



# 10 Things You Need to Know Before You Even Think About Getting Married

by Scott Wildey

Write your expectations here \_\_\_\_\_  
(then cross thru them. This is about yielding control of your agenda, your life to God).

INTRODUCTION why class?

- **Slide:** Struck me that it's more difficult to get a Driver's license than a Wedding license
  - Not even a test!—Meaning, people can get married w/out any idea of what marriage is, or how to act married. We falsely assume that one just has to “be” married.
  - Though we all want safe roads as a car crash can prove fatal
  - There may be no worse pain on earth than the wreck of a marriage
  - Statistically, there are more fatal marriages than car crashes
    - Slightly above 50% will die
    - 75% will die if the couple cohabitates first
    - 75% of 2<sup>nd</sup> marriages die, and 87% of 3<sup>rd</sup> marriages
    - In most car accidents, you take a ding on insurance, but at least you can get your car fixed and move on with life like nothing happened...
- 2B1 is too late to talk about this stuff—as great as it is—and it is great!
- So, there are some negative motivations here (warnings to negate pain, brokenness and heartache)
- But, the main motivation is for you to become...the person God intended, where you will be most satisfied and have the most capacity to love another.
  - Takes more energy to go away from something than to run to something.
- We want every person to have fulfilling, close, soul quenching relationships
- And, we want anyone getting married to not only stay married, but also have a great marriage!
  - Whether you are a Christian or Not—we have the same goal for marriage...
- And, if you were to do nothing, your chances are (at best) 50/50. Some of may succumb to the pressure of cohabiting first, which makes it just a 1 in 4 chance.
- AND, by the time you start dating, or get engaged, it's probably too late because infatuation is completely intoxicating—it's like a drug with a temporary high that promises eternal ecstasy—but will one day fade. That's why many non-Western cultures think it's CRAZY, Bonkers that young people make such an important, life-long, substantial decision in the milieu of such fleeting feelings.
- But, here's the Good News: Just like you can take Driver's school before you take the driver's test, you can take test-drive marriage right now in the context of your current relationships before you literally (English accent), sign your life away. Great
  - Just like you practice 3-point turns, you can practice conflict and intimacy
  - Just like you practice parallel parking, you can practice fidelity and loyalty
- So, why is this important?
  - How many of you want to be married (in your mind) or have a fulfilling relationship?
  - What is your motivation for wanting to get married? Sex, happiness, comfort? Security?
  - **Slide:** “Life is shaped by the end you live for.” ~Thomas Merton

HERE ARE 10 THINGS YOU MUST KNOW B4U EVEN THINK ABOUT GETTING MARRIED:

1. **Marriage is formation, not infatuation**  
(Can sub “church” and same thing)



- a. Infatuation (graph)
  - i. Rigid
  - ii. Fading
  - iii. Cannot stretch (no elasticity)
  - iv. On its own will shatter
  - v. One-dimensional
  - vi. Only accepts façade of person
  - vii. If the purpose of marriage was simply to enjoy infatuation and make me “happy”, then I’d have to get a ‘new’ marriage every two or three years.
  - viii. **SLIDE: Quote:** “They dream in courtship, but in wedlock wake.” ~Alexander Pope
  
- b. Marriage (upheaval/renewal)
  - i. “The two shall become one”—think about it—that’s a clash!
  - ii. Elastic, Potential, Persevering
  - iii. Adventure comes from same root as adversity
  - iv. Reconciliation (Which is how we learn and follow the Gospel)
  - v. Love is learned, acquired
  - vi. 3-D (loves and accepts person as they really are): Learn to love as God loves
  - vii. Becoming more like Christ—move from self-absorbed to self-giving
  
- c. **SLIDE: Quote:** “Marriage is the operation by which a woman’s vanity and a man’s egotism are extracted without anesthetic.” ~Helen Rowland
  
- d. **SLIDE:** An athlete who wants to increase his performance doesn’t look for the easiest workout; he looks for the training that will help the most.
  
