

Christian Marriage

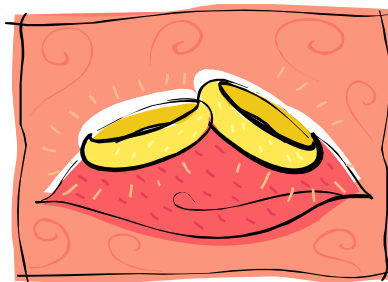


King of Glory Lutheran Church
4125 Grand Ave.
Billings, MT 59106
Phone: 406-652-1690
Fax: 406-652-1693

Cross: Symbol of Christ's Blessing
Two Rings: Symbol of the Marriage Covenant

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First Things in Planning a Christian Wedding

People from all cultures and all religions get married. The pastors of this congregation encourage you to plan your wedding within a faith community with which you feel comfortable and intend to participate. If one or both of the couple are not currently active participants in a Christian congregation, the pastor will ask you to participate in a course of instruction in Christian teachings prior to or immediately following the wedding. Upon completion of the course, you are welcome to join King of Glory Lutheran Church and make this congregation your church home.

Marriage within the context of Christian worship is a privilege reserved for those who sincerely desire God's blessing upon their marriage. When an ordained Lutheran minister presides and the wedding service takes place in the midst of the Christian community, the couple publicly affirms and announces to the gathered people that faith in Christ and participation in the life and work of the church is of serious importance to them. The church understands the wedding ceremony as first and foremost an act of worship. If you do not understand yourself or your wedding in this way, then you may be better served and more pleased with a non-church wedding.

How Christians Understand Marriage

Marriage is a gift of God, intended for the joy and strength of those who enter it and for the well-being of the whole human family. In creation God blessed humankind with mutual companionship, the capacity to love, and the care and nurture of children. God's faithfulness, enacted in the covenant with the people of Israel, is the promise in which marriage, too, is grounded. Jesus affirmed the covenant of marriage and, by the mystery of his self-giving, revealed the height and depth of love. Christian marriage is grounded in Christ. Even as the one Spirit holds the church of God in the bond of peace, so the Holy Spirit sustains those who are united in marriage, that as one they may be a living sign of God's grace, love, forgiveness, and fidelity. Because God is first faithful to us, we are able to be faithful to one another.

The Wedding Service as Worship

For people of faith, a wedding is not just a personal or even a family rite of passage. The Christian church views a marriage ceremony celebrated in a church and/or presided over by an ordained minister as a service of worship in which God's promises and grace in Christ is the primary focus. However small or large, simple or elaborate, those who are gathered are greeted in God's name. The promises of marriage are made before God and the Christian assembly. As God promises, God is present. The language of prayer and blessing, the choice of Bible readings and music, the words of the sermon and of the vows make clear that a wedding is a worship service-giving praise for God's unending love, celebrating the gift of marriage, and asking God's blessing. Those gathered represent the whole people of God and at the same time include people who bring a variety of religious beliefs and spiritual practices. Those to be married are the primary ministers of the wedding; ordained clergy serve as official witnesses and preside during the liturgical celebration. There is a given structure to the service of Christian marriage that is the beginning point for planning the wedding ceremony. A service outline is located on page seven.

Arranging the Wedding Date

The church calendar and the pastor's schedule must be clear before a date and time is set. Ideally, planning begins six months in advance, three months is minimum. Sacred days of the church year are avoided.

Pre-Marital Counseling

Couples will engage in four to six hours of pre-marital conversation and guidance. This process includes planning the wedding itself, reflection on Christian teachings about marriage, and the counseling tool PREPARE/ENRICH. This tool provides an inventory that assists the pastor in exploring the couple's relationship strength and growth areas, communication skills, conflict resolutions skills, family of origin issues, finances, personal, couple and family goals, and further opportunities for marriage enrichment. A \$35 fee is paid by the couple for the PREPARE/ENRICH assessment tool. In some circumstances, the pastor may accept pre-marital

counseling performed by another pastor or professional counselor. In these circumstances, it is still necessary for the pastor to meet with the couple to become acquainted with them and to plan the wedding service.

