

**A WORKBOOK FOR COUPLES THINKING  
ABOUT ENGAGEMENT AND MARRIAGE**

# Radical Relationships



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# Introduction

*“I now declare you to be man and wife together for as long as you both shall live.*

*Therefore what God has joined together, let man not separate.”*

With those awesome words married life begins. An exciting new future opens up before you. Marriage really can be a joy-filled adventure together more wonderful than you dare imagine. However, married life is complex and the future unknown. This book will help you as you think about marriage. If it seems right for you to go ahead, your careful preparation can lay a strong foundation for your life together and help your dreams come true.

Relationships before marriage tend to go through three phases:



**Discovery**



**Weighing & Testing**



**Commitment**

This book is designed to help you in the second phase of Weighing and Testing. It is a workbook! Glancing through the comments and questions will be of very little value.

You need to sit down and decide your own answers. Used in this way, it can be enjoyable and will help you to discover more about each other.

Take one section a day or one section a week. Set apart an hour or so to write separately about the topic and then an hour to quietly discuss together what you have written. If you are apart, you may like to write on one topic a week in your letters. Writing takes discipline but it will help you get to grips with the issue and share your thoughts and feelings. It will enable you to express deep things that are important for both of you.

If God shows you that you are not for one another, be glad that you have discovered that before marriage. Accept His word to you knowing that His plans are for your good. There is something even better ahead!

If He confirms his blessing on your love for each other, rejoice. May the Lord himself enrich and be with you on this delightful voyage of discovery.

# 1

## Are you ready?

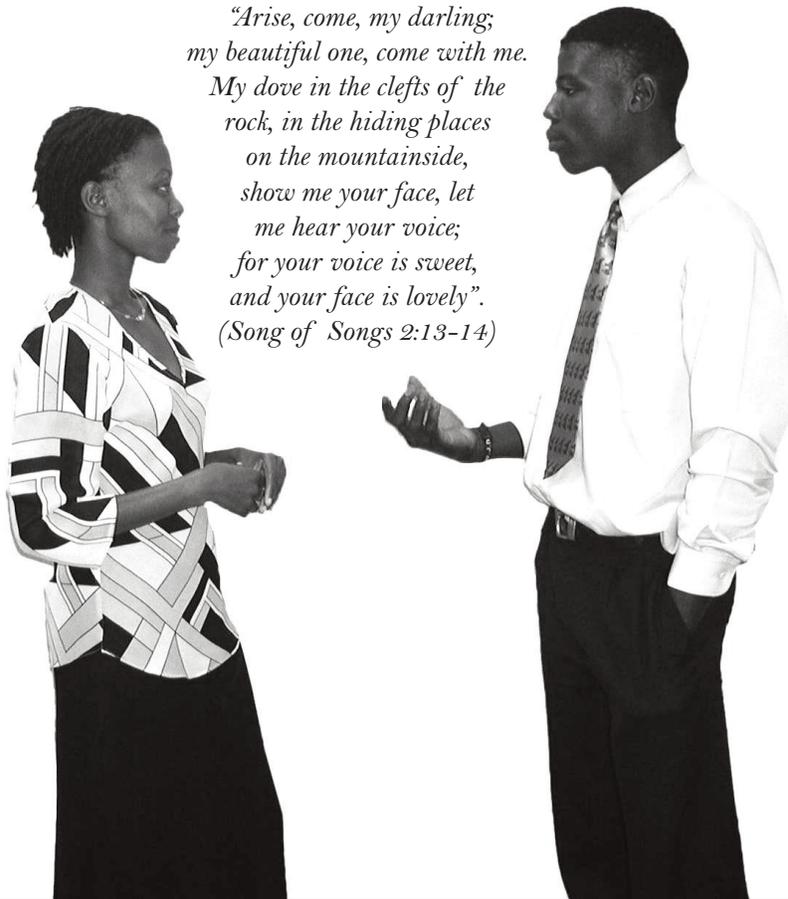
People have different reasons for wanting to get married and sometimes unrealistic ideas about what married life will be like. This first section will help you to explore your own hopes and expectations and to understand possible difficulties in your relationship. It also looks briefly at what the Bible says about marriage.

