

QUESTIONS AND ISSUES TO EXPLORE WITH YOUR BELOVED

*These questions are not to be mastered. They are a starting place to understand the practical and ordinary of long and lasting relationships to start. Much of marriage is very **practical** and **ordinary**.*

*Falling in love seems to change the way people think - or not think! Many starry-eyed people, and not just teenagers either, say, "All that matters is that we love each other. The rest will work itself out." However, that just is not true. Things don't just work themselves out; **you** have to work them out, and it can be hard work. Maintain a focus on these important questions. They should not be answered in a marathon but be explored over months over coffee and on walks together.*

QUESTIONS FOR EACH OF YOU TO ASK YOURSELF.

What are your goals in life? What are your beloved's goals?

List some ways you can support your beloved in his or her goals.

Interview some married people with successful marriages for ideas on how they demonstrate love for their spouses.

Do you have a daily schedule that you follow regularly?

Consider reading a book on time management.

Do you set goals as to what you want to accomplish each day? Have you ever set *long-term* goals? Try it out!

Do you actively try to learn new things and put them into practice?

In what areas do you struggle with character issues such as fidelity, honesty, self-control and respectfulness, and anger?

Do you know how to plan menus, cook, and serve food?

How do you want your home to be decorated? What styles do you prefer?

Do you know how to budget and handle finances?

What standards do you have for the cleanliness of your home?

Do you know basic home maintenance?

Do you know basic auto maintenance (i.e. how to change a tire)?

Women, do you recognize your own daily and monthly cycles well enough to know when you are likely to be emotionally tired, and perhaps unkind?

Do you both recognize how you behave under pressure?

Do you purposefully practice kindness every day?

What kind of words comes out of your mouth? Are they demeaning or uplifting?

Are you prepared to trust your spouse's decisions?

What makes you feel loved?

RELATIONSHIP-BUILDING

Do you know what your beloved really wants out of life?

What are your (and her) expectations for marriage?

How much time do your married friends spend working on relationship issues? Should they spend more? If so, doing what?

What things could you do to make your spouse happy?

Families who hope to have a beloved home with the children instead of in the workforce need to give the at-home beloved a feeling and reality of security, both relationally and financially. How will you show you will always be there, to calm fears about the risk of staying home in our divorce-happy culture?

How much insurance will you need?

How much savings?

RELIGION

In what faith were you brought up?

What faith do you have today?

If no particular faith, what beliefs do you have about life, death, the hereafter and good and evil?

If you have a belief in God, share it with each other. This is another way of being intimate.

In what faith will your children be brought up?

People sometimes change faith or denominations? What would you accept, what would be out of the question.

Would either of you convert to the other's beliefs?

Does your beloved's family accept your faith or denomination?

CHILDREN

Are you prepared to have children? How many children? When? What will you do if have an "unplanned" pregnancy? (There is no such thing as guaranteed conception-control).

What additional expenses will you incur should pregnancy occur? Are you prepared?

Have you discussed or received counseling on contraception. Have you discussed what are acceptable and unacceptable measures?

What parts will each of you take in raising your children, including teaching, disciplining, and caring for them?

Do you know basic child care?

What role will you play in your child's development?

Will you home school, or send your child to a public or private school? Become familiar with different types of schooling.

How will you handle the discipline of your child? Consider reading a book or two about child development.

EDUCATION

What do you want to do as a career? Why have you chosen that career?

What kind of education do you need to do it?

Where and when will you get the necessary education?

How much will that education cost (in time and money)?

What will you have to sacrifice in order to pursue that career?

EMPLOYMENT

What leads do you have for getting work once your education is complete?

What qualities do you have that a potential employer might find valuable?

What can you do to make yourself more qualified for employment (besides education)?

How will family and career be balanced in your lives?

What is your plan should you lose your job?

FINANCES

Who will be the breadwinner and who will look after the children?"

Do you have a plan for making enough money to support a spouse and at least one child?

Do you have a three-month reserve of money in the bank in case of an emergency?

What are your long-term financial goals (i.e. house, college for your children and retirement)?
What are you doing right now to plan for them?

Do you intend to buy a house? If so, do you have a workable plan for saving the money needed? Ask a realtor to give you some materials and explain the procedures.

Have you thought through your perspective on debt?

How much debt do you have?

HOME AND AUTO MAINTENANCE

What is your perspective on "stuff"? (I.e. boats, campers, motorcycles, etc.). Have you considered the cost for owning and maintaining these things?

