

99 Questions Before Saying "I Do"



~ Questions to Ask Before Marriage ~

by Jim & Carrie Gordon

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If there is one thing that can be done to stem the tide of marriage failure, it is **Marriage Preparation**. One of the key components of this preparation leads to getting to know your partner better than anyone else on the planet!

Marriage Preparation: Become an Expert of Your Spouse-to-Be!

Preparing yourself for marriage—becoming an expert of your spouse—comes by learning more about them. This happens best by asking questions ... and that is what this book is all about!

In terms of couples asking questions, we love what Dr. Robin Smith says in her book, *“Lies at the Altar”*¹. *“Questions should be asked before marriage, and asked again during marriage. And they should be answered truthfully, not how you think your partner wants you to answer them. After all, it is truth that sets us free. If you are dating and you don’t have the time to ask questions, then you don’t have the time to get married.”*

Plan and Prepare for the Marriage—Not Just for the Wedding!

We are told that, on average, US couples spend \$19,581 for their wedding. However, the majority of couples spend between \$14,686 and \$24,476! This does not include costs for a honeymoon or engagement ring!²

Consider this: if every couple planning for marriage applied as much effort, focused attention, and resources on marriage preparation courses as they did for their wedding day, in five years the rate of divorce would decline significantly!

1 See <http://www.drrobinsmith.com/>

2 See www.costofwedding.com/



"The Intimate Couple" is dedicated to helping couples strengthen their marriages—at any stage of the relationship. But we take special delight in investing in the lives of young people preparing for marriage! Hence this book, **99 Questions Before Saying "I Do"!**

The questions listed here are meant to be points of discussion for couples that will accelerate the process of becoming experts of each other, and in some cases, help formulate values and beliefs to assist in **developing true intimacy—the goal of every successful couple.**

The Bible offers some pretty good advice for us when it says, *"How can two walk together unless they agree?"*³ Every happily married couple will agree that marriage is very much about compromise.

"I'll let my wife paint the bathroom blue, if she lets me go on a golf weekend with the guys in my small group." This may be a poor illustration of compromise, but you get the idea: life is about give-and-take.

When we're talking about beliefs and values, though, compromise is not an option!

If a devoted Christian woman falls in love with a charming atheist, their relationship is in jeopardy before it even begins! Core values trump infatuation any day of the week!

It is our opinion that some questions are **Deal Breakers**. If a couple doesn't agree on **the answers to deal-breaker questions**, it means there are fundamental differences in perspective, and it is highly unlikely that they could experience a stable, successful relationship. A couple may disagree on what color to paint the bathroom, with very little long-term damage to their relationship. The same is not true when couples disagree about having children after marriage. This may be a deal-breaker question that would threaten long-term success.





I. Fundamental, Core Values Issues (Most of These are Deal Breakers!)

Core values represent the full scope of our belief system. Unfortunately, most people don't take the time to even consider what they believe about life, love, and spirituality until problems and conflicts arise.

It is vital that couples spend appropriate time talking through these questions making sure that answers are totally truthful—and not just the answers expected by the other partner!

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 1 What are your spiritual beliefs?
- 2 How important are they to you?
- 3 Are you committed to practicing what you believe?
- 4 Do you think marriage is for life?
- 5 Do you consider marriage a contract or a covenant? ⁴
- 6 Are you comfortable discussing everything? (sexual expectations, religious beliefs, money management, long-term goals, practical responsibilities, children)

⁴ <http://schansblog.blogspot.com/2007/10/marriage-as-covenant-vs-contract.html>



- 7 Are you willing that we find a mature married couple to be our “marriage mentors”? ⁵
- 8 If we have severe relationship troubles, are you willing to get counseling with me?



⁵ This may take time. Find a couple you trust and who have great success in their own marriage. **“Mentoring is a brain to pick, a shoulder to cry on, and a kick in the pants!”** John C. Crosby. Also check out: www.realrelationships.com



II. Previous Relationships

Yes, it's true: dating relationships can help us relate to different kinds of people, learn to discuss our feelings, and explore the range of emotions that every romance brings. Too often, though, previous relationships are detrimental and simply contribute to bringing "junk" into our next relationship. And, if previous relationships have been sexual in nature—then *everything changes* in moving forward!