FEES

On-site fees include pastor honorarium, musician honorarium, building maintenance and personnel. Any musicians/soloists in addition to the main service player provided by KOG will need to be compensated by you separately. Fees must be received in full in the KOG office one week before the actual wedding date. On-site and off-site fees do not include the \$35 required for the pre-marital counseling (see pre-marital counseling p. 2).

On-site

Member: \$500

Non-Member: \$1,000

Off-site

Member: \$200 (Clergy)

\$150-\$200 (KOG Musician)

Non-Member: \$300 (Clergy & KOG donation)

\$150-\$200 (KOG Musician)

Member & Non-Member: Travel, Lodging & Meal expenses for pastor and musician

For off-site weddings that are not located in Billings, the wedding party is expected to pay for the pastor and musician's travel, meals, and lodging. Lodging should be private and of a high quality; commensurate with the wedding party's accommodations. The honorarium suggested for the pastor is \$200. The honorarium suggested for the musician is \$150-\$200 depending upon the amount of rehearsal time, music, and solos.

Marriage License

A wedding service is both a religious ceremony and a civil action. By law, a couple must purchase a marriage license issued from the state of Montana. The license must be in the church office 5 days before the wedding is to take place. The church completes the license paperwork, photocopies it for their records, and mails it to the courthouse. The courthouse will return the original license to the couple. If one of you is a citizen of Montana, a license may be obtained from any Montana county and used in any Montana county. If neither of you is a Montana citizen, a license must be used in the county in which it is obtained. For the marriage license the following is required: 1) Both need a certified copy of their birth certificate. 2) If divorced, a certificate of divorce must be presented. 3) If the bride is under 50 years of age, proof of a blood test for German measles must be provided. 4) A check to pay for the license. To change your name, go to the office of Social Security.

Holy Communion

It is appropriate to share Holy Communion at a wedding, but not required. When Holy Communion is celebrated, the entire gathered assembly is invited to receive, not just the bride and groom. Communion is a sacrament. It is a visible sign of God's grace. This church believes that Christ is truly present in the bread and wine offering grace and uniting the community with all people of faith across time and space. It is appropriate for the bride and groom to assist the presiding minister in serving communion to the gathered assembly.

Music

In coordination with the pastor, the church service player will serve as your music consultant. She will review and approve your music selections. She will help you select other musicians and soloists. The focus of the wedding service and the music is upon God. Only music appropriate to a worship setting is allowed.

Live musicians and music are always preferable and recommended. The use of CD's and other recorded music is discouraged. The church does not have an adequate audio/sound system to accommodate recorded music. Hymns allow the congregation to participate, focus on God's work in our life and relationships, and are appropriate in the liturgy. Selecting at least one hymn is encouraged. One or two solos may be appropriate. Services with Holy Communion find more opportunities for solos.

A couple's favorite secular song is best performed at the reception. One song is not better than the other, but hymns and secular songs simply function in different ways and for different occasions. Blatantly inappropriate texts have no place in the worship service. (i.e. lyrics with profanity, that degrade women, reference the sexual act in disrespectful ways, etc.)

The music chosen for a wedding should be suitable for the available instruments in order to respect the integrity of the music. When selecting music, consider the effect, sometimes subconscious, a piece has on the gathered assembly.

Bulletins

It is helpful and meaningful to have printed bulletins with the order of worship. However, it is not required. Purchasing and printing of bulletins are the responsibility of the couple. The pastor must approve the content and order of worship prior to printing bulletins.

Flowers and Decorations

There are many ways to decorate the church from simple to elaborate. Flowers must be live. Flowers may not be placed upon the altar, baptismal font, pulpit, piano or organ. The furnishings of the worship space will not be re-arranged or moved. All arrangements of decorations are subject to the final approval of the pastor. Because multiple events often are scheduled at the church facilities and because we cannot guarantee the security of the site, the church may not be decorated until the Saturday of the wedding.