- e. Marriage is wonderful, but not primarily because: I get to have sex everyday, keep warm at night, or have an automatic partner when I ride roller coasters... Those things are great
  - i. Marriage is wonderful because it gives me an opportunity to change, grow and truly love and be loved in spite of my self-absorbed tendencies.
  - ii. ***The Great news is that you can practice being a spouse now—in your current relationships***
  
- f. **Segue:** The only choice you really have is to begin the process of transformation. And that change can bring the fulfillment that you mistakenly believe will happen by changing: relationship, friends, jobs, cities, churches, etc.



## 2. Your self-awareness is vital to your vitality

- a. **SLIDE: Quote:** “One of the best wedding gifts God gives is a full-length mirror called your spouse. If there is a card attached, it would say, “Here’s to helping you discover what you’re really like!” ~Gary and Betsy Ricucci
- b. The first sign of self-awareness is the reality of my unawareness
- c. Which means, view of God/Spiritual Growth needs re-calibration
- d. Once we define spiritual formation as a process, all of life becomes spiritual formation—including our single life, our dating life and our married life.
  - i. “Whether you eat or drink do so for the glory of God.” ~Paul
  - ii. **KEY:** We tend to be impatient with the process of spiritual (character) development, and therefore, avoid it—the RESULT—when we marry, we are spiritually, and emotionally infantile. Our capacity for a real, sustaining, growing love that’s acquired and needed for a fulfilling marriage is absent.
- e. There can be no wholeness in the image of Christ, which is not incarnate in our relationships with others—the people you live and do life with right now.
  - i. **SLIDE: KEY: Meaning, the best reflection of what your marriage will one day look like is a magnification of how you are currently in relationship with others.**
- f. Desire to get married is a good thing—OK to want to be married—God-given desire
  - i. Key is knowing what marriage really is so you know what you are asking for

- ii. Marriage reveals your character and your true self like nothing else
- iii. It's why many of the first church leaders thought marriage was more difficult than being single...
- iv. **SLIDE:** If you have the courage to pray: "Lord, cleanse me from my secret faults" then you are ready to get married. Psalm 139
  - 1. One of the faults that may be revealed is that God isn't enough for you—that you would do anything before you would remain single.
- g. When we are single, we can be consumed with the question, "How will I know the person I'm supposed to marry?"
  - i. That question becomes less and less relevant the more we know ourselves, who we are becoming, and who we want to become.
- h. Seeing yourself as God sees you: **Where are you receiving your identity?**
  - i. **SLIDE: Exercise:** Temptations that threaten your true identity
    - 1. What others say about you
    - 2. What you have accomplished
    - 3. What you possess
  - ii. **Exercise:**
    - 1. What are you trying to prove?
    - 2. Who are you trying to prove it to?
    - 3. Why are you trying to prove it?
  - iii. Masterpiece (Eph. 2:10, NLT), Jesus "beloved" before ministry (Mt. 4), Rm. 8
- i. HOPE: "He who began a good work in us will carry it through" (Phil. 1:6)

### 3. **Know your F.O.O. or your F.O.O. will own you**

- a. Much of your marriage may in fact already be arranged
  - i. **SLIDE:** PIC "Apple Tree" - Apple doesn't fall too far from the tree
  - ii. It's uncanny how marriage reveals how much you REALLY are like your parents, no matter how much you've denied it in the past.
  - iii. This includes good traits too, which are to be celebrated (but those are easy to love)
  - iv. But, it's the bad ones that nip us in the butt
- b. How was affection shown? How were disagreements handled? How was money viewed? Were the relationships close or cordial?
- c. **SLIDE:** PAC (patterns)
- d. Boundaries: Over-Functioner-Rescuer/Under-Functioner
- e. Emotionally Healthy Church Survey

### 4. **You are your own worst enemy**

- a. **SLIDE:** "I have met the enemy and s/he is me." ~Pogo
- b. Easy and natural to blame the other
- c. Your future problems in marriage have more to do with self, then spouse
  - i. We are really running from our own character development as a self-protection mechanism—which is the opposite of building relationship intimacy.
- d. Self-protection
  - i. We all have wounds
  - ii. So much energy is spent medicating these wounds, but not healing them
  - iii. **SLIDE: Question:** What are some ways we are self-protective?
  - iv. Ways we self-protect
    - 1. Criticism
    - 2. Contempt
    - 3. Defensiveness
    - 4. Stonewalling
    - 5. Detach, give in/give up, passive, aggressive, passive aggressive

