

Are You Ready to Stay Married?



“How did he ask?”

“Can I see the ring?”

“Where are you going to live?”

“Have you set a date?”

These are some of the many questions friends and family ask when a couple gets engaged.

If a couple is wise, even before they get engaged, they’ll ask their friends and family some big questions of their own. They will seek advice about developing domestic harmony, having a unified vision for financial peace and confirming their theological alignment. They will beg for insight into the melding of diverse backgrounds into a new family. They’ll gauge others’ opinions on the compatibility of their personalities, callings and life plans. They will ask for advice on wedding and honeymoon plans. Though these questions take different forms and concern different subjects, they are all essentially asking the same thing: Are we ready to get married?

But after the wedding day, the questions often taper off. Rarely do married couples ask themselves some of the great questions that helped get them to where they are. Having answered the initial question, “Are we ready to *get* married?” couples forget to ask the ongoing question, “Are we ready to *stay* married?” Like the former question, the latter can take many forms. For those of us who want to be really good at staying married, let’s revisit some of our original lines of inquiry to get some new answers to old questions.

1. How can I creatively show love for my spouse?

Many of us were at the pinnacle of our creativity when it came to “popping the question” or throwing the wedding party, but in the midst of marriage, we don’t always roll with the same momentum. While preparing for our engagement and wedding, I spent untold hours planning and scheming special surprises, gifts and treats for my bride-to-be in hopes to enliven our affections for one another and demonstrate my devotion to her. One of the biggest differences between then and now is a lack of time dedicated to contemplating how to display my affection. We often fall into the family routine and forget how our spouse loves to be loved. Make time to plan how to creatively demonstrate your love for your spouse.

2. How am I doing at...?

Budgeting. Leading our family spiritually. Addressing the needs of my spouse. It’s important to ask introspective questions of yourself and each other. When I was engaged, I constantly asked myself questions about the state of my readiness. It’s easy to forget within marriage to assess the commitments we’ve made to one another. Set aside a dinner to allow time for honest feedback from one another about how you’re doing as a wife or a husband. Ask how you can be more like the wife or husband you’re called to be, one who loves like Christ.

3. Which wise, godly people are speaking into my marriage?

Before I got engaged, I met with several older men I trusted, and I invited them to ask me tough questions about my future wife and myself. I wanted to walk into our marriage as prepared as possible, with open eyes. Years later, it is equally important to have older, wise and godly men and women who have a window into my marriage. They challenge me when I’ve grown too lax or too aggressive in certain areas. It takes another set of eyes to help reveal my blind spots. Proverbs 13:10 says, “Wisdom is with those who receive advice.” Identify the people in your life whom you admire and respect and give them permission to speak into your relationship.

4. Do I take care of myself like I did when preparing for my honeymoon?

Not only did my engagement bring with it a sweet season of spiritual and emotional introspection, it also brought a season of great physical health as I strived to be in great shape for our wedding and honeymoon. Let’s just say that I don’t quite revel like I

used to. Scripture tells us that our bodies belong to our spouses. As the years pass, they will leave their marks on us physically, and that is not just to be expected but to be valued, as well. We don't have to try to look like we did on our wedding night, but we can be mindful of our physical health and grooming. Devote some time to care for your body with a selfless diligence.

5. How can we regularly celebrate the fact that we are together?

Having a huge party to celebrate your marriage shouldn't just be an idea relegated to day one and then shelved until you hit 25 years. As fun as it was to host a reception and go on our honeymoon, it has been just as exciting to plan and take anniversary trips, to hire a babysitter so we can go on surprise date nights, to give each other thoughtful gifts and to have regular times in our schedule where it's just the two of us. It's a tremendously beneficial practice to show your kids and your spouse just how grateful you are to be married with a variety of dates, anniversaries, letters and prayers. Find any and every way you can to celebrate the fact that you're grateful to be married and you're ready to stay that way.

There is much more to staying married than simply not getting divorced. Staying married involves continuously asking good questions about your marriage. It's common to get to ask an engaged couple how they are planning their wedding day, but it is rare and precious to get to ask a couple on their 50th wedding anniversary how they made it work. By asking good questions about marriage each day, we move ourselves toward the sweetness of that day. And we demonstrate to God and to our spouse that, no matter how ready we were to *get* married, we are ready to *stay* married 'til death do us part.