

Twenty Steps to Happy Marriage



Before Marriage

1. Marriage is lifelong. So choose carefully. Generally speaking, the more you have in common: background, interests, faith, the more likely you will be to succeed. Happy partnership is more important than romance. Marriage is a lifelong partnership.
2. Get to know happily married couples. Ask them how they succeed. Some will tell you that their own parents divorced. So if you had that same sad experience, you **can** still have a good marriage yourself.
3. Keep your virginity, whether you are man or woman. It's the best wedding present you can give. But if you have lost it, ask God's forgiveness, which He gives to all who are truly sorry; and keep chaste until your marriage.
4. When going out together, take the opportunities of getting to know each other well. Talk about your likes and dislikes, your childhood, your home life, your memories. Discuss your hopes about roles in marriage, money, children, parenting. Read *Ready for Marriage?* By Nicky and Sila Lee - £1 From Alpha Hotline 08457 581278
5. Begin praying together. That will be important in marriage. Sadly some Christian marriages do fail, but very few who pray together ever separate. Meal times are a good time for prayer. Those who pray together stay together.
6. Look for a good marriage preparation course of several sessions. Some churches will prepare couples who are going to be married elsewhere. Many of the best courses include a pre-marriage questionnaire. The two questionnaires most used are called PREPARE and FOCCUS.
7. Either questionnaire is an excellent way to prepare for marriage, and can be done separately from a marriage preparation course. You learn even more about each other, your strengths and areas you need to discuss. Doing a questionnaire does not commit you to marriage. Visit their websites: FOCCUS, www.affinities.org.uk and PREPARE www.prepare-enrich.co.uk to find someone who provides a questionnaire near you.
8. A marriage preparation course should help you know how to share your feelings, and help you to listen carefully, and to see things from your fiance(e)'s point of view. These are the keys to solving the disagreements which every couple will have.
9. If you are prone to short temper or anger, ask for prayer and help from a church leader, and persist until the problem is overcome. Otherwise it will cause great unhappiness for both of you in the years to come.

10. If you cause hurt, even unintentionally, apologise, without making excuses. When you receive an apology, respond with real forgiveness, and never even mention the matter again.

After Marriage

11. When you are married, continue to express your appreciation of your spouse, regularly. Do not take each other for granted. Express thanks - even for routine things like cooking and cleaning. Continue to plan surprises.
12. Avoid working long hours regularly. Make sure you have good time for each other, rather than overworking for a better home or car. Make time for things you enjoy doing as a couple.
13. Spend time talking and listening. Express sympathy when necessary. Give support and comfort. Sympathy will be appreciated by your spouse much more than suggestions will. It's important to laugh together, too.
14. Share all your income. Agree a budget together, with a margin for unexpected costs. Don't use credit cards unless you can pay off the full amount monthly. Avoid the trap of debt. It's better to wait.
15. Talk about your sex life and aim to meet each other's needs. God's Word says that our body belongs to our spouse. That will mean compromises. Learn what the other enjoys.
16. Learn how to show and receive affection without it having to lead to sex. Just a touch, holding hands, a light kiss, a few words spoken: "I love you".
17. Pay attention to your appearance and to your clothes in a way that pleases your spouse. Pay attention to cleanliness, too. Help your spouse enjoy being married to you, every day.
18. Trust is a priceless commodity, but it is difficult to restore when broken. So always be 100% honest with each other, especially about money; and avoid even thinking about being unfaithful.
19. Share responsibilities for children, parents and any others in the family. Spend quality time with the children, even if you work full-time. Discipline should be calm, fair, firm and consistent, and agreed between parents.
20. Just as a car needs servicing, give your marriage a service from time to time. Read a book on marriage together, and discuss it. Even better, go on a marriage course or weekend. Ask a church to organise one.

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Summing it up in twenty-one words: **The key to happiness in marriage is to help your spouse enjoy being married to you, and to do so continually.**

Edward Pratt