

Accountability

Accountability remains important in this stage. Many couples make it to this point in purity and then fall into sin.

Food for Thought

Topics to discuss before you get engaged. Meet the 8 F's.

1. **Friendship** – Do you enjoy being together? Can you see yourself becoming the best of friends? Do you have a good relationship together?
2. **Faith** – Do you see eye to eye on fundamental issues of doctrine (the gospel, the church, the atonement, etc.)? Are there things that would stop you from being able to fellowship in the same church (e.g., baptism)?
3. **Family** – Do you share the same views about family and the workplace? What does she want to do after you start having kids? Gender roles are especially important in this discussion.
4. **Finances**—What is your philosophy of money? Do either of you have significant debt? Do you have a budget and who will maintain it in marriage?
5. **Future**—What do you both want to do with your lives and do your visions match up?
6. **Foolishness**—What difficult things from the past does your future spouse need to know about you before you get engaged? The purpose of this is NOT for you to share a laundry list of sins, but to be honest about your past. Discussion of your sin (especially sexual sin) should be vague and general, not specific and detailed.
7. **Fights**—How have you handled conflict in the dating relationship? How are you working to handle conflict now?
8. **Fears**—What fears do you have in getting married or getting married to this specific person?

Core Seminars—Singleness & Courtship **Class 10: Make a Decision: Engagement & Marriage**



Introduction

All along the way, we have thought through different stages of engagement—initiation; early stages; intermediate stage. Today we want to think about the last stage of courting, engagement and then preparing for the marriage.

The Last Stage of Courtship

In this last stage, three elements are often significant:

1. It is often time for dating couples to visit parents (if it has not already been done).
2. The key question for this last stage is: “What do I not know that I need to know in order to get engaged?”
3. Making the decision to get engaged.

What are you looking for?

If you've done this process well, the core characteristics that you should be looking for in someone to marry are the same as those you initially wanted in someone to date (Proverbs 31, I Peter 3, Titus 1, I Timothy 3, Ephesians 5). These are the descriptions of men and women that you should consider as you determine whether or not to marry someone.

Making the decision

First, look at the purpose that God has for your life. Will you be able, generally speaking, to serve God better together than apart? Will you be able to accomplish ministry (be it your original plan or one that you have caught a vision for through this person) more effectively together than apart?

Second, look at Ephesians 5:22-33.

Lastly, if your relationship leads you into sin (physically or otherwise); if it dulls your interest in your church or your walk with the Lord; if you are less eager to learn, study, grow and pray because of the influence of, or interactions with, your partner, why in the world would you consider making that relationship permanent? Cf. Eph 5:1-14

Popular Myths that Hurt the Decision-making Process

First, you don't need as much information as the world says you do. This feeds the myth of a perfect or easy marriage. Cf. 1 Cor 13:12; Gal 5:13.

Another myth is need to "keep your options open because the perfect woman or man could walk around the corner and you don't want to be caught settling." Cf. Jam 4:6; Mark 10:43-45.

This is closely related to another myth, the myth that says we must have overwhelming romantic attraction and chemistry with our partner *before* we "pop the question."

You must also disregard the myth that perpetual companionship and an indefinite "deciding" stage are ok. Men must be deliberate in moving the relationship forward or moving out of it, and women must make a decision too as soon as it's appropriate. Cf. Matt 5:37

One final exhortation. If you believe that you are called to be married, and you believe you have found the person you want to marry, then get married.

It's unwise (and in sinful violation of some of the other principles we've discussed) to have a three-year engagement or an inappropriate relationship because the logistics of getting married aren't perfect.

Engagement

Time Spent

In this first category, time spent, the main concerns should be to avoid temptation and to keep in mind that you are not married yet. That simply means keeping basically the same constraints on the settings in which you spent time together before you were engaged.

Topics Discussed

Don't spend significant time talking about what your sex life will be like once you're married. Do talk clearly about boundaries in your physical relationship, and do put clear methods in place to help you adhere to them, but don't spend time fantasizing about your future sexual relationship. Cf. 1 Cor 7:1-9

Prepare for marriage

Make good use of your engagement by using it not just to prepare for the wedding. Take some time to actually prepare for marriage as well. Get solid, biblical marriage counseling, either from the pastor who will be conducting the wedding service or from some other person who is mature in the faith and in marriage.

Find and read a good marriage book together. Discuss its implications for your marriage.

Finally, talk about things that you think might be sources of conflict during your marriage. Cf. James 1:19; 3: 1-12; 4:1-2, 6-10.

Prepare for the Wedding

A wedding is a *worship service* in which two people happen to get married. As you plan the music, preaching, and other aspects of your wedding service, keep in mind that it is ultimately an event of worship before God.