



Engaged

First of all, congratulations on this wonderful milestone! This season of your life will be filled with much joy and anticipation of the wedding day to come. There are hundreds of decisions awaiting you, both important and not so important. What music will play at the wedding? Who will perform the ceremony? What kind of food will be at the reception? What color napkins do you want? What favors will you give the guests? Tensions will be high as you won't agree completely on every decision. Stress will be present as you're trying to juggle all of the details. You'll have to tiptoe the line of pleasing your families while still staying true to who you are as a couple. As you're going through all of this, it's hard to keep the meaning of a wedding in mind: it's the start of a marriage. It's the beginning of two people leaving their families to become one new family. That truth gets lost in the midst of flowers, linens, and food choices. As much as your wedding needs to be planned, you need to spend more time planning your marriage.

The Facts about Marriage

The idea of marriage has been around since the very first couple. In the Bible there are more than five hundred references to marriage, married, husband, and wife. Believers who regularly attend church divorce at a rate 35% lower than secular couples. Nominal Christians, who seldom or never attend church, have higher divorce rates than secular couples. So, one of the most important things you can do during your engagement is spiritual in nature. Your marriage will be stronger and your relationship better if you and your future spouse are on the same page spiritually.

Though culture suggests that marriage is disposable, God has a different perspective. Marriage is one man and one woman united for life. There is no escape clause. The survival rate of second marriages is significantly lower than that of first marriages. For every additional marriage, the likelihood of divorce increases.

The Purpose of Marriage

God designed marriage as an instrument to make us more like Christ. In his book, *Sacred Marriage*, Gary Thomas asks this question, "What if God designed marriage to make us holy more than to make us happy?" Is it possible that there is something much more profound in the heart of God than simply to make us happy?

During your engagement, you must learn to lay down your own ambitions so you can love and serve your spouse. Through marriage you will learn about unconditional love, respectful honor, how to forgive and be forgiven. You will see your shortcomings and grow from that insight. You will develop a servant's heart, and draw closer to God. As a result, true happiness and contentment can be discovered, and this is one of God's ultimate desires and purposes for designing the covenant of marriage.



RELATED SCRIPTURE

Then the Lord God made a woman from the rib he had taken out of the man, and he brought her to the man. The man said, "This is now bone of my bones and flesh of my flesh; she shall be called 'woman,' for she was taken out of man." For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife, and they will become one flesh (Genesis 2:21-24).

Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. It does not dishonor others, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres (1 Corinthians 13:4-7).

Two are better than one, because they have a good return for their labor: If either of them falls down, one can help the other up. But pity anyone who falls and has no one to help them up. Also, if two lie down together, they will keep warm. But how can one keep warm

alone? Though one may be overpowered, two can defend themselves. A cord of three strands is not quickly broken (Ecclesiastes 4:9-12).

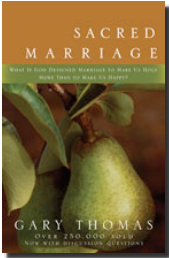
fulfillment. Included are insightful questions, suggestions, and exercises.

Small Groups at Long Hollow

You can find on-campus and off-campus groups that meet your needs by visiting longhollow.com/grow and clicking the button to Launch Group Finder Now.



RELATED RESOURCES

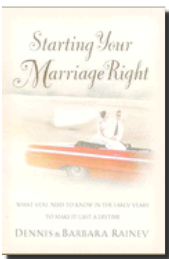


Sacred Marriage

Gary Thomas

ISBN 978-0310242826

Your marriage is a spiritual discipline designed to help you know God better, trust him more fully, and love him more deeply. God's primary intent for your marriage isn't to make you happy . . . It's to make you holy. Everything about your marriage—everything—is filled with prophetic potential, with the capacity for discovering and revealing Christ's character. Sacred Marriage uncovers the mystery of God's overarching purpose.

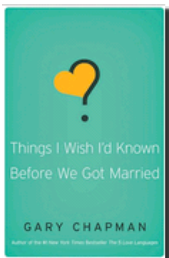


Starting Your Marriage Right: What You Need to Know in the Early Years to Make It Last a Lifetime

Dennis and Barbara Rainey

ISBN 978-0785288527

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Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married

Gary Chapman

ISBN 978-0802481832

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