

b. Marriage

STOP HERE – allow at least one day before proceeding to Project V.

PROJECT V.

Review comments on Project I through IV then proceed with Project V.

Personal Evaluation

Are you ready for marriage? How do you know?

How have you demonstrated the ability to manage money?

Are you financially able to marry now?

What is your view of a healthy marriage and family?

Have you looked at the differences between your partner and yourself?

Have you honestly looked at and discussed your own, as well as your partner's strengths and weaknesses?

Are you able to make good decisions and follow through with them?

Do you have the ability to be flexible? How has this been demonstrated?

Are you willing to change?

How important is Jesus Christ to you personally? What importance do you place on Him being central to your marriage? How can He help your marriage?

Are you ready to leave the single lifestyle?

Are you physically, financially, emotionally and spiritually free from previous relationships including parents, dating partners or prior engagements?

Do you have your family's blessing for this marriage?

Is your wedding date far enough away to allow your partner and you to resolve major conflicts in your relationship before marriage?

PROJECT VI.

DO NOT GO ANY FURTHER IN THIS MANUAL UNTIL YOU HAVE READ THE FOLLOWING THREE PAGES:

If they raise issues or questions, (and they will) talk to the instructors or a pastor promptly.

If the following questions disturb you, we are sorry. However, marriage counselors with years of experience are often asked, “**What are the most common causes of marital breakups?**” In all honesty the answers include:

- Should never have married in the first place
- Should never have married each other
- Married too young
- Married too quickly

Some of you will build satisfactory marriages; some you will build very happy marriages. For those of you who might not do either, the following warning signs might well indicate whether you should have second thought. We call them 18 “red flags.”

1. You may be very deeply in love, but if you have know each other for less than three months, it is doubtful that you have been acquainted long enough to really know the person you plan to marry. Better give yourselves and the relationship more time. What is the need to hurry into marriage?
2. If your partner has been drunk or used drugs heavily three times in the past three weeks or about ten times in the past three to four months, he or she does have a problem and may require professional help. No marriage should begin if one partner is clearly unstable, troubled and in need of professional help.
3. If your partner makes statements like, “I owe a great deal to mother, it’s my duty to make her happy,” and if such statements are coupled with behavior that make it apparent that he or she will do almost anything to ensure parental approval... you should consider how such a close relationship with in-laws will affect your marriage.
4. If your partner says things like, “I can’t live without you; my life has no meaning apart from you; if I ever lose you I would kill myself,” and if such statements are joined to very obvious dependent behavior, this partner may bring nothing to the relationship beyond deep draining needs. Being needed so desperately may flatter the ego for a while, but if that is all there is, the relationship will become dull and draining. You cannot be a wife to a man you have to be a mother to nor can you be a husband to a woman who wants a father figure.
5. If you have developed a pattern of quarreling, disappointing, seriously irritating, or hurting each other during the majority of times that you have been together in the last three months, perhaps you are trying subconsciously to tell each other something. Think about it. Marriage will not erase this type of discontentment.

6. If many of the significant, mature people in your life – parents, relatives, teachers and especially good friends who love you – indicate that you may be making a mistake, you should pause. People rarely comment on another’s decision in this day and age. If they muster the courage (in words or otherwise) to tell you that they are troubled, weigh their opinions or nonverbal reactions. Do you have significant people in your life from whom you seek feedback?
7. If some very serious problem has occurred in the past few weeks, and if it is definitely troubling you, and if you have not had an opportunity to work it through, then either confront the problem or think about postponing the wedding.
8. If your financial situation is uncertain and/or there is significant debt and there appears to be no means of correcting it in the near future, don’t pass it off because “we’re in love.” Statistics show that financial problems are a significant factor in the dissolution of at least 40% of all marriages. Although money does not buy happiness, lack of money can cause a great deal of stress and unhappiness. Credit card debt that could not be paid off in 60 days is a serious caution.
9. If all of your friends are marrying and you feel pressured to do the same, don’t! You can sustain any amount of societal or peer pressure to avoid an unhappy life.
10. If you feel that having become sexually involved commits you to marrying each other despite serious problems in your relationship, don’t. A good marriage is predicated on maturity and responsibility, not on sexual involvement which may not be found on love. In fact, premarital sex will hinder you from knowing each other and from building essential, foundational truths into your relationship.
11. If both of you are 18 years or under, your potential for divorce is 3 ½ times greater than that of people who are 21 years of age and over.
12. If you are marrying because you just have to get out of the house, you will ultimately hurt yourself, your partner and the marriage if you are marrying merely as a means of asserting your freedom or “getting back” at your parents for past hurts. Moving out of the house might be very appropriate, but should marriage be the excuse or the way?
13. If you are a pregnant couple (it does take two!) then slow down, think, talk, ponder and pray. Neither pregnancy itself nor the fears of any social stigma that pregnancy might cause are good reasons to marry. Ask yourselves whether you would really marry one another if there were no pregnancy.
14. If your backgrounds, cultures, and/or religious beliefs differ so greatly that strong differences of opinion about important matters have already occurred, the difficulties will more than likely increase when you marry. Further, if one partner consistently compromises and the other never does, resentment will eventually build up on both sides. You must be able to meet one another at least half way, learning where, when and how to compromise as well as understand, accept and meet each other’s needs.

15. No plan or design for success. This includes not understanding – the purpose for marriage, the roles of husbands and wives, the complex demands nor the commitment required to yield a meaningful and lasting marriage.
16. A Godless marriage.
17. Is there any type of abuse in your background? Sexual, physical, and/or verbal?
18. If your partner has demonstrated any of the following behaviors towards you:
 - threats
 - name-calling
 - intimidation
 - put downs
 - punishment
 - outbursts of anger
 - pushing
 - kicking or hitting
 - blame
 - ridicule
 - or any type of controlling behaviors

Verbal or physical abuse is not acceptable.

NOTE: No one can predict that your marriage will fail or succeed and none of these warning signs spells disaster. The risk that you take is part of the adventure of marriage. But, if you decide to take that risk, you must first consider the odds. Are they in your favor? If not, you might be taking greater risk than you should. The wiser question is what will you do, what will you invest in your marriage to make it what you hope it will be?

Please review the 18 items again.

List the red flags you feel need the most consideration and discussion before you proceed with wedding plans.

- 1.
- 2.
- 3.

Please do not panic, bury your head in the sand or hit the road. But, do think it over and talk it over. Make certain that you are acting responsibly and that your decision to marry is made with good judgment. You might want to seek feedback from a qualified, unbiased person; such as a minister, counselor or married person.

Although marriage is wonderful, it is also a lifelong commitment that should be given careful consideration before a lasting decision is made or binding action taken. You owe it to one another to be honest about your feelings and your situation. Only good can come of it.

PROJECT VII.

Complete the following statements and then share your responses with your partner.

Often many of our expectations come from our own home and our own background.

1. This is what you need to know about my family life as I was growing up in order to understand me...
2. If I could have changed one thing about my family life as I was growing up, it would have been...
3. Because I want or don't want this to occur in my own marriage and family life I will...
4. My parents have influenced my attitude toward marriage by...
5. Something from parent's marriage that I would like to have in mine is...
6. Something from my parent's marriage that I prefer not having in mine is...