Do you know how much will it cost to have a reliable car.

How much time and money does it take to care for a house? Talk to a homeowner and get a sense of it.

Does someone know how to fix things that break? Alternatively, do you plan to pay repair bills?

ISSUES TO DISCUSS WITH EACH OTHER

*Warning: These questions are designed to help you get to know each other better. Don't use them to try to define every place the two of you are different. It is good to understand differences, but we must recognize that marriage involves **appreciating** the differences and loving each other **in spite** of them. It also involves learning to change. If you start drawing lines in the sand and saying, "This is the way I am, like it or not," you're in trouble already.*

RELATIONSHIP

What are the things you do that your beloved finds most encouraging? Most bothersome?

How should disputes in public be handled?

Do you know your beloved's priorities? Could you list them?

How would you like your beloved to respond when you are upset?

What is "off-limits" in fighting?

Which "good manners" are important to your beloved? Do you practice them?

What is your beloved's favorite way to relax? How will you react when there is no gas in the car and you are already late for a meeting?

How will you react when your beloved is late picking you up?

What happens when you reach a stalemate in discussion?

What is the best way for someone to compliment you in a meaningful way?

What is the best compliment for your beloved?

When do you most want your beloved with you? When do you most want to be alone?

How important is it to have a specific "date night" when you are married?

In what areas would you like your beloved to keep you accountable?

How would you like to be kept accountable in those areas?

What should your beloved know that you are sensitive about?

What expectations do you have about marriage?

What are three things you consider most important when making decision.

FAMILY

What family traditions would you like to keep?

How important is it to see your family *on* a holiday?

How important is it to celebrate the holidays with your family?

What holidays are most important to spend together?

Is it more important to you or to your family that you spend holidays together?

What is the limit on how often extended family members may come and visit after you are married?

When a problem arises with one of your families, how will it be handled?

When your parents are no longer able to care for themselves, what responsibilities will you and your spouse take in caring for them?

In what areas will your extended families be permitted into your nuclear family's decision-making? To what extent?

What do you plan to do differently from the way your family did things?

MONEY

Each of you records your spending for a month. Look at each other's lists and discuss.

Prepare a budget together. Make sure everything is included. Discuss it.

What do you do with "extra" money (e.g. leftover grocery money)?

When you don't have enough money for something, do you take money from another fund, withdraw from savings, buy it on credit, or go without?

How often should the checkbook be balanced? Who will do it?

What are the three things you consider most important in finances?

What are some things you currently buy (include everything: magazine subscriptions, CDs, certain brands of clothing, etc.) that you would be unwilling to quit buying once married. Go shopping with each other, buying the things you would ordinarily buy (especially things like health/beauty products).

Go furniture shopping together, pretending that you each have \$25,000 to spend. Make your choices separately and compare notes. Discuss why you made those choices, and think about what styles you each prefers.

What situations would merit adding second income to the family after the children arrive?

Your thoughts on credit, mortgages, and personal loans.

TIME

What do you consider a waste of time?

Do you ever just waste time? What is your favorite way to waste time?

How much time do you allow for reading each week? When?

What kinds of books do you most like to read?

What kinds of films, concerts, music, computer games and television shows do you both enjoy?

Will you limit television use in your home? To what extent? What about computer and game use? Telephone use?

How much time would you like to spend discussing the relationship? What do you consider "working" on the relationship? (I.e. would reading "relationship" books count.)

If a friend asks you to do something spontaneous but you have time planned with your beloved, what do you do?

Do you check in with your beloved before making plans? Would that change after marriage?

Write out what you consider realistic weekly schedules and compare.

What is important about the time you spend alone together?

What is important in the time spent with others? What interests would you like to share?

What interests do you prefer to pursue alone?

SPACE

What is necessary for a place to seem like home to you?

What things are most important in having a clean house?

What would you be willing to give up, in space and cleanliness?

Who should take care of what housekeeping responsibilities?

Draw floor plans of your ideal homes and compare. Describe your tastes in architecture.

Describe your "dream estate".

How important is it that you have time alone each day?

What are some important considerations in organizing your space?

What rituals do you go through before starting on a business trip?

Going to bed? Going on vacation? Getting ready in the morning? Do you prefer to talk or not talk at those times?

What would you most like to share with your beloved?

THAT SHOULD ABOUT COVER IT!

Actually, it doesn't. However, it is a great place to start. You'll know a whole lot more about the person after going through just a few of these questions.