



Preparing to Launch

a notebook



for launching

a healthy marriage



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Welcome to Preparing to Launch!

I am excited to have the opportunity to participate in your Pre-Marriage Counseling. My hope is that through some of the 25 years of mistakes and successes my wife and I have had, together with help from a number of wise people whose material we'll draw from, we will be able to be with you through this exciting and challenging time. My wife and I have been in ministry for over 20 years, both on college campus for 10 years in Austin Texas and in a missions church in downtown Orlando. I hope that our experience together with that of many others we've known during this time will help prepare you well for launching into marriage. Because I believe the Scriptures teach that marriage is an institution established by God, and that it is a life-time commitment, I will approach this with a serious question: Is this the right time for this couple to get married?

Please read the enclosed copy of "A Few Beginning Thoughts" which describes some of the mindset we have in Premarital Counseling. Remember it will require significant time in addition to the sessions we are actually sitting in the same room together. Typically, we will have sessions for an hour and a half every two weeks. That leaves the in between week for you to do homework and plan an evening together with your fiancé to talk about the Workshop material that you've finished for that week. Without your commitment to do the Workshop materials beforehand, a session together will have far less impact, so we will not plan on meeting together if it's not done.

I believe this is the most significant decision you will face other than salvation. In light of that, I would expect your level of commitment to the premarital counseling process to reflect this fact.

Each Session together will be slightly different in what it takes to prepare and what we will accomplish during the time together, but here is a typical flow:

Each of you will have a notebook.

Two weeks before the session you will look over the Workshop materials and decide how much time and when during your week you will complete the work. Typically it would be good to plan about an hour to an hour and a half for the Workshop preparation. You can expect at least one short video to introduce the topic to you followed by some questions

that either the video itself brings out or that are related. These videos are all Youtube videos, so you will need access to a computer with internet that can play Youtube. If this is an issue, we may be able to work out a way for you to stay late the week before to view the video on my computer. Often you will be referred to the Appendix for additional materials. Appendix material is not optional unless specifically noted.

We will cover Personal Background, Scriptural Marriage and Roles, How the families we grew up in might impact our marriages, understanding and knowing how each person is unique and how that affects a marriage, expectations, dreams and shared values, communication and conflict, money and also sex. It's a lot of ground to cover, but we'll get there!

Plan well enough that you and your fiancé can plan an evening together without other distractions AFTER you have both completed the Workshop preparation but BEFORE the day of our session. During this date time, reserve time to talk about the work you did, hear about the work your fiancé did, and talk together about any issues that came up. Plan to pray with and for each other at the end of each date.

During our session together, we will have a chance to talk about the area you have worked on the past two weeks. I may start with a short introduction about this area in my wife and my lives. Feel free to ask questions that strike you during this time. I'll then typically ask what specific areas impacted you the most from your preparation. We will spend some time talking about those issues and related topics, and then work together through the workshop questions, surveys and discussions.

Because I want you to be committed to this premarital counseling course, but I also wanted to have it be affordable, I've sought the best resources available for virtually free (the cost of the materials). The charge for premarital counseling is therefore kept to \$75 per session – half of the normal counseling rate. The only other cost to you is the purchase of an excellent book dealing well with sexual intimacy, "Intended for Pleasure" by Ed Wheat – it costs about \$15.

Keep in mind that every church has different wedding policies, so please keep me in the loop with specific timeframes and expectations they have. If you are planning on having your service at h2o, let me know and I can provide you with the wedding policies.

You will receive a sexual purity pledge that I will ask both of you to sign during our first session together. We'll talk more about this later, but this decision is too significant to approach with a mind clouded with sexual issues.

I look forward to walking with you towards the launch pad for your marriage and doing what I can to help you make sure all systems will be "go!"

If you have questions, please feel free to contact me at steve@h2ochurch.org.

Sincerely in Christ,

Steve Reed

Pastor & Licensed Mental Health Counselor – (#MH13289)

Preparing to Launch: A Notebook for Launching a Healthy Marriage

A few beginning thoughts:

Here in Central Florida, from time to time we have had the privilege to be able to see the launch trail of the Shuttle as it climbs to the Space Station or heads out for some other mission. Imagine how much planning and training it takes to ready! Before an astronaut is allowed to apply to be on a Shuttle crew he or she has had to complete 1000 hours of flight training, have completed a college degree in engineering, science or math, take an additional year of courses in advanced math and sciences, underwater simulations, endurance and stress tests, psychological assessments and that famous really fast chair going around thingy.

Imagine your marriage as this kind of voyage. It's the kind that once you launch, you have your crew who you have to depend on, and you don't get to swap out crew members along the way. There's going to be launch pressure, mechanical failures, unexpected obstacles and sometimes shortage of fuel along the way. You'll need to know how to keep in touch with your Launch command, how to deal with stress, how to repair failed equipment in flight, and how to deal with unexpected obstacles.

Our goal with premarital counseling is to prepare you well to have a successful flight, that you grow close to your co-crewman, that you have anticipated and been trained to handle many of the obstacles you will face ahead of time. Our goal is that you will complete your journey well, will have had many of the breathless moments astronauts long for as they catch a glimpse of the sun rising behind the sphere of the earth from outer space, or the vastness of the heavens that can only be experienced after the launch.

But one more thing we are fully committed to and we want you to commit to as well. Just as there are a significant number of tests that must be passed for a shuttle to launch, so too there are honest assessments that need to be made along the way. Everyone on the Shuttle crew really wants the launch to go off without a hitch and the mission to be successful, but anyone along the way has the authority to raise a yellow or red flag that will stop the launch in its tracks even if its seconds before launch. We will ask you for the same permission - permission for us to raise yellow or red flags, and permission for each of you to do so as well.

Our goal with premarital counseling is to prepare you well to have a successful flight!

Commitments Before Premarital counseling:

Each Complete "Getting to know you" questions (see p. 20)
Agree to Premarital Purity Covenant (See p. 21)

Commitments During Premarital Counseling:

Complete each Workshop (Readings, Videos and Workbook Exercises) at least two days before session (this allows for more time to process with fiancé and for questions to come up).

Each week, schedule a date with your fiancé for after you've both finished the Workshop for that week and before the next Premarital Counseling Session. This can be a simple burger and coke or coffee out somewhere, or it can be dinner at a nice restaurant. The key is – a place you can talk openly about the Workshop for that week and a place where you can feel free to pray with and for each other.

Quote from Mayo Clinic on Premarital Counseling:

Premarital counseling is a type of therapy that helps couples prepare for marriage. Premarital counseling can help ensure that you and your partner have a strong, healthy relationship. Premarital counseling can also help you identify weaknesses that could become bigger problems during marriage.

Through premarital counseling, couples are encouraged to discuss a wide range of important and intimate topics related to marriage, such as: Finances; Communication; Beliefs and values; Roles in marriage; Affection and sex; Children and parenting; Family relationships; Decision making; Dealing with anger; & Time spent together.

Premarital counseling helps partners improve their ability to communicate, set realistic expectations for marriage and develop conflict resolution skills.

Remember, preparing for marriage involves more than choosing a wedding dress and throwing a party. Take the time to build a solid foundation for your relationship.

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