

PREPARATION FOR MARRIAGE

By: Bill Irby – Minister, West Hobbs Street Church of Christ, Athens, AL
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It is commonly said that the most important decision that a man or woman can make is to become a Christian. This is certainly so. But in close second place is deciding which person we will marry. Nothing else will influence your earthly happiness and your eternal destiny like the choice of mate.

Like every other major situation in life, preparation is the key. Though marriage may be the most distant thing in your mind, *forethought now will help you avoid regret later.*

First, Prepare Your Body. Abstain from things that will have a deleterious effect on your physical being. Consider these passages: 1 Thessalonians 5:22, 1 Corinthians 6:18, and 1 Timothy 6:4-12. To abstain from all appearance of evil is to avoid evil whenever and however it shows up. Remember that if you have a physical relationship with someone you become joined to that individual and not just physically. You carry with you psychological and perhaps even medical mementos of that relationship. Consider the damage done by sexually transmitted diseases (STDs), and the attendant immoral behavior. If you live the way God wants you to live, the chance that you get one of the diseases is practically nil.

Positive measures can be adopted to strengthen and protect your physical self. Hard physical work and reasonable exercise are good things (Ephesians 4:28, 2 Thessalonians 3:6, 10). Christians should develop good study habits (2 Timothy 2:15). A brain that is not exercised becomes just as flabby as a body that is not exercised.

Second, Prepare Your Mind. Know the *Rules* God has for marriage. These rules are readily available in the Bible: Genesis 2:24, Matthew 19:1-12, Ephesians 5:21-6:4. We must note here that the Bible describes marriage as being between Adam and Eve, not Adam and Steve.

Not only must we know the rules, we must know the *Ruler*. We do so by coming to know His mind (Philippians 2:5-11). For everyone on earth today, knowing God means one thing: knowing His Word (Hebrews 4:12, 2 Timothy 3:16-17).

Third, Prepare Your Soul. Become a Christian. A man or a woman is cheating themselves out of the great blessing of life if they do not accept God's grace and become a Christian. Learn and obey the plan of salvation. As a Christian, make it your business to become an evermore-effective Christian. 1 Timothy 4:12-16 and Hebrews 5:12-6:4 will help prepare the Christian's soul.

Fourth, Prepare Your Will. I am not speaking of the legal document (one's "Last Will and Testament"). In order to have a successful marriage we must learn to control the part of ourselves that motivate us to act, that is, our will. People do what they want to do. You will do what you want to do. The question then becomes, "What do you want to do?"

The key is to let God's Will be your will (Jeremiah 10:23, Luke 22:42). We can, should, and must adopt the attitude exhibited by Jesus in John 6:38 "*For I came down from Heaven, not to do mine own will, but the will of Him that sent me*".

Be sure to remember this when you are about to "fall in love." Love between a man and a woman is an act of the heart that brings together the three parts of that heart: emotion, intellect and will. Love has a "decision component." Therefore, choose wisely. Be careful and then be faithful.

Bill Irby