couples regardless of how long they have been married.

Just so you know, I have, at times, simply shared with them this list. Sometimes I weave them into the discussion. Regardless of how you choose to do it, make sure you are strategic in helping couples begin their married life together.