

Resources for Couples Preparing for Marriage

By Jane P. Ives

Available through popular booksellers, unless otherwise indicated.

Those marked with [C] available through Cokesbury, (800-672-1789 or www.cokesbury.com)

See also “Marriage Preparation Resources for Pastors and Mentor Couples,” “Premarital Inventories,” and “Resources for Couples Planning for Second Marriages” at www.marriagelovepower.net in the “Marriage Preparation” section under “Best Practices Articles and Recommended Resources” or search by title or topic at www.gbod.org/leadership-resources/marriage-family-ministries

[10 Great Dates Before You Say “I Do”](#) by David and Claudia Arp and Curt and Natelle Brown (Grand Rapids, MI: Zondervan, 2003). The authors provide 10 brief chapters discussing issues relevant for engaged couples. Each chapter has an accompanying guide and exercises for couples to share thoughts and feelings about those issues. These conversations are designed to help couples learn to share hopes and expectations, appreciate their differences, communicate and connect, solve problems as a couple, manage money, develop spiritual intimacy, consider roles and plans for a family, and choose an intentional marriage. [C]

[All-in-One Marriage Prep: 75 Experts Share Tips and Wisdom to Help You Get Ready Now](#), Susanne M. Alexander (Naples, FL: Barringer, 2010). This comprehensive collection of short articles by various authors is grouped by topic and covers a wide-range of issues for courting, engaged, and newly-wed couples to consider and discuss. Contributors include Claudia and David Arp, John Van Epp, Mark Gungor, Scott Haltzman, Mike McManus, and others. [Marriage Transformation L.L.C., 800-501-6682, www.allinonemarriageprep.com]

[Before You Say “I Do”](#) by H. Norman Wright and Wes Roberts (Eugene, Oregon: Harvest House, 1997). This workbook provides interactive surveys, thoughtful questions, and real-life examples to help couples discover areas of harmony and areas of potential discord. Couples can deepen their relationship by exploring ways to adjust to their differences, clarifying role expectations, developing spiritual intimacy, establishing a healthy sexual relationship, handling finances, and building healthy relationships with in-laws. [C]

[Celebrating Our Differences: Living Two Faiths in One Marriage](#) by Mary Helene Rosenbaum and Stanley Ned Rosenbaum (Boston, KY: Ragged Edge Press and Black Bear Productions, Inc., 1994). The authors offer practical advice and resources for interfaith couples and for pastors and rabbis working with them, clearly pointing out the various pitfalls that can take such couples by surprise, so that couples can foresee and discuss potential problems before they arise. Reasonably priced used copies available through popular online booksellers, including www.betterworldbooks.com.

[Christian Weddings: Resources to Make Your Ceremony Unique, Revised Edition](#) by Andy Langford (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2008). Couples can personalize their wedding ceremonies by selecting liturgical elements from an expanded range of resources. [C]

[Empowering Couples: Building on Your Strengths](#) by David H. Olson and Amy K. Olson (Minneapolis, MN: Life Innovations, Inc., 2000). Each chapter begins with a quiz about a particular relationship topic to help couples or individuals assess their strengths and needs for growth in that area. Clarifying information is followed by couple exercises to help turn “stumbling blocks into stepping stones” (p. ix). Chapter topics include “Communication,” “Conflict Resolution,” “Role Relationship,” “Managing Finances,” “Sexual Relationship,” “Children and Parenting,” “Personal, Couple, and Family Goals.”

Engaged Encounter United Methodist, www.encounter.org. This organization offers weekend experiences for engaged couples, providing an opportunity for private reflection and discussion of their dreams, ambitions, and attitudes. To find dates and locations for Engaged Encounter - United Methodist events, visit the website or call 866-633-3862.