My lover spoke and said to me:

*“Arise, come, my darling;  
my beautiful one, come with me.*

*My dove in the clefts of the  
rock, in the hiding places  
on the mountainside,  
show me your face, let  
me hear your voice;  
for your voice is sweet,  
and your face is lovely”.*

*(Song of Songs 2:13-14)*



# Foundations

*"I met her, and it was love at first sight."  
—Western saying*

*"The African marries and then falls  
in love."  
—African saying*



*You set my feet on solid ground.*

**T**ake time to write short answers to these questions. Writing is not always easy but it makes us think clearly and is worth the effort. Then share your answers together and discuss openly with your friend how you are feeling.

1. What is marriage? Attempt your own definition. What is its purpose?
2. What do you expect from marriage? The word 'expectation' carries an attitude of hope and the anticipation of good things ahead. List five goals you have for your marriage. (A goal should be realistic, attainable and have a time limit!)
3. List what you believe are the most important foundations for building a solid relationship in marriage.
4. There are many reasons and motives for marriage. What are yours?
5. What attracted you to one another?
6. What are the things you fear most about marriage?
7. What problems do you expect your marriage to solve? What hopes will it bring to pass? What expectations will it fulfill?



## Bible Search

8. The Bible describes marriage as a covenant between a man and a woman made in the presence of God. A covenant is a solemn vow and an unbreakable commitment. Look up the following verses and write down what they mean to you.

Ecclesiastes 5:4-5; Numbers 30:2; Proverbs 2:16-17; Malachi 2:14-16;  
Matthew 19:4-6.

**Danger ahead!**

*"But love is blind, and lovers cannot see, the pretty follies that they themselves commit."  
—William Shakespeare*

*"Marry in haste, repent at leisure."*



**M**arriage is not a cure-all. Holy wedlock can end up **BEWARE!** in unholy deadlock! Don't ignore caution signs.

1. Go slowly when the feeling is now or never. The genuine will last.
2. Go slowly when one is much more eager than the other.
3. Go slowly when your intention is to reform your friend.
4. Go slowly where your parents object or are not enthusiastic. Remember, you don't just marry a person but a family. The extended family is more important than many realise. Try to understand your parents' reasons for any reservations and take time to consider their views. Don't be too quick with your answers and counter-objections.
5. Go slowly even if there is pregnancy. Marriage may be right but sudden marriage may lead to lifelong regrets and unhappiness. The child may suffer if the marriage is unhappy. Single parenting, grandparenting or adoption are other alternatives.
6. Go slowly when you have serious doubts. You should, however, recognise that it is a step of faith to make a lifelong commitment to another person.
7. Go slowly if either of you is not ready to make a home. Don't marry just because all your friends are doing it or because you are attracted sexually.



## **Bible Search**

8. Read the story of Amnon and Tamar in 2 Samuel 13:1-9. What do you think are the main lessons to be learned from this story? Could they apply to you?

Write what you feel as you read these cautions. Be honest and open and deal with any that make you feel, "that applies to us."

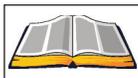
# Wrong Reasons To Marry



*Love built on beauty, soon as beauty, dies.*  
—John Donne

**W**rite what you feel as you read the following cautions. Be honest and open. Do you think that any of these wrong reasons to marry applies to you? If so, take time to talk about them.

1. You feel sorry for the person or because the person “needs” you.
2. The relationship has gone so far that it feels impossible to turn back.
3. There are strong emotional attachments caused by too much physical involvement.
4. You think there’s no one else. You feel that this could be your last chance or that losing this one may mean a long wait.
5. It will be traumatic if you don’t!
6. You're young, romantic and in an exciting and unfamiliar environment.
7. You want to get away from your parents.
8. You want the glamour, popularity or money that are associated with the person you hope to marry.
9. You are bored or lonely.
10. You have a desire to escape and rebel or a desire to defeat and hurt.
11. You feel jealous or possessive.
12. You want to “find yourself.”
13. You want to prop yourself up emotionally.