When one or both of you have a sexual history, you need to engage in up-front, honest dialogue. God designed sex to be the super-glue holding marriage together on multiple fronts: sexually (obviously), spiritually, emotionally, and intellectually. In fact, sex is a profound force tying souls together. Breaking that connection with a sexual partner, and moving on to another relationship does not necessarily dissolve the "soul-ties" with the first partner.

These sexual liaisons from previous relationships—unless properly dealt with—will result in feelings of poor self worth and insecurities being carried into and impacting new relationships.

The questions in this section, then, are also **deal-breakers** since improper perspectives about past sexual encounters will bring damaging attitudes, fears, and insecurities into a marriage, creating severe problems.

We suggest that couples in this situation read the book, *The Invisible Bond*⁶, by Barbara Wilson. This book is an effective resource in facing and eliminating spiritual and emotional bonds with previous sexual partners

Apart from the spiritual/emotional issues to work through if you have a sexual past, couples should consult with their doctor about the potential risks of STD's and HIV/AIDS resulting from past sexual contact.

6 See <http://www.barbarawilson.org>



Dealing with Guilt from Previous Sexual Relationships: Guilt and shame are very common by-products of sexual encounters outside of marriage; Jesus death on the cross allows for forgiveness and removal of sin and its consequences of guilt and shame. If you are still wrestling with guilt, find a pastor or Christian counselor to help work through all guilt—there is no room for it in any marriage!

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 9** Have you been in a serious, romantic relationship before?
- 10** Did any good come from your previous relationships? Discuss.
- 11** What issues arose that you are still dealing with?
- 12** What did you learn about yourself?
- 13** Was it a sexual relationship?
- 14** Have you hidden any other past sexual liaisons from me?
- 15** Did sex occur because you agreed it should, or as a result of “giving in to temptation” in the passion of the moment?
- 16** What kind of emotional baggage do you think is being brought in from other relationships?
- 17** Are there feelings of guilt, regret, or shame that you’re dealing with as a result?



III. Marriage Roles

For the vast majority of couples, the marriage roles they saw their parents assume, is what they tend to view as normal. For example, in my wife's family, it was her father who went to the grocery store to buy groceries every week. It was normal that the husband assumed that particular role. Was it right or wrong? Well, neither. Actually, the very question is wrong! Right or wrong is not an appropriate adjective as applied to a role, it just **was**.

Someone assuming that her concept of what a husband or wife's role should be is the only correct one, may experience some conflict!

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 18** When two people live together, one usually leads. Who will be the leader in your marriage?
- 19** For many marriages, the leadership is divided up according to areas of strength or interest. Who takes care of household chores, vacation planning, financial planning, etc.?
- 20** What will this kind of leadership mean in the context of your marriage? In other words, how can leadership be delegated in a particular area, and yet both partners have a voice in the discussion and decision making?



IV. Finances

Most studies conclude that money and/or sex problems are the top two reasons cited as reasons that couples divorce. Money issues are huge in their impact on a relationship and, fortunately, can be settled even before problems begin! If engaged couples can get their financial houses in order, one of the biggest marriage stressors will be eliminated, or at least greatly reduced!

As part of every marriage preparation curriculum, it is our opinion that Dave Ramsey's **Financial Peace University**⁷ course be included. We give our whole-hearted endorsement to the material presented! Every engaged couple would benefit tremendously by taking this course!