Candles

The church will light the two altar candles for the worship service. These candles represent the light of Christ that shines into our world. The two candles symbolize Christ as the Alpha and the Omega-the beginning and the end. The church does not have extra candelabras. All candles brought into the church from an outside source need to be dripleless.

Unity Candle

Some couples elect to light a unity candle after the exchange of vows. This is not a required part of the wedding service. A unity candle arrangement usually includes two smaller candles lit at the beginning of the service representing the bride and groom. After the exchange of vows, the couple together may light a larger candle placed in between the two individual candles. All candles remain lit symbolizing our God given individual gifts and the gifts of God given through the bond and covenant of marriage. The unity candle is provided by the bride and groom, not the church. Please have the unity candle at the rehearsal.

Colors

The paraments (colored altar cloths), banners, and pastor's stoles are designed and used according the liturgical church year. Both the color and the symbolism present on these items are meaningful to Christian worship. These items are not decorations. They may not be removed or changed to coordinate with wedding colors. An explanation of the church year and colors: Blue-Advent, Hope; Purple-Lent, Royalty and Repentance; White-Christmas & Easter, purity, joy, cleansing of Christ; Green-Epiphany & the Season of Pentecost, Growth in the Spirit; Red-Day of Pentecost, Holy Spirit and Fire

Photographs and Audio-Visual Recordings

It is best if formal pictures are taken before the service. No flash or roaming photographers, professional or not, are allowed during the service. Only a professional photographer may take pictures during the service from a discreet location in the balcony of the church with no flash photography or noisy instruments. It is the responsibility of the couple to inform the photographer of this policy and to insure that they abide by it. A stationary video camera may be used in a discreet location from the balcony. If the couple desires the pastor to appear in a photo, please notify the photographer and pastor in ample time.

Rehearsal

The rehearsal is held as close to the wedding date as possible (normally the day before). All members of the wedding party and all those participating in the service are to be present. This includes the wedding party, ushers, musicians, readers and parents. The pastor is in charge of the rehearsal. It is the responsibility of the bride and groom to make sure everyone arrives **ON TIME**. Encourage the wedding party to be prompt. The rehearsal should only take 30-45 minutes.

Attendants

The bride and groom may have no attendants or as many as desired. Due to space limitations, some restraint in numbers is wise. Select people who support your marriage and will be honest with you throughout your marriage. Attendants for either bride or groom may be of either sex.

Ring Bearers and Flower Girls

Ring bearers and flower girls may be part of the service, but they are not required. Ring bearers and flower girls must be at least five years of age. Please seat a family member close to the bridal party so that the young wedding participants may be seated during the service.

Processional and Seating

Consider how the bridal party will walk in-as couples or by themselves? It is acceptable for the bride to walk in with one parent or with both mother and father. It is acceptable for the bride and groom to walk in together. The tradition of the father handing over the daughter at one time represented the transfer of property as possession of the daughter was transferred from one male to another. However, this may still be a meaningful ritual action for a father and daughter without the connotation of the transfer of property. Consider the seating of parents and relatives. If parents are divorced, special attention needs to be given to who is seated where and to the procession. Consider escorts for grandparents or other special guests. Consider special arrangements for people with disabilities. It is tradition for the bride's mother to be escorted in last after the groom's mother. It is acceptable for the groom to take part in seating the family.

Recessional

At the end of the ceremony, there are several ways for the bride and groom to exit. They may exit followed by the wedding party. They may have a reception line at the church. They may go directly to a waiting car to leave for the reception. They may wait in another room until everyone exits the church. They may usher each row out themselves. If the reception is held off the church premises, it is best to have a reception line at the reception site.

Birdseed and Rice

Birdseed and rice are not allowed due to the mess and the need to keep walkways clear.

Reception

The parish administrator arranges the use of the church fellowship hall for receptions.

