

9 Serious Questions You Should Ask Before Getting Married

Marriage is supposed to be heavenly, but it can end up being hell on Earth if you (1) marry the wrong person or (2) find out after you're married that your spouse was hiding some dark secrets. Just ask my friend "Carlos," who was married for a year before he learned that his wife owed thousands of dollars in credit-card debt. The tension caused by a shopping addiction—and her ongoing deception—led to divorce.

Anyone who's been through a job interview knows employers try to identify potential problems by asking lots of questions before they hire anyone. Some companies take months to recruit high-level employees because they know one wrong hiring decision can cost millions of dollars. So why wouldn't you be even more careful before you tie the knot with the person you plan to spend the rest of your life with?

I'm amazed by how many Christian couples don't use wisdom when choosing a mate or neglect to get premarital counseling before they walk down the aisle together. Any counselor will tell you that couples face major difficulties if they don't honestly communicate at the beginning of their relationship and put all their cards on the table. You have to ask questions!

If you are a believer in Christ and you want a marriage that honors God, you should make sure you ask these questions before the Big Day.

1. How did your partner come to know Jesus personally? It's a sad fact that some people pretend to be Christians. They can sing the choruses and mimic the preacher, but their private lives are a different story. They are posers—and some of them are actually attending church to find a cute girl or guy.

Don't fall for a fake. You need a spouse who has a genuine relationship with God.

2. Has your partner been growing spiritually? It's also a sad fact that many Christians today remain spiritual babies even though they've been in church for years. If you want a strong marriage, don't pursue a person who has no spiritual spark. My wife is beautiful, but what attracted me to her was her passion for God. If your partner has no interest in discipleship, worship, prayer or studying God's Word, don't assume they will develop spiritual maturity later.

3. What kind of family life did your partner have? We all come from different backgrounds. Some people grow up in single-parent families, others are raised in alcoholic homes, and others experienced abuse. God can help us overcome any handicaps caused by family dysfunction. But you need to know what you are dealing with before you vow to love your partner "in sickness and in health." You can't carry your partner's burdens or experience deep intimacy unless you share your pain with each other.

4. What is your partner's dating and marriage history? It's true that when we come to know Christ "the old things passed away" (2 Cor. 5:17). But that doesn't mean you can lie about your past. Your potential spouse needs to know if you have been married before, if you have kids living in another city, or if you are obligated to make alimony payments.

5. Does your partner have a criminal record? Employers ask this question—and they sometimes turn away prospective employees who have been sentenced for crimes. You don't want to wait until your wedding night to learn that your husband is wearing a tattoo on his back that he got in prison. And you should rethink your marriage plans if you learn your boyfriend was convicted of assault.

6. Does your partner struggle with addictions? Many marriages

end in divorce because one partner has self-destructive habits. The addict may be hooked on alcohol, drugs, porn or gambling—and a churchgoer with these habits may have learned to hide their behavior. If you see the warning signs of addiction, don't be fooled into thinking it's no big deal. You may need to postpone the wedding.

7. Does your partner have debts or a questionable credit history? The financial side of marriage is challenging enough without the extra stress of debt. Wise couples will meet with a pastor or mentor before the wedding to discuss a reasonable budget. If you find out your partner owes the equivalent of a year's salary because of out-of-control spending, you should reconsider this relationship.

8. Has your partner received prayer ministry or counseling for his or her failures, hurts and traumas? God's grace is bigger than any sin. The Holy Spirit can deliver a person from the shame of adultery, the pain of divorce or the bondage of resentment. But these things don't just drop off by themselves; people need prayer and counseling to get free from their past. You should insist that your partner get the help he or she needs.

9. Do you and your partner agree about family plans? I know a couple who married without talking about this issue. The man wanted lots of kids; the wife didn't want any. This will not work! Amos 3:3 says: "Do two people walk hand in hand if they aren't going to the same place?" (The Message). Find a partner who shares your desires and goals.

If you want a marriage that stands through life's storms, you need a partner who is wholly committed to Jesus and on the path to healing. Your spouse won't be perfect, but please don't settle for less than God's best for you.

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