## Bible Search

14. Read Romans 12:1-3 and 9-21. What do these verses mean for you today?

# Pure Friendships



- Make up your mind about the standards on which you will base your friendship to keep it pure. Do this ahead of time and then stick to it. Decide not to do anything that would dishonour Christ. Do not settle for less than the best.
- Colossians 2:20–3:17 is a passage that is helpful for setting the right standards and checking your motives in doing so. Read it carefully and prayerfully.
- Basic bottom line rules are often suggested, for example: never alone in dark or lonely places, never in the dark, never undo any clothing. These are wise rules but Colossians 2:23 warns us that unless our principles are well-founded, “they lack any value in restraining sensual indulgence.” What principles will you draw from Colossians?
- Know how to handle advances. Speak firmly but kindly. Say why your standards are what they are. Be clear. Do not be afraid to remove his or her hand or head quietly but definitely and immediately suggest something better to do. Learn to say no and to act accordingly.
- Watch the clock. One of the best ways to avoid wrong involvement is to keep an eye on the time and get home at a reasonable hour.
- Keep control of your thoughts.
- Long periods of Bible study and prayer can be excuses to spend time alone together rather than times of really meeting the Lord—beware.
- Avoid being exclusive—the “I want/we want to be alone” idea, cutting out other interests. Go around in groups. Choose your places and activities to increase your love for Christ, your respect for each other and your friendship with others.
- Develop self-control in your life now. A person who lacks self-control before marriage is unlikely to be different afterwards.
- Keep your dignity—that sense of nobility, worthiness, honour and purity, that wonder of being made in the image of God.
- “Flee the evil desires of youth and pursue righteousness, faith, love and peace.” (2 Timothy 2:22)

- God's handbook says FLEE youthful lusts, so don't go near anyone, read any book or see any film that will make you lustful. But PURSUE—run after—righteousness. As an athlete strives for the finishing line be determined to go for righteousness. Also be on your guard. "If you think you are standing firm, be careful that you don't fall" (1 Corinthians 10:12). Complacency could be your greatest stumbling block.
- If you have reason to doubt the intentions of your friend, leave him/her.
- If you keep yourself pure in thought and in deed before marriage, your rewards will be great as you enjoy all the delights of married love that the Lord your Creator has in store for you.



# Leave to cleave

*For this reason a man will leave his father and mother and be united to his wife and the two will become one flesh.*  
—Genesis 2:24

Jesus quotes this verse in his teaching on marriage. It is a saying of importance repeated four times in the Bible. Let's look at leaving first.

*Marriage concerns more than just two people who are getting married. Father and mother stand for the family who are in turn part of the community and of the state. ... Leaving is the price of happiness. This must be a clean and clear cut. Just as a new-born baby cannot grow up unless the umbilical cord is cut, so marriage cannot grow up and develop as long as no real leaving, no clear separation from the family takes place.*

—Walter Trobisch, *I Married You*

In Old Testament culture, as in most cultures, the wife left her family to join the husband's family. So the wife left anyway. The unusual thing in this verse is that the husband also has to leave. In our times, the meaning is that both husband and wife have to leave.

1. What will leaving mean for you? Will it be a physical, a psychological and/or a spiritual leaving? How difficult will it be?
2. Are there other people, activities or interests you may also have to leave? For example, what decisions will you need to make about the amount of time you spend with your friends or playing sport?
3. Your life may have had a consuming passion to which you have dedicated your time and talents. This could be work, profession, study, sport, hobbies or Christian service. You may not have to abandon this thing but are you willing for Christ and your future partner to be the prime focus of your life?
4. To leave does not mean to abandon. What will your parents and family mean to you after marriage? How will 1 Timothy 5:8 apply to you?
5. In many cultures, the wife often has serious difficulties in coping with and accepting her husband's relatives. They may act as if the home was also theirs and the husband seems to side with them. Do you foresee problems in this area?