Alcohol, Tobacco, and Drugs

The use of alcohol and tobacco products is prohibited on the entire church premises including the building, parking lot, grounds, and adjacent streets. Other illegal substances are prohibited by state and federal law. Weddings at King of Glory are a privilege. The pastor may dismiss any persons in the wedding party who appear intoxicated, including the bride and groom. Montana state law invalidates a marriage license if either of the applicants is under the influence of alcohol or drugs.

Climate Control

The settings for climate control (heat and air conditioning) are not to be adjusted by anyone.

Personal Items and Valuables

The congregation may not be held liable for any damaged or missing valuables or personal items, particularly those left unattended on the church premises at any time. There are no secure rooms on the church premises. Therefore, the wedding dress may not be stored on the church premises overnight, and the church may not be decorated until the Saturday of the wedding.

Wedding Service Order Sample

Prelude
Processional
Invocation
Declaration of Intent
Prayer
Readings
Homily
Exchange of Vows
Exchange of Rings
Unity Candle (optional)
Blessing
Prayers
Holy Communion (optional)
Lord's Prayer
Benediction
Kiss
Presentation
Recessional
Postlude

Wedding Checklist

- ___ Date of Wedding _____
- ___ Time of Wedding _____
- ___ Location _____
- ___ Rehearsal Date & Time _____
- ___ Pastor _____
- ___ Counseling Appointments Day _____ Time _____
- Day _____ Time _____
- Day _____ Time _____
- Day _____ Time _____
- Day _____ Time _____
- ___ Order of wedding service complete (consultation with pastor)
- ___ Fees paid to KOG office one week before wedding
- ___ Vows selected, pastor informed
- ___ Processional Order
- ___ Seating
- ___ Recessional Order
- ___ Number of attendants in bridal party: Bride: _____ Groom: _____
- ___ Number of rings in ceremony _____
- ___ Communion Yes or No
- ___ Service Bulletin Number & Printer _____
- ___ Musician _____
- ___ Soloist _____
- ___ Contacted service player _____
- ___ Contacted soloist _____
- ___ Selection of service music: hymns, processional, recessional, solos
- ___ Music finalized and approved by musician and pastor _____
- ___ Have informed musician of time of rehearsal
- ___ Reception Site _____
- ___ Florist _____
- ___ Photographer _____
- ___ Informed florist and photographer of guidelines pertaining to each
- ___ Marriage license signed and in church office 5 days before wedding
- ___ Transportation arrangements to and from church

Wedding Vows

Wedding vows are the promises that the couple makes to one another. The promises we make to one another grow out of our experience with the promises God has made and kept. We love because God first loved us. We know something about faithfulness because God has been faithful to us. Marriage vows are made publicly in the presence of witnesses. Fidelity to these promises is what makes a marriage. These promises are intended to bind a couple to one another for life. They express what has brought a couple to the day of marriage and their hope for the future. As you select your vows, take time to reflect on what has brought you to this point in your relationship and what you hope for the future. Although certain words have taken on the force of tradition, there are no required words.

Couples may choose one of the following for wedding vows

A

In the presence of God and this community,
I, name, take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*;
to love and honor from this day forward,
in joy and in sorrow,
in wealth and in poverty,
in sickness and in health,
to love and to cherish,
as long as we both shall live.
This is my solemn vow.

B

I take you, name, to be my *wife/husband* from this day forward,
to join with you and share all that is to come,
and I promise to be faithful to you
until death parts us.

C

I, name, give myself to you, name.
By the grace of God,
I promise to support and care for you.
In the love of Christ,
I promise to love and cherish you.
With the Spirit's help,
I promise to be faithful to you,
as long as we both shall live.

D

I take you, name, to be my *wife/husband*,
and these things I promise you:
I will be faithful to you and honest with you;
I will respect, trust, help, and care for you;
I will forgive you as we have been forgiven;
and I will share my life with you,
through the best and worst of all that is to come,
until death parts us.