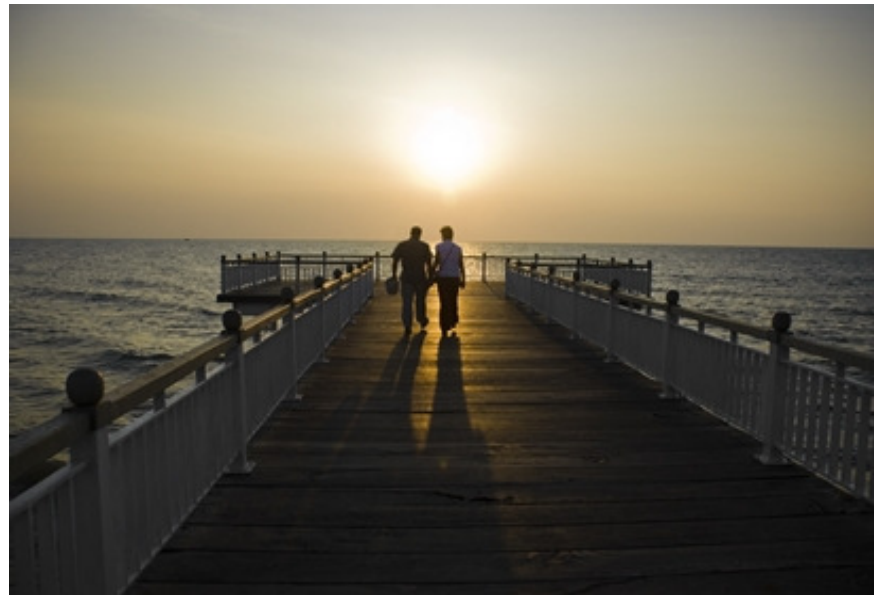
Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 21** How much money do you owe? (lines of credit, credit cards, loans of any kind)
- 22** Do you own a house or property with a mortgage? If so, how much is the mortgage?
- 23** What are all your monthly obligations?
- 24** What amount is discretionary, and what amount can't be changed or eliminated?
- 25** How do you handle your money: are you a spender or saver?
- 26** How much do you earn annually?
- 27** What are your financial goals?

⁷ See <http://www.daveramsey.com>



- 28** Do you have a retirement strategy?
- 29** How will you budget?
- 30** Who will do the record keeping?
- 31** How will you make financial decisions together?
- 32** Are you willing to take Dave Ramsey's Financial Peace University (FPU) finance course? ⁸



⁸ Every couple preparing for marriage should take this course! See <http://www.daveramsey.com>



V. Home Life

As with the marriage roles and responsibilities, our own upbringing usually determines our perception of normal and right or wrong in family and home life. The key is communication—talking about all of the assumptions! When couples together decide who cooks, cleans, and does the laundry—oh, and yes, who buys groceries!—there will be less room for conflict or disappointments by virtue of making incorrect assumptions.

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 33** What factors must be considered in choosing where to live?
- 34** What are your thoughts regarding renting vs. buying a house?
- 35** Who cleans the house?
- 36** Who makes the meals?
- 37** Are you willing to negotiate all of the household chores?





VI. Sexual Topics (Answers may be Deal Breakers!)

Given the impact our family upbringing and our personal sexual background has on our marriage, this section will have separate questions.

In this section, we ask you to discuss the dynamics of sexuality in your home growing up. Was sexuality a hidden topic that no one referenced—except as it related to something bad?

On one hand, in very religious and conservative homes, sex is sometimes relegated to the shadows, instead of being celebrated as a gift from God. If this is the background of one or both partners, it is critical to think through the implications in your marriage! There is the danger that sex is thought of as being bad, or at least something that should not be openly discussed. On the other hand, partners that have been promiscuous and have not practiced sexual restraint bring the opposite danger into the relationship.

In both cases, the solution is to evaluate where you are right now as a couple, and then communicate clearly with each other expressing where you want to be, and where you believe God wants you to be! This process of evaluation and communication will serve you well as a couple—not just in this area of sexuality, but in every area!

Family Background and Attitudes about Sexuality Questions:

- 38** Did your parents talk openly about sex with you? Discuss the dynamics of sexuality in your home while you were growing up.
- 39** Was sexuality a hidden topic that no one referenced—except as it related to something bad?



40 Some families promote *guilt* rather than *abstinence*. The abstinence message basically tells us to wait to have sex; the guilt message tells us engaging in sex is bad. What message did your family give?