- v. Conflict
  - 1. These self-protections determine much of how we conflict:
  - 2. **SLIDE: Exercise:** Take some time and write out your conflict style and any self-protection mechanisms you use.
    - a. passive, aggressive, steam roll, controlling, dominating, detaching, running
    - b. Is conflict good or bad? What's your style? Do you hold any grudges? Do you avoid all conflict? Do you make people pay? Are you a runner or a pursuer?
    - c. How do you conflict w/Roommates?
  - 3. This is the tell tale. Marriage is conflict (It's 2 becoming 1...boooooom!)
- vi. **SLIDE:** Reconciliation
  - 1. How do you resolve conflict?
  - 2. Do you have a track record of reconciliation in your current relationships?
  - 3. God's about People: Reconciliation
    - a. **Question:** If you aren't modeling this in your relationships now, what makes you think you will in any future one?
- vii. **Marriage will never remove your trials (lonely, controlling, fearful, etc.)—it will only add new ones.**
- viii. **SLIDE:** A main purpose of marriage is reconciliation where we learn first hand the Gospel—we recreate it. If you want to know what kind of spouse you'll be, look at what kind of: son, daughter, friend, sister, brother, co-worker, etc., you are.

## 5. Sexuality is about 'sect's, not sex

- a. Intimate relationships, as opposed to intimate experiences, are the result of planning. They are built.
- b. **SLIDE:** Scholars believe that the word sex is related to the Latin word **secare**, which means “**to sever, to amputate, or to disconnect from the whole.**” This is where we get words like **sect, section, dissect, bisect, etc.** Our sexuality then is much more than the physical act of 'sex' and pleasure. Though so-called 'experts' focus on technique, the reality is, sex is about intimate connection. **Our sexuality then is all the ways we go about reconnecting.** And this can only happen in a safe and trusting environment where we are free to be vulnerable—free to connect in the innermost places of our soul. When we don't treat our sexuality with this kind of care and attention (even in marriage) **the bedroom can ironically become a lonely place.** I.e., **people can be 'having sex' regularly and still be profoundly disconnected. In the same way, celibate people can be extremely sexual—very connected in intimate relationships w/ friends, family, etc.**
- c. The French sociologist Jacques Ellul sees our **modern fixation with sex as a symptom of our breakdown of intimacy.** Having detached the physical act of sex (e.g., “Casual sex”) from relationship, we can only work at perfecting the “technique”
- d. We want desperately to connect—we really want to be fully known and fully loved.
- e. The world emphasizes intercourse as the ULTIMATE, but it's NOT—It's the “Penultimate”—it's the last of many ways we connect intimately with others. Sexuality is about connecting in intimacy in a myriad of ways. This means, that most of our “DESIRE FOR INTIMATE CONNECTION” can be met outside of the bedroom

### **Different Types of Intimacy:**

**SLIDE: Exercise:** Worksheet (How are you developing each of these?)

Marriage can't fulfill all (don't put all eggs in one basket)

We tend to physicalize any kind of intimacy w/ opposite sex, but isn't holistic

- i. Emotional
- ii. Intellectual
- iii. Aesthetic
- iv. Creative
- v. Recreational
- vi. Work
- vii. Crisis

- viii. Commitment
- ix. Conflict
- x. Sexual = outward expression of culmination of list

f. **SEGUE:** False Intimacy

- i. **Question:** What are some characteristics of False Intimacy (virtual relationships)?
- ii. Virtual Relationships (from “Every Young Woman’s Battle” pg. 63)

Virtual Relationships	Real Relationships
<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Based on fantasy</li> <li>• Require little effort</li> <li>• Involve no accountability</li> <li>• Involve false mystique and pretense</li> <li>• Give a one-dimensional view of the person</li> </ul>	<ul style="list-style-type: none"> <li>• Built on reality</li> <li>• Require relational work</li> <li>• Lived out in the presence of others</li> <li>• Require integrity and mutual trust</li> <li>• Give a three-dimensional view of the person (warts and all)</li> </ul>

- g. **Diagram:** Romance > Reality > [either] Restitution or Rebellion
  - i. Real intimacy calls for restitution