E

Writing your own vows:

Occasionally, couples choose to write their own vows. When writing your own vows, the promises must indicate the complete sharing which marriage implies and make clear that the promises are a lifelong commitment. It is not a formula, but the promise of fidelity that makes the marriage. If you write your own vows, consider brevity and the use of clear language. It is best if both the bride and groom make the same vows to one another. Some couples are particularly gifted and write their own vows well. They put in time, energy and thoughtfulness. If a couple writes their own vows, the pastor proofreads them to insure that they are appropriate to the definition and purpose of the vows.

Couples do not need to feel obligated to write their own vows. The church offers the gift of already written vows with which the couples may completely and joyfully express their promises and life-long fidelity to one another. Some couples may even find writing their own vows a difficult venture filled with pressure "to get it right". In this instance, writing your own vows may become a burden rather than a joy.

Scripture Readings

Scripture readings declare the steadfast love of God, proclaim the blessings of God, and call the couple to live out God's love within the covenant of their life together. A regular worship service of the church includes four readings of Scripture. An Old Testament Reading, a Psalm (sung or read responsively), a New Testament Reading, and a Gospel Reading. A wedding ceremony may include all these readings or it may only have one or two readings. Below you will find selected Scripture suggestions. Couples may choose other Scripture readings not listed. Your pastor or worship leader may have hymn or solo suggestions based upon your selected texts. Members of the family, the wedding party, or the assembly may be invited to read the Scripture texts during the service.

OLD TESTAMENT

Genesis 1:26-28 *Woman and man created in the image of God*
Genesis 2:18-24 *Companionship rather than loneliness*
Ruth 1:15-18: *Ruth vows to stay with her mother-in-law Naomi*
Ecclesiastes 4:9-11 *To are able to accomplish more than one*
Proverbs 3:3-6 *Loyalty and faithfulness written on the heart*
Song of Solomon 2:10-13 *The voice of the beloved*
Song of Solomon 8:6-7 *Many waters cannot quench love*
Song of Solomon 7:10-12 *I am my lover's*
Isaiah 63:7-9 *God's steadfast love lifts up the people*
Jeremiah 31:31-34 *The new covenant of the people of God*

PSALM

(Psalms often are available in musical form-as a hymn or as 1-3 canted verses with a congregational refrain. Ask your pastor or worship leader if the psalm may be sung)

67 *May God be merciful to us and bless us*
100 *We are God's people and the sheep of God's pasture*
117 *The steadfast love of the Lord*
121 *The Lord keeps watch over you*
127 *Unless the Lord builds the house*
128 *Blessed are those who walk in the Lord's ways*
150 *Let everything that breathes praise the Lord*

NEW TESTAMENT

Romans 8:31-35, 37-39 *If God is for us, who is against us*
Romans 12:1-2, 9-18 *A living sacrifice and genuine love*
1 Corinthians 12:31—13:13 *The greatest gift is love*
Galatians 5:22-23 *The fruits of the spirit are love, joy, peace, patience, kindness, etc.*
Ephesians 3:14-19 *The breadth, length, height and depth of Christ's love*
Ephesians 5:1-2, 21-33 *Walk in love, as Christ loved us*
Ephesians 4:32 *forgive one another as God in Christ has forgiven you*
Philippians 1:27 *standing firm in one spirit, striving side by side with one mind for the faith of the gospel*
Philippians 4:4-9 *Rejoice in the Lord always*
Colossians 3:12-17 *Clothed in compassion, kindness, meekness and patience*
1 John 3:18-24 *Let us love in truth and action*
1 John 4:7-16 *Let us love one another for love is of God*