Personal Sexual Background Questions:

41 Where did you get your present *knowledge* about sex? School? Books? Pornography? Family?

42 Have you ever had sex? (If yes, other issues, emotional and health-related, are now vital to talk about!)

43 Pornography is highly addictive; have you viewed porn? When was the last time you exposed yourself to porn?

44 If pornography was a part of your life, you will have serious issues to deal with that will impact your marriage. Are you willing to do whatever it takes to become free from pornography?

Abusive Experiences Questions:

45 Have you been a victim of abuse of any kind? If so, describe in detail what happened.

46 Have you shared your story with others? Have the perpetrators of the abuse been brought to justice?

47 Are you still affected by your abusive experience? Are you willing to get counseling? ⁹

48 Have you discovered freedom from all shame and guilt that might have been associated with this experience?

⁹ Ask your pastor, doctor, or social services representative for recommendations



General Sex-Related Questions:

- 49 What are your expectations about sex?
- 50 Do you assume men and women have the same needs and desires for sex?
- 51 Are you willing to read books together that will help prepare us for the sexual part of our relationship?
- 52 Are you willing to take a marriage preparation course? ¹⁰



¹⁰ Check out www.prepare-enrich.com and <http://www.marriage101online.com/>



VII. Family and Relatives

Getting married will mean you are a new family unit! What expectations do you hold regarding your relationship with parents and other family members? Are you able to maintain a healthy balance between being independent as a couple, yet still part of the larger family with parents and in-laws?

Due to the complexities of parental and family relationships, the issue of relatives may be a bigger one than you first might imagine!

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 53** Which word best describes your relationship with your parents: excellent, hostile, hurtful, mediocre, cool, strained, improving, loving, domineering, coaching, encouraging
- 54** What do our parents think about our plans for marriage?
- 55** What are the expectations our parents have for us?
- 56** How will we relate with our parents?
- 57** What will be the frequency of visiting or socializing?
- 58** How can we protect our new relationship, while still honoring our parents?





VIII. Children

Though at first blush this may not seem to be an issue, don't take anything for granted—assuming your partner has the same feelings as you do about having children. For some couples we know, this very issue has been very divisive indeed! Couples need to communicate about expectations and remove all assumptions.

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 59** Do you want to have children? When? How many?
- 60** What were your personal “growing up” experiences like in your home?
- 61** Was good parenting modeled by your mother and father?





IX. Conflict

Conflict can be defined as a state of disharmony, often leading to battles. Most of us try to avoid conflict—especially during dating and engagement. Often when we do engage in conflict, our emotions are so raw, and we’ve had so little constructive practice—as well as positive role models—that we don’t do it very well!

Some people think conflict is inherently bad; this is not the case! Conflict can actually lead us to deeper levels of appreciation, understanding, and closeness if we handle it correctly. On the other hand, when conflict is not responded to correctly, it can destroy a marriage.

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 62** How well do we handle conflict? (Suggestion: Take a personality test online. It will help assess your tendencies in this area. ¹¹)
- 63** How will decisions be made when we disagree?
- 64** Does conflict make you angry? (This may be a Deal Breaker!)
- 65** Which word best describes your actions in the middle of conflict? avoidance, retreat, silence, aggression, anger, defensiveness, offended



¹¹ See <http://www.learnmyself.com/>; <http://www.personaldna.com/tests.php>



X. Full Disclosure (These answers speak to identity issues—how we see ourselves impacts everyone close to us; some of these issues are Deal Breakers!)

The questions from this section cover a grab-bag of different topics, but all emphasize the need for openness, honesty, and the ability to reveal secrets. This is so difficult for most of us! We can only reveal or disclose things that are painful or embarrassing for us when we feel secure and safe. Total acceptance and unconditional love pave the way for this degree of disclosure. As challenging as it may seem, pursuing this depth of intimacy will provide a marriage that is incredibly strong and fulfilling!