## Bible Search

6. Remember Jesus left the ranks of heaven and made himself of no reputation. He took the form of a servant and humbled himself becoming obedient to death. He left because he loved. The only way to win his bride was to leave. He was prepared to pay any price to gain her. He left so deeply for his bride that he even felt forsaken by God: "My God, my God why have you forsaken me?" (Psalm 22:1). If you are to cleave, leaving is a very necessary pre-requisite. Read carefully for yourselves: Genesis 2:24; Matthew 19:5; Mark 10:7 - 9; Ephesians 5:31.

## Moving into

## Maturity

Change has the beauty  
Of a rose.  
But change also carries  
Its own thorns.  
Marriage is magnificent change.  
It is a giant step  
Into the maturity of love  
And responsibility.

Marriage also brings about  
A new relationship  
With your parents.  
That relationship becomes  
More mature.  
You have become an adult  
With love and respect for  
Your parents  
That remain all of  
Their lives.

But you have changed.  
Your new relationship  
Takes precedence.

Your spouse is Number One.  
And yet love and respect  
For your parents  
Never die.  
When you move into  
a new relationship  
Both the old and the new  
Become more mature

Thank God for parents  
Who help make that change  
Smoother.

“A man must leave his father and mother  
when he marries so that he can be  
perfectly joined to his wife, and the two  
shall be one.” (Ephesians 5:31 LB)



## Moving into

## ONE

A person needs to know  
What his priorities are  
As he goes through life

How badly do we want  
To succeed in life?  
Are we striving only  
To climb the company ladder  
And get our name on  
The door?

How badly do we want  
To succeed?  
To be with the guys,  
To fish, to hunt,  
To stay away and  
Be accepted?

Life is filled with  
Difficult choices.  
Fortunately one selection  
Is quite easy,  
God gave me a  
Number One.

A spouse who comes first,  
Ahead of everything and  
Everyone else.

My parents can't be first  
And neither can hers,  
The children can't be first  
Though that is a real  
Temptation.

But if I fail to  
Love their mother  
Very well,  
Our children  
Would suffer.  
God gave me a  
Number One.

*Think, write and discuss your reactions to the above two poems.*

# Oneness

*A happy marriage is the union of two good forgivers.*

—Robert Quillen

*Marriage is not a federation of two sovereign states.*

*It is a union, personal, social, spiritual and physical. It is the fusion of two hearts, the union of two lives, the coming together of two tributaries which after being joined in one will flow in the same channel and direction carrying the same burdens, responsibilities, obligations, the same joys and sorrows.*

—Peter Marshall

Leaving prepares the way for being united or cleaving. The Hebrew word here means to stick to or to be glued to a person. This is the second marriage principle in Genesis 2:24. It means that your closest relationship after God ought to be with your marriage partner. No relative, child, friend, business, profession, church work should have a closer place in your heart than your spouse. You are prepared to cleave no matter what, to pledge faithfulness whatever the cost and whatever the partner turns out to be. It is for better, for worse, for richer, for poorer, in sickness and in health, until death separates you. Marriage is 100% giving whether the other person gives or not. It is a lifelong commitment of richness and joy.

1. In what areas or dimensions of life do you anticipate a growing oneness in marriage? Be as specific as you can in your answer.
2. What feeling, joy, issue, subject, or problem do you find most difficult to share? It need not be a negative thing. You may feel there are some positive things that you've been unable to share.
3. What special qualities do you as friends have to share with your families and with others? In what ways will you do this?
4. Public leaving and private cleaving open the way to "becoming one flesh." We like to spiritualise that today but the Bible is realistic. Do you feel that the sexual union within marriage will encourage your oneness in other aspects of your life together?



## Bible Search

5. Read John 17:20-23. What do these verses say to you about oneness? "The man and his wife were both naked and they felt no shame" (Genesis 2:25). Are you able to be really open with your friend? Are there barriers to openness? If so, what do you think these are and why do you think they exist?