GOSPEL

Matthew 5:1-10 *The beatitudes*
Matthew 5:14-16 *You are the light, let your light shine*
Matthew 7:21, 24-29 *A wise person builds upon the rock*
Matthew 19:3-6 *What God has united must not be divided*
Matthew 22:35-40 *Love, the greatest commandment*
Mark 10:6-9 *They are no longer two but one*
John 2:1-11 *The wedding at Cana*
John 13:34-35 *I give you a new commandment, love another as I have loved you*
John 13:14-16 *As I have washed your feet, you should wash one another's feet.*
John 15:9-17 *Love one another as I have loved you*

Wedding Information Sheet

King of Glory Lutheran Church

Bride	Groom
Full Name:	Full Name:
Address:	Address:
Phone:	Phone:
E-mail:	E-mail:
Birthplace:	Birthplace:
Birthday:	Birthday:
Occupation:	Occupation:
Previously Married: Yes No	Previously Married: Yes No
Children:	Children:
Baptized: Yes No	Baptized: Yes No
Denomination:	Denomination:
Current Membership	Current Membership
Parents:	Parents:
Address:	Address:
Phone:	Phone:
Grandparents:	Grandparents:
Future Name:	Future Name:

Future Address: _____ Future Phone: _____

State Marriage License # _____

Date of Wedding _____ Time _____

Location of Wedding: _____

Expected Attendance: _____

Presiding Pastor: _____

Rehearsal Date: _____ Time _____

Counseling Sessions: Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Day _____ Time _____

Maid/Matron of Honor: _____ Best Man _____

Attendants: _____ Attendants: _____

Flower Girl: _____ Ring Bearer: _____

Ushers: _____

Musicians: _____

Music: Processional: _____

Solo/Hymn: _____

Solo/Hymn: _____

Solo/Hymn _____

Scripture 1) _____ 2) _____ 3) _____

Things to Consider Before You Get Married

Written by: Nicole Teague, CIGNA Behavioral Health

So, you've finally found her/him — the person of your dreams. Now, it seems the next logical step is to get married. After all, you're in love, and that's all you need to handle whatever curves life may throw your way. However, with so many people divorcing these days, it's more important than ever to take the time to consider whether you are truly ready to devote yourself to a life-long commitment.

People spend so much time planning for that special day — the day of their wedding. But what about planning for the actual marriage, which is meant to last the rest of your life? As you would with any long-term commitment, marriage is something that you should plan for. So before you take the plunge, take the time to consider some things that could have an effect on your level of happiness.

- **Are you ready to get married?** During their teens and 20's, people change considerably. Until a person has matured as an individual, it is difficult to know if a relationship that worked for them in their younger years will still be working for them years later. Have you experienced everything you wanted to as a single person?
- **Finances** — Do you have enough money to get married? Getting married can be expensive. Once you are married, how will you spend your money? Discussing money issues ahead of time, (spending habits and where you each feel your money should go), can prevent disagreements later. Discuss how you and your partner feel about buying, saving, and sharing bank accounts. How will the bills be split up? Will a prenuptial agreement be necessary?
- **How alike are you?** Where do you stand on important issues such as religion and having children? Do you both agree on what a "good relationship" looks like? Do your personalities clash or are you in-sync? While some people prefer that their mate to be very similar to them, others feel that differences "spice up" the relationship. What are your expectations from marriage? What are your partner's? Do you think are able to give your partner what he/she needs?
- **Spiritual Beliefs-** What are each person's expectations regarding religion and faith? What are your spiritual beliefs? How important is it to you that your spouse shares those beliefs? How often do you plan on going to church together, praying together, doing devotions together? Where will you go to worship? If you have children, how will you engage them in church? If one spouse is less involved in a faith community than the other, what are the expectations each spouse has of the other? Is the less involved spouse willing to make a commitment to become more involved because it is of high value to the other spouse? Does the more spiritually motivated spouse really want to spend his/her entire life with someone to whom it is of little value or interest? Spiritual values become more important to each person when a couple has children. It's best for everyone if you clearly share similar spiritual goals.
- **Personal needs and beliefs** — What do you need to make a relationship work? What are your views on important issues such as loyalty, honesty, and dealing with anger? How do your views fit with your partner's? What behaviors are considered to be "off-limits"? Communicate these with your partner.
- **Communication skills** — How do you plan to communicate with your partner? Do you know how to fight fairly? There will be things you disagree on — how will you handle this? Set ground rules for communication, making sure to discuss specific issues such as arguing, yelling, and name-calling. Are you able to resolve issues to reach a compromise?
- **Life outside of marriage** — Having a life outside of your partner is vital, and it is important to maintain your identity rather than to lose yourself in your mate. Discuss how much time you will set aside to spend time with friends, or on hobbies. Are there certain activities that are expected to be discontinued or changed once you begin your married life?
- **Do you want to have children?** If so, how many? How do you plan to discipline them, raise them, and care for them? How would you handle issues such as infertility and adoption should they come up? Having children brings changes into your relationship and you will have less time to focus on the two of you. It's important not to lose yourself in your new roles as parents, and to find a way to maintain the partnership you have created.