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 66** Is there anything about your past that I don't know but should be aware of?
- 67** If you could change one thing (anything!) about yourself, what would it be?
- 68** If you could change one thing (anything!) about me, what would it be?
- 69** Are you willing for both of us to have a complete physical done by a family doctor, so we can be aware of each other's medical history?



XI. Random Questions from the Wagners

We found the following questions in the book, *God Chicks and the Men they Love*¹² by Holly and Philip Wagner, to be very helpful.

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 70 What is your biggest fear?
- 71 What do you want our life to look like in 5 years?
- 72 If you had a million dollars, what would you do with it?
- 73 What are two things you love about me?
- 74 If money were no object, where would you like to go on vacation?
- 75 What are you looking forward to?

12 See <http://www.godchicks.com>



XII. Random Questions from Dr. Smith

We found the following questions in the book *Lies at the Altar*¹³, by Dr. Robin Smith

Questions to Ask Each Other:

- 76 Are you working in your chosen profession?
- 77 How many hours a week do you work?
- 78 Do you exercise regularly?
- 79 What do you like or dislike about your appearance?
- 80 Have you ever been alienated from your family?
- 81 Do you have a best friend?
- 82 Are you serving in your church or community?
- 83 What is your idea of a fun day?
- 84 Do you enjoy traveling?
- 85 Do you like to cook?

13 See <http://www.drrobinsmith.com/>



86 Are there household responsibilities that you think are primarily male or female?

87 Are you a morning person or an evening person?





XIII. Again, here are a few more random questions from us that will help you become an expert on your spouse!

- 88** If you knew you couldn't fail, what would you do?
- 89** What are your top 3 spiritual gifts? ¹⁴
- 90** Can you describe your personality type to me? ¹⁵
- 91** Are you more concerned with succeeding, or not failing?
- 92** What have you failed at in your life?
- 93** Were there lessons to be learned from that "failing" experience?
- 94** What was the worst experience of your life? Why?
- 95** Did any good thing result from this experience?
- 96** What one thing about your life would you change if you had the power?

14 Check out: www.kodachrome.org/spiritgift for a free online test

15 Check out: <http://www.41q.com/> and <http://www.humanmetrics.com/cgi-win/JTypes1.htm> for more free online tests



- 97 Would you consider yourself a confident person? ¹⁶
- 98 Would you commit to regularly using marriage enrichment resources (books, websites, conferences) with me after we're married?
- 99 Are you willing to establish an accountability-partner relationship? ₁₇

Provided you have taken the time to honestly answer all of the questions listed here, there is no doubt that the two of you are much better prepared for marriage than when you started! All the best as you venture on this wonderful journey of marriage!



16 Dr. John Maxwell – “Confidence in oneself is the cornerstone of leadership. It is difficult for those who do not believe in themselves to have much faith in anyone else. Self-confidence brings confidence in others.” Check out <http://drkeithjohnson.com/> for free confidence resources.

17 Accountability-partners keep each other on track with personal disciplines and healthy relationships. It is so vital—especially for men! Check out this great article on accountability partners: http://www.associatedcontent.com/article/403678/improve_your_christian_life_by_finding.html?cat=9



About Jim and Carrie Gordon

In September 2007, Jim and Carrie launched their website www.the-intimate-couple.com, dedicated to providing "*resources that encourage couples to develop their spiritual, emotional, intellectual, and sexual intimacy as God designed it*". The experiences of their 28+ year marriage has provided much of the valuable content for the website that continues to grow in readership, impacting thousands of marriages around the world!

The "*signature*" resource of The Intimate Couple is the "**7 Day Sex Challenge**", an intensive marriage course developed by Jim and Carrie. In addition, Jim and Carrie have produced other e-books, presented marriage seminars, answered hundreds of questions submitted through their website, facilitated pre-marriage classes, and worked alongside couples experiencing relationship difficulties as well as couples wanting to move their marriage from "good to great".

Be sure to drop by their website www.the-intimate-couple.com. You'll find hundreds of free articles dedicated to making your marriage the awesome experience God designed it to be!

