

Get Ready, Get Set, I Do!

Always keep in mind that the social and recreational activities in which you engage should never violate scriptural principles. All of those who would be holy and pleasing to God, must “put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the flesh, to fulfill its lusts,”¹⁰⁴ and they must “abstain from every form of evil.”¹⁰⁵

Examining Social and Recreational Behavior

Romans 14:20-15:3; 1 Corinthians 10:24, 27-33

Will you allow your spouse to spend time with his or her family and friends? _____

Will you be willing to spend your time with his or her family and friends? _____

Will you control the time you spend with your family and friends in order to meet your spouse’s needs? _____

Do you (will you) share in social and recreational activities that the other enjoys more than you do? _____

Do you (will you) avoid insisting that the other participate in activities he or she does not enjoy? _____

Are you (will you be) careful not to expect your mate to do anything that violates his or her conscience? _____

In-Laws

The extended family can be either a rich blessing or a disabling curse for a marriage, especially a new one. When God instituted marriage, He said, “... a man shall leave his father and mother and be joined to his wife, and they shall become one flesh.”¹⁰⁶ Our earlier discussion of this thought deserves emphasis. In order to be *joined* to your spouse you must first *leave* your parents. This may at first seem too

How to improve your marriage

obvious to be stated, but some find it hard to do. Neither spouse is immune to physical or psychological dependence upon parents. At the first disagreement, a new wife may be tempted to run to the familiarity of her parents' home. New husbands who have been particularly close to their mothers may be tempted to long for mother's consolation or her cooking. Discuss this before marriage and agree that "come what may" you will "leave and cleave."

I remember my first year of marriage. Maria was not an experienced cook, and I liked to eat. It wasn't that her cooking was so bad, it was just not that to which I had grown accustomed. I tried always to compliment her experimental efforts. One suppertime she served green peppers stuffed with rice and hamburger. It wasn't really bad, so I gushed about how delicious it was. Believing she had found a winner, she served it again the next evening. As before, I complimented her. I don't remember how many consecutive evenings she served the same. Too many. I felt like driving down the road to my mother's house for a good meal, but fortunately it was too far. Finally, I told her that I didn't like stuffed peppers enough to have them every evening. Maria has never served that dish again in all of these fifty years.

The Bible principle to remember is that you must first *leave* – physically, emotionally, and financially – in order to effectively join and *cleave*. As a new husband, you must accept the love, care and nurturing of your wife in place of what you received from your more experienced mother. Your wife will learn and gain in experience as you help her. And you, new wife, must learn to turn to your husband rather than your father for love, protection and guidance. Sure, he lacks experience. His judgments may lack the maturity to which

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you are accustomed, but he will grow and develop as you help him. You will grow together, and your common journey will be much more precious than it would be if you allowed others to manage your relationship. Keep this advice before you daily.

Accept advice from your parents and others, and learn from the experience of those who are older, but stand on your own feet. Make your own decisions. Marriage is the beginning of a new home – your home. Make it yours. If your parents are ill-advised enough to interfere, trying to run your household, politely but firmly tell them that you love them but the two of you are now guiding your lives with God’s help. It is *vital* that you agree to this principle *before* marriage.

As before, study the verses shown before answering the questions regarding in-laws.

Testing Relationships with In-Laws Genesis 2:24; Matthew 5:38-42; Ephesians 5:21; 6:1-3

Are you willing to leave parents in favor of depending upon your spouse? _____

Are you respectful of his parents and yours? _____

Are you the solution rather than the reason for problems with the other’s family? _____

Finances

Disagreements over money are frequently responsible for unhappy and broken marriages. While research indicates that not feeling loved and appreciated, growing apart, sexual problems and finances are all main reasons for divorce, more than one study claims financial disagreement is the number one cause. Two things are certain: finances are a part of every