- **Employment** — What are your long-term career goals? Will you have to travel or relocate for your job? Do you spend long hours at the office? Do your work schedules allow enough time for you to spend together? What kind of effect will your job have on your family life? If you have children, will someone quit their job to take care of them?
- **Sex** — Being unsatisfied with your sex life can cause problems in your relationship. Discuss your expectations with your partner, and find out what he/she expects from you in return.
- **Daily life** — Who will be responsible for daily activities such as household chores and paying the bills? How will these responsibilities be handled if life's circumstances change — for example, when children are born or work hours are changed?
- **How committed are you to the relationship?** When your relationship goes through changes (which it will), are you willing to take the necessary steps to deal with the changes? Are you open to counseling if you find your relationship is in trouble, or are you more likely to give up?
- **Personal space** — Are there times when you need to be left alone? Talked to? Listened to? Comforted? Communicate these needs clearly to your partner.
- **How to keep your marriage exciting** — How will you find ways to keep your relationship satisfying? When do you plan to dedicate time to your relationship and how do you plan to do so? What is your idea of time together — spending time with a group of friends, watching sports on TV, a private candlelit dinner, a walk in the park? Can you make a regular "date night" a priority?
- **Family/friends** — Do you get along with the people who are important in your partner's life? If not, will it cause problems in your relationship?
- **Remarrying/Blending families** — If you or your partner have been married before, you may have additional issues to discuss. If there are children involved, what will your role with them be? What do you expect your partner's role to be? Discuss what the relationships are with your ex-partners, and what you expect your spouse's relationship to be with those people.
- **Know your odds** — Statistics have shown couples who lived together before they were married, those who were previously married, and those without a college education are more likely to get a divorce.

Why get married, anyway? Take some time to consider why you want to get married in the first place. Many people get married thinking that they can change the other person. Although people can change, certain behaviors may be difficult to change. Looking at how you have acted in past relationships and with family members can be a telltale sign as to which behaviors you may carry with you into new relationships. The need to recognize what you contributed to the failure of your previous relationships is essential in order to prevent committing the same mistakes again.

Getting married will not fix problems within a relationship. Do you want to get married to get away from your family? Are you doing it for money? Stability? An unplanned pregnancy? Before you "tie the knot", make sure you are doing it for the right reasons.

Love changes everything... Marriage is not a fairy tale. The love you share with your mate will change over time. What you need from your relationship will change over time. The excitement will eventually wear off. Your patience and devotion will be tested. Marriage requires you to give of yourself, to make sacrifices, and to admit when you are wrong. It requires you to forgive when you really don't want to, and to keep on trying no matter how hard you want to give up. It takes dedication, commitment, honesty, and effort to make a marriage last.

There is no magic formula to making a marriage work. Sometimes, even the best of marriages fail. Many people enter a marriage expecting their partner to make them "happy" or "complete". However, only you can be held responsible for your own happiness. By taking the time to think about your future and sharing your thoughts with your partner, you have already taken the first step in making sure your relationship can stand the test of time.

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