6. **Sex is good, not god**

- a. **SLIDE: Question:** If God looked at nothing but my sexuality, would I look like a truster of Jesus, or a monarch of one’s own kingdom?
  - i. How do you know your character is being formed into the image of Jesus?
    1. What is your spontaneous reaction to what the world’s values vs. what God values...your reaction and action towards sex is a great revealer!
    2. **SLIDE:** Rm. 12:1-2
- b. Sex clouds judgment out of context (an exclusive, life-long committed relationship). We define committed differently. Also, the line between feelings of love and infatuation are thin—it can trick you. Frankly, Sex confuses everything—it makes you feel like you are closer than you really are
- c. **SLIDE:** Cohabitation
  - i. Burden of “conditional love” and a performance-based relationship
  - ii. Why? Because it’s a “tryout”—don’t do well, pack your bags.
  - iii. 2 Words describe them: “if” and “when”—if or when you do this, then I’ll—the person just becomes a commodity for your own happiness. I’ll marry you if or when \_\_\_\_\_.
  - iv. Big Difference: In cohabitation, couples usually focus on obtaining satisfaction from the other person, while in marriage, the focus tends to be more giving satisfaction to the other person (we view the other as a commodity— a means to our own happiness).
  - v. Cohabitation is conditional; Marriage is permanence/commitment (i.e., love).
- d. 4-year itch
  - i. Relationships based on sex do not wear well, for when the physical attraction fades, so does the love (4 –year itch, endorphins, etc.).
- e. **Marriage requires discipline—if you can’t exercise sexual discipline before marriage, what makes you think you will be able to once you are married. The same self-control needed before marriage is needed after marriage.**
- f. Drive to Rationalize:
  - i. In the Bible, the apostle Paul uses the word *porneia*, which translates as ‘sexual immorality’ and ‘fornication’, to describe any sexual encounter outside the marriage bed. I.e., God’s created plan and purpose for sex is only in marriage. The marriage covenant is the fullest and richest context for sex to be enjoyed.
  - ii. **SLIDE: Big Questions:** Is this reasonable? Is it possible? What’s at stake?
  - iii. Practicals? How do they derive their own conviction around what to do /not to do? i.e. spend the night, sleep together without having sex, oral sex
    1. Scott/Linsey = we did it, and if we can, so can you

2. It's so foreign to people to think that they can have self-control in the area of sexuality
3. Think about something you have developed self-control in your life
4. Non sequitur to say, "I struggle with self-control, therefore it's not possible."
5. It's worth it! My marriage has benefitted—established trust of putting relationship above personal needs, plus, having trust in the area of self-control allows us to trust each other with: office mates, not looking at porn, etc.
6. **SLIDE:** S.W.A.T. team training—police train over and over again and decide before hand what will happen with the stuff hits the fan—so, when someone pulls a gun on them, they go into 'automatic' mode—otherwise they would freeze. (Have to have your decisions ingrained now)
  - a. Don't underestimate the innate power of rationalization
  - b. Need friends encouraging you in the right direction
7. **SLIDE: Questions:**
  - a. Any regrets if you were to break up w/ this person?
  - b. Anything that would be difficult to tell a future mate?
  - c. Do you feel guilty about any actions?
  - d. Do you have to rationalize to friends, family, pastors?
  - e. How does your behavior match up to Paul's definition—"anything outside of the marriage bed."?
    - i. Marriage Bed = Life-long, exclusive commitment you've made in public and are accountable to.
- g. **SLIDE:** Warnings and boundaries for sex [in the Bible] are not meant to keep us from something, but to keep us from missing something. The guidelines are meant to protect something of great value that can only be realized in an exclusive, lifelong, covenant relationship, where real intimacy can be cultivated (true vulnerability—knowing and being known).