[Getting the Love You Want: A Guide for Couples](#), by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. (New York: Harper and Row, Publishers, Inc., 2008). This classic work describes the unconscious needs that lead us to choose our mates and how learned behaviors from childhood lead to conflict; shows how to learn positive ways to meet those needs; and outlines a ten-week course in relationship therapy couples can do on their own. [C]

[Getting the Love You Want Workbook: The New Couples' Study Guide](#) by Harville Hendrix, Ph.D. (New York: Atria Books, 2003). This workbook contains a twelve-week course with step-by-step instructions for working through the exercises in Part III of *Getting the Love You Want* and deepening the love and companionship in relationships. [C]

[Growing Love in Christian Marriage Couple's Manual \(3rd Edition\)](#) by Joan and Richard Hunt (Nashville: Abingdon Press, 2013). This couple's workbook provides information, suggestions, and discussion exercises, along with Scripture and other worship resources, for engaged or newlywed couples to use on their own or with guidance from a pastor or mentor couple. Marriage issues are addressed in the four themes of Faith, Hope, Love, and Power. Couples may use this resource most effectively if each person has a copy to read and in which he/she can write. The workbook includes a premarital inventory, for which administration and interpretation instructions are provided in the **[Growing Love in Christian Marriage Pastor's Manual](#)**. [C]

[Interfaith Wedding Ceremonies: Samples and Sources](#), selected and with an introduction by Joan C. Hawxhurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Dovetail Publishing, 1996). The author discusses issues interfaith couples should consider when planning their wedding, then offers sample ceremonies, excerpts from other ceremonies, and a variety of helpful resources.

[Mixed Matches: How to Create successful Interracial, Interethnic, and Interfaith Relationships](#) by Joel Crohn, Ph.D. (New York: Fawcett Columbine, 1995). The author, drawing on years of counseling experience, shows couples in cross-cultural relationships how to approach each other compassionately and negotiate solutions to their cultural and religious differences. This book also offers practical advice on how couples can confront prejudice, deal with in-laws, and help their children develop a sense of identity in a bicultural family.

[Saving Your Marriage Before It Starts: Seven Questions to Ask Before - and After - You Marry](#) by Dr. Les Parrott III and Dr. Leslie Parrott (Grand Rapids, Michigan: Zondervan Publishing House, 1995). The authors help couples explore their expectations of marriage; learn how to cultivate lasting love; assess the impact of their attitudes toward life; appreciate and adjust to gender differences; develop effective speaking and listening skills; resolve conflict

creatively; and deepen the spiritual aspects of their relationship. See also [Workbook for Men](#) and [Workbook for Women](#). [C]

[Take Back Your Wedding: Managing the People Stress of Wedding Planning](#) by William J. Doherty, PhD. and Elizabeth Doherty Thomas (2007). The authors address various wedding planning issues, providing resources and sound advice for dealing with them in ways that strengthen family relationships and prevent future problems. This book can help couples and their families clarify expectations, negotiate differences up front, uncover underlying issues that may influence decision-making, avoid predictable conflicts, and manage those conflicts that are unavoidable (pages 6-7). The website www.thefirstdance.com offers additional helps and insights.

[The Interfaith Family Guidebook: Practical Advice for Jewish and Christian Partners](#) by Joan C. Hawxhurst (Kalamazoo, MI: Dovetail Publishing, 1998). This book is designed to help interfaith couples respect and appreciate each other's religious heritage and successfully resolve the many issues they will face in their marriage, such as planning their wedding, raising their children, and celebrating holidays. Available from popular online booksellers, new and used.

[Things I Wish I'd Known Before We Got Married](#) by Gary Chapman (Chicago: Northfield Publishing, 2010). The author offers practical wisdom and tips, dispelling the myths, illusions, and expectations that can undermine happiness in marriage. This would be an excellent gift for engaged or newlywed couples.

www.thefirstdance.com: This website provides resources for marriage preparation and wedding planning. Articles address both couple and extended family dynamics, showing how to deal with a variety of issues in ways that prevent future problems.

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