

Introduction

We are very excited for your engagement and for all that God will do as you move toward marriage. Thank you for the privilege of assisting you as you seek out premarital counseling. Premarital counseling is an important time. There is no decision, other than your salvation, that is more permanent and lasting than choosing whom you will marry. The premarital counseling sessions we will share together are designed to enable you to make this decision with confidence and to follow through on this commitment with excellence.¹

WHAT'S THE POINT OF PREMARITAL COUNSELING?

There are at least five purposes for premarital counseling. *First, we want to help build a solid biblical, gospel-centered foundation as you start your marriage.* So, we'll spend a lot of time in Scripture thinking through biblical ideas and the gospel as they apply to marriage.

Second, we want to help you begin a dialogue about your marriage. There are a host of topics (communication, finances, sex, parenting, etc.) that we think are important to consider before you get married. The conversations we begin during counseling are part of a life-long learning process. We'll discuss and resolve some issues, but many others will be left for you to work through over the course of your entire marriage. We'll start the dialogue and leave the rest to you.

Third, we will point out areas of concern in your relationship. We are all sinners. No relationship is perfect. Despite all of your premarital bliss, you are going to have problems, conflict, and struggles in your marriage. We want to help you address these difficulties sooner rather than later and in humility rather than in pride. So, the more honest you are about your struggles, the more you will facilitate the counselor's ability to help you in preparation for marriage.

Fourth, we want to preserve you from temptations. Many Christian couples do a good job of preserving themselves from premarital sex, but once they get engaged, they let down their guard and begin falling into sexual temptation. Men and women rationalize premarital sex with thoughts like, "We're engaged, which means we are practically already married" or "We'll be married soon, so what does it matter?" We want to help you fight temptation and stay pure until the wedding day.

Fifth, we want to prepare you for marriage, not just the wedding day. Too often couples get caught up in the frantic details of preparing for the wedding day and don't spend time thinking about the days after the wedding. Premarital counseling is meant to slow you down and help you think about the relationship. The wedding day marks the beginning of your life together, but the marriage will last for the rest of your life. So, it is good for you to take time to prepare for this life-long journey together.

WHAT'S INVOLVED IN PREMARITAL COUNSELING?

Premarital counseling involves four sessions with another married couple from our church. Each session ranges from 1.5-2 hours. Additionally, you will be responsible for completing assignments between each session. These assignments are no easy task and are not to be taken lightly. Like anything else worth doing, this will take time, so you will need to plan ahead. Warning: If you simply see these exercises as something to "get through," then they will not provide much value. However, if

¹ Much of the material in Restoration Church's "Premarital Counseling Plan" has been adapted from North Wake Church in Wake Forest, NC and Capitol Hill Baptist Church in Washington, DC.

you take the assignments seriously and work through them prayerfully and thoughtfully, they will serve to build a solid foundation for your marriage.

Here is our five-fold strategy behind the premarital counseling plan:

STUDY: Marriage is God's idea and design; therefore, we must listen to what he has to say. In each session you will study Scripture to set a solid biblical foundation for everything we discuss.

READ: In addition to reading/studying Scripture, you will be required to read a couple books and selected articles. These resources complement the Bible and facilitate the application of the gospel to your marriage.

LISTEN: To reinforce the material, we ask you to listen to select sermons related directly to some of the topics covered.

APPLY: Each session has application exercises designed to help apply the key ideas to your specific relationship.

TALK: You will have lots of conversations—with God, with your future spouse, with your counselors, and with other couples in the church. These conversations provide a model for healthy communication inside your marriage, while helping you grow in godliness.

We pray that God uses this material and our discussions to help you build a solid foundation for your marriage. Use this time of premarital counseling to have open, real, honest conversations with one another; express your joys, worries, concerns, and excitement to each other throughout this process. Above all, spend time praying for and with one another that God's design of marriage would shine brightly in your marriage from the wedding day forward.