## 7. Love is learned, not fallen into

- a. "Help! I've fallen and I can't get up!" (commercial)
- b. Autonomous Romanticism received a major boost by the 18<sup>th</sup> century Romantic poets (Wordsworth, Coleridge, Blake, then Byron, Shelly and Keats). They thought it was a crime to marry for any reason beyond love (defined mostly by feeling and emotion).
- c. But, romantic love has no elasticity to it—it can never be stretched; it simply shatters. In contrast, mature love must stretch because we all are fallen and broken in different places and will constantly have conflicting emotions, etc.
- d. **Falls are inevitable, we can't control that, but we can control which direction we fall.**
- e. **SLIDE:** We fall into infatuation, but we climb into love.
- f. Infatuation just happens...love doesn't just happen. Love is acquired, learned, practiced. Love must be learned, and learned again, there is no end to it.
  - i. Love is actually not natural—selfishness is more natural.
  - ii. The beauty of Christianity is learning to love—endured, covenanted relationships test this love.
- g. As a matter of fact, much of the dissatisfaction in marriage is because we expect too much from it. We want it to be our end all and be all—**SLIDE: "The myth of the final solution."**
- h. **SLIDE: Question:** Marriage (mature love) presents our character challenges and asks us to address them head on. Do you have friendships now that are doing that? Have you asked:
  - i. "How can I discover in the challenges of this friendship the opportunities to learn more about God?"
  - ii. What one thing do you really like about me?
  - iii. What would you change about me?

## 8. Living holy will lead to happiness

- a. **SLIDE:** 2 Definitions of Happiness
  - i. Cultural Definition: A good feeling of pleasurable satisfaction
  - ii. Bible's Definition (Classic): Pursuing a life of wisdom, virtue and character
  - iii. "Life is shaped by the end you live for." ~Merton
  - iv. So, what happens if I marry to be happy, but I wake up one day unhappy?
  - v. You aren't marrying (probably evidenced in other relationships) for real love, you're marrying someone as a commodity—as a means to your happiness.
  - vi. But, marriage is about growth—and growth hurts (remember: 2 become 1—boom!)
- b. **SLIDE:** Wisdom, character, virtue: Galatians 5:22ff "Love, joy peace, patience, kindness, goodness, faithfulness, gentleness and self-control"
- c. Fidelity (contract vs. covenant)
  - i. In a self-centered view of relationships we will maintain them as long as our earthly comforts, desires and expectations are met (contractual)
  - ii. In a God-centered view we preserve our relationship because it brings glory to God and points a sinful world to a reconciling Creator who is maintains perfect fidelity.
  - iii. For Better, for worse... (Vows)
    - 1. **SLIDE: 1 Corinthians 13:** 4Love is patient, love is kind. It does not envy, it does not boast, it is not proud. 5It is not rude, it is not self-seeking, it is not easily angered, it keeps no record of wrongs. 6Love does not delight in evil but rejoices with the truth. 7It always protects, always trusts, always hopes, always perseveres. 8Love never fails.
    - 2. **SLIDE: Questions:** Do you have any friend(s) you have covenanted with?
    - 3. Are you loving your friends 'as they are' now? Exhibiting 1 Cor. 13:4-7
    - 4. Friendships can be the gym in which our capacity to experience and express God's love is strengthened and further developed.

## 9. Do what you 'value' OR value what you actually do

- a. **Quote:** "Integrity is the ability to meet the demands of reality." ~Henry Cloud, Integrity
- b. Faith/Life congruence
- c. **SLIDE: Exercise:** What are your personal 10 commandments:
  - i. **When dating:** What would cause you to stop dating a person?
  - ii. Are you a better person and follower of Jesus?
  - iii. What do your strongest Christian friends think?
- d. You are ready to date and marry when you have a picture in your mind of the character of that person and resolved in your heart that you will not settle for less. I.e., if you haven't come to the peace that you would rather be single then compromise, you aren't ready—partly because there's a good chance your sole reason for wanting to be married is: pressure, happiness, loneliness—which are fine to feel, but not good reasons to marry.
- e. **SLIDE:** *You are ready to date and marry when...*
  - i. You do not have to compromise any aspect of your relationship with God in order to be with the person to whom you are attracted.
  - ii. You are willing to be single than make a bad choice of a marriage partner.

## 10. Esouse to the type of spouse you desire

- a. **SLIDE: Exercise:**
  - i. Who are You Looking For?
  - ii. Who are You Becoming?
  - iii. Is this list the same?
- b. A good marriage is not something you find, it's something you work for.